



Reminiscence: A Creative Writing Workshop



Plot: What happens in a narrative and in what order.

- ▶ **Its arrangement, structure, and design.**
 - ▶ **Chronological (the order in which events happened)**
 - ▶ **Before and After (This structure helps highlight the major “shifts” that have occurred in our lives, and we gather their meaning from witnessing how things changed from “before” into “after.”)**
 - ▶ **The Item (This structural strategy can work for longer and shorter pieces alike. We associate certain items with things of great value, *i.e.* the hairbrush that calls to mind our mother, or the Zippo lighter that reminds us of a long lost friend. Anchoring a piece in a concrete item also grounds your reader and helps connect a string of memories without your having to explain why you’ve chosen to include them.)**
 - ▶ **Fragmented (the order you’ve chosen to reveal events)**
 - ▶ **Flashbacks (an ongoing narrative of a particular period where you dip into the past periodically but return to the ongoing account)**

Session 3, 5/4/17: Writing Prompt on Plot & Form

Choose THREE of the following possibilities and write quickly for 5 minutes on each one:

- **Identify a crossroads in your life**
- **Discuss a terrible decision you had to make**
- **Describe an event in your childhood that had the most impact on your life as an adult?**
- **Recount the greatest challenge of your life so far?**
- **Recall the day it all began, or the day it all ended, or the day you want to relive, or the day you want to forget**



Session 3, 5/4/17: Writing Prompt on Plot & Form

- Which one of the three prompts you wrote about has more energy for you?
- Which one is calling for you to develop it further?
- That is the one you'll develop for next week in response to this assignment.

Keep the time frame very short. If you try to write about something that covers 20 years, you'll end up summarizing too much.

Limiting yourself to 500 words is a great exercise in conciseness. Focus on appealing to all five senses. As always, aim to show as much as tell.



Critiquing Guidelines:

- *Meet in small groups of four plus the writer. I'll meet with one of the groups.*
- *Choose a moderator who will keep the group focused and working within our time frame (aim for 10 mins per person)*
- *Read the pieces silently and make brief notes.*
- *Share your comments orally.*
- *When you finish, jot down on my copy what your group told you so I can review what people have already said.*



Critique Questions:

In these responses, you will not be pointing out grammar or spelling errors—and nor will I. We are interested in helping each person improve the content of his/her submission. Since there are no grades, you needn't feel in competition with one another. Remember, we are all in this together. Nasty or unnecessarily negative comments don't help the writer to improve. Instead of telling the writer “you should do this or do that,” just point out if you felt confused or needed more details.

- **What stands out about the piece? What caught your attention?**
- **Is there anything you don't understand about the narrative? If so, explain.**
- **What changes would you suggest to strengthen this piece based on elements we've covered so far that make for strong narratives?**
- **Has the writer appealed to multiple senses. Are there places where more showing rather than telling is needed?**