

Writing Powerful Narrative Nonfiction

From *The Secret Life of Bees*, by Sue Monk Kidd

She had a big round face and a body that sloped out from her neck like a pup tent, and she was so black that night seemed to seep from her skin. (p. 2)

That's all I could hear, over and over. And then the cry of birds overhead, sharp as needles, sweeping from lower-bough trees, stirring up the scent of pine, and even then I knew I would recoil all my life from the smell of it. (p. 32)

Suddenly I felt ice cold, as if something dangerous had slipped into the room. I looked toward the window and felt a tremor slide along my spine. (p. 39)

Leaning back on my elbows, I slid down till the water sealed over my head. I held my breath and listened to the scratch of river against my ears, sinking as far as I could into that shimmering dark world. (p. 56)

A barge of mist floated along the water, and dragonflies, iridescent blue ones, darted back and forth like they were stitching up the air. (p. 57)

. . . when August removed the lids, the bees poured out in thick black ropes, breaking into strands . . . (p. 94)

From *You and I and Yesterday*, by Marjorie Holmes

The sun began to beam, the fierce white locks of winter to yield, to lose their grip. Icicles made a dripping music from the eaves, the trees stretched, shook off their white fur coats. You could hear their branches crackling in the night, like people who've let their bones go to sleep. (p. 14)

When the entire back lot had been transformed into a black and stormy sea, Mr. Mitchell would attach a rake to a Daisy and comb and shape it all out into smoothly undulating parallels, pleasantly satisfying as corduroy. (p. 29)

. . . heavenly [rhubarb] pies whose juice bubbled sunset-pink. . . . Mason jars would be clicking and whispering like people gossiping. (p. 33)

But I sometimes get a little homesick for women's voices calling to each other around the clothespins in their mouths, and the fragrance of sun-sweet garments that have danced all day outdoors. (p. 91)