



Using the Literary Conventions of a Genre in Writing



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Creative Nonfiction

Quarter 1 – Module 5: Using the Literary Conventions of a Genre in Writing

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Regional Director: Gilbert T. Sadsad
Assistant Regional Director: Jessie L. Amin

Development Team of the Module

Writer: Joyce T. De Guzman

Editors: Cecile F. Laxa
Francia T. Briones

Reviewer: Honesto M. Pesimo Jr.
Camarines Norte Division (headed by Emma Dasco)

Layout Artist: Joyce T. De Guzman

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• **Using the Literary Conventions of a Genre in Writing**

Throughout your stay in school (that's from elementary through senior high), you must have had countless experience writing your very own formal and informal compositions. How was your writing experience? What did you remember about theme writing? In this lesson, you will be adding another writing experience in your school life. This time, you will be doing it with an awareness of the different literary conventions, while being meticulous about the writing process from pre-writing to publishing, so that you will get to enjoy the journey (yes, we are talking about your journey as a writer!) and be able to succeed. Read on and find out.

Learning Competencies:

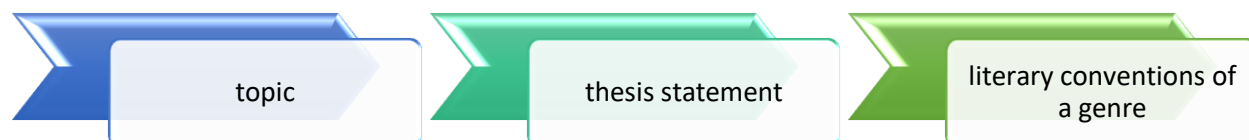
1. Write a draft of a short piece using any of the literary conventions of genre following these pointers:
 - a. Choosing a topic
 - b. Formulating a thesis statement
 - c. Organizing and developing ideas
 - d. Using any literary conventions of a genre
 - e. Ensuring that theme and technique are effectively developed
2. Peer-edit each other's draft based on
 - a. clarity of idea
 - b. appropriate choice of literary element
 - c. appropriate use of the element
 - d. effective combination of the idea and the chosen literary element
3. Revise the draft of a short piece using any of the literary conventions of a genre (e.g. plot for narrative piece)

Learning Targets:

At the end of the lesson, you are expected to:

1. Write a short literary work of your choice (using any writing convention of a genre);
2. Edit at least one work of your peer based on a set criteria/standard;
3. Revise your work based on the peer feedback.

KEY WORDS



VOCABULARY LIST

1. **Topic** is the theme, subject, and matter of any fiction or nonfiction material.
2. **Thesis Statement** is the most important expression/communication of a literary or non-literary work.
3. **Literary Conventions of a Genre** is a type of writing that uses literary styles and techniques to create narratives.

PRE-TEST

Directions: Read the following creative nonfiction work then answer the questions that follow in your notebook.

We raced to the hospital. When we arrived, my four uncles, my three aunts and my step-grandmother were already there. My mother and I kneeled by the bed. His eyes were open, and we couldn't close them because all the mucus or whatever it was clumped so the eyelids wouldn't budge. The funeral home people came to take his body. It was an incredibly painful experience. When they straightened his body out, I realized what a tall man he had been. They covered him up in sheets and I thought that he was about to scream: "Will someone get these damn sheets off me!" because that's what he would've done if he were alive and covered in sheets. We accompanied the funeral people to the elevator. The hospital staff had done an announcement that a deceased and his family were going to pass and that everyone come out and stand solemnly at the side of the hallway. Back in the room, my mother had given me a locket with a bit of his hair in it so I could at least have a bit of my grandfather with me.

That evening the whole family (we are a very big family) went to St. Hubert which was my grandfather's favorite restaurant. At the end of supper my uncle Ollie asked the waitress if he could take home two of the St. Hubert wine glasses since it was his deceased father's favorite restaurant, the waitress said yes, so it wasn't technically stealing.

(From Sara Goertz (2019), "Last Memories of My Grandfather")

1. What is the excerpt/topic about?
2. What was highlighted in the excerpt?
3. How did the writer focus on the moment of experience?
4. If you were to rewrite the piece, what changes will you do? Why?

LEARNING ABOUT IT

Later in this lesson, you will be asked to write a short literary work using any of the writing conventions of a short story. To be able to do that, read the following pointers.

Short Story Tips: 10 Hacks to Improve Your Creative Writing

(from Jerz Literacy Weblog, est 1999,

<https://jerz.setonhill.edu/writing/creative1/shortstory/>)

Writing short stories means beginning as close to the climax as possible — everything else is a distraction. A novel can take a more meandering path but should still start with a scene that sets the tone for the whole book.

A short story conserves characters and scenes, typically by focusing on just one conflict, and drives towards a sudden, unexpected revelation. Go easy on the exposition and talky backstory — your reader doesn't need to know everything that you know about your characters.

1. Get Started: Emergency Tips

What does your protagonist want?

(The athlete who wants her team to win the big game and the car crash victim who wants to survive are not unique or interesting enough.)

When the story begins, what morally significant action has your protagonist taken towards that goal?

(Your protagonist should already have made a conscious choice, good or bad, that drives the rest of the story.)

What obstacles must the protagonist overcome in order to reach the goal?

(Simply having a rival is not that interesting. Yes, Harry Potter defeats Voldemort, but first he must mature into a leader with the moral clarity and teamwork skills necessary to defeat Voldemort. A short story can't possibly tackle that kind of character development, but a character who faces internal obstacles and must negotiate messy moral trade-offs is more dramatically interesting than the hero in the white hat who must use the right weapon to defeat the villain in the black hat.)

What unexpected consequences — directly related to the protagonist's goal-oriented actions — ramp up the emotional energy of the story?

(Will the unexpected consequences force your protagonist to make yet another choice, leading to still more consequences? How does Huck change, first when he teams up with Jim, and later when he realizes how much Jim depends upon him?)

Show Don't (Just) Tell

What details from the setting, dialog, and tone help you tell the story?

At the climax, what morally significant choice does your protagonist make?
(Your reader should care about the protagonist's decision, and ideally shouldn't see it coming.)

Drawing on your own real-life experiences, such as winning the big game, bouncing back after an illness or injury, or dealing with the death of a loved one, are attractive choices for students who are looking for a "personal essay" topic. But simply listing the emotions you experienced ("It was exciting" "I've never been so scared in all my life" "I miss her so much") is not the same thing as generating emotions for your readers to experience.

2. Write a Catchy First Paragraph

In today's fast-moving world, the first sentence of your narrative should catch your reader's attention with the unusual, the unexpected, an action, or a conflict. Begin with tension and immediacy. Remember that short stories need to start close to their end.

3. Developing Characters

In order to develop a living, breathing, multi-faceted character, it is important to know way more about the character than you will ever use in the story.

Imagining all these details will help you get to know your character, but your reader probably won't need to know much more than the most important things in four areas:

- a) **Appearance.** Gives your reader a visual understanding of the character.
- b) **Action.** Show the reader what kind of person your character is, by describing actions rather than simply listing adjectives.
- c) **Speech.** Develop the character as a person — don't merely have your character announce important plot details.
- d) **Thought.** Bring the reader into your character's mind, to show them your character's unexpressed memories, fears, and hopes.

4. Choose a Point of View

Point of view is the narration of the story from the perspective of first, second, or third person. As a writer, you need to determine who is going to tell the story and how much information is available for the narrator to reveal in the short story. The narrator can be directly involved in the action subjectively, or the narrator might only report the action objectively.

5. Write meaningful dialogue.

Dialogue is what your characters say to each other (or to themselves). Each speaker gets his/her own paragraph, and the paragraph includes whatever you wish to say about what the character is doing when speaking.

Write Meaningful Dialogue Labels

“John asked nervously” is an example of “telling.” The author could write “John asked very nervously” or “John asked so nervously that his voice was shaking,” and it still wouldn’t make the story any more effective.

How can the author convey John’s state of mind, without coming right out and telling the reader about it? By inference. That is, mention a detail that conjures up in the reader’s mind the image of a nervous person.

6. Use setting and context.

- a) Setting includes the time, location, context, and atmosphere where the plot takes place. Remember to combine setting with characterization and plot.
- b) Include enough detail to let your readers picture the scene but only details that add something to the story. (For example, do not describe Mary locking the front door, walking across the yard, opening the garage door, putting air in her bicycle tires, getting on her bicycle—none of these details matter except that she rode out of the driveway without looking down the street.)
- c) Use two or more senses in your descriptions of setting.
- d) Rather than feed your readers information about the weather, population statistics, or how far it is to the grocery store, substitute descriptive details so your reader can experience the location the way your characters do.

7. Set Up the Plot

Plot is what happens, the storyline, the action. Jerome Stern says it is how you set up the situation, where the turning points of the story are, and what the characters do at the end of the story.

Understanding these story elements for developing actions and their end results will help you plot your next short story.

- a) **Explosion or “Hook.”** A thrilling, gripping, stirring event or problem that grabs the reader’s attention right away.
- b) **Conflict.** A character versus the internal self or an external something or someone.
- c) **Exposition.** Background information required for seeing the characters in context.
- d) **Complication.** One or more problems that keep a character from their intended goal.
- e) **Transition.** Image, symbol, dialogue that joins paragraphs and scenes together.
- f) **Flashback.** Remembering something that happened before the short story takes place.
- g) **Climax.** When the rising action of the story reaches the peak.
- h) **Falling Action.** Releasing the action of the story after the climax.

- i) **Resolution.** When the internal or external conflict is resolved.

8. Create conflict and tension.

Conflict produces tension that makes the story begin. Tension is created by opposition between the character or characters and internal or external forces or conditions. By balancing the opposing forces of the conflict, you keep readers glued to the pages wondering how the story will end.

Yourke's Conflict Checklist

- a) **Mystery.** Explain just enough to tease readers. Never give everything away.
- b) **Empowerment.** Give both sides options.
- c) **Progression.** Keep intensifying the number and type of obstacles the protagonist faces.
- d) **Causality.** Hold fictional characters more accountable than real people. Characters who make mistakes frequently pay, and, at least in fiction, commendable folks often reap rewards.
- e) **Surprise.** Provide enough complexity to prevent readers predicting events too far in advance.
- f) **Empathy.** Encourage reader identification with characters and scenarios that pleasantly or (unpleasantly) resonate with their own sweet dreams (or night sweats).
- g) **Insight.** Reveal something about human nature.
- h) **Universality.** Present a struggle that most readers find meaningful, even if the details of that struggle reflect a unique place and time.
- i) **High Stakes.** Convince readers that the outcome matters because someone they care about could lose something precious. Trivial clashes often produce trivial fiction.

9. Build to a Crisis or Climax

This is the turning point of the story—the most exciting or dramatic moment.

While a good story needs a crisis, a random event such as a car crash or a sudden illness is simply an emergency –unless it somehow involves a conflict that makes the reader care about the characters.

10. Find a Resolution

The solution to the conflict. In short fiction, it is difficult to provide a complete resolution and you often need to just show that characters are beginning to change in some way or starting to see things differently.

Yourke examines some of the options for ending a story.

- a) **Open.** Readers determine the meaning.
Brendan's eyes looked away from the priest and up to the mountains.
- b) **Resolved.** Clear-cut outcome.
While John watched in despair, Helen loaded up the car with her belongings and drove away.

- c) **Parallel to Beginning.** Like the beginning situation or image.
They were driving their 1964 Chevrolet Impala down the highway while the wind blew through their hair.
Her father drove up in a new 1964 Chevrolet Impala, a replacement for the one that burned up.
- d) **Monologue.** Character comments.
I wish Tom could have known Sister Dalbec's prickly guidance before the dust devils of Sin City battered his soul.
- e) **Dialogue.** Characters converse.
- f) **Literal Image.** Setting or aspect of setting resolves the plot.
The aqueducts were empty now and the sun was shining once more.
- g) **Symbolic Image.** Details represent a meaning beyond the literal one.

Looking up at the sky, I saw a cloud cross the shimmering blue sky above us as we stood in the morning heat of Sin City.

KEEPING YOU IN PRACTICE

Task 1

Directions: Try to recall some literary works which you have read already, whether it is from the genre of fiction, drama, or poetry. What do you think made them memorable? Write your answer in your notebook.

Task 2

Directions: As you recall those genres, try writing down their respective literary elements below. The first example is done for you. Write your answers in your notebook.

Title of Literary Work: *The Little Prince (Antoine De Saint Exupery)*

Genre classification: novella

Genre Element	Specific answers
Characters	<i>The little prince, the narrator (pilot), the rose, the fox, the snake, the baobabs, the king, the vain man, the drunkard, the businessman, the lamplighter, the geographer, the railway switchman, the salesclerk, the roses in the rose garden, the three-petaled flower, the little prince's echo, the Turkish astronomer</i>
Plot	<i>The narrator, an airplane pilot, crashes in the Sahara desert. The crash badly damages his airplane and leaves the narrator with very little food or water. As he is worrying over his predicament, he is approached by the little prince,</i>

	<i>a very serious little blond boy who asks the narrator to draw him a sheep. The narrator obliges, and the two become friends. The pilot learns that the little prince comes from a small planet that the little prince calls Asteroid 325 but that people on Earth call Asteroid B-612. The little prince took great care of this planet, preventing any bad seeds from growing and making sure it was never overrun by baobab trees. One day, a mysterious rose sprouted on the planet and the little prince fell in love with it. But when he caught the rose in a lie one day, he decided that he could not trust her anymore. He grew lonely and decided to leave. Despite a last-minute reconciliation with the rose, the prince set out to explore other planets and cure his loneliness.</i>
<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Internal conflict - the conflict that arises near the end of the book is the need for the narrator to let The Little Prince go</i>
<i>Setting</i>	<i>Sahara Desert</i>
<i>Point of view</i>	<i>First person (told by the pilot)</i>
<i>Theme</i>	<i>The dangers of narrow-mindedness, enlightenment through exploration</i>

Title of Literary Work: _____
Genre classification: _____

Genre Element	Specific answers
Characters	
Plot	
Conflict	
Setting	
Point of view	
Theme	

Task 3

Directions: Now that you have read the above hacks to improve your creative writing, get ready to write a short piece that depicts or describes your favorite place in your town or city of at least three (3) elements of your choice. Write it in your notebook.

*Rubrics

5 – Correct use of language/grammar; presence of three or more elements; appropriateness of elements that depict or describe your favorite place in your town or city.

3 – Minor errors on the use of language/grammar; presence of one or two elements; appropriateness of elements that depict or describe your favorite place in your town or city.

1 – Major errors on the use of language/grammar; absence of an element;

NOTE:

You do not need to write an elaborate whole story. You only have to choose one of the literary conventions listed above and develop it into a short narrative piece. As you write your piece, have a topic, theme, and technique in mind. Be guided by the following standards:

1. Choose a topic that interests you.
2. Formulate a thesis statement.
3. Organize and develop the ideas.
4. Use any of the literary conventions of a short story discussed above.
5. Ensure that theme and technique are effectively developed in your piece.

Task 4

Directions: After writing your piece, have your classmate/peer edit your work based on the standards listed in the table below. You peer, on the other hand, will edit your work using the same standards.

To edit your peer's work, read the text thoroughly before giving constructive feedback and comments. Comments should be based on the standards listed below. In your notebook, write your comments that are specific, clear, and understandable. You can also give suggestions for the improvement of your peer's work.

Standards	Description
Idea	Idea/Topic, point of view and theme are clearly expressed.
Choice of literary element	Literary element chosen is appropriate. Clear focus on the literary element is evident.

	The main point or idea is elaborated and explained by enough and specific details, descriptions, and reactions.
Fusion of idea and literary element	Clear and logical flow of ideas are evident. Effective use of literary element to express the idea or topic.

After writing your work and editing the work of your peer, be ready to revise your output. To do this, be guided by the instructions below.

1. Be open-minded. Writers improve their craft by listening to the feedback of other writers. Do not feel bad if your peer gave a lot of comments.
2. Read the comments before revising your work. Take note of what you should improve, revise or change in your first draft.
3. If the comments are not clear, feel free to ask your peer about it.
4. Work on improving your draft by making the necessary changes to your work. Research if you see the need for it. Ask questions.
5. Put yourself in the position of your reader as you revise. If you cannot understand what you have written, chances are, your readers will also feel the same.
6. Write your revised draft presentably.
7. Finally, be ready to publish your work.

Task 5

You have tried working on your short fiction piece following the set standards. In like manner, you also edited your peer's work. Finally, you revised your draft. The process might have seemed difficult at first, but you will be doing things like these in the future lessons as you deal with other topics. Let it not frustrate you as this is part of the journey you must go through as a writer. Remember the cliché "no pain, no gain"? Well, it may be a cliché, but it sure holds an undeniable truth, and in this topic, we are sure that it was a lesson well-learned.

You have also focused on only one literary convention, but perhaps found the task overwhelming. Seasoned writers create works using the different elements to come up with a masterpiece – a unified whole which keeps readers thinking even long after they have finished reading the piece.

After focusing on only one element, what literary convention do you think is the most challenging thing/idea to write about? Write your answers in your notebook.

*Rubrics

5 – Correct use of language/grammar; presence of one element; clear discussion of 'the most challenging thing/idea' to write about

3 – Minor errors on the use of language/grammar; presence of one element; clear discussion of 'the most challenging thing/idea' to write about

1 – Major errors on the use of language/grammar; presence of one element; no discussion of 'the most challenging thing/idea' to write about

POST-TEST

Directions: Write a dialogue of not more than 200 words about how good the Bicolanos are. Be guarded with your language and grammar. Be sure that your written output portrays positive attitude and culture of the Bicolanos. Write your answers in your notebook.

Character 1: _____

Character 2: _____

Character 1: _____

Character 2: _____

Character 1: _____

Character 2: _____

*Rubrics

5 – Correct use of language/grammar; clear and logical conversation; appropriate characterization of Bicolanos' as regards to their attitude and culture

3 – Minor errors on the use of language/grammar; clear conversation; appropriate characterization of Bicolanos as regards to their attitude and culture

1 – Major errors on the use of language/grammar; clear conversation; inappropriate characterization of Bicolanos as regards to their attitude and culture

ASSIGNMENT

Directions: Is your knowledge on Creative Nonfiction relevant in your life as a student and as a person? What learning have you assimilated after finishing the module/subject? Use appropriate language and correct grammar. Write your answer in your notebook.

*Rubrics

5 – Correct use of language/grammar; identification of the relevance of Creative Nonfiction; clear discussion of the learning assimilated

3 – Minor errors on the use of language/grammar; identification of the relevance of Creative Nonfiction; clear discussion of the learning assimilated

1 – Major errors on the use of language/grammar; identification of the relevance of Creative Nonfiction; vague discussion of the learning assimilated

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ANSWER KEY

Pre-Test

1. It is all about the “Last Memories of My Grandfather”.
2. The excerpt highlighted the death of the grandfather.
3. The writer focused on the moment of experience casually, devoid of drama.
4. Answers vary.

Keeping You in Practice

Task 1

Answers vary.

Task 2

Answers vary.

Task 3

Answers vary.

Task 4

Answers vary.

Task 4

Answers vary.

Post-Test

Answers vary.

Assignment

Answers vary.



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