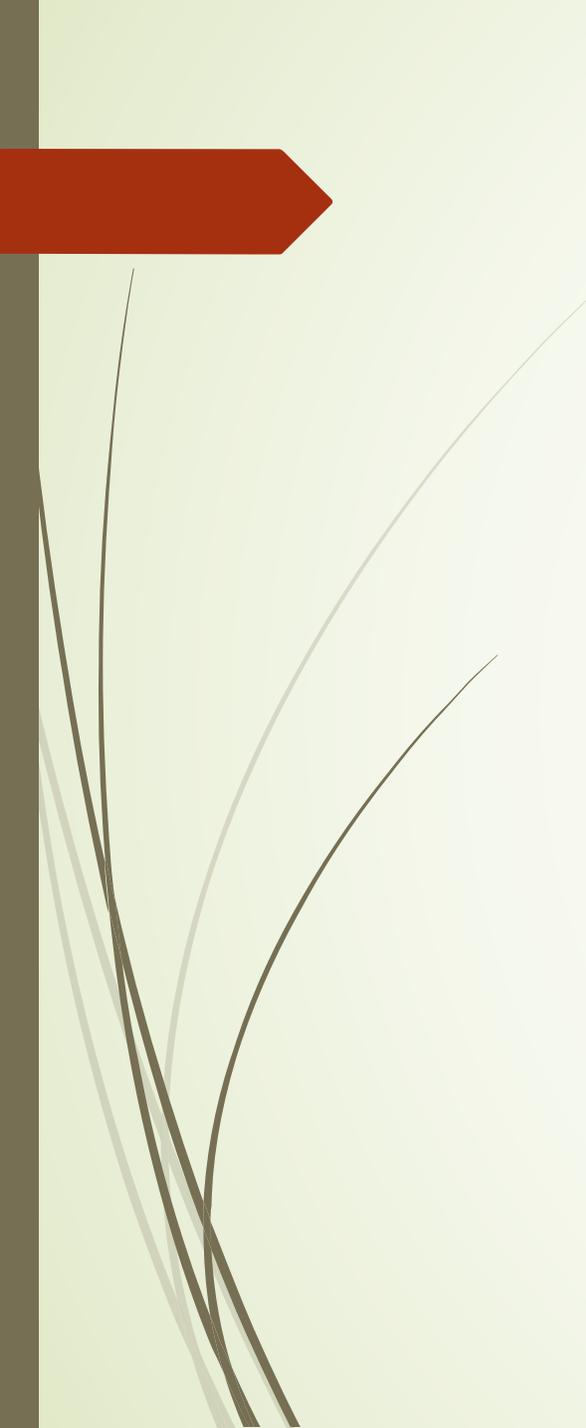




Reminiscence: A Creative Writing Workshop



A memoir is my version of events. My perspective. I choose what to tell and what to omit. I choose the adjectives to describe a situation, and in that sense, I'm creating a form of fiction.

—Isabel Allende



PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE WILL BE NO CLASS ON THURSDAY, MAY 18, DUE TO THE USF COMMENCEMENT. DO NOT COME TO CLASS ON THAT DAY!

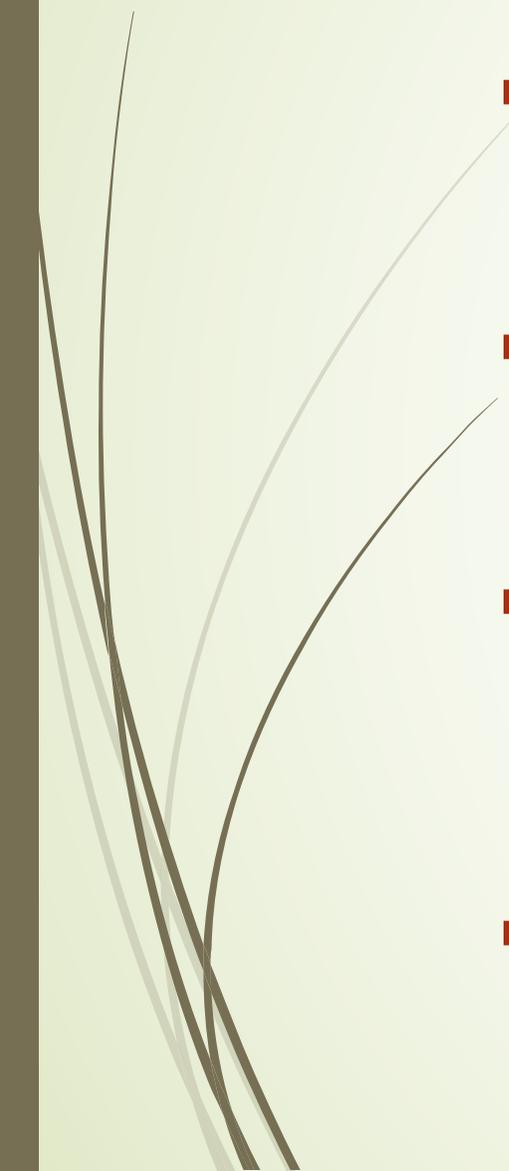
THE SCHEDULE IS SUCH THAT THIS MISSED DAY WILL BE MADE UP AT THE END OF OUR SESSION. IN OTHER WORDS THERE ARE EIGHT MEETINGS TOTAL, EVEN THOUGH YOU WILL NOT COME TO CLASS ON MAY 18.

Writing about place/setting of your memoirs:

- **Writing about place or location of an event in your narrative allows you to recreate the scene and experience in the mind of your reader.**
- **The place where the event or experience took place is more than just about its name. Many things contribute: the physical location of the place; the physical attributes, such as the urban setting of crowds, pollution, public transit, traffic jams; or the rural setting of open spaces, fewer people, fields, farms, and small communities.**
- **Similar to developing a character, the place needs to be expanded. Yet place is more than just character. It is also about meaning. A place or location often has significant meaning. We can associate a particular place with good memories or bad memories, as being a happy place or sad place, as being a relaxing place or stressful place.**



Tips for writing about place:

- Describe the place as if it is a character in your story. What is its appearance? Its behavior? What is the place saying to you?
 - Describe the physical attributes of the place using sensory images. How does place smell, sound, taste, feel, and appear to you?
 - Write about place as it means to you. Do you have fond memories of the place? What do you like or dislike about the place? What is important? What is insignificant about the place? How does the place feel to you?
 - Use concrete and specific details. Remember as many significant details about place as you can.
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Sample description of a place:

- ▶ **Lake Calhoun is a great place to swim and relax. In the summer, the water is warm and clean, and the beaches are large enough to accommodate groups of people seeking relief from a midsummer scorcher. In addition to swimming, visitors to the lake can go canoeing, sailing, windsurfing, or fishing. The blue water is a refreshing, tempting sight. The sweet scent of sun block wafts through the air from sunbathers lying on the beach. Children laugh and splash in the water, and nearby volleyball games stir passionate shouts in the heat of competition. Meanwhile lifeguards sit atop their towers and make sure everyone is safe. In the distance, sail boats catch the soft breezes that cross the lake and canoeists glide quietly past. This is what summer is all about!**
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Session 5, 5/25/17: Writing prompt on Place

My favorite place is...

- **Your room and house**
- **The home of one of your friends**
- **Some place you've worked**
- **The street where you live**
- **Some place you have traveled**
- **Your favorite place to relax**
- **Or any place of your choice!**

Limiting yourself to 500 words would be a great exercise in conciseness. Focus on appealing to all five senses. As always, aim to show rather than tell.



Writing Prompt on Place:

Or....

Write a description of a place you remember that has now changed in very noticeable ways. Concentrate on trying to capture the difference between what it was and what it is and on trying to convey whatever shifts in your feelings and your interest have occurred as a result.

Or....

- **A place you couldn't wait to get away from.**
- **A place that is your place.**
- **A secret place.**

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

Prewriting for place exercise

- ▶ Instead of diving immediately into writing about a special place, take a few minutes to list different aspects of your experience of the setting you've chosen to develop. Try to pick details that relate to the five senses.
- ▶ Close your eyes and mentally return to an episode in your memoir. Take your time setting the scene. Think of it as building and painting a stage set; try to recreate all the visual and sensory details as accurately as you can. Once you have the setting firmly in mind, visualize the scene unfolding around you. Feel, smell, see and hear what you did then. Notice who you are *in the past*, re-inhabit your former self. If the scene involves another person or a conversation, have that conversation. Glance around you as you imagine it, just as you did then. Notice all the details (you may chose to not write about all these, but being aware of them will enrich your recreation.)



CRITIQUE 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?**