Teacher Overhead Transparencies

What is an Autobiography?

An autobiography:

1. focuses on a long period of time, often the person's whole life
2. is always told in the first person using the pronouns *I, me, my, mine, we, our*, and *us*
3. answers the 5W's (*who, what, where, when,* and *why*) and *how*

Example

Mountain climbing is in my blood. My grandfather, Hans Renwald, scaled Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain, in the early sixties. My father, Michael, made the summit in 1970. Everyone expected me to follow in their footsteps. And with a name like Aaron, I seemed destined to do it. Aaron means "mountain."

My father introduced me to mountain climbing at a very early age. When I was five he built me a climbing wall in my room. I learned the basic moves like hopping and smearing. Later on, up in the hills, I developed my navigational skills.

Climbing quickly consumed me. I made my father repeat stories about his own expeditions. I read books about famous climbers like Edmund Hillary. Soon my sights were set on Everest. I vowed to climb the mountain before my nineteenth birthday.

I trained hard. In the summer, I did six and seven hour cycling marathons. In the winter, I scaled as many peaks as I could. The most challenging of them was Alaska's Mount McKinley (6,914 m) in May 1988. The trip was supposed to take about two weeks but it took us over three. Strong winds, blizzards, and an avalanche warning forced us to spend ten days in protective snow caves. It was the perfect way to test my high-altitude and cold-weather endurance.

Climbing Mount Everest remains the greatest accomplishment of my life. And the toughest. Even getting to base camp was demanding. It took us ten days from Jiri, going up and down steep forest trails with yaks and mules hauling our supplies.

We spent two days at camp, getting used to the reduced oxygen levels. Then, after a traditional blessing at the altar of the Khumbu Icefall, we began our ascent up the North Col. I thought I was ready. Well, nothing could have prepared me for the sheer, icy rock faces or the crushing fatigue I experienced.

We almost lost it on the terraced ledges of the Yellow Band. One of our climbers ran out of oxygen and collapsed; he had to be short roped down. I almost passed out on the rock steps just before the summit. It would have been so easy to give up then but I couldn't. I'd spent my entire life preparing for this. I had sacrificed so much. I had to go on.

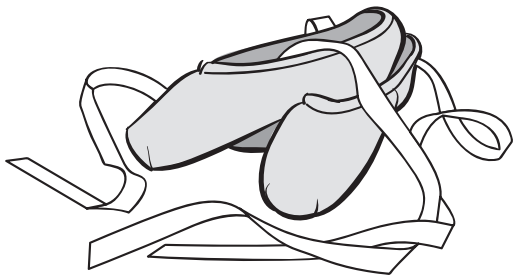
The final hour was the hardest. But when I took those last few steps and reached the summit just after 9 a.m. on May 6th, 1991, it was all worth it. I was three months shy of my nineteenth birthday. I had climbed to the top of the world. And I was the third man in my family to do it!

What is a Biography?

A biography:

- is always told in the third person, using the pronouns *he, she,* or *it*
- includes information about the 5W's (*who, what, where, when,* and *why*) and *how*
- is a non-fictional (true) account of the subject's life and accomplishments
- often involves research into the subject's life
- provides information that the reader may not know about the subject
- usually describes events in the order they happened

Example



Chan Hon Goh was born in Beijing, China on February 1st, 1969. Her grandfather had been a famous painter, her uncle had been a famous choreographer, and her parents were famous dancers with the Central Ballet of China. An artistic life seemed to be her destiny.

Chan grew up watching rehearsals and seeing her father perform. At home, she would sneak her mother's ballet slippers and pretend to dance. "I loved everything about ballet," Chan remembers, "the movement, the stories, and the music." But Chan's parents didn't want her to become a ballerina. They thought life was too hard for a dancer.

When Chan was eight, she moved to Canada with her parents. She was excited about life in Vancouver. However, Chan couldn't speak English, and she didn't understand the games at recess. Her classmates thought she was stupid. Chan was lonely and embarrassed.

Things were better after school. That's when she took piano and singing lessons, and studied dance with her parents at their new studio, the Goh Ballet Academy.

Chan had natural grace, but she had trouble controlling her long arms. Her movements needed improvement. Her father didn't think she could become a good dancer. Chan was determined to try.

By the time she was eleven, she had passed the dance exams for Grades 2 and 3. By thirteen, her movements had improved tremendously. But her parents never corrected or praised Chan like they did the other students. Chan was upset and discouraged. She told her parents she dreamed of becoming a dancer. They finally agreed to help her in any way they could.

One day, the legendary dancer Anton Dolin visited The Goh Ballet Academy. Taking Chan's father aside, he pointed out one of the students. "She has it," he said. "She is going to be a beautiful dancer."

The dancer he pointed to was Chan Hon Goh.

By the time Chan was in high school, she was on the honour roll and she studied by correspondence. Schoolwork was done in the early morning and again at night. Days were reserved for ballet. "All I ever thought about," Chan recalls, "was ballet." She vowed that one day she would be a dancer and travel the world!

Meanwhile, Chan performed in local festivals and competitions. She also spent a few months studying ballet in both France and New York.

Chan's last year in high school marked a turning point. First, she earned the Solo Seal Award, which allowed her to work as a professional dancer. Then, Chan became the first Canadian to win a silver medal at the Genee Competition, one of the most important ballet competitions in the world.

Chan knew she had to leave her family to become a successful dancer. She didn't want to move far so she applied to be a dancer with the Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle. She was turned down. Then, she auditioned for the National Ballet of Canada.

Chan's audition was successful! In 1988, nineteen-year-old Chan Hon Goh became a member of the National Ballet of Canada. She had set her goal and worked hard to achieve it. Now she was about to realize her dream of becoming an internationally recognized ballerina!

Note Taking Template

Main Topic for Research:	**Biography of Chan Ho Goh**
Notes below are related to Subtopic:	**Early Years**
Reference Title and Pages Used:	***Famous Dancers of Canada*** **Pages 188 and 189**
Author(s) and/or Editors:	**Mary Simpson**
Publisher:	**Write-a-lot Publishers, Canada**
Publish Location & Copyright Date:	**Vancouver, BC, 1998**
Internet Address:	**Not Applicable**

Main Ideas from Notes at Right	Detailed Notes about Subtopic
Birth	– February 1, 1969 – Beijing, China
Family	– parents were professional dancers with Central Ballet of China – grandfather a famous painter – uncle a famous choreographer
Childhood	– grew up watching her parents dance – wanted to dance professionally well parents said it was too difficult – moved with family to Canada when she was eight – didn't speak English, school was difficult – took piano lessons, danced at parents' studio, the Goh Ballet Academy – awkward at first but became more graceful as she got older – parents finally let her pursue her dream of being a dancer – spotted by legendary dancer Anton Dolin – said she would be a beautiful dancer

Summary of Notes from Above

Chan Hon Goh was born in Beijing China on February 1, 1969. There were a lot of artistic people in her family: her parents were professional dancers, her grandfather a famous painter, and her uncle a famous choreographer. Chan moved with her family to Canada when she was eight. She continued to dance and got better as she grew older. She convinced her parents to let her pursue her dream of one day doing it professionally. A famous dancer named Anton Dolin spotted Chan and agreed she had the right stuff to do it.

How to Write a Bibliography

A bibliography is a list of all the sources you used in a formal report.

Bibliography entries appear alphabetically. This is usually done by the last names of the author(s), editor(s), translator(s), etc. If no names are provided then the first word of the title is used.

Books

Books by a single author

Jones, Ray. *Talking about Statistics*. New York: Harper Collins, 1983.

Books with two or more authors or editors

Dal, Michael, and Louise Lui. *Galileo*. New York: Harper Collins, 1999.

Books under direction of an editor

Brown, Mary, ed. *The History of Canada*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1999.

Other Printed Works

Article or essay in an anthology

Brown, A. Y. "The Loon in Canadian Literature." *Symbols in Fiction*. Ed. A. D. Singh. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971. 27–41.

Article or entry in a reference book

"Sparta." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 15th ed. 1987.

Review in a scholarly journal

McNeal, Robert H. Rev. of *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky, 1929–1940*, by Isaac Deutcher. *Canadian Historical Review* 46 (March 1965): 79–81.

Article in a magazine

Alexander, Caroline. "Teaching in Malawi." *The New Yorker* 16 Dec. 1991: 52–57.

Article in a newspaper

Raymond, Jean-Gilles. "Victims of Crime Have Rights Too." *Guardian Weekly* 24 Jan. 1999: 13.

Anonymous article

"Importing Full Employment." *The Globe and Mail* July 17, 1965: 6–7.

Letter to the editor

Chan, Maureen. Letter. "Best Bets." *National Post*. 4 Dec. 1998: A28.

Editorial

"Court Case Avoided." Editorial. *Burnaby Now*. 30 May, 1999: 6.

Interview that you conducted

Chan, Stacey. Personal interview. 28 Nov. 1999.

Online Sources

Web-accessible electronic journal article

DeKoven, Marianne, "Conrad's Unrest." *Journal of Modern Literature* 1.2 (Winter 1997–98): 33 pars. Online. 2 June 1999.

WWW pages

Crane, Gregory, ed. *The Perseus Project*. 21 May 1999 [last update]. Online. Tufts University, Medford MA. 3 June 1999.

Citing part of a document

Kipling, Rudyard. "The White Seal." *The Jungle Book*. Online. Project Gutenberg. 1999, June 2.

Visit the MLA style section of the Open School BC's *Writer's Style Guide* Web site for more information on using MLA style for citations of online sources.

Other Media

Sound recording

Dylan, Bob. *Nashville Skyline*. Columbia, 1969.

Television or radio program

"Death by Moonlight." *The Valour and the Horror*. Dir. Brian McKenna. Writs. Brian McKenna, Terrence McKenna, and Roman Jarymowicz. CBC. 1992.

Film or video

Under the Willow Tree: Pioneer Chinese Women in Canada. Dir. Dora Nipp. National Film Board, 1997.

CD-ROM

The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. CD–ROM. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.

What is Technical Writing?

WANTED: TECHNICAL WRITER

A-1 Electronics is looking for someone to create documents that help people:
- easily understand technical subjects
- carry out tasks that require specialized knowledge and/or instructions

The successful applicant will demonstrate an ability to:
- write clearly—to take something that is technical or complicated and explain it in a simple, easy-to-understand way
- write completely—to say everything that needs to be said to fully understand the subject or perform the task
- write concisely—say only what you need to say without any confusing or pointless extras
- create graphics that help explain your text

Preference will be given to applicants with previous technical writing experience. Applicants who are willing and motivated to learn will also be considered.

To apply, send your resume and cover letter to:
A-1 Electronics
123 Any Street
Anytown, BC

Technical writing is a special type of communication that gives people information about things they might not know. It could be instructions on how to use a vacuum cleaner, a magazine article about the latest fashion trends, or a report that explains why red ketchup is more appealing than green ketchup.

Here are some more examples of technical writing:

Business letters	Press releases	Resumes
Newsletters	Travel guides	User manuals
Presentations	Advertisements	Cover letters
Scripts	Recipes	Questionnaires

There are lots more!

Writing a Product User Manual

A basic product user manual has five parts:

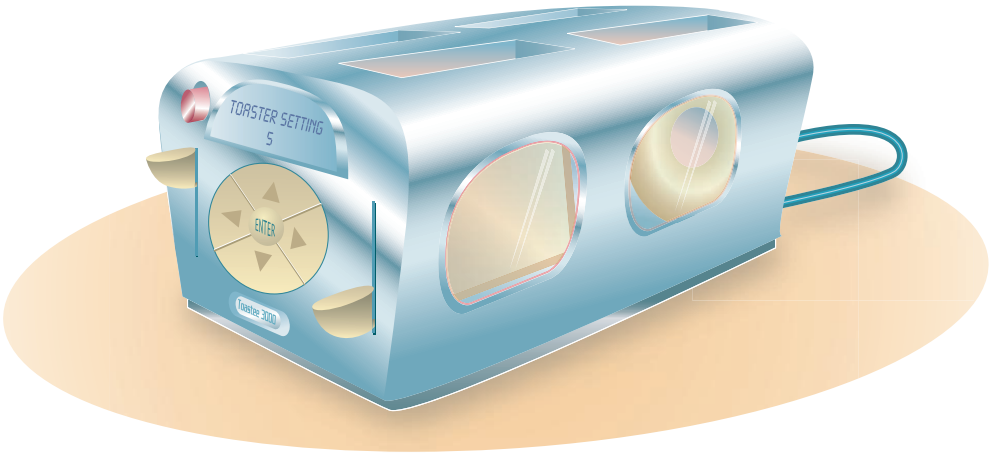
A cover page: this page contains a simple image of the product, its name, and the product number, but not much else

A table of contents: a short list of what is in the user manual, including page numbers

A summary statement: a brief overview of the product and what it does

A product description: a description of the product's parts and features

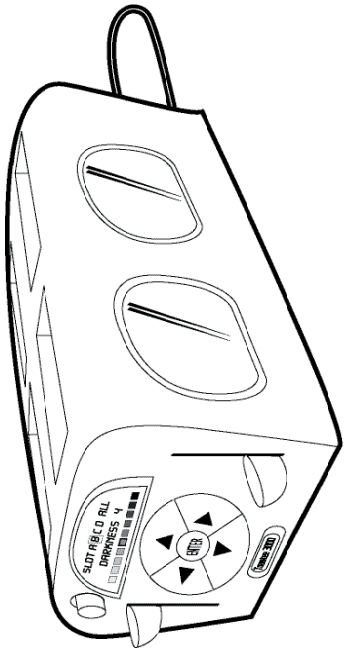
Operating instructions: step-by-step explanations on how to use or operate the product



The Toastee 3000 Product User Manual

Toastee 3000™
Digital Toaster

User Manual



Toastee 3000™
Digital Toaster

Table of Contents

About the Product

The **Toastee 3000**™ **Digital Toaster** makes up to four slices of evenly cooked toast in just seconds. The **Toastee 3000**™ has individual heat zones, so each slice can be cooked at a different temperature for customized toast.

Now everyone in your family can enjoy their toast exactly the way they like it!

Product Description

① Stainless steel design: The **Toastee 3000**™ is made from premium stainless steel that never needs to be cleaned. It is also cool to the touch, even immediately after use.

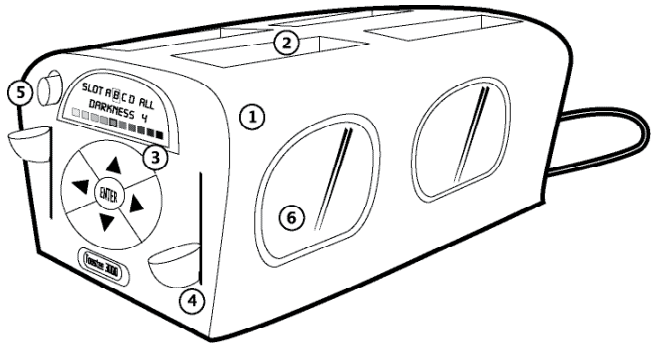
② Toast slots: Extra wide slots fit even the widest bread and bagels.

③ Programming dial and digital operating display: Allows you to individually program the temperature and darkness levels for each slice of toast.

④ Automatic handles: As soon as you program your toast settings, your bread or bagel automatically plunges into the toaster.

⑤ Shut-off button: Simple push-button that allows you to end your toasting cycles early if you wish.

⑥ Glass viewing panel: Heat-resistant see-through glass panel that allows you to watch your bread or bagel as it toasts.

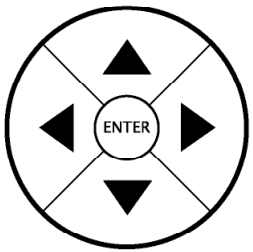


Operating Instructions

1. Plug the toaster cord into a standard electrical outlet.

2. Place the first slice in Slot A. Place the next slice in Slot B, then Slot C, etc.

3. Use the programming wheel to program the individual toast settings.:



(a) Slot A should appear automatically on the digital display. If it doesn't, scroll through the Slot List with the Up and Down buttons on the programming wheel. Push the Enter button in the middle of the programming wheel to select Slot A.

(b) The Toast Setting display should now appear. Use the Left or Right buttons to choose the toast darkness you prefer. Push the Enter button in the middle of the programming wheel to select this toast darkness for Slot A.

(c) Repeat Steps (a) and (b) for the additional slots.

Note: If you want all of your slices to toast the same, select ALL from the Slot List, then set your darkness in the Toast Settings display.

WARNING: Keep this toaster away from water or wet surfaces. Electrical shock or death may occur.

The Opening of a Persuasive Argument

The opening of a persuasive argument is where you introduce the topic and state your position (point of view) on it. It should "grab" your reader's attention and make him or her want to read on.

Example:

Child Labour in the Third World

Did you ever wonder who made those designer jeans and fancy running shoes you're wearing? If you found out it was a child working for pennies a day in a smelly, crowded factory, rather than going to school, would you still buy those clothes? I doubt it very much. Child labour is a serious problem in some parts of the world. We need to shop carefully so we don't support businesses that employ child workers.

The Body of a Persuasive Argument

The body is where you support your position with good reasons. If you do your job properly, you will convince your reader that your position is the right one.

A persuasive writer can use a variety of approaches in the body to convince readers of his or her position.

- Use facts if you can, as they are more persuasive than opinions. Statistics are especially powerful.
- If you can't find facts, make reasonable arguments that people can believe.
- Appeal to your audience's emotions by using powerful words.
- Mention the opposing arguments then explain why yours are better. This will make your argument look stronger.
- Save your best argument for last.

The Conclusion of a Persuasive Argument

A good conclusion has three parts.

1. A rephrasing of your opening statement. This reminds the reader of your issue and position on that issue.

   e.g., Childhood obesity, as stated earlier, is becoming a major problem in North America.

2. One or more sentences that clearly summarize your main points. Do not introduce new evidence here; this should be done in the body.

   e.g., Statistics show that our environment is dangerously polluted and it's getting worse every year.

3. A personal comment or call for action. You can do this:

   with a prediction

   e.g., Unless we do something now, obesity will soon be the number one health problem faced by children.

   with a question

   e.g., Is this what we want to happen? Surely not. We must do something now to prevent it.

   with recommendations about what action a person should take

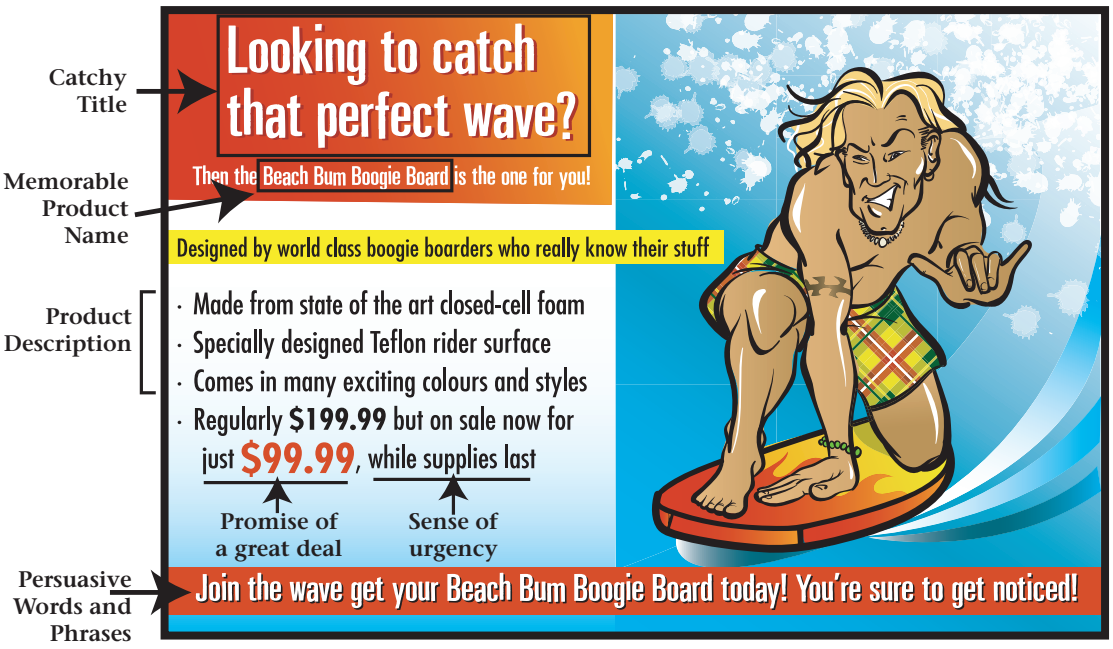
   e.g., To prevent this from happening, make sure your children get regular exercise and eat properly

   with a quotation

   e.g., When it comes to your health, "Abuse it and you'll lose it."

Advertisements

Advertisements are one of the most common and powerful forms of persuasive communication. Look at this graphic to see some of the things that make an advertisement persuasive.



Advertising Techniques

Competition comparison

Competition comparison uses words that make the competition look bad or inferior.

e.g. *Pine Scent is less effective than Sea Breeze at killing household germs.*

Glittering generalities

Glittering generalities are words that promise something desirable. Most of the time these promises are so vague they can't be proven.

e.g. *Sparkle-icious will make your teeth dazzling white and forever clean.*

Bandwagon

Bandwagon is an appeal to do what everyone else is doing. It is an especially powerful advertising technique because we all want to be part of the "in" crowd.

e.g. *95% of school children prefer Monster Crunch Cereal. Join the crowd—get yours today*

Testimonial

A testimonial is a product endorsement from someone famous, like a movie star or a professional athlete.

e.g. *My Blazing Star track shoes carried me to a gold medal at the Olympics. Get you own and join me on the podium.*

Plain folks

Plain folks ads use ordinary people to sell a product. It is an effective technique because we can easily relate to these people.

e.g. *Folks like us work hard for our money. That's why it's nice to have a bank like Sea First in our neighbourhood.*

Planning Your Persuasive Argument

Step 1: Choose an Issue

Choose an issue that interests you and that you'd like to persuade others to support. Some possibilities include:

- Tougher punishments for young offenders
- Saving the rainforest
- Lowering the voting age
- Zero tolerance for violence in schools
- Mandatory helmets for cyclists
- Building a skateboard park

Step 2: Identify Your Position

Identify your position on the issue you have chosen. Do you support the issue or oppose it? Why do you feel this way?

Step 3: Research Your Issue

Research your issue in a variety of sources, such as the Internet, newspapers, and magazines. You might even interview people who are involved or affected to hear their side of the story. Look for information that can be proven (facts rather than opinions), as it is more persuasive.

Collect your research information in point form notes, a table, or another format that works for you. Include three or more arguments that support your opinion and at least one argument that opposes it.

Common Errors in Logic

1. Hasty Generalization — This type of argument reaches a conclusion based on too little evidence or too few examples. For example, we might see one event and conclude that all similar events will have the same outcome. This isn't necessarily true.

For example, a snowboarder might make a jump without falling, so we might conclude that the jump is safe for all snowboarders. The fact that the first snowboarder was an expert and had done the jump many times may not have been considered.

2. Begging the Question — This can happen when we insist that something is true but don't have proof. For example we might say, "Anyone can see that our basketball coach is incompetent, he should be fired immediately." This statement has no supporting evidence and the argument expects readers to start from the same point of view.

3. Faulty Cause and Effect — A common problem can come from thinking that one event causes another without enough evidence. Superstitions often come from this type of thinking. For example, a baseball player may always tweak his helmet or hit the plate a certain way before swinging at the ball, believing that if he doesn't do this, he will miss. Similarly, a writer might conclude that one event causes another without enough evidence.

4. False Premise — This error happens when an argument starts with a wrong assumption. For example, you might say, "A mother bear will not attack to protect her cubs." If you move on from there in real life, you would likely discover that this premise is false.

5. False Conclusion — You might reach a conclusion in a persuasive argument that doesn't follow from the facts or examples. For example, you might conclude from watching a number of TV shows that all TV shows are boring, but you may be watching a channel with nothing of interest to you.

6. False Analogy — Someone who tries to argue that if things are similar in some ways, then they are similar in other ways makes this error. For example, a writer might argue that because dogs and cats are both house pets and since dogs will fetch sticks, cats will fetch sticks too.

7. Ignoring the Issue — This error happens when you argue things that are irrelevant. For example, you begin by discussing whether or not a movie is worth seeing, then say the theatre is beautiful or the popcorn is lousy. Those things have nothing to do with the movie's quality.

Delivering a Great Speech

Have you ever watched someone deliver a really powerful speech? If you have then you know how persuasive the spoken word can be. Here are some tips for delivering a great speech.

1. Practice your speech several times before you present it. Practice in front of a mirror or in front of somebody who can give you feedback.
2. Face your audience and look people in the eye.
3. Stand tall and relaxed.
4. Take a deep breath before you begin.
5. Speak clearly and at an even pace.
6. Where appropriate, use hand gestures to emphasize key points.
7. Change your tone and volume to express different emotions.
8. Be confident. Remember, you are the expert on the subject and have something people want to hear.
9. Learn to speak about your topic naturally rather than reading it aloud word for word.

The Sound of Poetry

Alliteration: Tangle Your Tongue in a Twist-tie

The use of repeating letters at the beginning of words in a poem is called **alliteration**. Here is an example of alliteration from the second line of the well-known children's rhyme, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star":

how I wonder what you are. . .

Did you notice the repeating ***w*** sound—ho***w***, ***w***onder, ***w***hat? That's the alliteration.

Onomatopoeia

Wham, *Bang*, and *Boom* are examples of another common sound device called **onomatopoeia**. It is a long word with a weird spelling but it's easy to figure out what it means.

Onomatopoeia describes a word whose sound is similar to its meaning. *Wham* means just what it sounds like—something has been hit hard. *Bang* is a loud noise. *Boom* is a noisy explosion.

Repetition

Repetition is the repeating of certain words in a poem for a pleasing effect or to emphasize an important idea.

Here is an example of repetition from "The Highwayman," a famous poem by Albert Noyes.

The Highwayman

PART ONE

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,

The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,

The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,

And the highwayman came riding—

Riding—riding—

The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door

In this passage, the word *riding* is repeated several times. This makes us wonder where the highwayman is riding to. It creates suspense.

Imagery in Poems

Similes and Metaphors

Writers use a number of different techniques to create imagery in their poems. Two of the most common ways are by adding similes and metaphors.

Simile is the easier one to spot. It nearly always includes the word *like* or *as*. Many examples of simile have slipped into our everyday language: *cool as a cucumber*, *smart like a fox*, and *neat as a pin* (though, really, what's so neat about a pin?).

Metaphor does not use *like* or *as*. It is more direct. It implies that one thing IS the other, not just like it. Observe the differences between the following paired examples.

> ***Metaphor:*** The sea is a plate of glass.
>
> ***Simile:*** The sea was smooth as a plate of glass.
>
> ***Metaphor:*** She had diamonds for eyes
>
> ***Simile:*** Her eyes sparkled like diamonds.

Another device that poets use to create imagery is **personification**. Personification gives human qualities to things that aren't human.

e.g.,

The wind stroked her white curls.

Obviously wind can't stroke a girl's hair, but it's an interesting image for a poem, isn't it? The poem is much more creative and interesting than it would have been if the poet had just said, *The wind blew the girl's hair around her face*.

Personification is easy to spot in a poem. Just look for the non-human thing that is described with human qualities.

Haiku

Have you ever noticed the beauty of a snowflake? The delicacy of a butterfly's wing? The flight of a kite in the wind? ***Haiku*** poems try to capture and express some of these special moments in a few short lines.

Haiku:

- originated in Japan centuries ago
- are often about nature or the changing of the seasons
- are three lines long
- have five syllables in the first and third lines
- have seven syllables in the second line
- do not rhyme

Examples

Snow, softly, slowly,
settles at dusk in a dance
Of white butterflies

Oeharu

Flapping into fog
an angry crows cries hoarsely
for spring to begin.

Gyodai

Diamante Poems

Diamante poems are easy to recognize because they are written in the shape of a diamond.

Line 1: *A noun*

Line 2: *Two adjectives that describe the noun in Line 1.*

Line 3: *Three verbs (enging in "ing") which describe the noun in Line 1.*

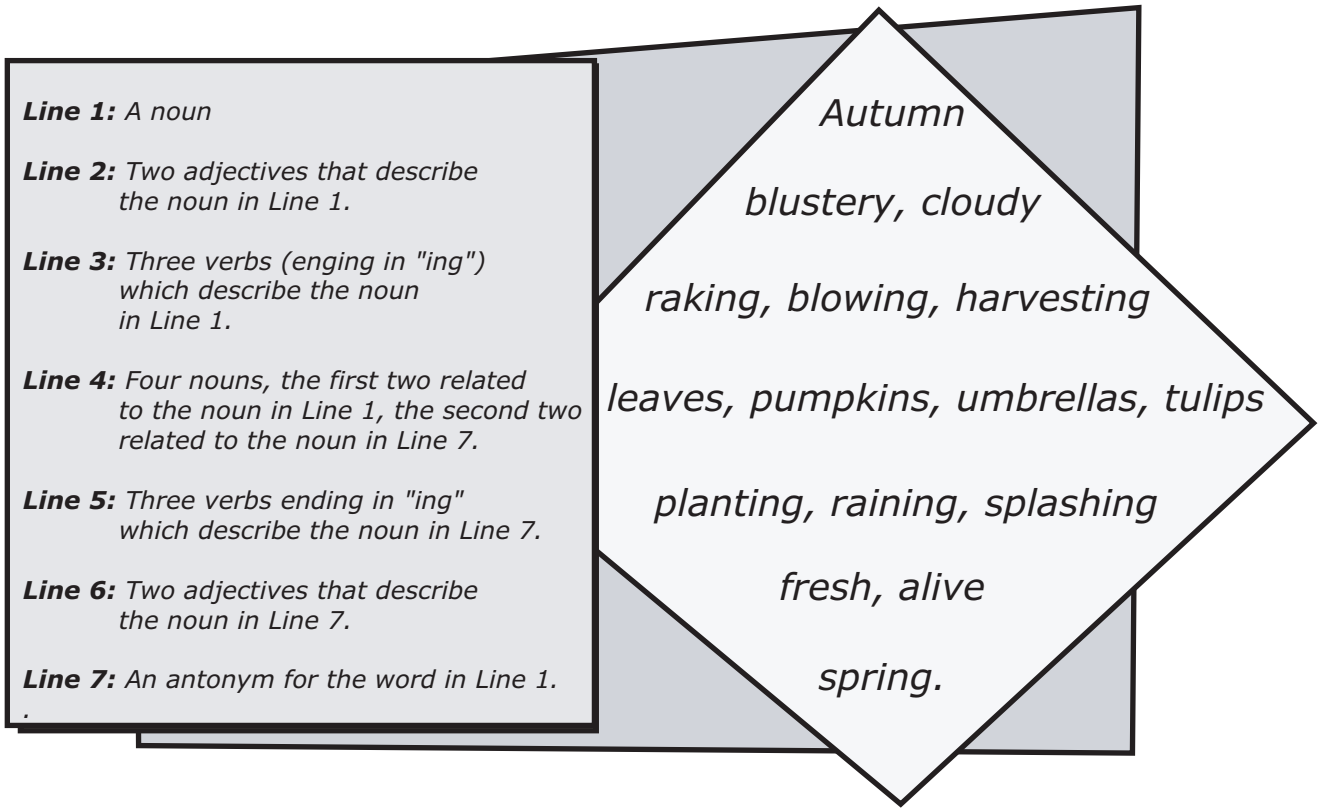
Line 4: *Four nouns, the first two related to the noun in Line 1, the second two related to the noun in Line 7.*

Line 5: *Three verbs ending in "ing" which describe the noun in Line 7.*

Line 6: *Two adjectives that describe the noun in Line 7.*

Line 7: *An antonym for the word in Line 1.*

.



As you can see in this example, each line has to have a certain number of words. These words also have to be of a certain type.

Free Verse Poems

Free verse poems are far less rigid and structured than other are other types of poetry. For example, free verse poems:

- have an irregular rhythm
- may or may not rhyme
- can be any length (no set number of lines)

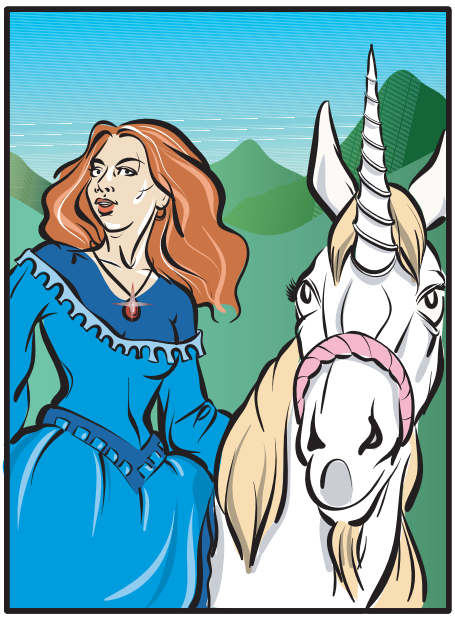
Lots of people find it easier to write free verse poems than they do structured poems like haiku. There are fewer limitations, so you have more freedom to say what you want, and how you want to say it.

Story Types

Stories can be grouped into different types, or ***genres***, based on where and when the story takes place, what happens, and who the characters are. Some of the most popular story types are:

- Adventure
- Fantasy
- Folk Tales
- Historical Fiction
- Horror
- Mystery
- Realistic Fiction
- Science Fiction

Many stories are actually a combination of two or more genres. For example, a story that takes place in a South American jungle is both an adventure story and realistic fiction. Another story about aliens attacking a space colony is both science fiction and a horror story.



What is Setting?

One of the most important parts of any story is the ***setting***. The setting describes:

The location of the story — in a small town in northern British Columbia, in the woods, on a distant planet, etc

The author usually describes the setting(s) in a story with lots of detail. This helps the reader really picture the scene.

The time of the story — a long time ago, today, 2050, etc

The time when a story takes place affects many things. If the story were to take place in the early 1800s for instance, then everything the characters do, wear, say, and how they live must match the time period.

The mood or feeling of the story — is it a happy place? A sad place? A scary place?

Authors carefully choose their settings in order to create a certain mood. For example, a story set in a haunted house on a dark, stormy night would be rather frightening. Another story set on a tropical island with a gentle breeze and waves lapping against the shore would be peaceful and relaxing. Skillful writers often take you through many different moods as they tell their story.

Creating a Great Setting

Choose a specific location for your story.

- Does your story take place on a dark street in a big city? On the top of a snowy mountain? Inside your grandmother's kitchen? Somewhere else?
- Close your eyes and imagine you are in this place. Take notes on what you can see, hear, smell, and touch. If you prefer, draw a detailed picture of your setting. Include everything that you will write about later.
- Do some research on your location if you don't know very much about it. This will help you describe your location accurately.

Choose a specific time for your story.

- Does your story take place in 1920? Today? 2199?
- When a story takes place determines how you need to describe it. If your story is set in 13th century England, you should include things like castles, peasant villages, and green, open fields. If your story is set in a modern city, then skyscrapers, mini-malls, and automobiles would be more appropriate.
- Make your setting believable for the time you have chosen. If you are unfamiliar with this time, research it so you can describe it accurately. Add any new information to your notes or drawing.

Establish a strong mood for your story.

- How do you want your readers to feel when they read your story? Skillful writers often take you through many different moods as they tell their story. By making one scene happy, the writer relaxes you and makes you feel good about the story. Then, in order to build suspense, the writer may begin to change the mood. Suddenly, happy feelings may turn to fears as unexpected dangers threaten them.

Characters

What is a Character?

Characters are the people, animals, and objects that take part in a story. A story is usually woven around what they say and do.

How Characters Are Developed?

Good characters have strengths and weaknesses, just like characters in real life. They are believable and interesting so we want to keep reading about them.

There are several ways you can develop good characters. You can describe:

what your characters look like

e.g., *Rita was small and fragile but had immense courage.*

what your characters do (how they behave and perform)

e.g., *With a determined effort, Rita managed to get the rowboat into the lake and clamber aboard.*

what your characters say

e.g., *"I'm afraid but I'll do it anyway!" Rita shouted.*

what your characters think or say about each other

e.g., *Polly watched from shore, knowing it was impossible to stop Rita once she decided to do something.*

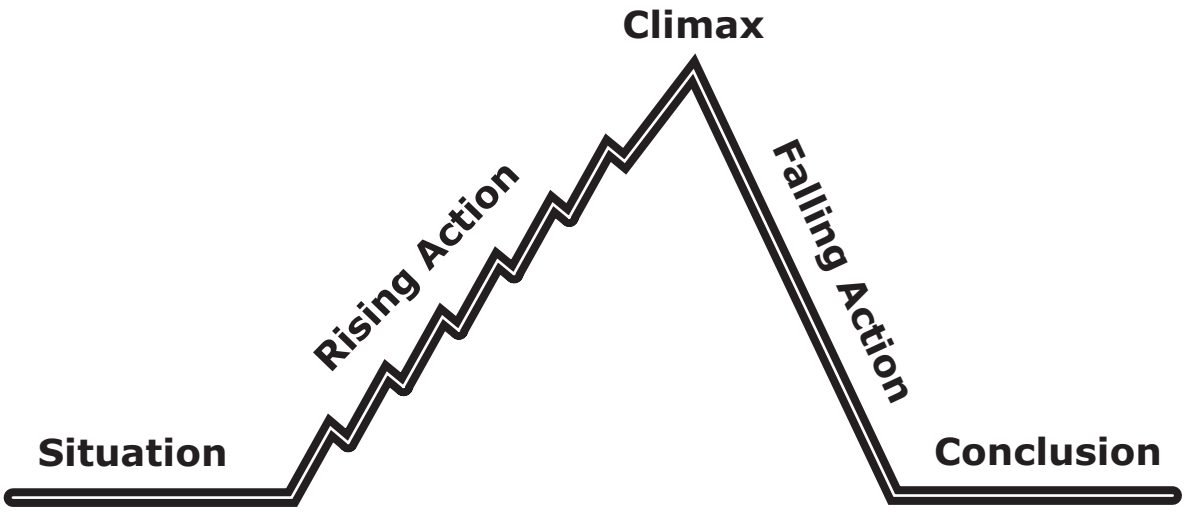
Creating Good Story Characters

- Keep a "character notebook" and write down details you notice about interesting people you see in stores, on the bus, in the news, etc.
- Look in magazines, newspapers, etc. for pictures of interesting people. Perhaps it is a young woman hiking up Mt. Kilimanjaro or an old man feeding bread crumbs to pigeons in the park.
- Interview someone you think would make a great character. This guarantees your characters are realistic and accurate.
- Decide on the facts about your characters—name, age, family background, occupation, etc. Stick to facts you can easily imagine and that fit with the setting of your story.
- Decide what and who is important to your characters. What are their likes and dislikes, beliefs, dreams, and fears? What do they think about?
- Decide what your characters look like, how they act, and what kind of clothing they wear. What do they talk about and how do their voices sound?
- Decide how your character will change during the story. Figure out what your main character wants and why he or she wants it. What problem(s) does he or she face? How does your character overcome those problems?
- Make sure your character acts and reacts in a believable way. If you don't think he or she is credible, neither will your audience.
- Reveal new information about your character as the story progresses, not all at once. This will help the audience better understand your character's actions and motives.
- After you complete your character descriptions, ask a friend or family member to draw a picture of or describe your main characters. This picture or description might give clues about what is missing from your description.

Plot

The ***plot*** is the sequence of events that happen in a story. It contains the situation, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion of a story.

- The ***situation*** introduces the setting (location, time, and mood of the story) and gives information on the characters. It also introduces the problem in the story.
- The ***rising action*** occurs when events begin to unfold and the problem gets worse.
- The ***climax*** is usually the most exciting part of the story. It is where a solution to the problem is suddenly revealed.
- The ***falling action*** is where the action in the story begins to wind down.
- The ***conclusion*** is where the story ends. The problem may or may not be resolved here.



Tips for Writing Powerful Plots

Here are some tips for creating powerful plots that keep your readers turning the pages. Keep these tips in mind when you begin writing your own short story.

- Decide what the main problem in your story will be. Does the main character face an internal struggle, a problem with another character, or with a greater force, such as nature?
- Decide what events will take place as the main character faces this problem. These events should become more complicated or serious as time passes until they reach a climax.
- Check to see if you need to add connections between events, especially if you are changing place or time.
- Make sure you include events that will end your story in a satisfying way. Don't be too abrupt but don't drag out the conclusion either.

Theme

Theme is the central idea or ideas presented in a story. It is the deeper message that lets readers connect the story to their own lives.

Theme makes you think. The author presents a story, and through the actions of the characters, tells you something about life in general. When you learn to think about the purpose of a story, you'll find that pinpointing theme is easier.

To find a theme, ask yourself:

- Why did the author choose to write this story?
- What insight or experience did the story offer me?

A good story always has a theme. It might be obvious from what the characters learn or say or by what happens to them. In other stories the theme may be less obvious. You might have to think about it for a while or discuss it with another person who has read the story.

Creating an Enthralling Theme

- Ask "so what?" about the events in your story. The answer may be your theme.
- What do you want readers to learn from your story? The answer may be your theme.
- Consider how your story makes you feel. This could be a clue to the theme.
- Try to make your theme specific. "Overcoming stereotypes lets one see the world in a new way" is more specific than simply saying the theme is "stereotypes."
- The theme may be introduced at the beginning of the story but often does not emerge until later, sometimes until the very end.
- Look around for ideas for themes. They may emerge from:

  - your experiences

  - a friend, family member, or other person's experiences

  - the story being told in a song, poem, play, book, or film

  - the story being told in a painting, photo, or picture