

Using Fiction Techniques that Breathe Life into Your Writing

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The purpose of “Creative Nonfiction” is to communicate information, teach, inspire. People want to learn in a pleasurable way and they can relate to stories. What do your readers care about? (e.g.their families, who they are, how they got that way, where they’re headed, what makes them tick.) So ... tell stories about people, then slip in the important teaching/message.

Elements of Creative Nonfiction (which will be demonstrated with an actual piece of writing):

1. **Hook** - Start with action/emotion.
2. **Scenes** - The building blocks of creative nonfiction. Show, don’t tell. Factual, true incident, something happens, often conflict, structured to keep the reader guessing what will happen next. Should comprise 50-70% of the writing.
 - Suspense/Something at stake -
3. **Characters/Dialog** - Don’t just tell about someone, show them so they become unforgettable, so the reader can identify with them. Like watching a nonfiction movie.
4. **Description/Setting** -
 - Concrete Details - Instead of lots of adjectives; instead of stating abstract ideas that readers can’t easily visualize. Use details that can act as metaphors for something larger you want to get across. Details may symbolize a memorable truth. Be creative in how you seek, gather, and utilize information.
 - Appeal to Senses - Try to use details/words that appeal to all five senses, if possible.
 - Use strong verbs
5. **Reflection/Information** - Brief, inserted between scenes.
6. Over-all **Story/Structure/Frame** - Like a plot, it will reveal changes in people, places or objects, sometimes a journey. Often chronological order (can start in middle), sometimes ordered by theme or thesis. Keep up rhythm and momentum, or else you’ll lose your reader.
 - Include Bookends - At the end, hark back to something said at the beginning. Feels complete, satisfying, memorable. You might make “a promise” or raise a question, then keep the reader reading to the end to find out.

All the above will interest and involve the reader, allowing you to communicate the information, insights, and truths you want to get across. Work on the shape and structure of your piece, then hone in on phrases and sentences. Then rewrite word by word, looking for: word efficiency, word choice, clarity, etc.

👉 Conferees who attend the workshop will receive helpful handouts!