

Creative Nonfiction Essay

In their methods of narration, David Harris-Gershon's *What Do You Give the Children of the Terrorist who Tried to Kill Your Wife?* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior* are written in the genre of creative nonfiction, more specifically the memoir. These writers use cultural history to express their perceptions of their personal histories: the excavation of the past through recalled memory and the recreation of an event in light of knowledge gained after the event. In short, the texts call attention to the constructed nature of one's retelling of his or her personal history; any memoir is, in the end, a narrative – a story told in a specific context, to an intended audience, often with the desire to portray the memoirist in a particular light.

Drawing upon the strategies used by Harris-Gershon and Kingston, construct a short memoir concerning a specific event in your past, one that, looking back, you now realize served as a bridge over the border between your identity as a child and your perception of yourself as an adult. I urge you, in this essay, to be as creative as possible. Take risks.

As you write, think carefully about the difference between the personal essay and the memoir. Memoir is similar to the personal essay, except that the memoir tends to focus more on striking or life-changing events. Where the personal essay explores, free from any need to interpret, the memoir interprets, analyzes, and seeks the deeper meaning beneath the surface experience of particular events. The memoir continually asks the following questions:

- Why was this event of particular significance?
- What did it mean?
- Why is it important?

In this sense, the memoir is heavier than the personal essay, and it mines the past to shed light on the present. The memoir seeks to make sense of an individual life.

Length: 4-5 Pages

Evaluation

I will focus on the following aspects in looking at your draft:

- ✓ Is the narrative moment appropriate for the essay and your audience?
- ✓ Is there clear narrative structure that shows the story to the reader rather than just tells a story?
- ✓ Is there a moment of analysis, imbedded in the creative text, which explains the import of this moment on you or your life?
- ✓ Overall, does the essay have any major grammar, punctuation, and spelling concerns?
- ✓ Did you show significant revision practice—incorporating suggestions for improvement from both your instructor and your peers? (i.e. Have you made substantive changes to your essay based on feedback?)