

# Writing 352 Course Syllabus

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## WRITING MEMOIR AND CREATIVE NONFICTION

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This is a 4-credit online course

**Dates:** January 8-April 30, 2024

**Place:** D2L

**Instructor:** Belo Miguel Cipriani, Ed.D.

**Email:** Belo.Cipriani@metrostate.edu

**Virtual Office hours: Wednesdays** by appointment only 10am to 4pm

### Course Prerequisites:

- WRIT 251 Introduction to Creative Writing -OR-
- WRIT 359 Boot Camp: Creative Writing for Non-Majors

### Course Description:

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This course focuses on writing memoir as well as specialized nonfiction genres such as nature or travel writing. Students read and discuss pieces by professional writers, learn to create and revise their own work, and comment on each others' writing. This course may be repeated for credit.

### Course Objectives:

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To develop and expand creative writing skills through weekly writing exercises and three major creative papers. To develop writing skills in the area of revision (the craft of writing) through revising and developing the same major papers. To develop critical thinking skills through a

biographical sketch, class discussion of and written response to readings by selected authors, and response to work by classmates.

## **Competence Statement:**

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Knows concepts, techniques and approaches to writing creative nonfiction and memoir at an advanced level. Can identify personal areas of interest and apply these interests in a form that is compelling and clear as demonstrated in three major creative papers. Knows and understands the craft of revision as demonstrated in revisions of creative papers. Can critically analyze a variety of creative nonfiction and memoir texts as demonstrated in a written biographical sketch, class discussions and written responses.

## **Required Texts:**

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Firsts: Coming of Age Stories by People with Disabilities edited by Belo Miguel Cipriani

The Color of Water by James McBride

Wild by Cheryl Strayed

Taste Makers by Mayukh Sen

## **Learning outcomes:**

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- Articulate an informed personal reaction to works in the arts and humanities.
- Demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of works in the arts and humanities.
- Describe and appreciate works in the arts and humanities as expressions of individual and collective values within an intellectual, cultural, historical and social context.

- Employ syntax and usage appropriate to academic disciplines and the professional world.
- Engage in the creative process or interpretive performance.
- Interpret and respond critically to works from various cultures in the arts and humanities.
- Knowledge and understanding of a controlling idea or theme in a piece of writing.
- Knowledge and understanding of a selection of literary terms to effectively analyze and interpret diverse genres.
- Locate, evaluate, and synthesize in a responsible manner material from diverse sources and points of view.
- Participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.
- Respond critically to works in the arts and humanities.
- Select appropriate communication choices for specific audiences.
- Understand those works as expressions of individual and human values within a historical and social context.
- Understand/demonstrate the writing and speaking processes through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing and presentation.
- Use authority, point-of-view, and individual voice and style in writing and speaking.

## **ABOUT PLAGIARISM:**

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This is a writing class and it is expected that all writing be your own. It is expected that you accurately give credit to information and sources you have drawn upon. Plagiarism, which is signing your name to writing done by another, is illegal and works against your ability to improve and advance your own writing. Plagiarized papers will receive an F. Overall consequences of plagiarism in this class may range from a failed grade

on a specific paper, to failing the class, to being reported for academic misconduct.

**Respect** for each other's work and for each others' points of view is expected in this class. Disrespectful comments will negatively affect your grade and may result in being reported for academic misconduct. If you have any concerns about your small group workshops please bring those concerns directly to me.

## **Diversity and Disability Statement:**

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Our institution values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students with disabilities are also welcome to contact the Center for Accessibility Resources to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in the course, including accommodations.

The Center for Accessibility Resources is located in New Main, room L223. Phone number is 651-793-1549 and email is [Accessibility.Resources@metrostate.edu](mailto:Accessibility.Resources@metrostate.edu).

## **Other Student Success Resources**

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### **The Center for Academic Excellence**

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<http://www.metrostate.edu/student/learning-resources/learning-resources/center-for-academic-excellence>

### **Veterans and Military Student Services**

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<http://www.metrostate.edu/student/student-services-support/student-services/veterans-and-military-student-services>

## **Student Services**

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<http://www.metrostate.edu/student/student-services-support/student-services>

## **Counseling Services**

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<http://www.metrostate.edu/student/student-services-support/student-services/counseling-services>

## **Attendance:**

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**If you fail to login and complete the assignments in either of the first two classes sessions, you will be automatically dropped.**

**If you miss more than one class**, either by not login-in to D2L or not submitting assignments for the week, your grade will be lowered by a full letter. If you miss more than 2 classes, you will receive no credit for the course. No extra credit or make-up work is available.

## **University Non-Attendance and Reporting Policy and Procedure**

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The purpose of the Non-Attendance and Reporting Policy is to ensure Federal Title IV regulations are adhered to with respect to a student's enrollment level for the purpose of calculating and paying financial aid. While Metropolitan State University is not required to take attendance, Federal Title IV financial aid regulations require a procedure to establish that students have attended, at a minimum, one day of class for each course in which the student's enrollment status was used to determine eligibility for the Pell Grant Program. In addition, the university needs to determine a last date of attendance for those students who receive all failing grades or unofficially withdraw.

## Course Requirements:

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Participants will. . .

- Complete all writing assignments.
- Complete all reading assignments
- Make careful and considered comments about classmates' submitted pieces when workshopped.
- Attend all class sessions by logging into D2L.
- Turn in all assignments on time.

Other course requirements to note:

### A. ATTENDANCE IS ESSENTIAL.

We will be doing writing and discussion assignments every week – this is an important aspect of the course and counts toward your grade. If you must submit your work late, it is up to you to inform the instructor and make arrangements. Missing more than two classes will lower your grade. **Repeated late work will lower your grade.**

### B. WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

1.

1. Three major papers. Two essays are due – the first a shorter one(3-4pp) and the next is a longer one (5-6pp). A longer memoir essay(7-10pp) is due near end of semester. These pieces, significantly revised, are the heart of the writing part of this course.
2. Reflection Papers – Intended to help you apply elements of writing to reading material, to develop critical thinking skills in the area of writing. Due several times during semester.

3. Biographical Sketch – 2-3 page creative nonfiction piece about someone you have not met.
4. PORTFOLIO - see notes below

### **C. CLASS PARTICIPATION**

This is a very important part of this class. Here, we will analyze readings as writers and respond to fellow students' work and work on in-class writing.

### **D. YOU WILL BE RESPONDING TO EACH OTHER'S WORK**

This will be done both in the weekly exercises and as you read each other's' papers in small groups. Your sensitive and clear response to your classmates' work is a vital and important part of this class.

### **PORTFOLIO – DUE APRIL 30**

All work typed, double-spaced. Must include:

1. Final, significantly revised nonfiction essays (two of them – one shorter, one longer). Include earlier drafts submitted for class discussion with my comments.
2. Final significantly revised memoir piece (7-10pp). Include earlier draft submitted for class discussion with my comments.
3. Revision narratives: Discuss evolution of each of these pieces, changes made after workshop session, how and why you made the changes. What elements of writing worked on in class (description, detail, dialogue, sense of place, senses, etc...) contributed to final draft? Each of the three essays should have its own revision narrative (2 pages each).
4. Self-assessment/reflection paper: What have you learned about nonfiction and memoir? How have the readings of assigned texts

and fellow students work affected your writing? What assigned reading influenced you the most? What are your strengths and weaknesses as a writer? Is there a metaphor which describes your relationship to writing? How has your relationship to writing changed during semester?(3-4 pp.)

5. Publishing Plan: What do you want to accomplish as a writer in the next months and years. This could include a writing plan/schedule, topics you want to write about, publications pursued, etc...

## **COMPETENCE ACHIEVEMENT IS BASED ON A COMBINATION OF ALL THE ABOVE.**

### **OTHER IMPORTANT DETAILS:**

All papers must be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides. Computer labs are available for your use at the Mpls. and St. Paul campuses. **The Writing Center(Center for Academic Excellence)** is an invaluable service – please use it, especially if you need support with grammar and sentence construction. They are very helpful and open to working with writers of all levels.

### **Grades:**

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Because my creative writing classes focus on process, I put a lot of emphasis on the final portfolio. I respond to your drafts based on originality, content, mechanics, grammar, spelling and punctuation. I want the final portfolio to show your best work, as well as the transition of your pieces from draft to polished work. Grade breakdown:

Quality and timely submission of all drafts, revisions, exercises and other requirements, 50%.



Portfolio containing your best work and a cover page, table of contents, flash memoir piece, biographical sketch, two 1,000 word essays, one 2,000 word essay, a publishing plan, and a reflection paper 50%.

All students will work together with the instructor on analysis of texts, discussion of technique and relevant subject matter, and writing prompts.

When reading and critiquing others' drafts, I always ask myself this question: *How can I be most useful to this writer?* Being useful means paying careful attention to what the writer is trying to do in their draft and suggesting constructive ways to help them achieve their best work. Respect all work by working as hard as you can both on your own and others' drafts. Always note positive as well as weaker aspects of a piece. Accept each piece on its own terms; do not try to change a writer's fundamental voice and/or subject matter. Finally, when it's your turn for critique, separate yourself from your work; it's not you that's being examined, but a piece of writing which stands by itself. Hard though it is at times, once you've written it and sent it out there, it belongs to the world.

## Schedule

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### Week 1 (January 8, 2024 ) - Creating Memoir Outlines

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#### Video:

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- How to Create an Outline for a Work of Creative Nonfiction or Memoir

#### Readings from *Firsts: Coming of Age Stories by People with Disabilities*:

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- *Landmines* by Caitlin Hernandez
- *Firsts in Art* by Kimberly Gerry-Tucker

- *Sleeveless At Least* by Teresa Alguezabal

**Assignments (Please review assignment details in the Week 1 Module):**

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- Reflection Paper 1
- Creative Activity 1

\*\*\*Both assignments are due on Sunday January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024 by 11:59pm.

**Week 2 (January 15, 2024) Elements of a Great Work of Memoir**

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**Video:**

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- Elements of a Great Work of Memoir

**Readings from *Firsts: Coming of Age Stories by People with Disabilities*:**

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- *Overdubbing the Cody Effect* by Samuel Ethan Ruben
- *The Hearing Child* by Kevin Souhrada
- *Star Words* by David-Elijah Nahmod

**Assignments (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

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- Reflection Paper 2
- Creative Activity 2

\*\*\*Both assignments are due on Sunday January 21, 2024 by 11:59pm.

**Week 3 (January 22, 2024) Temporal techniques**

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**Video**

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- Temporal techniques

**Readings from *The Color of Water*:**

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- Chapters 1 to 9

**Assignments (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

- Reflection Paper 3
- Creative Activity 3

\*\*\*Both assignments are due on Sunday January 28, 2024 by 11:59pm.

**Week 4 (January 29, 2024) Three Most Common Memoir Structures and Styles**

**Video**

- Three Most Common Memoir Structures and Styles

**Readings from The Color of Water**

- Read Chapters 10 to 20

**Assignments (Please review assignment details in the weekly module)**

- Reflection Paper 4
- Creative Activity 4

\*\*\*Both Assignments are due on Sunday February 4, 2024 by 11:59pm.

**Week 5 (February 5, 2024) Writing About Others**

**Video**

- Writing About Others: Objects as Gateways

**Readings from The Color of Water**

- Read Chapters 21 to 28

**Assignments (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

- Reflection Paper 5
- Creative Activity 5

\*\*\*Both Assignments are due on Sunday February 11, 2024 by 11:59pm.

### **Week 6 February 12, 2024) Travel Writing**

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#### **Video**

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- Travel Writing

#### **Readings from Wild:**

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- Read Chapters 1 to 6

#### **Assignments (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

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- Reflection Paper 6
- Creative Activity 6

\*\*\*Both Assignments are due on Sunday February 18, 2024 by 11:59PM

### **Week 7 February 19, 2024) The Turning Point**

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#### **Video**

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- None

#### **Readings from Wild**

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- Chapters 7 to 13

#### **Assignments (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

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- Reflection Paper 7
- Creative Activity7

\*\*\*Both Assignments are due on Sunday February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 by 11:59pm

### **Week 8 (February 26, 2024) Using Dialogue in Memoirs**

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## **Video**

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- Interview with Ruth Gila Berger

## **Readings from Wild**

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- Read Chapters 14 to 19

## **Assignments (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

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- Reflection Paper 8
- Creative Activity 8

\*\*\*Both Assignments are due on Sunday March 3, 2024 by 11:59pm.

## **Week 9 (March 4, 2024) Spring Break**

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\*\*\*No Homework\*\*\*

## **Week 10 (March 11, 2024) Food Writing**

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## **Video**

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- Food Writing

## **Readings from Taste Makers**

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- Intro
- A Note on Names
- chapters 1 to 2

## **Assignments (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

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- Reflection Paper 10
- Creative Activity 10

\*\*\*Both Assignments are due on Sunday March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024 by 11:59pm.

## **Week 11 (March 18, 2024) Opposing Viewpoints**

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### **Video**

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- None

### **Readings from Taste Makers**

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- Read from Interlude to chapter on Julie

### **Assignments (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

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- Reflection Paper 11
- Creative Activity 11

\*\*\*Both Assignments are due on Sunday March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024 by 11:59pm

## **Week 12 (March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024) Migration Stories**

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### **Video**

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- None

### **Readings From Taste Makers**

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- Read Chapters on Najmieh and Norma

### **Assignments (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

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- Reflection Paper 12
- Creative Activity 12

\*\*\*Both Assignments are due on Sunday March 31, 2024 by 11:59pm.

## **Week 13 (April 1, 2024) Developmental Editing**

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### **Video**

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- Developmental Editing

## **Readings**

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- None

## **Assignment (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

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- Creative Activity 13

\*\*\*The peer editing work that is part of Creative Activity 13 is due on Sunday April 7, 2024 by 11:59pm.

## **Week 14 (April 8, 2024) Copy Editing**

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### **Video**

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- Copy Editing

## **Readings**

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- None

## **Assignment (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

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- Work on portfolio

\*\*\*There is no assignment to turn in this week.

## **Week 15 (April 15, 2024) Getting Published**

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### **Video**

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- Getting Published
- Interview with Christy Furnas

## **Readings**

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- None

## **Assignment (Please review assignment details in the weekly module):**

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- Work on Portfolio

## **Week 16 April 22, 2024)**

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\*\*\*Your portfolio is due by Sunday April 28,, 2024 by 11:59pm.

## **Literary Terms**

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alliteration: When two or more words in a group of words begin with the same sound (usually, the same letter or group of letters). For example: Anne's awesome apple; Fred's frozen french fries.

allusion: in **literature**, an implied or indirect reference to a person, event, or thing or to a part of another text. Most **allusions** are based on the assumption that there is a body of knowledge that is shared by the author and the reader and that therefore the reader will understand the author's referent.

antagonist: The opponent or enemy of the main character, or protagonist. See also: protagonist.

aside: Words spoken to the audience by a character in a drama that are not supposed to be heard by the other characters onstage. An aside is usually used to let the audience know what a character is thinking.

assonance: in poetry, the repetition of the sound of a vowel or diphthong in nonrhyming stressed syllables near enough to each other for the echo to be discernible (e.g., *penitence*, *reticence* ). "the use of assonance throughout the poem creates the sound of despair."

characterization: The means through which an author reveals a character's personality. Characterization may be direct or indirect. In direct characterization, the writer or a narrator tells the reader what the character is like: "Ben was a quiet, serious boy." In indirect characterization, the author shows the reader or audience member what



the character is like through (1) how the character looks, (2) what the character does, (3) what the character says, (4) what the character thinks, and (5) how the character affects other characters. From these five things, the reader or audience member understands the character's personality.

climax: The point in a play, novel, short story, or narrative poem at which the conflict reaches its greatest intensity and is then resolved. The climax is also the part of a narrative when the reader or audience member experiences the most-intense emotions. See also: plot.

conflict: A struggle between opposing forces. A conflict may be external (between the character and another person, society, nature, or technology) or internal (a struggle within the character).

chronology: The arrangement of events or dates in the order of their occurrence.

dialogue: The conversation between characters in a work of literature.

dissonance: A tension or clash resulting from the combination of two disharmonious or unsuitable elements.

dynamic character: A character who undergoes a significant internal change over the course of a story. This may be a change in understanding, values, insight, etc. See also: static character.

exposition: A comprehensive description and explanation of an idea or theory.

figurative language: The literal meaning of a word is its definition as you would find it in a dictionary. Figurative language uses words in some way other than for their literal meanings to make a comparison, add emphasis, or say something in a fresh and creative way. Examples of figurative language include alliteration, hyperbole, idiom, imagery, metaphor, onomatopoeia, personification, and simile.

flashback: A scene in a story that occurred before the present time in the story. Flashbacks provide background information about events happening during the current narration. They may be presented as memories, dreams, or stories of the past told by characters.

flashforward: A **flashforward** (also spelled **flash-forward**, and more formally known as prolepsis) is a scene that temporarily takes the narrative **forward** in time from the current point of the story in **literature**, film, television and other media.

foreshadowing: Clues or hints about something that is going to happen later in the story. Authors use foreshadowing to build suspense and to prepare the reader for what happens later.

genre: **Genre** means a type of art, **literature**, or music characterized by a specific form, content, and style. For example, **literature** has four main **genres**: poetry, drama, ...

haiku: The **haiku** is a Japanese poetic form that consists of three lines, with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third. The **haiku** developed from the hokku, the opening three lines of a longer poem known as a tanka. The **haiku** became a separate form of poetry in the 17th century.

hyperbole: Extreme exaggeration used for emphasis or effect; an extravagant statement that is not meant to be taken literally. For example: "I almost died of boredom." Hyperbole is frequently used in humorous writing. See also: figurative language.

idiom: An expression that cannot be understood from the meanings of its individual words. For example, "it's raining cats and dogs" is an idiom that means it's raining really hard—but there is no way to know that from the meanings of its individual words. See also: figurative language.

imagery: Language that portrays sensory experiences, or experiences of the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Authors use imagery to describe actions, characters, objects, and ideas, and to heighten the emotional effect of their writing. One way authors create imagery is through the use of figurative language. See also: figurative language.

irony: There are three types of irony: (1) dramatic irony, when the reader or audience member is aware of something that the characters are not aware of; (2) situational irony, when something happens that is the reverse of what you expected; and (3) verbal irony, when the name or description of something implies the opposite of the truth (for example, calling a very tall person “Tiny”).

major character: A main or important character; a character who plays a large role in a story. Major characters usually face some sort of obstacle, and they will be present throughout all, or almost all, of a story. A story can have one major character or several. See also: minor character.

metaphor: The comparison of two unlike things to illuminate a particular quality

or aspect of one of those things. For example, “Karen was a ray of sunshine” is a metaphor in which Karen is compared with a ray of sunshine. The metaphor suggests that Karen was cheerful, happy, warm, hopeful—qualities we associate with the sun. Metaphors state that one thing is something else; they do not use the words like or as. See also: figurative language, simile.

minor character: A character who does not play a large role in a story. Minor characters usually do not face any obstacles during the course of the story, and they usually do not change during the course of the story. The reader does not usually learn much about minor characters. They

are just there for the major characters to interact with and to help advance the plot. See also: major character.

mood: The feeling the reader gets from a work of literature. Another way to describe a story's mood is atmosphere. When you walk into a place, it has an atmosphere that makes you feel a certain way; when you "walk into" a story, it too has an atmosphere that makes you feel a certain way. For example, the mood could be calm, creepy, romantic, sad, or tense. Authors create mood through word choice, imagery, dialogue, setting, and plot. The mood can stay the same from the beginning to the end of a story, or it can change.

onomatopoeia: The use of words whose sounds imitate the sounds of what they describe, such as hiss, murmur, growl, honk, buzz, woof, etc. See also: figurative language.

personification: Describing nonhuman animals, objects, or ideas as though they possess human qualities or emotions. For example: "The moon smiled down at her," "I felt the cold hand of death on my shoulder," "There is a battle being fought in my garden between the flowers and the weeds."

plot: The sequence of events in a story. The plot includes the opening event (what happens at the beginning/the main problem that the main character faces), the rising action (what happens to intensify the problem), the climax (when the problem reaches its most intense point and begins to be resolved), the falling action (what happens to solve the problem), and the resolution (how things end).

point of view: The perspective from which a story is told. In other words, who is telling the story—a character in the story or an outside narrator. There are several types of point of view: (1) first-person point of view, where the narrator is a character in the story who describes things from his or her own perspective and refers to himself or herself as "I"; (2)

third-person limited point of view, where the narrator is not a character in the story but the narrator can describe the experiences and thoughts of only one character in the story; (3) third-person omniscient point of view, where the narrator is not one of the characters and is able to describe the experiences and thoughts of every character in the story.

protagonist: The main or central character of a work of literature. Usually, the main character is involved in a conflict or struggle with the antagonist. See also: antagonist.

setting: The environment in which a story takes place, including the time period, the location, and the physical characteristics of the surroundings.

rhyme: **Rhyme**, also spelled rime, the correspondence of two or more words with similar-sounding final syllables placed so as to echo one another. **Rhyme** is used by **poets** and occasionally by prose writers to produce sounds appealing to the reader's senses and to unify and establish a **poem's** stanzaic form.

rhyme scheme: The ordered pattern of rhymes at the ends of the lines of a poem or verse.

simile: When two unlike things are compared—using like or as—in order to illuminate a particular quality or aspect of one of those things. For example, “Randy’s voice is like melted chocolate” is a simile in which Randy’s voice is compared to melted chocolate. The simile suggests that Randy’s voice is rich, smooth, sweet, warm—qualities we associate with melted chocolate. See also: figurative language, metaphor.

soliloquy: The act of talking to oneself. 2 : a poem, discourse, or utterance of a character in a drama that has the form of a **monologue** or gives the illusion of being a series of unspoken reflections.

sonnet: A poem of fourteen lines using any of a number of formal rhyme schemes, in English typically having ten syllables per line.

speaker: Just like fiction has a narrator, **poetry** has a **speaker**—someone who is the voice of the **poem**. Often times, the **speaker** is the **poet**. Other times, the **speaker** can take on the voice of a persona—the voice of someone else including animals and inanimate objects.

stanza: In **poetry**, a **stanza** is used to describe the main building block of a **poem**. It is a unit of **poetry** composed of lines that relate to a similar thought ...

stereotype: A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

"the stereotype of the woman as the caregiver"

strophe: In poetry, a group of verses that form a distinct unit within a poem. The term is sometimes used as a synonym for stanza, usually in reference to a Pindaric ode or to a poem that does not have a regular metre and rhyme pattern, such as free verse.

suspense: Is a state of mental uncertainty, anxiety, of being undecided, or of being doubtful. In a dramatic work, **suspense** is the anticipation of the outcome of a plot or of the solution to an uncertainty, puzzle, or mystery, particularly as it affects a character for whom one has sympathy.

static character: A character who does not undergo a significant change over the course of a story. See also: dynamic character.

symbol: An object, setting, event, animal, or person that on one level is itself, but that has another meaning as well. For example, the American flag is really a piece of fabric with stars and stripes on it, but it also represents the United States and ideals like freedom, patriotism, and pride. In a story or play, rain could be a symbol; the rain would really be rain, but it might also represent an idea like sadness or leaving the past behind. Symbolize means "to be a symbol of."

symbolism: The practice of using symbols. See also: symbol.

tense: Tense is a grammar term used to indicate whether a sentence (or verb) is an action in the past, the present or the future.

theme: A story's main message or moral.

tone: The author's attitude toward the subject matter or toward the reader or audience. Words that could describe tone include doubtful, humorous, gleeful, serious, and questioning. Tone is conveyed through the author's word choices and the details that he or she includes.

villanelle: A 19-line poem of fixed form consisting of five tercets and a final quatrain on two rhymes, with the first and third lines of the first tercet repeated alternately as a refrain closing the succeeding stanzas and joined as the final couplet of the quatrain.