**UNIT ONE**

**1.1 The Concept of Creative Writing**

Creative writing is free writing. It indicates obviously the freedom of students to write without too much teacher-interference. Creative writing means the same as free writing. When students write, they sometimes write what they want to write. They feel free whenever they write. Nobody forces them to write. Students have their own image when they write. It may come from their emotions. It reveals emotional response when they write. Creativity is, Susanne (1981), the ability to create one’s own symbols of experience: creative writing is the use of written language to conceptualize, explore and record experience in such a way as to create a unique symbolization of it. Creative writing helps to develop thinking skills. As a writer organizes his thoughts, decisions are made on how to best communicate what it is he wants communicated. He decides which ideas are relevant and which are not.

The language of creative writing must be creative. That means imaginative, picturesque and extraordinary. The language must stimulate, wake up the reader’s imagination, and paint a picture with words. The language must make the ordinary as well as extraordinary. The extraordinary language includes creative words, creative structures and creative ideas. Students should use creative words that people do not use often. For example, if you are having dinner, and the food is good, we use an adjective, delicious to describe the food. We can use a less usual word for describing food. You can even make up a word or use a different kind of word with a descriptive feeling like: earth shattering, heart-winning, volcanic etc. In creative writing, you can be much freer with the structure of a sentence also but don’t forget your basic grammar.

Basically, creative writing is an imaginative art. But before you can imaginatively create a story or a poem, you must have been struck by an idea or concept. However, in some cases, especially in poetry, the poems flow in the poet’s imagination and he/she only records what is in the imagination. This is inspired creativity. Some writers claim to have written while in a trance. So creativity here is spontaneous creativity which is not based on idea but the idea emerges after the work is complete.

A writer could also be inspired by an idea or a concept. Let us look at corruption. Almost every day we hear of corruption. In the civil service, in government, in schools, on our roads, in recruitment and even at gates and reception areas of public places the story is the same. If you want to explore the idea of corruption in your work, you will ask yourself the following questions. What do you want to say about corruption? Is your intention that of condemnation, exaltation or to give information? Do you just want to let your audience know that corruption exists or does not exist in certain places? Your decision here will determine the content and form of your story. Hence it influences your writing.

Having taken the decision on your perspective on the idea, the next step is to imaginatively create a story to suit your purpose. Can you think of a perspective, that you would like to adopt in an exposition of an ill in the society? Remember, the creative writer is the conscience of the society so should reflect the society objectively. You should be able to extol when necessary and criticize where criticism is required and condemn despicable acts. By the end of this module, hopefully, you may be able to tell the story with fictitious names and some embellishments to make it realistic and interesting. There are so many sources for creative writing. Some of them will be discussed below.

**Environment**

A writer is a product of his background. The environment of the writer has a great influence on his/her writing. Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* would not have been written by him if he were not from Igbo land. A non-Igbo man or woman who has lived in Igbo land could depict the Igbo culture in a novel but not with much detailed information on an aspect of the culture of the people and its significance. Let us consider the following excerpt from the novel.

*The missionaries had come to Umuofia. They had built their church there, won a handful of converts and were already sending evangelists to the surrounding towns and villages. That was a course of great sorrow to the leaders of the clan; but many of them believed that the strange faith and the white man’s god would not last. None of his converts was a man whose word was heeded in the assembly of the people. None of them was a man of title. They were mostly the kind of people that were called efulefu, worthless, empty men. The imagery of an efulefu in the language of the clan was a man who sold his matchet and wore the sheath to battle. Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, called the converts the excrement of the clan, and the new faith was a mad dog that had come to eat it up. (p. 130).*

In the above passage, Achebe presents the incursion of the Whiteman to Umuofia which is heralded by the advance group, the missionaries. In this short piece, he shows not just the activities of the missionaries and their converts but also the feelings of the elders, and the class of people that embraced the new religion. They are somehow outcasts, people of no consequence in the towns and villages. The elders believe this group of people could not achieve anything. On the other hand, the converts who belong to this class of people who are rejected and looked down on by their kinsmen, found solace in the new religion. Achebe contends that the callousness of the society towards this class of people contributed to the success of the new religion contrary to the expectations of the elders and the priestess of Agbala.

As a creative writer, you have to keep your eyes and ears ‘wild, wide open’. This is the only way you could see and hear beyond everyone else in that environment. The filth in your surrounding acquires new meaning for you, new significance and a symbol of something, you could explore.

**Events**

Closely related to environment are events and maybe individuals, inter-personal relationships. An event could spark off the creativity or spirit in you. You may not build an entire story on it but it could form part of the story. Your ability to situate that event appropriately in the story is what matters. This helps to make your story coherent. Good novels, plays, short stories and poems thrive on coherence.

Think of an event – a birthday party, a wedding, a naming ceremony. Can you relate that event factually? Try to recount specific details and of that event. Think of the significance of some specific acts and include them in the story the way you recalled it. Have you ever been a bridesmaid or a best man in a wedding? Can you recount vividly as much as possible, the exchange of consent and rings, the prayers, the dressing of the couple, the bridal train, the priest, the guests? Can you go beyond the bridal white gown? Was the gown flowing, were there sequins? Can you describe her beyond “she looked beautiful?” Can you tell how beautiful, noting the minutest details of her make-up? Did she engage a makeup artist? Was it worthwhile? If you can give these details in one, two or three paragraphs, read it again and the story is not drab, or boring but interesting you are getting close to your mark. Compare your write up with the one below. Let us come back to Chenua Achebe's work once again. Achebe presents an aspect of life of the people in Igboland through a detailed presentation of an event – a wrestling match. The reader can easily feel the excitement and the physical movements of the spectators and the wrestlers. He likens the rhythms of the drums to the heart-beat of the people. In another excerpt below, Festus Iyayi, in *Violence* through Idemudia’s illness, and the attempts to admit him into the hospital present’s the inability of the government to provide basic social amenities for the people.

*Even in that early hour, the University Hospital was crowded. It was a pitiable sight. So many people were sick and in need of the doctor. The long benches were full. The porch outside was filled with patients who were able to stand. Some of the patients coughed violently.*  *Mothers who carried sick children moved agitatedly. The faces that waited were grim serious and preoccupied with worry (Violence 61).*

You can see from the above, that a creative writer does not just see events on the surface but gives details, analyzes situations, adduces possible reasons for such situations or events or their consequences. They also seek underlying meanings to the surface events or use words that emphasize or highlight the message that is being conveyed. In the first passage, note words like “long benches” “…filled,” “porches… full”, “coughed violently”, “moved agitatedly”, “faces…grim, serious.., preoccupied with worry”. These help to evoke the deplorable, near-desperate, and hopeless situation the patients find themselves.

**Individuals**

Specific individuals in your society could ignite the creative impulse in you. Your story could revolve around these individuals play a significant role in the story or have a significant impact on the character of your protagonist. There is a saying that anyone who survives childhood has at least a story in him or her. The individual could therefore be you or any other person who has played a significant role in your life or the lives of others. It could be how this individual relates to the people around him or her that inspire you. In your writing, you present the society through such individuals. Their inter-personal relationships with others became sources of germinal ideas for you.

In Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, his admiration for Unoka is obvious. Unoka’s presented as lazy and cowardly but Achebe’s attitude to him is not that of condemnation. He wants us to appreciate his qualities which if Okonkwo had possessed; his life may not have ended in catastrophe. Read the following passage on Unoka carefully.

*He was very good on his flute, and his happiest moments were the two or three moons after the harvest when the village musicians brought down their instruments, hung above the fireplace. Unoka would play with them, his face beaming with blessedness and peace. Sometimes another village would ask Unoka’s band and their dancing egwugwu to come and stay with them and teach them their tunes. They would go to such hosts for as long as three or four markets, making music and feasting. Unoka loved the good fare and the good fellowship, and he loved this season of the year, when the rains had stopped and the sun rose every morning with dazzling beauty…Unoka loved it all, and he loved the first kites that returned with the dry season, and the children who sang songs of welcome to them. He would remember his own childhood, how he had often wandered around looking for a kite sailing leisurely against the blue sky. (pp. 4-5)*

Unoka is an artist, an actor and a musician. He is good natured, generous and humorous. He enjoys good fellowship and lives in harmony with his kinsmen and the forces of nature. His son, Okonkwo, lacks his warmth and humanity. Although his society sees Unoka’s life as a disaster, he is useful to the society through his life.

**Myth**

Writers, from the origin of literature, have taken their germinal ideas from myth. The myths are either central to the works or are reflected in the works. As a writer, you will decide to reflect a particular myth the way it is or restructure it to suit your purpose. In the novel and the play, it is a bit difficult to base the entire work on a particular myth. Writers, often depict the myth as part of the story to help illuminate certain character(s), ideas or incident(s). In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe presents the myth of Ogbanje as part of the belief system in Igbo land. In this case, the myth is presented as part of the stories.

In poetry, the most concise genre of literature, a myth could be the germinal idea and an entire poem becomes an exploration of that myth. Ogbanje in Igbo is Abiku in Yoruba. Read Wole Soyinka’s *Abiku* and assesses the explication of that belief system in Yoruba land.

**Legends**

Legends deal with communal heroes or heroines. They are men and women who have performed certain feats in the past. Ngugi Wa Thong’O is an African writer who portrayed a legendary hero of the celebrated in Mau-Mau anti-colonial rebellion freedom fighting in Kenya. In one of his plays, *The Trial of Dedin Kimathi,* he presents the celebration of such a hero. However, in *A Grain of Wheat*, he presents such presumed legendary heroes who fought for uhuru-Independence as traitors. Some of them are Mugo, Gikonyo, Karanja, and Numbi who presumably played heroic roles in the struggle.

**History**

History and legend are interrelated. Both are set in the remote and immediate past of the people. This is unlike myth which is set in the primordial past. Many Nigeria writers have drawn the inspiration for some of their works from history. Many Nigerian writers especially novelists have written novels on the Nigerian Civil War. Each writer presents his own perspective on the war. Poets and dramatists are not left out in recounting historical experiences imaginatively. One could say that each writer mediates history in order to present an artistically satisfying experience.

**Why Do We Write?**

Creative writing is considered to be any writing, fiction, or non-fiction that goes outside the bounds of normal professional, journalistic, academic, and fictional forms of literature. Works which fall into this category include most novels and epics, as well as many short stories and poems. Writing for the screen and stage, screen writing and play writing respectively; typically have their own programmes of study, but fit under the creative writing category as well. In addition, creative writing is anything where the purpose is to express thoughts, feelings and emotions rather than to simply convey information. It involves the skillful and imaginative production of something original. Writing is like a journey that you cannot just set out on aimlessly. You cannot just write without having a good reason why you would like to do so. Below are some of the reasons why you may want to write.

**Communication of Ideas**

One of the reasons why you write is to be able to transmit your own thoughts or ideas to other peoples across cultures, time and age. That you live and write in Nigeria does not mean that you write for the Nigerian peoples alone. Your writing will go places, it could even outlive you the same way the works of William Shakespeare, Alexander Pope, Philip Sydney, John Dryden, Scot FitzGerald, Ernest Hemingway, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Christopher Okigbo, Ola Rotimi, outlived them. Up to now, their positions, feelings and ideas about life generally are still being read in their works.

**We Keep Diaries through Writing**

You may decide to keep a record of some of the important events or things that have happened to you in writing. When you do this, you are keeping a record through writing. Sometime in life, and as you go into the world of work, you may want to keep the date and time of some experiences, where you meet some peoples who are important to you. This type of writing, depending on the writer does not require a very elaborate composition like the novel. You must not forget that there are some functional diaries that involve an elaborate or serious writing. You may need to visit a bookshop, your University or the public library where you will get a copy of novels written in the forms of a diary. You may also ask a friend or your facilitator for a copy of the following fictional diaries: Ferdinand Oyono’s *Houseboy,* George and Weedon Grossmith’s *The Diary of a Nobody*, Nelson Mandela’s *No Easy Walk to Freedom,* and Kenneth Kaunda’s *Sambia shall be Free.*

**Development of Talent**

You may have the natural gift to create and communicate ideas. If you do not have it, you may also acquire the skills of writing through training and practice. The type of practice we are gradually putting you through could make you a good creative writer. That is why it is important for you to know whom you are. You must also know your creative ability. You should know that your creative ability can open doors of success for you. In the end, you will feel fulfilled if you are able to create what is good. All you should do when you discover the creative gift in you is to do all you can to develop it. You may develop it by reading more creative works or by asking the right questions from experienced creative writers. And, if you do not have it, start now to seek, to learn, and in no time, you will acquire the technique. This may be the reason why Covey (1990) insists that “what lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters, compared with what lies within us”.

The truth is, you will naturally be at ease if you are a gifted writer, but you can acquire the skills for writing, the way you can be taught to know a trade or how to play a game.

**For the Records**

You may decide to write, to document issues/history/things which account might have been given through oral information. Your aim to keep a concrete reference material for other people to consult/read may inform this type of writing. Such oral records may be about the culture, religion and traditions of your people. This is what makes writing a form of documentation.

**Writing as a Profession**

You may write because it is your career or for the reason that you want to make it a profession. You could put your ideas down for others to read. In this case you may also decide in which of the genres (i.e. prose, play or poetry), you want to write for people to read. This also depends on the type of people (audience) you hope should read your work. You will also determine how much it would cost you to get the work published. If you wish to treat your writing this way, it has become a business. You should think of the reason why you want to be a creative writer. You may be wondering about the need for the writing situation. You will soon realize that it is as important to you as other areas of writing. You should know the best place for you to write, the time and the tool you prefer to write with. Writing situations help you to determine a convenient take off ground for your writing. It will help you to answer the helpful questions of the three Ws of creative writing. Below is a diagrammatic representation of the Ws.

Fig. 1 Three W’s of creative writing (situation questions)

A WHERE?

B WHEN?

C WHAT?

(a) This is (where) I write (a) (i.e. in the garden, seashore?)

(b) This is (when) I write (b) (night, early in the morning?)

(c) This is (what) I write with (c) (i.e. computer set, a pen?)

As you read through this part of the Unit, try to identify and choose your own three W’sor answer the three writing situation questions. If you are able to do so, you have just created a takeoff ground for your writing.

**Time**

You may prefer to write early in the morning. Some other people may like to write in the night. Others like to write in the evening; after their class work. The time you choose to write can affect your attitude and efficiency in writing. That is why you must know yourself and the time that is suitable for your writing. And when you have found that a particular time is suitable for your writing, you should try to practice always. Like an exercise that requires a regular practice, a repeated pattern of behavior will provide a sense of progress for your creative work. Also, if a medical doctor places you on a diet, you must keep to it always so that it can have the expected results on you. The same way, you must always write at a time suitable for you so that you can have a mastery of the art.

**Place**

The place where you write is also important. If you are writing in a computer laboratory, you have to adapt to that place. If you write in long hand, you can decide to choose the place yourself. But as you do this, keep distractions at a minimum. You may not like to write where there are distractions like a television set, refrigerator, or in the cafeteria and other noisy environments. If you know this about yourself, you will avoid such places so that you can make progress in your writing. As a writer, you are not different from a song writer or a musician who may decide to write or compose his songs or rehearse by the seashore, forest, garden or a mountainous area.

**Materials**

You will need writing materials like pen, paper, pencil, writing pads, notebooks, computer sets. You can do your writing with all of these. Only that you need to know which of the writing materials you are more comfortable writing with. Do you like to make your draft with a computer set or scribble something on a jotter to enable you take off the actual writing? You must know how you feel writing with any of these before you can say you are comfortable or not or before you can engage in a regular practice (Reid, 2002).

**1.2 Types of Creative writing**

Creative writing is the pursuit of artistic ends through the written word. Fiction, non-fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, prose poem, memoir—the possibilities for the form that your writing, and thus your message, may take are as diverse and numerous as there are writers writing. And as a creative writer, just as important as your final product is the process by which that product comes to be—how you develop your own personal toolbox of skills, strategies, and styles is going have an impact on the form your final product will take. Generally, we have two broad areas of creative writing: Fiction and Nonfiction. The main difference between fiction and nonfiction is the basis of fact. Nonfiction is not necessarily hundred percent true, many memoirs seem to stretch the notion of being nonfiction, all the time, but nonfiction is differentiated from fiction in that it is based on a set of facts.

**1.2.1 Fictional**

Fiction writing allows human creatively to run limitless, creating stories that probe every facet of life and the human experience. This very openness, however, is what can make it seem so challenging—even if you know what you want to write about. Fiction refers to prose stories based in the imagination of authors. The essence of fiction is narration: the relating or recounting of a sequence of events or actions.

Genres of fiction involves all imaginative works and includes short story, parables, myth, romance, novella, novel, poetry, and drama, etc.

**The Novel:** this is a full-length imaginative prose that is extended in narration, and assembles many characters and a wide range ofhuman experiences. It has an elaborate plot and a complexcharacterization.

**The Novelette**: this one is a shorter form of the novel with a less complicated plot and characterization.

**The Short Story:** this is a work of fiction which centres on one or more major characters. It has an artificial pattern of plot, thoughts andactions of characters. Its narration of events is usually simple andthe story itself is full of suspense, surprise and expectation. A goodexample is, Chinua Achebe’s *Girls At War*.

**1.2.2 Non- fictional**

Creative non-fiction is a relatively recently recognized “genre” that involves writing from personal experience and/or reporting on other peoples’ experiences. Creative nonfiction encompasses memoir writing, biography and autobiography, oral history, and inspired reportage on almost any subject. It involves writing about actual events in your own life and/or others’ lives, conveying your message through the use of literary techniques such as characterization, plot, setting, dialogue, narrative and personal reflection.

Anything from journalism to biography to self-help to essays can be nonfiction. There is such a wide range of possibilities of what nonfiction can be; as the name states, it is nearly everything that is “not fiction." There are many subgenres of nonfiction. Some of them include: memoir, autobiography, biography, essay, history, journalism, letters legal or professional documents, etc.

**Memoir:** A memoir is a longer piece of creative non-fiction that delves deep into a writer's personal experience. It typically uses multiple scenes/stories as a way of examining a writer's life (or an important moment in a writer's life). It is usually, but not necessarily, narrative.

**Autobiography:** "Auto" means self, "bio" means life and "graphy" means writing. An autobiography is the story of a person’s life told by that person. It is written from the first person point of view, using pronouns like I and me. Autobiographies are often written for a purpose to entertain, persuade, inform, or express an opinion.

**Biography:** A biography is the story of a person’s life as told by someone else. It is written in the third-person point of view. The writer, or biographer, gets information by conducting interviews and by reading letters, diaries, and documents. Biographies contain some of the same elements as fiction, such as characters and setting.

When you are writing a nonfiction story, keep in mind the fact that since it is based on actual events, sometimes these actual events involve other people. You need to be aware of how you paint someone you know in your nonfiction if you plan on publishing the piece or sharing it in any way. Something that you might find small and fun someone close to you might find embarrassing or even hurtful. Make sure you understand not only your audience but your cast of characters. Creative non-fiction should include accurate and well-researched information, hold the interest of the reader, and potentially blur the realms of fact and fiction in a pleasing, literary style while remaining grounded in fact.

***Unit Exercise***

***Dear Students! Here are some questions for you to answer and review this unit as well. Therefore, attempt all questions and get more on concepts of creative writing.***

1. *Mention some sources for creative writing.*
2. *Creative writing exists for certain reasons. Explain.*
3. *How does the keeping of diaries different from when you write as a professional?*
4. *How would you advice a young creative writer on the use of the three W’s in creative writing?*
5. *Define the concepts ‘writing situation’ and ‘communication of ideas.’*

**Unit Two: Non- Fictional Writings**

A story grows from real and imagined experience. Nonfiction is a type of writing that deals with real people, places, and events. It contains factual information, but the writer can arrange the information in any way he chooses. The main characteristic of non-fiction is that it is a text writing that deals with real events and people. Characters, settings, and events must conform to what is true. The story can be modified by the author but it cannot be manipulated by the writer’s imagination. The types of nonfiction include autobiography, biography, essay, informative article, interview, and more others. A newspaper article, a set of instructions, and an encyclopedia article are also forms of nonfiction.

Creative nonfiction usually takes reality as its origin. Creative nonfiction deals with realities truthfully – experiences, events, and facts – yet the drive of the writing is the author’s involvement in the story, and writers use every literary device in the book to tell that story well. Carol Bly offers a précis in *Beyond the Writers’ Workshop*: ‘All you have to do is be truthful, tell things in your personal voice and revealing your own life circumstances through anecdote or narrative and revealing the meanings you attach to those circumstances, rather than arguing the point’ (2001: xvii).

Time makes stories of us all; history rewrites us. Creative writing explores the narrative of humanity moving through time, and creative nonfiction makes those realities readable. With such vigilant aims, you can see that creative nonfiction shares many of the perceptual and philosophical possibilities of poetry and fiction, but it reaches out even further to readers: it teaches to some extent; it has a purpose beyond entertainment or art for art’s sake.

Creative nonfiction exercises an almost incredible gravity. Playwrights, novelists and journalists are pulled into it along with popular scientists, psychologists and mathematicians. Poets use their perceptual and linguistic precision to create exact and resonant pictures of reality. History scholars discover untapped public audiences for their knowledge as ‘narrative historians’. If you have a story to share, you will use any device of literary craft to tell it well or at the very least clearly.

In creative nonfiction, devices are used that will include many of the characteristic methods of the practice of fiction. These might include story-like qualities such as ‘hooking’ the reader with the first sentence ; developing convincing real-life scenes and characters; using linked events and narrative; writing description vividly and tautly; creating and maintaining a credible point of view and setting; and using speech and dialogue compellingly. Reality must be transformed into literature, but remain recognizable and grounded in life and vivid detail. Here some distinct types of the non-fiction writings discussed below.

**2.1 Biography**

Biography is the story of a person’s life told by someone else. It is written in the third person. The biography of the famous author Sebahat Gebregzabher is a great example! The biography is written by another author Zenebe Wela entitled 'Mastawesha'. In writing a biography, the biographer gets information by conducting interviews and reading letters and diaries. Biographies contain some elements of fiction, such as characters and setting. The sole purpose of a biography is to present an accurate account of the subject’s life. The author makes an honest effort to interpret the life in order to offer a unified impression of the character, mind and personality, accomplishments, goals of the subject , the person’s environment such as, where, when and how they lived , and shows how the person affects other people. The author of a biography focuses on the person’s character, career, place in history, and the uniqueness of the character’s experience.

**How to Write a Biography**

Before writing any biography, a biographer should remember that the purpose of a biography is to report on a person’s life in an informative and exciting manner. At the end of a biography, the reader should feel that they know the subject on a personal level’. Many biographies are written in chronological order. Biographers use primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are material from or directly related to the past (e.g. letters, diaries, newspapers or photographs). Secondary sources are documents which discuss information originally presented elsewhere (e.g. other biographies, reference books, textbooks & journals).

To write a biography you should find out the basic facts of the person's life. Think about what else you would like to know about the person, and what parts of their life you want to write most about. (I.e. if your assessment is about being famous, you will need to write more about the famous events which this person was involved in. The format of a biography has:

1. **Beginning**

* Introducing the person
* Name
* Birth date
* What makes this person famous?

1. **Middle**

* Write about some highlights of the person's life.
* Describe and discuss their early life.
* What events shaped or changed this person’s life?
* Did he or she overcome any obstacles?
* What examples from their life illustrate their famous qualities?

1. **Ending**

* Explain why did you write about this person and make conclusions about this person's life.
* What kind of effect did he or she have on the world? Other people?
* Were this person’s accomplishments recognized? How?
* Would the world be better or worse if this person hadn’t lived? How and why?

When a biographer writes his or her biography, he or she should REMEMBER the following points as well.

* Ensure all information written is accurate -double check!!
* Be precise.
* Write in past tense and third person.
* Dates are important and should link to the events you are writing about.
* Write in chronological order.

**2.2 Autobiography**

It is the story of a person’s life told by that person. It is written in the first person. The word autobiography can be broken up into three parts: auto = self, bio = life and graph = writing. It is a chronological, narrative account of the author’s life related to crucial historical events. An autobiography can be read just like a story. It is usually a long work that covers a long part of the writer’s life. A reader can notice that the narrator of the story keeps using the pronouns “I” or “me”. That’s because autobiographies are written in the first person point of view. The author of an autobiography wants to share a personal evaluation of actions and speculates on the significance of certain actions and events. Examples of Autobiographies are journals, diaries, letters, and memoirs. Therefore, an autobiography

* Has the main character who is the author.
* Recounts key incidents, or events in the author’s life.
* Describes major influences (people, events, places) on the writer, and
* Describes interactions between the writer and significant people in his or her life.

Autobiography is different from diary, journal, and memoir. A diary is a daily journal of one's thoughts, feelings, moods, actions, activities, and so on. It is not usually intended for an audience. It's personal. An autobiography is a book about a person's life that can include information about themselves given to them from others like parents, bosses, friends, and relatives. It can also include thoughts, feelings, and moods and other subjective observations which are usually expressed within the context of events, actions, and activities. It's written by the person whose life it's about with the intention of being published. A journal is a record of events or matters of personal interest kept by any one for his own use, in which entries are made day by day, or as the events occur. Now usually implying something more elaborate than a diary. A memoir on the other hand covers one specific aspect of the writer’s life while an autobiography focuses on the chronology of the writer’s entire life.

**How to Write Autobiography**

Every person has an interesting story to tell and writing your autobiography is a great way to share it with people. But why do you want to do it? This is the first question you will need to ask yourself before you actually sit down to write an autobiography. Pursue the following activities or tasks to write good autobiography.

* Reflect on the following questions: What is your motivation for writing your biography? Ask yourself these questions: • Am I interested in passing on my family history to future generations? • Am I recording my personal history? Is it my personal values and philosophies? Is it when I underwent a personal transformation?
* Lists and getting started: Once you have decided your reasons for setting down your personal memoirs you are going to be writing a lot of lists. This is where just spending time thinking about things and jotting them down will help you build the structure of your personal memoir, your autobiography. Here are a few subjects for lists and the short descriptions that go with them that will get you started. make your own list of questions and jot down the answers.
* Start with a simple list and then expand upon it so that you build up short word pictures: Places, People, Events and Experiences. Once you start you will get the idea and the memories will start flowing. One thought will lead to another and soon you will have filled your first notebook.
* Deciding on an autobiographical style: There are many different ways to tell your story and once you have your lists started you can begin to consider the style you want to tell it in. What point of view are you going to use in telling your story? Are you going to tell your story in the first person or from the viewpoint of another person?
* Autobiography structure: Now that you have your lists developed and you have decided on your perspective, it’s time to put your outline into a structure. Organize your lists into a structure: themes and focus.
* Editing Your Autobiography: “How long should it be?” What are the key points of your story, what are the most relevant things in your life – family, career, travel, or all of these with equal emphasis? What will your readers find most interesting? Usually readers like to discover more about the person whose story they are reading. Be honest and write from the heart and allow your readers to feel your emotions and form a picture in their mind from your words. Talk about your struggles and triumphs, the strong emotions and if difficult decisions had to be made write about how you made your decisions. After you have done the rewrite, it is time to think about the title and chapter headings. Certainly you can find a good title from one of the strongest themes of your autobiography. It is quiet important to find more interesting title than “My Life”.

**Sample Autobiography**

(1) My name is Christopher Columbus; I am the son of Domenico Colombo and Susanna Fontanarossa. I live at Genoa, Italy. My siblings are Bartolomeo, Giovanni and Giacorno. My name has various forms, in Latin Christophorus Columbus, Genoese Christoffa Corombo and in Italian Cristoforo Colombo .

(2) When I was still young, I used to help my father in working to his cheese stand as a helper. Even in my young age, I used to dream of sailing and discovering lands through voyages.

(3) I never entered a formal education, but I learn Latin, Portuguese, Castilian and be widely knowledgeable in Astronomy, Geography and History by reading works of Ptolemy, Marco Polo and Pope John Pius II.

(4) Through my persistence in achieving my dream to become a sailor, I was able to discover the land now called America, My exploration was able to prove that the Earth is round. Aside from those I was also able to discover the island of Japan and a lot more.

(5) As a typical European guy, I have light colored eyes, light skin complexion, blonde hair and a height about 6 feet tall. I am a persistent kind of person, once I have a dream I will do all my best to achieve it.

(6) One of the biggest problems that I encountered is when kings and queens from different nations keep on neglecting my proposal to sail west and discover lands, but through my persistence I was able to convince the queen of Spain and allow me to sail west including all the needed materials for sailing.

(7) In the near future I would like to sail more and discover more lands and name me as its discoverer.

(8) If there is a song that would represent my personality, that will be Don’t Stop Believing by the Glee Cast. The Line “Don’t stop Believing, Hold on to the feeling.” simply shows my persistent side, that if you have a dream don’t stop in achieving it and believe that you have all the knowledge and skills to achieve it.

The above sample autobiography tells us in each paragraph as follows:

* 1st Paragraph – Personal Information ,2nd Paragraph – Early Life , 3rd Paragraph - Education , 4th Paragraph – Accomplishments , 5th Paragraph - Descriptions , 6th Paragraph - Obstacles , 7th Paragraph – Future Plans , 8th Paragraph – A Song of Personality

**2.3. Diary**

A diary is a set of notes about what one is thinking, doing, feeling at a particular moment. A diary entry is a very personal kind of writing. The format of diary writing involves:

* Date/day
* Salutation ‘Dear Diary’
* Heading of the entry
* Contents of the diary entry
* Signature

When someone wants to write a diary, s/he should remember the following points:

* Creativity, imagination and expression in diary writing are tested.
* You should write as if you have really been a part of the situation.
* It is written in the first person.
* One does not write about things experienced on a daily basis. Only matters of some significance are recorded.
* It is a secret record of one’s life, so one can be very honest about one’s feelings and emotions.

There are many reasons people keep a diary. For some, it's a way to nurture their creativity. Writing in a diary can help spark new ideas or develop thoughts. For other people, keeping a diary is a way to stay emotionally healthy. Writing in a safe space can help you process past experiences. A diary is also a way of keeping a record of what happened and when. Others keep a diary of things that they're thankful for, as a way to be more in tune with the good things in their life. And some people keep a diary as a way to improve themselves or follow through on changes they're trying to make. You can keep a diary for any reason that interests you.

While there are no hard and fast rules to keeping a diary, there are conventions that many diary keepers follow. Following conventions can make things easier. Rather, you can benefit from the experience of other people. One common convention when keeping a diary is to write the date at the top of each entry. Some people are very specific when writing the date, including the exact time of day that it is. Other people might simply write the month or year. The main idea here is that diaries are often organized chronologically, by date. Another convention that some people follow is to write to their diary as though it's a living person or entity. For example, one very famous diary-keeper, Anne Frank, called her diary 'Kitty.' She began each diary entry by writing 'Dear Kitty.' Beyond those conventions, a diary can take on many different formats. For example, some people add drawings, or artwork into their diary entries. You can do whatever helps you, the diary-keeper, get down the thoughts, emotions, ideas or events that you're trying to capture.

**Diary Guidelines**

1. Any habit will be difficult to start and maintain if it's hard to do. You have to start it and keep up with it. You have to find a way to write that works for you, that is your style.
2. When you're writing in your journal, it's important to just write whatever you feel like, without worrying about who might be reading. Simply writing 100% honestly about your feelings or your ideas can help you work through them. This diary is for you. It is to help you remember. It is for you to share if you want to.
3. Starting and keeping a daily habit can be very difficult, especially these days when so much in our lives is chaotic and unstructured. Try to schedule a time each day to sit down and write.
4. If you have missed a few days in your journal, don't worry - and certainly don't give up! Just fill in the gaps as best you can as soon as you can. Even a short diary entry is better than nothing, and the longer a day stays empty, the harder it is to remember what happened. If you don't have time to go into great detail, even making a simple bullet pointed list can help recall what happened when you have the time to elaborate on the day.
5. Journal entries are like a letter to your future self, and reading back on your past is a great way to get perspective on your life. Writing in your diary can help you recall when momentous occasions happened. You might not realize how important they were until later on. By writing about these events in your diary, you can recall it in great detail whenever you want to remember it.

**2.4 Reflective Writing**

Reflection is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2012) as “The action or process of thinking carefully or deeply about a particular subject, typically involving influence from one's past life and experiences.” Reflection is a way of enabling self-development and deeper learning by looking back at an experience so as to learn from it and then move forward. A person may discuss learning from an experience; reflective writing takes this a stage further by putting the reflection into the more permanent and structured format of a written account and linking it to academic theory.

Reflection offers you the opportunity to consider how your personal experiences and observations shape your thinking and your acceptance of new ideas. Reflective writing can help you to improve your analytical skills because it requires you to express what you think, and more significantly, how and why you think that way. In addition, reflective analysis asks you to acknowledge that your thoughts are shaped by your assumptions and preconceived ideas; in doing so, you can appreciate the ideas of others, notice how their assumptions and preconceived ideas may have shaped their thoughts, and perhaps recognize how your ideas support or oppose what you read.

Reflective writing provides an opportunity for you to gain further insights from your work through deeper reflection on your experiences, and through further consideration of other perspectives from people and theory. Through reflection we can deepen the learning from work. According to Gibbs (1988), it is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience, it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost. It is from the feelings and thoughts emerging from this reflection that generalizations or concepts can be generated. And it is generalizations that allow new situations to be tackled effectively.

**Why do we write reflectively?**

Reflecting on an experience (“Reflection on action”) can help you to make links between theory and practice and between your past and present knowledge. Reflecting on and learning from your experiences can help you to avoid repeating mistakes and move away from acting automatically without thought: it will help you to identify the successful aspects of an experience, and any useful principles which can be applied to other situations.

Reflective Writing:

* Provides a way by which you can make best use of an experience (turning surface learning into deep learning).
* Can be used to record your progress throughout your life.
* Can improve your performance by using the outcome of reflection to inform futurepractice.
* Is a means of learning by making links between theory and your practice, and
* Is a skill which can continue to help you develop professionally after leaving University.

**Models of Reflection**

Reflective writing moves beyond describing, and subjecting your experience to greater scrutiny. In Learning by Doing, Gibbs (1988) outlines the stages for a ‘Structured Debriefing’, which is based on Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle and which encourage deeper reflection:

**Description**: What is the stimulant for reflection? (Incident, event, theoretical idea) What are you going to reflect on?

**Feelings**: What were your reactions and feelings?

**Evaluation**: What was good and bad about the experience? Make value judgments.

**Analysis**: What sense can you make of the situation? Bring in ideas from outside the experience to help you. What was really going on?

**Conclusions (general)**: What can be concluded, in a general sense, from these experiences and the analyses you have undertaken?

**Conclusions (specific)**: What can be concluded about your own specific, unique, personal situation or ways of working?

**Personal Action plans**: What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time? What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learnt?

Bloom (1964) identified different levels of thinking processes, which he presented in a hierarchy (table 1); these can also be used as a framework for more thorough reflection. They move from knowing, evidenced through recalling information, through to evaluating, evidenced through making systematic judgments of value.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Increasing**  **Difficulty** | **Process** | **Explanation** |
| **Knowledge** | Recognition and recall of information - describing events |
| **Comprehension** | Interprets, translates or summarizes given information - demonstrating understanding of events |
| **Application** | requires applying information, demonstrating principles or rules, and using what was learnt, or experienced |
| **Analysis** | Separates wholes into parts until relationships are clear – breaks down experiences. requires to identify reasons, uncover evidence, and reach conclusions; |
| **Synthesis** | Combines elements to form new entity from the original one - draws on experience and other evidence to suggest new insights. |
| **Evaluation** | Involves acts of decision making, or judging based on criteria or rationale - makes judgments about |

Table 1: Levels or models of thinking processes in reflective writing

**Practicing reflective writing**

* Be aware of the purpose of your reflective writing and state if it is appropriate.
* Reflective writing requires practice and constant standing back from oneself.
* Practice reflecting writing on the same event /incident through different people’s viewpoints and disciplines.
* Deepen your reflection / reflective writing with the help of others through discussing issues with individuals and groups, getting the points of others.
* Always reflect on what you have learnt from an incident, and how you would do something differently another time.
* Try to develop your reflective writing to include the ethical, moral, historical and socio-political contexts where these are relevant.

***Activity 2.3***

*Read the following three accounts of a presentation at a team meeting in the workplace by someone after graduating. The accounts of the same event are written at two different levels of reflection. Read the accounts and consider how they are written. Presentation "A" and "B" are done for you.*

***The Presentation***

***-A-***

*I had to take an agenda item to the weekly team meeting in my third week of working at PIGG PLC. I had to talk about the project that I am on (creating a new database for the management information system). I had done a presentation before and then I relied on my acting skills. Despite the acting, I spent quite a bit of time preparing it in the way that I have seen others make similar presentations.*

*The presentation at the last team meeting, given by my colleague, went well – she used Power Point and I decided to use it. I decided that a good presentation comes from good planning and having all the figures that anyone might request so I spent a long time in the preparation and I went in feeling confident.*

*However, I became nervous when I realized they were all waiting for me to speak and my nerves made my voice wobble. I did not know how to stop it. Early on, I noticed that people seemed not to understand what I was saying despite the Power Point. Using Power Point meant that people received my presentation both through what I was saying and what I had prepared on the slides. In a way that meant they got it twice but I noticed that Mrs. Shaw (my boss) repeated bits of what I had said several times and once or twice answered quest ions for me. This made me feel uncomfortable. I felt it was quite patronizing and I was upset. Later my colleagues said that she always does it. I was disappointed that my presentation did not seem to have gone well. I thought about the presentation for several days and then talked with Mrs. Shaw about the presentation (there was no-one else). She gave me a list of points for improvement next time. They included:*

*- putting less on Power Point;*

*- talking more slowly;*

*- calming myself down in some way.*

*I also have to write down the figures in a different way so that they can be understood better. She suggested that I should do a presentation to several of the team sometime next week so that I can improve my performance.*

***-B-***

*I am writing this back in my office. It all happened 2 days ago. Three weeks after I started at PIGG PLC had to take an agenda item to the team meeting. I was required to report on my progress in the project on which I am working. I am developing a new database for the management information system of the company. I was immediately worried. I was scared about not saying the right things and not being able to answer questions properly. I did a presentation in my course at university and felt the same about it initially. I was thinking then, like this time, I could use my acting skills. Both times that was helpful in maintaining my confidence at first, at least. Though the fact that I was all right last time through the whole presentation may not have helped me this time! I decided to use Power Point. I was not very easy about its use because I have seen it go wrong so often. However, I have not seen anyone else give a presentation here without using it - and learning to use Power Point would be valuable. I was not sure, when it came to the session, whether I really knew enough about running Power Point. (How do you know when you know enough about something? – dummy runs, I suppose, but I couldn’t get the laptop when I wanted it). When it came to the presentation, I really wanted to do it well – as well as the presentations were done the week before. Maybe I wanted too much to do well. Previous presentations have been interesting, informative and clear and I thought the handouts from them were good (I noticed that the best gave enough but not too much information).*

*In the event, the session was a disaster and has left me feeling uncomfortable in my work and I even worry about it at home. I need to think about why a simple presentation could have such an effect on me. The Power Point went wrong (I think I clicked on the wrong thing). My efforts to be calm and ‘cool’ failed and my voice went wobbly – that was, anyway, how it felt to me. My colleague actually said afterwards that I looked quite calm despite what I was feeling (I am not sure whether she meant it or was trying to help me). When I think back to that moment, if I had thought that I still looked calm (despite what I felt), I could have regained the situation. As it was, it went from bad to worse and I know that my state became obvious because Mrs. Shaw, my boss, began to answer the questions that people were asking for me.*

*I am thinking about the awful presentation again – it was this time last week. I am reading what I wrote earlier about it. Now I return to it, I do have a slightly different perspective. I think that it was not as bad as it felt at the time. Several of my colleagues told me afterwards that Mrs. Shaw always steps in to answer questions like that and they commented that I handled her intrusion well. That is interesting. I need to do some thinking about how to act next time to prevent this interruption from happening or to deal with the situation when she starts. I might look in the library for that book on assertiveness.*

*I have talked to Mrs. Shaw now too. I notice that my confidence in her is not all that great while I am still feeling a bit cross. However, I am feeling more positive generally and I can begin to analyze what I could do better in the presentation. It is interesting to see the change in my attitude after a week. I need to think from the beginning about the process of giving a good presentation... I am not sure how helpful was my reliance on my acting skills\*. Acting helped my voice to be stronger and better paced, but I was not just trying to put over someone else’s lines but my own and I needed to be able to discuss matters in greater depth rather than just give the line.*

*I probably will use Power Point again. I have had a look in the manual and it suggests that you treat it as a tool – not let it dominates and not uses it as a means of presenting myself. That is what I think I was doing. I need not only to know how to use it, but I need to feel sufficiently confident in its use so I can retrieve the situation when things go wrong. That means understanding more than just the sequence of actions.*

*As I am writing this, I am noticing how useful it is to go back over things I have written about before. I seem to be able to see the situation differently. The first time I wrote this, I felt that the presentation was dreadful and that I could not have done it differently. Then later I realized that there were things I did not know at the time (e.g. about Mrs. Shaw and her habit of interrupting). I also recognize some of the areas in which I went wrong. At the time I could not see that. It was as if my low self esteem got in the way. Knowing where I went wrong, and admitting the errors to myself gives me a chance to improve next time – and perhaps to help Mrs. Shaw to improve in her behavior towards us!*

***Features of the accounts those are indicative of different levels of reflection***

***A) This account is descriptive and it contains little reflection.***

* *The account describes what happened, sometimes mentioning past experiences, sometimes anticipating the future – but all in the context of an account of the event.*
* *There are some references to Marianne’s emotional reactions, but she has not explored how the reactions relate to her behavior.*
* *Ideas are taken on without questioning them or considering them in depth.*
* *The account is written only from Marianne’s point of view.*
* *External information is mentioned but its impact on behavior is not subject to consideration.*
* *Generally one point is made at a time and ideas are not linked.*

***B) An account showing evidence of some reflection.***

* *There is description of the event, but where there are external ideas or information, the material is subjected to consideration and deliberation.*
* *The account shows some analysis.*
* *There is recognition of the worth of exploring motives for behavior*
* *There is willingness to be critical of action.*
* *Relevant and helpful detail is explored where it has value.*
* *There is recognition of the overall effect of the event on self – in other words, there is some ‘standing back’ from the event.*

**Unit Three: Fictional Writing**

Creative writing is a many-sided (ad) venture. There can be many approaches to it. Indeed, one could assume that there is really no distinction between a good novel, and a good play and a good poem; that they are all ‘phases’ of one phenomenon – products of the imagination. But in fact, all writing is *CRAFT*. From such “crafting”, yes, a learner or reader could extract ‘knowledge’ of various kinds, from various works of *many* great and famous *writers*. Creative writing needs to be “artificially” separated into fiction (novel), drama (playwriting) and poetry (poetic composing-like music).

Art depends heavily on feeling, intuition, taste. It is feeling, not some rule, that tells the abstract painter to put his yellow here and there, not there, and may later tell him that it should have been brown or purple or pea-green. It's feeling that makes the composer break surprisingly from his key, feeling that gives the writer the rhythms of his sentences, the pattern of rise and fall in his episodes, the proportions of alternating elements, so that dialogue goes on only so long before a shift to description or narrative summary or some physical action. The great writer has an instinct for these things. He has, like a great comedian, an infallible sense of timing. And his instinct touches every thread of his fabric, even the murkiest fringes of symbolic structure. He knows when and where to think up and spring surprises, those startling leaps of the imagination that characterize all of the very greatest writing.

Obviously this is not to imply that cool intellect is useless to the writer. What Fancy sends, the writer must order by Judgment. He must think out completely, as coolly as any critic, what his fiction means, or is trying to mean. He must complete his equations, think out the subtlest implications of what he's said, get at the truth not just of his characters and action but also of his fiction's form, remembering that neatness can be carried too far, so that the work begins to seem fussy and overwrought, anal compulsive, unspontaneous, and remembering that, on the other hand, mess is no adequate alternative. He must think as cleanly as a mathematician, but he must also know by intuition when to sacrifice precision for some higher good, how to simplify, take short cuts, keep the foreground up there in front and the background back.

The first and last important rule for the creative writer, then, is that though there may be rules (formulas) for ordinary, easily publishable fiction—imitation fiction—there are no rules for real fiction, any more than there are rules for serious visual art or musical composition. There are techniques— hundreds of them—that, like carpenter's tricks, can be studied and taught; there are moral and aesthetic considerations every serious writer must sooner or later brood on a little, whether or not he broods in a highly systematic way; there are common mistakes—infelicities ways of doing things—that show up repeatedly in unsuccessful fiction and can be shown for what they are by analysis of how they undermine the fiction's intended effects; there are, in short, a great many things every serious writer needs to think about; but there are no rules. Name one, and instantly some literary artist will offer us some new work that breaks the rule yet persuades us. Invention, after all, is art's main business, and one of the great joys of every artist comes with making the outrageous acceptable, as when the painter makes sharply clashing colors harmonious or a writer in the super-realistic tradition introduces—convincingly—a ghost.

On reflection we see that the great writer's authority consists of two elements. The first we may call, loosely, his sane humanness; that is, his trustworthiness as a judge of things, a stability Aesthetic Law and Artistic Mystery rooted in the sum of those complex qualities of his character and personality (wisdom, generosity, compassion, strength of will) to which we respond, as we respond to what is best in our friends, with instant recognition and admiration, saying, "Yes, you're right, that's how it is!" The second element, or perhaps I should say force, is the writer's absolute trust (not blind faith) in his own aesthetic judgments and instincts, a trust grounded partly in his intelligence and sensitivity—his ability to perceive and understand the world around him—and partly in his experience as a craftsman; that is (by his own harsh standards), his knowledge, drawn from long practice, of what will work and what will not.

What this means, in practical terms for the student writer, is that in order to achieve mastery he must read widely and deeply and must write not just carefully but continually, thoughtfully assessing and reassessing what he writes, because practice, for the writer as for the concert pianist, is the heart of the matter. Though the literary dabbler may write a fine story now and then, the true writer is one for whom technique has become, as it is for the pianist, second nature. Ordinarily this means university education, with courses in the writing of fiction, and poetry as well. Some important writers have said the opposite—for instance, Ernest Hemingway, who is quoted as having said that the way for a writer to learn his craft is to go away and write.

* 1. **Writing Fiction**

**Planning**

My work habits are simple: long periods of thinking, short periods of writing.

*Ernest Hemingway*

Some fiction writers say blithely that they never plan. Many plan a little, or occasionally, and a few plan in meticulous detail. Others write copious notes, find these turning into a story or novel, and then pause to plan it. Should you plan? When should you plan? How should you plan? How detailed should a plan be, and how rigorously should you apply it?

**To Plan or Not to Plan**

Could it be that beginner writers need to plan and experienced writers don’t? Let’s look at the working methods of a range of contemporary novelists: John Grisham always starts with a plot idea, not a character, and then writes 45-page outlines, with two paragraphs per chapter explaining what will happen next. P. D. James takes three years to write each of her novels, which includes eighteen months of plotting and planning before she starts to write. James Ellroy plans his novels thoroughly first. He wrote a 164-page outline of White Jazz, for example, and a 211-page outline of L.A. Confidential, admitting to a 15 per cent ‘improvisation factor’ in the ‘fever-driven voice’ of the final drafts. Sue Grafton works her mystery novels out on three levels: the apparent mystery, as understood by her detective and her readers, the real mystery, revealed at the end, and the turning point, revelation or peeling away that links the other two levels. An organized mind, and knowing exactly what she wants to say before she begins to write, allows Colleen McCullough to write a first draft quickly and cleanly, with no editing or correcting. John Irving also knows as much of the story as possible, if not the whole story, before he begins. Patience and planning add up to foreknowledge, he says, which gives authority to the voice and confidence in the telling. He claims that without knowing the story that lies ahead a writer would need to be very confident in the powers of the voice that told it.

In contrast, the American crime writer, Tony Hillerman, never knows exactly where the plot is headed when he begins a book. By the end of it he may have uncovered what the crime was, and what motivated it, but still not have worked out how to end the story. David Malouf often has no idea what’s going to happen in the middle when he shapes a novel but does know what the ending will be. James Lee Burke doesn’t allow himself to see more than two scenes around David Foster explains his approach in this way: I’ve no idea where my stories are going. I’ve only the vaguest idea of what I’m doing, too, until it’s done…I rely on intuition. Although…I work with words, ideas, characters and narratives, I do write a novel holistically. I don’t start at the beginning and finish at the end. I work like a painter on a painting. I am still working on the first page as I am working on the last page…When a novel has reached publishable length I am on the alert for an ending. If my own experience is any guide, I find that I need to plan my crime novels in meticulous detail in order to stay a step ahead of the reader, and avoid coincidences, dead ends, contradictory time-lines and unlikely outcomes. However, for other fiction I tend to use only brief sketch plans, so that the writing is a voyage of discovery, stemming from the conjunction of a character, a situation and a sense of promise.

No doubt personality traits are a factor in why some fiction writers plan and others don’t. Even so the thinking a writer does before and during the writing of a story or novel is a form of planning, and most good fiction is achieved in a mixture of writing, planning, rewriting, finer planning and further revision, so the question of whether to plan or not is moot. But it may be useful for new writers to try planning their work, but they should not be afraid to abandon a plan, or the habit of meticulous planning, if their instincts tell them to.

**When Should You Plan**?

A certain amount of planning can help if you’re a new writer, feeling uncertain about a new project, or starting a complex work, but there are other instances where it may be advisable. Most novels require more thought than most short stories, for example. Several characters usually means several subplots to juggle, and not only should the characters behave consistently, from convincing motives, but their various relationships with one another should be understandable. All the strands of the plot, and how they are interrelated, should be accounted for at the end. Also, the movement of a novel depends upon peaks and troughs (tension and the release of tension), creating and maintaining suspense, turning points, and resolutions. Without a certain amount of planning it may not be easy to hold so many factors in your head, let alone hope that you’ll be able to weave them together elegantly and neatly.

In the case of genre fiction, certain conventions may apply. Take romance fiction, for example. There are many different kinds, such as traditional, Gothic, modern, hospital, teenage, historical, and thriller. They are heavily plotted and fast moving, with few characters and few secondary. characters Long passages of description and introspection are rare. Their plots may evolve from a situation like this: A young woman, doing good works (as a governess on an outback cattle station, for example), is attracted to a young man. Various factors keep them apart, such as his unhappy and unsuitable involvement with another, more sophisticated woman. Further complications may delay the path of true love; the young woman becomes involved with a man who turns out to be a bounder, for example. At the end of the novel, perhaps as a result of a dramatic incident, the young man realises that the young woman is the one for him after all, and they acknowledge their love for each other. Readers know there’ll be a happy outcome, but the writer will aim to make it appear that this time there won’t be, to maintain the tension that pulls the reader along.

Experienced romance writers may write their novels quickly, without planning, but new romance novelists are well advised to read widely in the genre and plan according to the conventions of it. Indeed, some romance publishers provide ‘tip sheets’ for new writers. Finally, it’s not unusual for fiction writers to stop in the course of a novel or story to rethink what they’ve written and write a plan to get themselves out of trouble. Others begin their stories or novels without knowing what the ending will be until the writing is well advanced, at which stage they may then stop to plan the final stages. And many will re-plan as new ideas occur to them during the writing. If necessary they will go back and unravel and restitch the work to accommodate the new material—but only if the seams don’t show. It’s better to save a pleasing but unworkable idea, character or incident for a new piece of fiction than let it spoil the one you are working on.

**How to Plan**

There is no right or wrong methods of planning. Agatha Christie liked to muse on plot and character for several weeks as she went about her day-to-day domestic affairs, and then, when the story had taken shape to her satisfaction, sit down and write it. Many writers jot notes, queries and skeleton outlines on scraps of paper, at the beginning and as the need arises, constantly revising and discarding as they go, or write plot summaries and storylines, simple declarative sentences along the lines of ‘and then, and then…’ Some writers use a card system, marking characters, scenes and incidents on separate cards and shuffling them around as plot solutions, complications and contradictions arise. Others use whiteboards or pin butchers’ paper to the wall, listing characters and their motives, goals and obstacles, tracing intersections and influences, and locating characters in terms of time and place.

The planning might also involve character planning, in which the broad stages of a character’s personality or growth are plotted. These kinds of mapping and diagramming can enable writers to view everything at a glance, which is important when managing a large cast. Whatever your preferred approach, it’s important to spot coincidences, contradictions, implausibilities and wasted material before it’s too late, and also identify where, when and how your characters intersect with one another. A timeline or calendar of events and characters can be useful. I once wrote a crime novel in which, logically, one character received a letter on a Sunday, another character must have been in two places at a crucial stage of the plot, and a third character cropped up again after a gap of two hundred pages. Fortunately my editor identified these mistakes before the book went to print, but next time it might be a reader, so don’t assume that an editor will always spot your contradictions. Coincidences and convenient twists of fate happen in real life (for example, a lottery win by a family who were about to lose everything), but should be used sparingly and cautiously in fiction so that they don’t spill over into convenience (to write yourself out of a corner or conveniently end a troublesome story, for example).

Good planning can also help with pace and structure. No one wants to read a novel in which the pace is unrelievedly hectic, for example, or the central mystery is revealed too early, or tension is allowed to dissipate, or the reversals are telegraphed too obviously. Remember the role that causality plays: try withholding and delaying tactics to increase suspense, get readers to exercise their minds about the wrong person or problem, and ask yourself what the reader might want to happen next, then subvert it. Yes, these may be the ‘tricks’ of a mystery writer, but they will make even the most ‘literary’ novel more gripping.

**Testing a Plan**

Pay attention to character as well as storyline when you plan, so that you don’t force unlikely actions onto characters or indulge in character at the expense of action. When thinking about both the main storyline and whether or not to use particular scenes or incidents, how to use them, and what their outcomes should be, I tend to ask questions like these: What does she want? Would he do that, given the sort of person he is? Where did she learn to do that? Is he motivated strongly enough to act out of character? How far is she likely to go to achieve her aims? What does he want more than anything else? What would happen if she did this instead of that? What is stopping him from doing this?

**Trust Your Instincts**

Never be bound to a plan. If in the course of writing a story or novel your instincts tell you to follow a different character or course of action, then revise or abandon your original plan—after satisfying yourself that the new direction will work, of course. I’m suspicious of writers who say that their characters take over from them; the writer should always be in control, I believe. Your characters might surprise you, but that’s less to do with airy notions of the creative flame and more to do with working subconsciously.

**3.2 Writing Poem**

**Title of poem**

The title is very important because the reader sees your title before reading your poem. Your title, to a large extent attracts the reader to your poem. You should therefore be careful in choosing your title. Remember that your title reflects the subject of your poem. We have two types of title – *descriptive* and *evocative*.

The descriptive title is usually direct and summarizes the poem. Most titles are descriptive. The evocative title is more enticing but does not really reflect the subject. The descriptive title has an air of authority that is like a definition. For example, J. P. Clark’s “Night Rain” is a descriptive title which talks about rain on a particular night and in a particular place. But sometimes, it is difficult to draw a line between the two as a title could be evocative and descriptive.

**Voice**

What is voice in poetry? Every one of us has a unique way of speaking. Just as we have a unique way of speaking, we also have a unique way of writing.However, this does not mean that all the poems we write must be presented in a particular style or pattern. Some scholars talk of public and private poets. The public poets treat public issues that touch generality of populace. They highlight injustice in the society and therefore choose to speak for the poor people. They therefore become the voice for the voiceless, using their poems to speak out against the ills in the society. On the other hand, the private poet is content with expressing the beauty and tranquility around him/her or about other issues. They present personal or private issues or emotion and perspectives. The public poet writes in voices that are strong and critical while voices of the private poet are passive, soothing and placid.

If you read the poems on “Night” you will notice that all poets use night as a metaphor to criticize by highlighting the ills in that society. The poet’s voice is to a large extent influenced by his/her background, education, upbringing and other mannerisms she/he has acquired as she/he was growing up.

***Activity***

*Read the two poems below and indicate the public and private voices.*

**Corrupt land**

A bird flies through the open sky

Carrying massages from the open land

Shot down by a people who wish to lie

An open world killed by the corrupt hand

By Simon Eliasen

**Twilight**

Soft comes the hush of eventide

And song birds hide

In limbs of budded trees

To bid Farewell to setting sun

With lullabies they’ve sung

Each night for centuries.

A lark is winging swiftly home-

Black dot alone-

Beneath Auroral clouds.

All nature makes homeward rush

As twilight’s rosy blush

The eyes of night arouse

*By Margaret Ycavace*

**Persona**

We know that poetry is mainly about self expression. However, that does not mean that the pronoun ‘I’ which we find in some poems refer to the poet. In some cases the poet gives a particular voice to a character in the poem. That character is called the persona. The poet masks him/herself with that persona and speaks through the persona. Speaking through a persona is usually very effective as the persona could be a male, while the poet is a female. The important factor here is that you must ensure that the experiences are related appropriately. The gender or the age of the poet could be different from that of the persona but the poet in the poem masks him/herself by assuming the personality of the character whose experiences are being presented.

The persona can be a historical figure, a character from somebody else’s fiction, an object or a phenomenon. In trying to speak through other voices, the poet gains more insights into the nature of that group. A very good example of the use of persona is found in Wole Soyinka’s “Abiku”. In fact Wole Soyinka uses persona a lot as many of his poems are presented in the 1st person pronoun “I”.

**Narrative**

Some poems like other genres of literature tell a story. The only difference here is that the story is told in verse. However, there are narrative poems like the epics that are not presented strictly in verse. Apart from epic, many poets use verse to tell stories that have recognizable plot lines and are close to reality. Poets have written poems about nature, relationships and other issues in verse

**3.2. 1 Structure**

**Form**

Form is the pattern and structure of the poem. It also refers to style, the devices and techniques used by the writer. Generally, in literature we talk of content and form. Content is the theme and subject matter while form is how the theme is expressed in the work. In this case, form encapsulates all the stylistic elements that the writer utilizes in explicating his theme. Conventionally, the novelist presents his work in chapters, the playwrights in acts and scenes and the poet in lines and stanzas. The poet utilizes words to produce rhythm which is the hallmark of poetry.

**Meter**

The most important aspect of poetry is that the poet creates sound patterns. Meter in poetry therefore is established by the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in its lines. This metric pattern helps you to create sound patterns which in turn produce the rhythmic pattern in a poem. The units of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poem are called feet, and the number of feet determines the type of meter. For instance, when there are five feet consisting of an unstressed syllable and a stressed syllable in each line of a poem especially as in a sonnet, it is called pentameter.

**Line**

Line in poetry as the name implies, is a line of words in the poem. Each line may or may not make sense when it stands alone. A line ranges from one word to as many words as possible. It may be a phrase, a sentence or just one or two words that do not qualify to be called a phrase. Your preoccupation in creating your line is not the meaning but the sound pattern. However you will bear in mind that in the end of a stanza, or a few lines, the words should make sense. Some poets use the punctuation mark to demarcate each unit of thought or to enhance the rhythm of the poem. The punctuation could be at the end of a line or in the middle. Let us read Kalu Uka’s “Earth to Earth” below:

*As if man hung here unblown,*

*Their middlewed buds of love like pollen*

*Late caught, damp in a swollen*

*Drop of rain; or like the hot*

*Tear that chills a fevered pit*

*After heads into bodies socket*

You may have observed that this first stanza of the poem flows from the first line to the last without a full stop. If you read the rest of the poem you will encounter the full stop in the third stanza. It means that you can choose to break your sentence, clause, and phrase at any point in order to make your poem meaningful.

**Rhyme**

Rhyme projects sound pattern in a poem. It explores the “associativeness of sound [and] doesn’t simply take place at the end of lines…” (Herbert 224). Rhyme could occur at any point in a poem. This is achieved through literary devices like assonance, consonance and alliteration. In a poem, rhyme contributes to a large extent, to form. It aids the “integration of the sound of language with the particular shape, tone and sense of a poem” (Herbert 224).

**Stanza**

Stanza is simply the division of your poem into segments or groups of lines according to fixed conventional patterns. In a poem, the basic unit of poetic form is the *verse*, which is the *line.* Lines are organized into longer unit of thought and feelings called *stanza.* There are as different types of stanza forms as there are poems. The number of lines in each stanza that is organized in a particular rhyme pattern produce different types of stanzaic forms like the couplet, tercet, quatrain and many others.

**3.2.2 Poetic Language**

Poetic language is realized through the choice of diction. Prose is defined by Coleridge as words in their best order and poetry as the best words in their best order. It means that the arrangement of words in a very good pattern is the hallmark of literature, but in poetry the poet must make sure that he chooses the best words. This is vital because he does not have the time and space which the novelist and, to a lesser extent the playwright, has.

**Image**

In poetry, the poet recreates his/her “sensory and intellectual experiences in the minds of his readers” (Maxwell-Mahon, 57). Words are the only tools he needs in this re-creative enterprise. The words he chooses determine the success or failure of the enterprise. With an appropriate use of images you can make unfamiliar things familiar and the common ones unfamiliar.

**Symbols**

A symbol is a word, an object, person or a group of words that retains its meaning and could be used to convey another meaning. For instance, a sword is a weapon but it represents war, or justice. Some scholars believe that “some of the poems, which are considered great, are those, which have a symbolic significance.

**Figures of Speech**

These are literary devices which the poet uses to appeal to the imagination of the reader. These devices help the poet to evoke appropriate pictures in the minds of the reader. The mastery of the figures of speech will help you in the creation of a great poem.

**3.2.3 Poetic License**

Poetic license refers to the right or privilege which allows a poet to depart from the normal form or convention in writing his poem. This departure could be in the use of diction, rhyme, metrical pattern and other conventions. This means that a poet can deviate or depart completely from the accepted convention in writing poems. In many such cases, the poet’s intention is to establish a particular poetic effect. This perhaps is what has given rise to different forms in poetry. Some poets no longer pay proper attention to diction, rhyme, imagery to ensure that their poems conform to the order of metrical pattern. This is because they have the poetic license to write the way they feel. However, do not claim that you have poetic license, so use archaic words or spell words wrongly. The emphasis is/should be on language deviation or the poet’s freedom from conventional rules of language.

**3.2. 4. Re-drafting**

This is the most important aspect of creative writing generally and writing of a poem in particular. Most often, when we are reading what we have written, the tendency is for us to read what is in our minds. Sometimes in creative writing, the meaning of the final work is not the original meaning you started with.

Now, get your poem and start the actual re-drafting. Pay particular attention to your idea, the diction, and the figures of speech, sound patterns the images and finally the form. One good step that helps in re-drafting is to read your poem aloud to yourself and to another person. Then re-draft, paying particular attention to the areas of deficiency. Finally give the poem to another person, someone who has a good ear and a good or, at least, passable knowledge of poetry. Evaluate the person’s opinion and incorporate the necessary ones.

**3.2.5.The Final Draft**

You may wonder why I call it the final draft instead of the poem. You are a student and what you have at this stage is still subject to evaluation by your guide/facilitator. What he or she approves becomes your poem.

**3.2 Writing Short Story**

**What is a Short Story?**

As the name implies, the short story is a story that is very short. It develops around a central character. It is presented in a prose narrative form like the novel but shorter in length than the novel. It is so short that it is expected to be read at a sitting. This means that you could start and conclude a short story in less than an hour. A short story should have one dominant impression, and unified effect. You should choose your words carefully to ensure that every word reckonings to the meaning in the story.

The central idea must be obvious so that the reader does not miss it. Your characters, situations setting and action must be related to the central idea or your message. Although it is short, it must have a beginning, middle and an end, with its attendant conflicts, climax and resolution. Unlike the novel where the writer has more time and space to explore more ideas, the short story concentrates on one idea and compresses the characters and incidents to give an immediate impression which the novel cannot give.

The short story begins as close as possible to the conclusion. So, once you start, you should not waste time on copious descriptions of landscapes, environments and characters. Try to arrest the readers’ attention from the first line and move at a racy pace to the conclusion.

There is no fixed length for a short story. A short story could be between three (about 750 to 1500 words) to 20 pages (about 4000 – 7000 words) or slightly more. The essential element in short story is brevity of expression. You must strive for economy in the use of words. You should therefore leave out all descriptions and comments that do not meaningfully advance your theme, reveal your characters or propel your plot.

**The Characters**

The short story’s limitation on length does not allow for use of many characters. Structure your story around one character. Do not include any characters that do not relate with this character or contribute to the central idea. In choosing your characters, you should also decide on your *point of view*. Who is your narrator? It is obviously known that any type point of view has its strengths and weaknesses. The use of the first person, “I” helps you to produce direct impressions and first hand emotions which boost the authenticity of your account. The omniscient narrative helps you to explore and reach out more effectively. Remember to use dialogue when necessary irrespective of the point view you have chosen. In prose narratives, dialogue is usually more effective in producing, immediate effects in your story than indirect speech.

**Getting Started!**

**The First Paragraph**

Are you ready? By now you must have known what to write. Let us try to write the first paragraph of a story that will not be more than two pages.

**"The Story of An Hour"**

*Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.*

*It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message*

Have you written your first paragraph? Is it catchy? Did you create suspense? The story started here is a very simple one based on domestic affairs. You may or may not be able to guess what follows. In the middle of the story we will get the main story.

**Continuing***.*

*She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.*

*There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.*

*She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.*

*There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.*

*She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.*

*She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.*

*There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.*

*Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will--as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.*

*She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.*

*There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.*

*And yet she had loved him--sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!*

*"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.*

*Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhold, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door--you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."*

*"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.*

*Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.*

*She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.*

**Concluding**

*Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.*

*When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease--of the joy that kills.*

**3.3 Outline the Plot of the Novel**

**Definition**

The novel has been defined differently by different scholars. The definitions are as varied as the novelists. The novel is a form of narrative that is presented in prose form. It is like a story that is being told by the author and could be presents in any language. This distinguishes it from other genres of literature like drama that is presented in dialogue and poetry that is presented in verse. Like in drama, the novelist presents characters whose lives and experiences constitute the story.

**Types of Novels**

There are so many types of novels. Here is a list of some of the types of novel. Some novels fall under more than one type. Some techniques used in writing novels (satire, metafiction) might also be argued as their own types. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to show the variety of types: Adventure novel, allegorical novel, anti-novel, apologue, autobiographical novel, best seller or pulp fiction novel, bildungsroman or apprenticeship novel, children’s novel, Christian novel, cult or coterie novel, detective, mystery, thriller novel, dime novel, dystopian novel, epistolary novel, erotic novel, fantasy novel, gothic novel, graphic novel, historical novel, hypertext novel, interactive novel, multicultural novel, novel of manners, pastoral novel, picaresque novel, post modern novel, prequel, proletarian novel, psychological novel, regional novel, roman a clef, roman fleuve (river novel), romance novel, science fiction novel, sentimental novel, sequel, series novel, spy novel, utopian novel, western novel.

Some of these types of novels are categorized according to years of historical experience. The earliest forms of novel are the romance and the picaresque. The classification of novels help in determining or indicating the breath and diversity of the form the great novel transcends such categorization.

**Length**

Just like the length of stories, real or imagined, told in everyday life vary, the length of the novel varies too. It depends on the story and the teller. Some story teller posses the gift of elongating their stories through giving details and vivid description of events and incidents. Others tell stories with less emphasis on the details. Either way, the important factor is the end product. One may fill his stories with unnecessary details that could mar the story. On the other hand, lack of necessary details could make the story dull and uninteresting. So the length depends on you and what you want to write. According to Mahon, “a novel of average length would be approximately 75,000 words… about 2500 words per chapter”. This calculation would give you an average of about 30 chapters.

**Outline**

We have always emphasized that there are no specific rules for creative writing in any literary genre. However, some helpful tips are given to the budding artists. Some writers just start their novels and as they progress, the characters are developed as events unfold. Others draw their outlines and characters sketches before they start. For the purpose of this course, we will adopt the latter approach.

We will draw an outline based on a published novel. We will use Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* for illustration. This is because we do not have the time and space to write a novel here. However, as we go along, you should be working on a novel you could. If you were to write the novel, draw an outline of *Things Fall Apart* not more than 10 sentences or phrases. Compare what you have done with the sample presented below.

1. Okonkwo grows up with a lazy father

2. He determines never to be like his father

3. He works very hard

4. Record great achievements

5. Makes some mistakes

6. The colonial masters arrive with their religion

7. He goes on exile

8. As he comes back the society is no longer the same

9. He fails to recognize or adapt to the changes and dies in the process.

This outline could produce *Things Fall Apart* or any other novel. What makes your novel classic like this novel is your ability to demonstrate “…such mastery of plot construction, such keen psychological insight and such an ability to hold your themes steadily before your mind and pursue them to a logical conclusion” (Palmer 48). Achebe did this in his masterpiece, *Things Fall Apart,* which you should pick read carefully. Can you identify the theme that Achebe kept steadily in mind? You will see it on page 160. “He (referring to the white man) has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart”. In this novel, Achebe presents a once stable community unified by a common belief system and government. The colonial masters came with their own religion and government and destroyed this harmonious society. You can still tell this story differently and achieve the same purpose.

**3.5. Playwright**

Drama is primarily an imitation of human action in a mirror held up to nature and realized on stage. This means that you can base your play on incidents, concepts, persons and experiences. In drama, just like in other forms of creative writing, you have the task of using language in a special way to convey your message in an entertaining manner.

**Theme**

A play presents an idea which the playwright explores to draw attention to it in order to teach, to inform and to entertain the audience. It could be an idea which has been explored by other playwrights but you will fashion it artistically to present it in a fresh way. That idea becomes the theme of your play. As you write and practice, you will grow and mature and with maturity comes the self-confidence you need to handle sub- themes. You could develop an idea from your imagination, personal experience the world around you, an individual or the experiences of other people.

Ideas alone cannot make a play. For instance, corruption is an idea. If you write corruption one hundred times on the pages of your paper, it will not make sense. Let us move a step further, if you write an essay on corruption, it cannot make a play. It becomes a play or drama, through your ability to imaginatively weave a story around it and present it in dialogue form suitable for the stage.

**Imagination**

When we say that you generate an idea from your imagination, it means that the conception of the story is completely from your imagination. Sometimes, as you dramatize the story, the theme emerges. In this case the inspiration comes in form of a story. The idea that emerges from this story is the theme and the story is not based on your personal experience, a story someone told you or the experience of a close relation or friend. It may not be based on an incident you have witnessed or events in your environment. We know that some people already possess the creative talent but those who do not are using this course as a forum for apprenticeship.

**Personal Experience**

You may wish to recall that we said that anybody who has survived his childhood has at least a story in him. You could write a play based on your personal experience. It could be a pleasant, unpleasant, traumatic, serious or unserious experience. It must not necessarily be a childhood experience so it could be a recent experience or something that happened to you a long time ago.

You should note that you are not expected to document the experience exactly the way it happened but an aspect of it which you would recreate *imaginatively* and *artistically*.

**Another Person’s Experience**

Another person’s experience could inspire you. As we have seen above, you could elicit an idea for a possible play from an experience. Notice how the story of other persons told to Enyidie and the way she changes into a play in artistic manner. As a matter of fact the line below by Enyidie, her mother-in-law in the play was what her mother-in-law in real life told her, though not the way it is presented here.

*Enyidie: How can a barren woman give me any rightful place? Does she have any right here? As long as I don’t have grandchildren, this house and everything in it belongs to me. Now let me tell you what you don’t know. The dog in this house has more rights and is recognized more than this barren fool called Ndidi. At least the dog can procreate while this man is incapable of procreation. We are tired of having her patience. Advise her to take her Ndidi elsewhere.*

You can see from the dialogue that the lady was referred to as a man. The mother-in-law refers to her daughter-in-law as a “man” because men do not give birth and since this particular woman has not given birth to a child, she is in the same position with men who lack that capacity.

**An Individual**

We have seen two instances above where ideas for a play could be generated from personal experiences. An individual could also inspire you. The person could be a very good, kind, generous, wicked or brave person. The character of your boss in the office could inspire you to write a play in which you will explore the attribute(s) he/she embodies. Remember that an idea alone cannot make a play. When a personality inspires you, you should use your imagination to create a story and other characters that will act out that story since your story cannot be presented with only one character. This is why it is creative writing.

**Environment**

Incidents, events, and everyday life provide a lot of materials for a creative mind. Weddings, naming ceremonies, graduations, visits of important personalities and other occasions provide ideas for playwriting.

**Practical Steps in Writing the Play**

**3.5.1 What Makes a Play?**

There are basic elements of playwriting which a playwright must be conversant with before writing a play. Some of these elements are peculiar to the dramatic genre because it is realized mainly in performance. However, some of them apply to other genres of literature as well. You need to acquaint yourselves with them to ensure that you apply them appropriately as you write your play.

**3.5.2 Type and Length**

You will have to decide what type of play you want to write. Is it a tragedy or a comedy? Let us limit ourselves for now, to these two types. Remember that tragedy presents “an aspect of human suffering that often ends with the death the sufferer” (Maxwell-Mahon 23). However, not all tragedies end in death. The basic issue is that the tragic hero pursues an ideal that leads to a growing irrationality in his behavior (tragic flaw) which leads him to commit an error of judgment that leads to the catastrophe. It is a serious play. Comedy teaches through amusement and has a happy ending. Concerning length, a stage play is not expected to last more than three hours. Many plays do not last more than two hours.

**3.5.3 Stage Directions**

This is very important because you cannot represent every detail in dialogue. You therefore use stage direction to “fill-in the gaps”. It is in stage direction that you can give added information on the appearance, dressing, movement and positioning of the actors and actresses on stage as the play progresses. You could also include more information on the setting and the general environment of the play through the stage direction. This means that you must be acquainted with the stage geography and see your characters as actors on stage. This enables you to present only possible and plausible actions on stage.

**3.5.4 Production Effects**

You should be conversant with lighting and sound effects in the theatre. There are many types of stage but let us limit ourselves to the picture-frame stage called the proscenium stage. The use of light and sound effects are also included in the stage direction.

**3.5.6. Presenting the Story: Speech in Drama and Point of View**

In creative writing, you tell a story or relate an experience. It is necessary for you to know how to do that. You need to decide whether you will tell the story by yourself or you will tell it through somebody. Each genre of literature has its unique characteristics which influence the way it is presented.

**Dialogue**

Dialogue is a conversation between two people. It is the ultimate medium of presentation of action in drama. However, it is used sparingly in poetry prose where it is used to inject action but in drama the action is presented through dialogue. For effectiveness, dialogue should be tight and move swiftly. Dialogue is used to convey information, to reveal character, to crystallize relationships, to propel the plot and “precipitate revelation, crises and climaxes” (Oakley 94). It means that dialogue should not be static but must be moving forward in such a progressive manner that it should lead to a change of heart or plan or a resolution of an action. You should bear in mind that you must take pains to consciously create dialogue that is as close as possible to everyday speech. Avoid irrelevances; you should play down on the use of obscenities even when it is used to depict particular environment or people. Excessive use of profanities tends to bore the audience.

In creating your dialogue, try to be as concise as possible and ensure that your dialogue expresses one thought at a time and try to keep the lines short. Lengthy dialogue tends to slow down action, while short ones make the action brisk, racy and lively. Dialogue should be informative but not propagandist except for special effect. You should not turn your characters to preachers of specific ideologies. Your character’s dialogues must sound convincing and true to life and must conform to the characters as presented in the work.

Realistic dialogue does not mean “copying down everything you might pick up with a tape recorder at a social gathering” (Maxwell – Mahon 36). You should be able to prune the superfluous aspects of everyday speech from the dialogue and present only the “sense and sentiments” that carry your plot through its stages of development. That notwithstanding, you should reflect the real-life mutual conversation that involves lots of interruptions as the speakers butt into each other’s argument with noises of approval or disapprovals or cut-ins with counterarguments. Sometimes, normal conversations are disjointed, so try to reflect this disjointed nature of everyday dialogue especially at the emotional crisis moments in your work. Let us look at the dialogue below and see if it reflects some of the characteristics we discussed.

***Matron:*** *Back! I said go…*

***Inmate:*** *(in Edo) Ikhian ya sa amen ye ete vben.*

***Matron:*** *What was that?*

***Nweke:*** *He wants some hot water for his sores.*

***Matron:*** *Not now, Sorry.*

***Nweke:*** *(to patient, in Edo) Yato ta.*

*(Meaning go and sit down)*

*(Patient returns sheepishly to his mat).*

***Matron:*** *Now, would anyone care to explain what all that merriment was about?*

***Nweke:*** *We had just finished choir practice, Madam. Since we still had some time left before curfew, we were only* *keeping ourselves..er…keeping ourselves going.*

***Matron:*** *With drumming and dancing! Where do you think you are?*

***Editor:*** *(with malevolent calm) In the hospital. The General Hospital of his Imperial Majesty King George V of England; situated in the land of Port Harcourt, in the Colonial Territory of Nigeria, West Africa, the World.*

***Matron:*** *Is that supposed to be plain rudeness or a display of high intellect in geography?*

***Cat:*** *It’s neither.*

***Matron:*** *Beg you pardon!*

***Cat:*** *you asked a simple question, and he gave you a simple*  *answer.*

***Matron:*** *(curtly) No one is seeking your opinion.*

*(turns again to the Editor) In the first place, I was addressing him… (indicates Nweke) Since when did you become the spokesman for the … (restrains herself from describing the group) Or who do you think you are?*

***Cat:*** *Another question*

***Editor:*** *Leper, madam. I am a leper – like the rest…of them.…(with a sweep of the arm taking in the entire inmates) lepers, lepers all – at the mercy of the hospital authorities.*

***Matron:*** *You could be –She is cut short by a querulous appeal from an inmate still in dance tableau.*

***Dancer:*** *(in Ibibio) Ami ndi da ke utom mi tutu idaga nke? (Meaning: For how long am I supposed to hold this position?)* *Matron whirls round reproachfully: for the first time her calm is* *visibly rattled.*

***Cat:*** *The fellow wants to know how much longer he is to remain like that… (raises his eyes over the newspaper* *to glance at Inmate: he chuckles, and suppressing the* *rest of the impulse, adds)…Like a smoked he-goat. Matron does not respond, starts pacing about.*

***Editor:*** *Well, how long?*

***Matron:*** *Till the Senior Medical Officer himself comes to witness the extent of your latitude.*

***Hannah:*** *(breaks off her tableau) Well, we can’t wait forever!*  *You hear? (in a frenzy)The night watchman you sent is* *too slow for our pains. Go yourself quickly and carry* *the SMO here on your back.*

***Matron:*** *(shocked beyond belief) Miss Hannah!*

***Hannah:*** *Don’t Miss Hannah me! What’s the matter! Don’t we have a right to live in this land – just because we are like this? (displays her body) Everything we do – (crosses from inmate to inmate releasing them from their tableau) Sit down! Relax, all of you. The SMO? We can wait for him sitting down.*

You can see the fast pace of the dialogue above. In prose fiction, you could start your novel with an exciting dialogue instead of in a narrative form. The exposition presented in dialogue is usually more dramatic and effective that it could have been done in a narrative form.

**Monologue**

Dialogue is a conversation between two people while monologue is a one man conversation. We talk of monologues more in drama where it is referred to as dramatic monologue. However there is monologue in poetry especially in the 19 century English poetry. Dramatic monologues help to give more information on action and character. Soliloquy is a type of monologue but soliloquy is like thinking aloud so the character is oblivious of the audience. In dramatic monologue on the other hand, the character is aware of the audience and in actual sense, speaks and dramatizes to the audience. A very good dramatic monologue is the one we have in Efua Sutherland’s *Edufa*.

*Seguwa:(Returning) This is what we are living with. This weakness that comes over her, and all this meandering talk. Talk of water and of drowning? What* *calamitous talk is that? When will it end? How will it end? We are mystified.* *How wouldn’t we be? Oh, we should ask Edufa some questions; that is what I* *say. You should all ask Edufa some questions.*

**The Persona**

Persona is the voice used mainly in poems. However, persona means the person the artist's fronts in presenting his or her work. It is the writer’s mouthpiece. The writer may be a man, an adult but presents his work through the experiences of a child. The persona is like a mask which the writers wear to camouflage himself to make the experience presented vivid and more realistic. In “Abiku”, Wole Soyinka uses an Abiku child as a persona.

**Point of View**

We talk of point of view in the novel and the short story. Basically, there are three types of point of view – first person point of view, second person point of view and third person point of view.

**First Person Point of View**

In presenting your story, and you may decide to relate it in such a way that your reader will feel that you are presenting your personal experiences. It must not necessarily be a story of your real life – an autobiography. In this point of view you will use the first person pronoun ‘I’ and this ‘I’ in the story is called the narrator. In the first person narration, the story is viewed as authentic and reliable especially where realistic landmarks and dates are mentioned.

The only constraint is that it has its own limitations because the narrator can only relate the incidents he/she witnessed, or state his source of information. In multiple narrations, the story is told by different characters in the novel. An advantage of this point of view is that it is the most personal point of view as the reader identifies easily with the narrator.

**Second Person Point of View**

This point of view makes use of the second person pronoun, you. It is really difficult for someone to tell another person (2nd person) a story by saying “you did this, you did that…” The argument here could be that, there is no point for you here (the narrator) to tell me (2nd person) what I have done and what I have not done. It does not make sense. The insertion of dialogue in this point of view is difficult. Here is an excerpt from Akachi Ezeigbo’s “Fractures”.

*Wetness is to winter as dryness is to harmattan; winter spawns snow as harmattan hatches dust, two climatic conditions you detest. Dry leaves falling to litter the earth, everything brittle, breaking to the touch, trees shedding their leaves, naked and dying to the world. Features common to both seasons in varying degrees.*

*You exchanged the harmattan for winter because you wanted to, nobody forced you and you cannot claim persecution drove you away as so many exiled souls. You have asked yourself time and time* *again why you chose this as your country of self-imposed exile. You* *have learnt to live with the cold and get on with your life. The job* *you are doing is not the best but it is a job you are lucky to have and* *keep. The holiday was a bonus you received with gratitude. But* *things did not quite go the way you expected. They ended in an anticlimax.*

*You ask, “why do things go wrong at the time one is happiest”? This question creeps into your mind because you are suffering. You are in pain; you have lived with pain for twenty-four hours. You are sitting in the waiting room, in an orthopedic hospital, waiting for the surgeon to see you. One thought dominates your mind and it is not a happy thought. You feel you have fractures in your knee. The pain is unbearable and you think only a fracture could produce so much pain. Extremity in anything is morbid, so you allow hope to curl up inside your heart like a green snake, whispering that you might be wrong, that you are wrong. Should there not be some swelling if a bone is fractured?*

*You cling to this hope, as you train your gaze on the paramedical staff engaged in getting patients ready to see the doctors. One of* *them has scrutinized your papers, your insurance cover and taken* *other details from you.*

**Third Person Point of View**

You may decide to use the third person point of view, in which case you will use the third person “he/she” or the character’s name in the third person narrative, and we have the *omniscient point of view* and the *objective point of view*. The omniscient narrator sees and knows everything that happens in the story. This means that the author knows what each character is doing at any point and when necessary presents a character’s innermost thoughts and feelings. It is the most popular form of narration. Most novels you read are in the omniscient point of view which is also referred to as the *Eye of God*.

Objective point of view is also told in the 3rd person but unlike in the omniscient narration, the objective narrator does not intrude in the story, does not try to describe the characters, probe their inner feelings and thoughts, or comment on their actions. The reader is left to interpret the characters words and action and draw conclusions or make his/her judgment. The narrator is an outsider who can report only what he or she sees and hears. This narrator can tell us what is happening, but he can’t tell us the thoughts of the characters. The advantage here is that the story moves at a faster pace. The disadvantage is that the scope is limited to only the words and actions that the reader can hear or see physically. The reader is not exposed to the thoughts or motives of the characters and so may not be able to understand a characters growth or transformation or unravel some complications in the plot. Sometimes this objective point of view forms part of the omniscient point of view.

**3.6. Procedures to Follow in Creative Writing**

**Planning**

Creative writing depends on two different kinds of planning. First, you prepare to write by making an assessment of what is involved in expressing your idea and conveying it to your audience in a captivating manner. The next step is to plan the time and structure of how to get the job done. The concept of writing with confidence or pleasure is somehow mysterious and it is believed to be reserved for “born writers”. This myth or illusion is reinforced by our cultural belief that “creative writing can’t be taught”. Yet, most of us have learnt to write creatively; and we strive to improve by the day with less frustration and more control. Fortunately, common sense tells us anyone can learn to write well, with both energy and satisfaction.

Most writers share some unpleasant experience in the course of writing. Sometimes, what you want to write does not seem to flow in the way you want it. At other extreme cases, the mind is blank and the inspiration is not there, consequently, some works have remained uncompleted even by some renowned writers. Most often, we write to explore an idea; to understand a concept; and to demonstrate certain experience or make your reader understand certain issues or adopted a particular way of looking at an issue. We should try to write with a sense of self-discovery and try to engage and entertain our audience.

In planning, you must remember that literature is words set apart in some ways from ordinary everyday use. Unlike, oral literature, written literature is a private art that serves as a vehicle for the exploration and expression of emotion and the human situation. It is described as a lovely art, so make your writing lovely.

In your planning, you may start by giving a brief presentation of what the work is about or the social influences that inspired you. You could give the synopsis of what you want to write about through the presentation of an outline, character sketches and the setting. Try to relate your idea or imagery to human experience or use it to define human personality or relationship. Let us try to use the water imagery to define the character of a woman. The method below could help you in drawing your outline. Choose an idea/object and list at least ten things that come to your mind concerning the idea.

**Starting**

By now, you have the idea and an outline and you are confronted with the problem of how to begin. You stare at the blank sheet and you have the pen in your hand with a thousand and one options in your head. Even some renowned writers encounter this problem. In fiction, as in life, no venture no success, so take the plunge. Just start the story, what will be uppermost in your wind will be to rouse the attention of your reader, so that he or she can hardly wait to reach the end of the story to find out what it is all about.

You may start with the story of yourself. Try to recollect a significant and interesting event in your life that you could start with. Read the paragraph below which is the beginning of a novel, *African Child* by Camara Laye and later get the novel and read it.

*I was a little boy playing round my father’s hut. How old would I have been at that time? I cannot remember exactly. I still must have been very young: five, maybe six years old. My mother was in the workshop with my father, and I could just hear their familiar voices above the noise of the anvil and the conversation of the customers.*

*Suddenly I stopped playing, my whole attention fixed on a snake that was creeping round the hut. He really seemed to be ‘taking a turn’ round the hut. After a moment I went over to him. I had taken in my hand a reed that was lying in the yard – there were always some lying around; they used to get broken off the fence of plaited reeds that marked the boundary of our compound – and I thrust this reed into the reptile’s mouth. The snake did not try to get away: he was beginning to enjoy our little game; he was slowly swallowing the reed; he was devouring it, I thought, as if it were some delicious prey, his eyes glittering with voluptuous bliss; and inch by inch his head was drawing nearer to my hand. At last the reed was almost entirely swallowed up, and the snake’s jaws were terribly close to my fingers.*

You could start your story by narrating an incident like the one or above, or describing a character as in the one below from Chukwuemeka Ike’s *Toads for Super*. The opening point of your work is very important. Try to introduce your principal characters at the earliest opportunity. You could start with a dialogue, narration or description, the important thing is to ensure that you are consistent with your choice. \

**Continuing**

Once you have started your story, it is usually better to follow your outline. It helps you to get focused and avoid unnecessary digressions. Once you have chosen the genre, and adopted your style, your task is to continue your story. You may decide to present your story chronologically from the beginning to the end or make use of flashbacks to knit your story together to achieve the desired cohesion. As you write, you may develop new ideas or have reasons to modify the existing ones, do not hesitate to do that. Alternatively, you can prune everything at the point of revision. You may be aware of some gaps, if you can correct immediately, do so but if not, go ahead with your writing.

You may or may not have a time table. I observe that it is difficult in creative writing to adhere to any time table though some writers do. The length of time the work will take depends on the time you can spare for it and, most importantly, on how readily the ideas come. Sometimes the characters engage in a dialogue in the writer’s mind yet he may not have time to record it immediately. In some case after that moment, he may not be able to recall the ideas or how they flowed in his mind. Some literary works take many years to complete while some are written in a month or two.

As you continue with your writing, you may become barren of ideas. This means that you have time to write but you cannot do so because nothing comes to your mind. But you should not give up at such times. You may need to revisit your outline, joggle some ideas and plan more thoroughly. You may skip a particular troubled area and move on to the next chapter, scene or stanza. You may even change the direction of your story or take a long rest. As you write, the story is bound to be revolving in your mind even at odd times and odd places. The inspiration bug could bite you at any time. If you can, as soon as it comes, record it and revise latter.

**Completing**

The ending of your story is as important as the beginning. You must ensure that your story ends at the appropriate point and not stretched to an anti-climax. If you are not careful your story will never end but it has to end. Ensure that all the conflicts are resolved and that you end at the point where you will achieve high dramatic effect. Then revise your work. Some writers claim that they do not revise their works. You should at this stage, revise your work; tie the loose ends to ensure that you produce a work that is worth reading. At the point of revision, try to assess yourself by providing honest answers to the following questions:

1. Have I told an interesting story?

2. Is it convincing?

3. Is my perspective on the theme clear?

4. Have I achieved the objective I set for myself?

5. Have I created convincing characters?

6. Are my characters memorable?

7. Is the environment suitable for the characters?

8. How is my language?

9. Are there irrelevances that could be cut?

10. Do I like the way it ends.

You can revise your work as many times as possible before you send it to a publisher.

**The Title**

Sometimes, you give your story a title before you start and it ends up with that title. However, at other times, the title evolves from the story. As you write your story and titles come to your mind, write them down and later review all of them and choose the best. You should choose a title that will give your reader an idea about your subject matter. If you choose an appropriate title before you start writing, it will help you to ensure that your characters, events, and other incidents in the play revolve around it.

**3.6 Producing Criticizing Papers on Creative Works**

To write critically means to actually think about what a piece of literature means and find a way to express what it says to you. You must "consider" the work, form opinions about what you have read, and think about how the ideas in the work connect to the world in a larger way.

A critical analysis paper asks the writer to make an argument about a particular book, essay, movie, etc. The goal is twofold: one, identify and explain the argument that the author is making, and two, provide your own argument about that argument. One of the key directions of these assignments is often to avoid or minimize summary – you are not writing a book report, but evaluating the author’s argument. In your criticizing paper, you will most likely discuss how certain literary techniques are used to convey specific ideas. You will *not rate how good or bad an author is*. You will discuss *what a piece means and how it achieves its effect*. To write critically, you must provide analysis of specific points. You will explain how the events (quotes, actions, speech, examples, etc.) demonstrate themes and ideas.

**Potential Points of Criticism**

Sometimes it can seem intimidating to “criticize” a book or article; after all, they are professors and experienced policymakers. However, part of this exercise is to expose the fact that even though these authors are highly qualified, they are still advancing an argument and providing evidence--their aim is to persuade you that their argument is true, not to just present facts. Once you recognize that these authors are making arguments, you can analyze whether or not you find their argument compelling. Following are some possible questions you could ask to evaluate arguments:

**Theoretical Questions:**

* How does the author understand the situation?
* What is his theoretical background?
* How would this influence their view of the situation?
* If the author is a clear proponent of any views, how will this influence his work?

**Definitional Questions:**

* Are all the concepts in the text clear?
* Does the author define a concept vaguely to allow it to travel across different situations? If a concept can relate two seemingly different situations, is the concept meaningful?

**Evidence Questions:**

* Does the author’s evidence support their argument?
* Do they have enough specific evidence to prove the more general point?
* Does the author underemphasize or ignore evidence that is contrary to their argument?
* Is the evidence credible? Can you identify a bias in the evidence?

**Implication/Policy relevance questions**

* What are the implications of this argument?
* Are those implications positive or negative?
* How has the author dealt with this issue?

**Other approaches:**

* Is the author’s argument consistent throughout the book? Or, does the conclusion seem to offer a different argument than he presented in the introduction?
* Does the author’s background have important implications for their argument?
* Do the specific language choices of the author betray a certain ideology or bias, or frame the argument in a certain way?