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Creative Nonfiction
Quarter 1 – Module 3: Creative Nonfiction Demystified

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QUARTER 1, MODULE 3

• Creative Nonfiction Demystified

What exactly is creative nonfiction? Sounds new? Definitely not, because this genre has been written for as long as we can remember. It comes with some other fancy names and topics ranging from travel, recipe, to memoir may be packaged by every creative writer into all sorts of fun and exciting stuff to the readers' liking. If this introduction has gotten your fancy too, then that means you are ready for some new learning.

Learning Competencies:

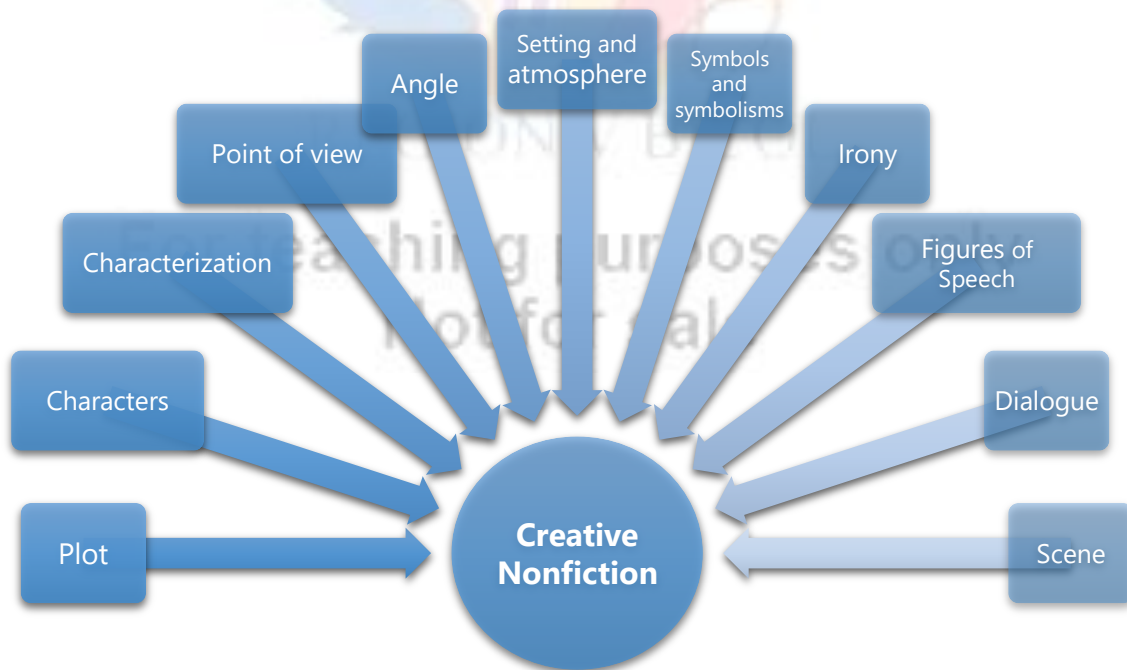
1. Do a close reading of creative nonfictional texts;
2. Identify the fictional elements in the texts.

Learning Targets:

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

1. List down the nature and characteristics of creative nonfiction;
2. Read sample creative nonfiction works and point-out the elements of fiction utilized by the writer.

KEY WORDS



VOCABULARY LIST

1. **Characters** are persons, animals and other things that live in the story.
2. **Setting** is the physical location and time of a story.
3. **Plot** refers to the strings of event present in the narrative.
4. **Point of view** is the narrator's way of telling the story.
5. **Conflict** is the struggle of the pre-eminent character with other characters or forces of the story.
6. **Theme** is a recurring social or psychological issue, like aging, violence, alienation or maturity.
7. **Irony** is the use of words to convey opposite of their literary meaning.
8. **Dialogue** is the exchange of ideas of the characters in a narrative.
9. **Figures of Speech** refers to the language to create images in the reader's mind such as simile, metaphor and apostrophe.
10. **Symbol** is such an object that represents grander qualities and ideas, such as dove as a symbol of peace and rose as a symbol of love.
11. **Symbolism** refers to the use of symbols to represent ideas and qualities.
12. **Angle** refers to the specific or particular standpoint from which the narrative is told.

PRE-TEST

Directions: Read the following excerpts and answer the questions that follow. Write your answers in your notebook.

Text A

The long and winding road to Bicol (an excerpt) (Kara Santos)

I've gone to Naga City from Manila and back countless times. I lived there growing up and still go back home several times a year. Most times I just hop on an overnight bus without a second thought. I rode the PNR Bicol Express train when it was still running. I've gone there by plane. My family and I used to take long car trips there and back several times for holidays.

But last Christmas was different. It was my first time to drive a motorcycle all the way there.

For experienced riders who regularly do the North or South Loop, this long ride is probably nothing. There are numerous endurance rides in the country, where people try to clock in more than a thousand KM in 24 hours or less. But I've never liked racing and I rarely keep track of how many kilometers I've done in a ride. I've always measured journeys in terms of meaningful experiences rather than miles.

Unpredictable weather, the heat, and the possibility of getting into an accident are just a few of the reasons why I was hesitant to ride all the way. I was also afraid that my scooter wouldn't be able to handle the trip. Chocobo, my Yamaha Mio Fino, who has served me well during the past 5 years and was Art's regular daily commute for a couple of years now hasn't been in the best condition. It seems like every other weekend, we've had to take him to the shop for some kind of repair job.

Text B

Why I Still Use Facebook (an excerpt) (by Nicholas Klacsanzky)

Studies say Facebook is addicting. I can agree with that statement. I check Facebook very often. It is hard to say how many times a day I look at it. However, I post once a day or less. Sometimes I will go through periods where I check Facebook once a day or less. Yet, I can still say I am addicted to it, because I almost always have it opened in a tab at work and at home when I am working on creative work. This is mostly because I use it as a communication tool, messaging people close to me. Many times, I arrange events through Facebook's messaging system. It seems in the new generation, messaging is more popular than calling by phone. Organizing events by phone is seen more as a nuisance now than a necessity. So, yes, I am addicted, but this mental disease is not crippling. Maybe I would be more productive without keeping Facebook open most of the day, but I still do well at work, practice music each day, learn a foreign language, and do creative writing daily as well—all the while being a husband and being a dad to a dog.

Now answer these questions about the texts.

1. From what point of view are the texts written?
2. What do the texts talk about? From whom do you think was the content of the texts based?
3. Comment on how the texts are written. What can you say about the style and language used?
4. What do you think of the ideas presented in the texts? Are they true or imaginary? What makes you say so?
5. Can you name some writing elements/conventions in the texts that you are familiar with? What are they?

KEEPING YOU IN PRACTICE

Task 1

Directions: Answer the following questions in your notebook.

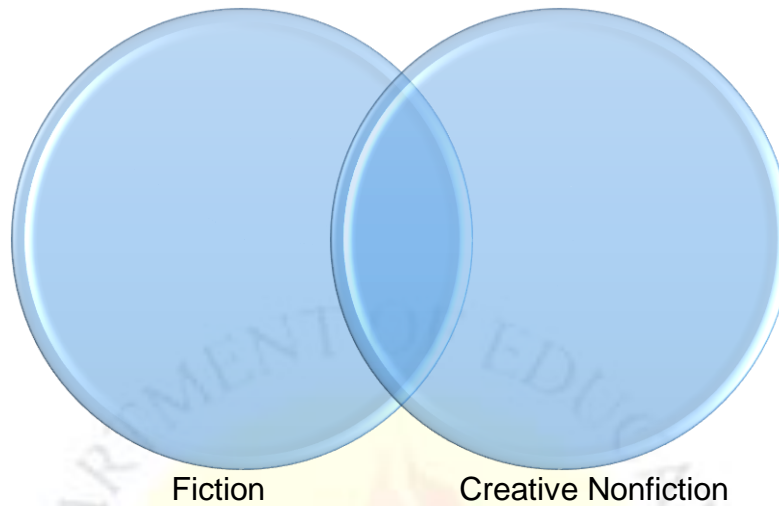
1. Describe creative nonfiction as a literary genre.

2. Name and discuss some elements of creative nonfiction.

3. What elements distinguish fiction from creative nonfiction?

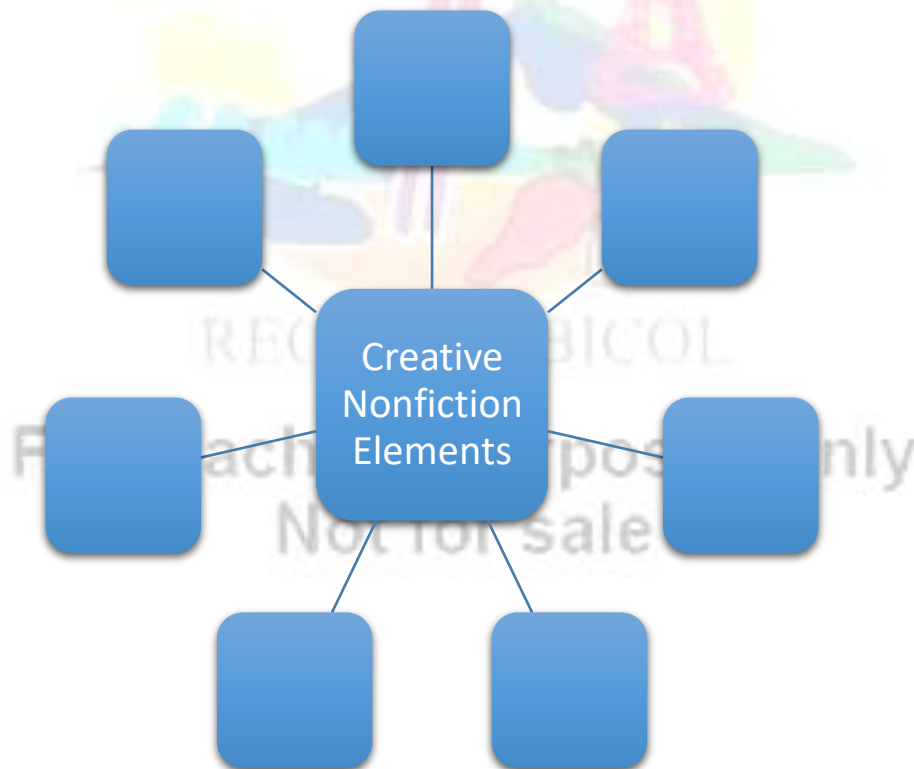
Task 2

Directions: Complete the Venn diagram below. Write your answers in your notebook.



Task 3

Directions: What are the elements of creative nonfiction? Show your knowledge of those elements by completing the following word map in your notebook.



Task 4

Directions: Read the following creative nonfiction work then answer the questions after it in your notebook.

The Long Walk to Freedom (an excerpt) (*Nelson Mandela*)

When I was not much more than a newborn child, my father was involved in a dispute that deprived him of his chieftainship at Mvezo and revealed a strain in his character I believe he passed on to his son. I maintain that nurture, rather than nature, is the primary molder of personality, but my father possessed a proud rebelliousness, a stubborn sense of fairness that I recognize in myself. As a chief— or headman, as it was often known among the whites — my father was compelled to account for his stewardship not only to the Thembu king but to the local magistrate.

One day one of my father's subjects lodged a complaint against him involving an ox that had strayed from its owner. The magistrate accordingly sent a message ordering my father to appear before him. When my father received the summons, he sent back the following reply: "Andizi, ndisaqula" (I will not come, I am still girding for battle). One did not defy magistrates in those days. Such behavior would be regarded as the height of insolence — and in this case it was.

My father's response bespoke his belief that the magistrate had no legitimate power over him.

When it came to tribal matters, he was guided not by the laws of the king of England, but by Thembu custom. This defiance was not a fit of pique, but a matter of principle. He was asserting his traditional prerogative as a chief and was challenging the authority of the magistrate.

When the magistrate received my father's response, he promptly charged him with insubordination. There was no inquiry or investigation; that was reserved for white civil servants.

The magistrate simply deposed my father, thus ending the Mandela family chieftainship.

I was unaware of these events at the time, but I was not unaffected. My father, who was a wealthy nobleman by the standards of his time, lost both his fortune and his title. He was deprived of most of his herd and land, and the revenue that came with them. Because of our straitened circumstances, my mother moved to Qunu, a slightly larger village north of Mvezo, where she would have the support of friends and relations. We lived in a less grand style in Qunu, but it was in that village near Umtata that I spent the happiest years of my boyhood and whence I trace my earliest memories.

1. Who is narrating? What point of view is used?
2. What elements of fiction are present in the narrative? List them down and cite the sample lines from the text to support your answer.
3. What type of creative nonfiction work do you think is the above excerpt? What makes you say so?

What is Creative Nonfiction?

Nonfiction is writing that is based on true events, people, places, and facts. It is a vast category and has sub-genres: it could be **factual**, like a scientific paper; it could also be **creative**, like a personal essay.

The label “creative nonfiction” can apply to various categories of writing, including food, travel, memoir, personal essay, and other hybridized forms. Its defining characteristic is the use of literary techniques to create a sense of artfulness in the language, character development, and story, all of which tends to drive the narrative “inward.” Creative nonfiction work also tends to focus on transformational events in the narrator’s or central character’s life. It generally seems closer to the truth of the narrator’s experience than other forms of nonfiction, as revealing the narrator’s experience / emotional consequence of the experience often seems the implicit “goal” of the work.

Because of these characteristics, creative nonfiction as a literary genre appeals both to the reader and the writer, as well. A creative nonfiction work can sound very personal and deeply revealing, and the resulting authenticity can have profound effects. The writer who has experienced that particular event being narrated is in the best position to talk about the experience from his or her viewpoint. The reader, on the other hand, can feel an affinity towards the writer’s work as it was narrated from an authentic, no-filter landscape, hence making it something to be trusted.

Lee Gutkind (2019) has this to say in describing the art of creative nonfiction:

“a concept that offers great flexibility and freedom, while adhering to the basic tenets of nonfiction writing and/or reporting. In creative nonfiction, writers can be poetic and journalistic simultaneously. Creative nonfiction writers are encouraged to utilize fictional (literary) techniques in their prose - from scene to dialogue to description to point-of-view - and be cinematic at the same time. Creative nonfiction writers write about themselves and/or capture real people and real life in ways that can and have changed the world. What is most important and enjoyable about creative nonfiction is that it not only allows, but encourages the writer to become a part of the story or essay being written. The personal involvement creates a special magic that alleviates the suffering and anxiety of the writing experience; it provides many outlets for satisfaction and self-discovery, flexibility and freedom.”

Elements of Creative Nonfiction

“Creative non-fiction blurs the distinction between fiction and non-fiction but only at the periphery of knowledge, where fact and truth are unavailable or obscured (Penn, 2017).” If the “periphery of knowledge” is the one thing that delineates one from the other, logically, it follows that creative nonfiction shares similar elements with fiction. Let’s find out.

A. **Plot.** Plot is one of the basic elements of every story: put simply, plot refers to the actual events that take place within the bounds of your narrative. Using our rhetorical situation vocabulary, we can identify “plot” as the primary subject of a

descriptive personal narrative. Three related elements to consider are scope, sequence, and pacing.

- 1) **Scope.** The term scope refers to the boundaries of plot. Where and when does the story begin and end? What is its focus? What background information and details does the story require? Narrative scope can be thought of as the edges of a photograph: a photo, whether of a vast landscape or a microscopic organism, has boundaries. Those boundaries inform the viewer's perception.

The way we determine scope varies based on rhetorical situation, but generally many developing writers struggle with a scope that is too broad: writers often find it challenging to zero in on the events that drive a story and delete unnecessary information.

- 2) **Sequence.** The sequence of the plot—the order of the events—will determine the reader's experience. There are an infinite number of ways one might structure the story, and the shape of the story is worth deep consideration. Although the traditional forms for a narrative sequence are not the only options, let's take a look at a few tried-and-true shapes the plot might take.
 - a) **Freytag's Pyramid: Chronological.** Following this sequence, the narration starts from exposition, to rising action, climax, falling action, and eventually resolution (see previous chapter on the discussion of these parts).
 - b) **In medias res.** In Latin, this means "in the middle of things," hence the narration does not follow the linear or chronological structure; instead, the story starts right in the middle of the action. This is an exciting way to grab the readers' attention, especially when they ask "Just what the heck is goin on here?" right from the beginning.
 - c) **Non-linear narrative.** In this technique, the narrative may be told in a series of flashbacks or vignettes or it might jump back and forth in time. In using nonlinear narrative, writers should make clear the reason for doing so.
- 3) **Pacing.** This refers to the speed and fluidity with which a reader moves through your story. This being said, the "flow" (narration) of an event can be fast or slow.

B. **Characters.** Characters bring life to the story. Keep in mind that while human characters are most frequently featured in stories, sometimes there are non-human characters in a story such as animals or even the environment itself.

C. **Characterization.** Characterization refers to the development of characters through actions, descriptions, and dialogue. Your audience will be more engaged with and sympathetic toward your narrative if they can vividly imagine the

characters as real people. Like setting description, characterization relies on specificity.

To break it down to process, characterization can be accomplished in two ways:

- 1) **Directly**, through specific description of the character—What kind of clothes do they wear? What do they look, smell, sound like?—or,
- 2) **Indirectly**, through the behaviors, speech, and thoughts of the character—What kind of language, dialect, or register do they use? What is the tone, inflection, and timbre of their voice? How does their manner of speaking reflect their attitude toward the listener? How do their actions reflect their traits? What's on their mind that they won't share with the world?

- D. **Point of View.** The writer's narrative position is informed by point-of-view and the emotional variables referred as tone and mood. Simply put, point of view is the perspective from which the story is told. This is also a grammatical phenomenon as it is dependent on pronoun use and impacts tone, mood, scope, voice, and plot.

Although point-of-view will influence tone and mood, we can also consider what feelings we want to convey and inspire independently as part of our narrative position.

- 1) **Tone.** This is the emotional register of the story's language. What emotional state does the narrator of the story (not the author, but the speaker) seem to be in? What emotions are you trying to imbue in your writing?
- 2) **Mood.** This refers to the emotional register a reader experiences. What emotions do you want your reader to experience? Are they the same feelings you experienced at the time?

- E. **Angle.** This element refers to the specific or particular standpoint from which the narrative is told. Visualize yourself writing about a chair. You were standing right in front so you can describe how it looks from the front. But of course, you might stand to one side and see another aspect which you might not see from the front. You can even move back and take a look from the back, or even from the top. From these different standpoints, you might be able to write different things about the chair.

The same thing could be done about writing on a particular topic. There is always more than one position to talk about it, and this refers to the "angle." Using a unique angle in creative nonfiction can be an attractive hook to the readers. They would not want to read about a topic which have been written in an overly familiar way. It would take a creative writer to choose a different or fresh angle. Here are some questions that might be asked in finding the appropriate angle for a narrative:

- 1) Is this something slightly or very familiar to the readers already?
- 2) What difference will it make if it will be written from this perspective?
- 3) Is there something new offered to the readers about this topic/subject?

F. **Setting and Atmosphere.** Each story has a setting. The setting is the place where the story takes place. Usually, an effective story establishes its setting early in the story: otherwise readers will have a difficult time visualizing the action of the story.

G. **Symbols and Symbolisms.** Writers use symbols to give meaning to objects, or events that are outside of the literal. Many people are familiar with common symbols in everyday life. Red roses are symbols of love, and doves are symbols of peace.

Many classic works of literature employ symbolism. Symbolism in literature provides a way for a writer to explore depth, frequently through double meaning. For example, if a character crosses a river, the writer is usually employing symbolism to signify rebirth, like baptism. Many writers use color for symbolism, with white representing good, black representing evil, and green symbolizing new life.

Symbolism in literature is often used to evoke various archetypes, such as good versus evil. When a character takes a trip, it is usually symbolic of a journey to discover the self.

Authors use symbolism to tie certain things that may initially seem unimportant to more universal themes. The symbols then represent these grander ideas or qualities.

H. **Irony.** Irony is a literary device or event in which how things seem to be is in fact very different from how they actually are. If this seems like a loose definition, don't worry—it is. Irony is a broad term that encompasses three different types of irony, each with their own specific definition: verbal irony, dramatic irony, and situational irony. Most of the time when people use the word irony, they're actually referring to one of these specific types of irony.

There are three types of irony:

- 1) **Verbal irony** is a figure of speech in which the literal meaning of what someone says is different from—and often opposite to—what they actually mean. For example, if someone has a painful visit to the dentist and when it's over says, "Well, that was pleasant," they are using verbal irony because the intended meaning of their words (that it wasn't at all pleasant) is the opposite of the literal meaning of the words. Verbal irony is the most common form of irony. In fact it is so common that when people mention "irony," they often are actually referring to verbal irony.

- 2) **Dramatic irony** is a plot device that highlights the difference between a character's understanding of a given situation, and that of the audience. When the audience watching a movie know what's behind that door, but the character in the movie has no idea, that's dramatic irony.
- 3) **Situational irony** refers to an unexpected, paradoxical, or perverse turn of events. It is an example of situational irony when, in the O. Henry story "The Gift of the Magi," a young wife cuts off her hair in order to buy her husband a chain for his prized watch, but the husband sells his watch to buy his wife a comb for her beautiful hair.

Although these three kinds of irony may seem very different at first glance, they all share one important quality: a tension between how things appear and how they really are.

Also, it's worth knowing that sometimes instances of irony don't quite fit into any of these categories, and instead align with the more general definition of irony as something that seems to be one way, but is in fact another way. Put more broadly: sometimes irony is verbal irony, sometimes it is dramatic irony, sometimes it is situational irony, and sometimes it is just irony.

Besides the three main types of irony described above, two other literary devices—sarcasm and satire—share a lot in common with irony:

- 1) **Sarcasm** is a bitter, cutting, or mocking taunt used to denigrate a particular person, place, or thing. It can sometimes take the form of verbal irony. For instance, if you were to say to someone who had just cut you in line, "What a polite, civilized person you are!" that would be sarcasm in the form of irony, since your meaning is the opposite of the literal meaning of your words. Sarcasm very often involves irony. However, it doesn't always have to use irony. For instance, when Groucho Marx says "I never forget a face, but in your case I'll be glad to make an exception," he is being sarcastic, but his words, however witty they are, mean exactly what they say.
 - 2) **Satire** is a form of social or political critique. Like sarcasm, it often makes use of irony, but it isn't always ironic.
- I. **Figures of speech.** These are the various [rhetorical](#) uses of [language](#) that depart from customary construction, word order, or significance. Specifically, a **figure of speech** is a rhetorical device that achieves a special effect by using words in a distinctive way.

Though there are hundreds of figures of speech, here are the most common you will encounter, either in prose or poetry writing:

- 1) **Alliteration:** The repetition of an initial consonant sound.
Example: She sells seashells by the seashore.

- 2) **Anaphora:** The repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or verses.
Example: Unfortunately, I was in the wrong place at the wrong time on the wrong day.
- 3) **Antithesis:** The juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in balanced phrases.
Example: As Abraham Lincoln said, "Folks who have no vices have very few virtues."
- 4) **Apostrophe:** Directly addressing a nonexistent person or an inanimate object as though it were a living being.
Example: "Oh, you stupid car, you never work when I need you to," Bert sighed.
- 5) **Assonance:** Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words.
Example: How now, brown cow?
- 6) **Chiasmus:** A verbal pattern in which the second half of an expression is balanced against the first but with the parts reversed.
Example: The famous chef said people should live to eat, not eat to live.
- 7) **Euphemism:** The substitution of an inoffensive term for one considered offensively explicit.
Example: "We're teaching our toddler how to go potty," Bob said.
- 8) **Hyperbole:** An extravagant statement; the use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect.
Example: I have a ton of things to do when I get home.
- 9) **Irony:** The use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. Also, a statement or situation where the meaning is contradicted by the appearance or presentation of the idea.
Example: "Oh, I love spending big bucks," said my dad, a notorious penny pincher.
- 10) **Litotes:** A figure of speech consisting of an understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite.
Example: A million dollars is no small chunk of change.
- 11) **Metaphor:** An implied comparison between two dissimilar things that have something in common.
Example: "All the world's a stage."
- 12) **Metonymy:** A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated; also, the rhetorical strategy of describing something indirectly by referring to things around it.

Example: "That stuffed suit with the briefcase is a poor excuse for a salesman," the manager said angrily.

13) **Onomatopoeia:** The use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to.

Example: The clap of thunder went bang and scared my poor dog.

14) **Oxymoron:** A figure of speech in which incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side.

Example: "He popped the jumbo shrimp in his mouth."

15) **Paradox:** A statement that appears to contradict itself.

Example: "This is the beginning of the end," said Eeyore, always the pessimist.

16) **Personification:** A figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstraction is endowed with human qualities or abilities.

Example: That kitchen knife will take a bite out of your hand if you don't handle it safely.

17) **Pun:** A play on words, sometimes on different senses of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words.

Example: Jessie looked up from her breakfast and said, "A boiled egg every morning is hard to beat."

18) **Simile:** A stated comparison (usually formed with "like" or "as") between two fundamentally dissimilar things that have certain qualities in common.

Example: Roberto was white as a sheet after he walked out of the horror movie.

19) **Synecdoche:** A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole.

Example: Tina is learning her ABC's in preschool.

20) **Understatement:** A figure of speech in which a writer or speaker deliberately makes a situation seem less important or serious than it is.

Example: "You could say Babe Ruth was a decent ballplayer," the reporter said with a wink.

- J. **Dialogue.** Basically, this refers to the communication between characters in the narrative. A dialogue is dependent on relationships between characters, and this, in turn, can influence tone of voice, word choice (such as using slang, jargon, or lingo), what details we share, and even what language we speak.

Good dialogue often demonstrates the traits of a character or the relationship of characters. From reading or listening to how people talk to one another, we often infer the relationships they have. We can tell if they're having an argument or

conflict, if one is experiencing some internal conflict or trauma, if they're friendly acquaintances or cold strangers, even how their emotional or professional attributes align or create opposition.

- K. **Scene.** A plot, in any form of literature, is made up of scenes. In drama, it's the subdivision of an act. Usually, it's defined by having a single setting and a certain set of characters.

Of course a scene can also refer more loosely to a series of events within a certain amount of time in a work of literature—a conversation between two characters, the climactic battle at the end of a war, or even just the protagonist getting out of bed in the morning.

A **scene** is what is shown in one time and place. If the character leaves one spot and goes somewhere else, or one conversation ends and he sits working for half an hour before the next one starts—or the writer simply switches to something else because nothing more happens there that's worth showing—that's the end of a scene and the start of the next one. A scene is also the basic building block of storytelling, because its end gives us closure and frees us to think about what happens after that.

Also, a “chapter” is usually a group of several scenes. Then again, a scene might run between two chapters, or a major scene might take up many (and there are authors whose chapters take only two or three pages).

A sequence could mean a set of scenes, but it could also mean a set of events within one scene.

POST-TEST

Directions: Make a diary entry by choosing one of the three topics. Be sure to use at least three figures of speech. Write your entry in your notebook.

1. My Summer Vacation amid COVID-19
2. My First Online Class
3. My Mask, Face Shield and Social Distancing

*Rubrics

5 – Correct use of language/grammar; use of three or more figures of speech; appropriateness of figures of speech used; clear narration of events

3 – Minor errors on the use of language/grammar; use of less than three figures of speech; appropriateness of figures of speech used; clear narration of events

1 – Major errors on the use of language/grammar; without the use of figure of speech; unclear narration of events

ASSIGNMENT

Directions: Try reflecting on your experiences. Which among them do you think is worth telling your readers? Write a letter to yourself. Do it in your notebook.

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*Rubrics

5 – Correct use of language/grammar; clear presentation of experiences; statements that manifest own reflection; correct letter-form

3 – Minor errors on the use of language/grammar; clear presentation of experiences; statements that manifest own reflection; correct letter-form

1 – Major errors on the use of language/grammar; clear presentation of experiences; a statement that manifests own reflection

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ANSWER KEY

Pre-Test

Text A/B

1. First Person Point of View
2. - Text A talks about a person who traveled to Naga from Manila through her motorcycle, Chocobo, a Yamaha Mio Fino.
- Text B tells about a person who is addicted to Facebook.
- The contents of both texts were based on personal experiences.
3. Answers vary.
4. Answers vary.
5. Answers vary.

Keeping You in Practice

Task 1

1. “Creative nonfiction” can be applied to various categories of writing, including food, travel, memoir, personal essay, and other hybridized forms. Its defining characteristic is the use of literary techniques to create a sense of artfulness in the language, character development, and story.
2. Elements of Creative Non Fiction

Plot. It refers to the actual events that take place within the bounds of narrative.

Sequence. Sequence of the plot- the order of events- will determine the reader’s experience.

Characters. They bring life to the story. They may be persons, animals, or inanimate things.
3. All elements may be applied to both fiction and Creative Nonfiction but the latter talks about a fact or truth.

Task 2

Answers vary.

Task 3

1. The narrator is the son. The point of view is third person.
2. The elements are characters, setting, plot, point of view.
Characters:
A. I – “I maintain that nurture, rather than nature, is the molder of personality.”
B. My father – My father possessed a proud rebelliousness, a stubborn sense of fairness that I recognize in myself.”

Setting:

"My father was involved in a dispute that deprived him of chieftainship in Mvezo."

"My mother moved to Qunu. We lived in a less grand style in Qunu.

But it was in that village near Umtala that I spent the happiest years of my boyhood."

Plot:

- A. My father was involved in a dispute at Mvezo.
- B. One of my father's subjects lodged complaint against him involving an ox.
- C. The magistrate sent a message ordering a father to appear before him.
- D. My father did not appear.
- E. The magistrate deposed my father, thus ending the Mandela family chieftainship.
- F. My mother moved to Qunu, a slightly larger village north of Mvezo.
- G. We lived in a less grand style in Qunu, but it was in that village near Umtata that I spent the happiest years of my boyhood and whence I trace my earliest memories.

Point of view: First Person

- 3. It is a memoir because it is both biographical and historical.
It is also within the periphery of knowledge, not an imagined one.

Post-Test

Answers vary.

Assignment

Answers vary.

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