

COLLEGE GUILD
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CREATIVE LANGUAGE

Unit 3 of 6

Fiction

No matter their educational background, writers can fill their lines with creative thought and language unlike that of any other writer. In fact, using your own unique voice, you might even be able to improve on some of the great writers of English literature!

In 1917, T.S. Eliot wrote the poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." He opens --

*Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table.*

A "patient etherized upon a table" is certainly a unique simile for an evening sky.

1) What do you imagine Eliot's sky looks like?

As a writer, you can express this invitation of Eliot's in different ways and in different voices --

A cool dude might say: *Yo, babe, -- how's about me an' you boogie on out of here- the sky is some ol' weird tonight.*

A professor: *Scuse me, Ma'am. Please join me in an experience which I'm sure will prove educational. We rarely see an evening sky looking unconscious.*

2) How would you express Eliot's invitation in the voice of a different character. Who is your character and who is he/she/it speaking to? Do you like your invitation better than Eliot's?

One definition of fiction is "the class of literature comprising works of imaginative narration in prose form.... a made-up story". In other words, in this section, let your imagination run wild. We'll start with single sentences. Imagine that each of the following sentences is the beginning of a book or short story.

3) Write the second sentence for each to keep the story going.

"Before starting the car, Patricia slipped the Hostess Cup Cakes out of her pocket."

"There were 982 chickens in the parking lot -- Nancy had counted them all."

"For some reason, the ocean reminded her of Aunt Middy's orange apron."

"George knew it was going to be a tough day on the job."

"He dropped the mouse on the front porch and that's when he saw it."

"Well," said Stanley, "I'll never try that again."

"Mary watched the airplane with her boyfriend and luggage take off."

"The magician pulled a rabbit out of his sleeve, and what happened next surprised even him!"

4) Take one of these and continue the story for a whole paragraph.

STORIES

To write full length stories, you'll have the help of three fictional characters from literature, as well as three characters from fairy tales, stories in which magical things happen.

ROBINSON CRUSOE is a man shipwrecked on a desert island. His only companion is an island native named Friday. (Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe, 1719)

THE LITTLE PRINCE is a young boy who has ended up on earth from a faraway planet, for which he is very homesick. (The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint Exupery, 1943)

WILBUR is a poorly behaved pig and the runt of his litter who befriends a wise and even-tempered spider named Charlotte. (Charlotte's Web by E.B. White, 1952)

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD is on her way to Grandma's house, not knowing that a wolf is planning to eat her and her grandmother for dinner.

RAPUNZEL is locked in a high tower, but her hair is so long that when she lets it down, it reaches the ground.

SLEEPING BEAUTY is under an evil spell, and can only be woken up by the kiss of a handsome prince.

5) Write a short story which includes at least three of the characters from the six stories/ fairy tales above.

(You don't need to be familiar with them – use your imagination from the brief descriptions.)

6) Make up an original fairy tale in which all the characters are pieces of furniture, one in which all are clothes, or one in which all are food.

Now we move from short stories to novels. Books do more than entertain. They can touch a person's imagination, even change minds and influence society. The famous writer Charles Dickens (1812-1870) wrote about characters who lived in poverty, helping to open people's eyes to the plight of the poor. Even a children's story can have a powerful impact. For example, the Harry Potter series (by J.K. Rowling) is credited with getting many children today interested in reading for the first time. Imagine you are the author of your own book.

7) What is its title?

8) Tell us all about the characters, location, plot, etc.

9) Write a paragraph from anywhere in the novel.

10) How does it end? Does good triumph over evil? What happens to the main characters?

Now that you've written your novel, let's turn you into a publisher, the one who has to sell your book. Whether or not people purchase a book may depend on what happens in the bookstore – does the front cover catch the customer's eye? When bookstore browsers pick it up and turn it over, does what they read make them want to buy it? The back cover of a book is an important marketing tool. It's challenging to write, especially since you don't want to give away the ending, and you have to fit the words into a 6" x 9" space. (Please remember not to use your real last name.)

11) Write the text and design for the back cover of the book – this may include a short summary of the subject (which intrigues without giving away the plot), information about the author, the author's picture, endorsements from famous people, and/or quotes from reviewers.

This next section is all about focusing on HOW a writer tells his or her story. Here are four examples of creative writing by College Guild students.

I wake in the morning. My joints are hurting due to arthritis. I sit up and reach for my cane, but it's not where I thought I put it. Where did I put it? My memory is not too good these days. Oh, there it is. I walk to the kitchen to make breakfast. Oh, how I miss those days when I ate what I wanted to eat. Now I have to watch my weight and eat carefully. I don't want to have another heart attack. After taking all of my medications, I feed my two cats and then go outside to feed the birds. I come back inside and watch TV until lunch time. Boy, it's hard to get up these stairs these days. After lunch I watch some more TV and then go for a walk. The doctor says that walking is good for me. I walk to the park and back. Wow -- that was a workout..... [Danny]

In the garage she awaits my arrival -- her skin a fiery red and her legs are of the thickest tread, eyes of crimson and gold with her pipes so intricately covered in chrome. Beneath her bodice of metallic tone -- her parts scream to welcome me home. Within her arms I enter with ease then crank her shaft; our separation seems a forgotten past. [Jason]

*I like to watch things burn,
not in a crazy pyro kinda way,
just a nice campfire although
I've torched a bridge or two
Along the path I chose.
I don't know what ever
happened to the spark
in me, the one that*

*kept me warm so
I'm left with just these ashes.*

[Dan]

There we were, ahead 14-13 with two minutes left to play. We had the ball and needed only to run the clock out. The City Championship was in our pockets. Bryant hands the ball off to Kendall so he can run straight into the line and keep the clock ticking. Oh no, what is Kendall doing? He's taking off around the right end. Stop, drop! We don't need a score! Oh my Gosh, the big end for the PBC Panthers has stripped the ball from Kendall and is strolling untouched into our end zone. Goodbye championship. Kendall you better find a place to hide and quick! [John]

12) Describe how each author wrote to make his reader relate to the subject or make the piece enjoyable to read.

13) Which is your favorite and why?

14) Write a fictional piece of your own in any style.

15) What did you hope to make your readers feel?

DIARIES can be fictional or non-fictional. There are many reasons to keep a real diary: to keep track of all that is going on in your life; leave an accurate historical record of events for your descendants; express your feelings in a safe way. A "trip diary" describes what happens during a special vacation, a "seizure diary" helps your doctor make treatment decisions.

Diaries have been the framework for many books and movies, both true stories, like The Diary of Anne Frank (the written record of a Jewish girl during Hitler's reign), and fictional, like the 1970 movie, The Diary of a Mad Housewife.

The piece by Danny on page 3 is written in the form of a diary, an old man describing his day. Whatever the character, put yourself in that person's life. In other words, you are telling the story in the "first person", as if you are that character.

16) Describe a movie plot based around the discovery of a diary. How does it begin and end, who are the characters and where does it take place?

To show you that diaries can be by and about anything you can dream up, read the following poem, a diary entry by a vegetable!

Green Victims

*Gathered together like this
she should feel outnumbered*

*afraid
but for almost a week now
she comes out wearing that
bonnet like an executioner's
hood
and jerks one of us up by
the head.
The sound of roots snapping
sends shivers up my leaves.
We watch another victim hauled
away in the cabbage basket.
The mourning ends around noon
when the smell of corned beef
wafts across the garden.*

by John Yarbrough (Copyright © 2002, Boiled White)

Now it's your turn --

17) Write a diary entry about a day in the life of each of the following 6 characters:

mountain climber

teacher

soldier

writer

ice cube

cloud

18) Why is it effective to write in the “first person”, (as if you are the character), instead of the “third person”, where you are writing about a character from the outside?