

College Guild
PO Box 6448, Brunswick ME 04011

CREATIVE LANGUAGE

Unit 4 of 6

FICTION

Have you ever read a book that gave you a whole new perspective on life? A particular book can touch a person's mind and imagination the way no other book does. Even a children's story can have that kind of impact. For example, the Harry Potter series (by J.K. Rowling) is credited with getting many children today interested in reading for the first time.

Now you are the author of your own book.

1. What is its title?
2. What is its opening sentence?
3. Tell us all about the characters, location, plot, etc.
4. Write a paragraph from anywhere in the novel.
5. How does it end? Does good triumph over evil??

Now that you've written your novel, let's turn you into a publisher, the one who has to sell your book. Whether or not people purchase a book may depend on what happens in the bookstore – does the front cover catch the customer's eye? When bookstore browsers pick it up and turn it over, does what they read make them want to buy it? The back cover of a book is an important marketing tool. It's challenging to write, especially since you don't want to give away the ending, and you have to fit the words into a 6" x 9" space. (Please remember not to use your real last name.)

6. Write the text and design for the back cover of the book – this may include a short summary of the subject (which intrigues without giving away the plot), info about the author, the author's picture, endorsements from famous people, and/or quotes from reviewers.

More and more today, books are being read on a computer screen.

7. What are the advantages of reading a hard copy book (bound pages with a cover) vs. reading the same book "on line"?

An author can choose to use a "pen name". One example is George Sand, the name used by a woman writer who lived in the early 1800's. She felt that only male authors were taken seriously, so she took a man's name. Also, her real name was (ready?) -- Amandine Aurore Lucile Dupin, Baronne Dudevant.

8. What are other reasons someone might choose a pen name?

9. What would you choose as a pen name and why?

Another kind of promotional writing besides book covers is product promotion. Here is a CG student's idea to get you thinking about this kind of writing:

10. Make up an exciting new product that uses your own (first) name.

Example: Mike's Magnificent Motorcycles!

11. Describe the product – how it's made, what it looks like, etc.

12. Write a marketing spiel or jingle for TV.

NON-FICTION

In this age of e-mail and telephones, writing a letter seems more and more outdated – but not for prisoners. You are one group who quickly learns how much it means to receive a letter. The letters you write back can be equally meaningful. It is not only the time taken and the effort to write and mail a letter that makes each one a unique gift, but the thoughtfulness invested in finding the right words to share. (Please sign only your first name in all the letters.)

A letter may be a better way to communicate than a face-to-face discussion where the person you want to talk to could get defensive or angry.

13. Write a letter to your teenage nephew who is suddenly cutting school and lying to his parents.

Sometimes letters are written to support and comfort during difficult times. Unfortunately, not knowing what to say keeps some friends from writing at all.

14. Write a sympathy note to your 74 year old neighbor whose husband of 50 years has just died.

15. If you had to write a eulogy praising a person who has died, what would you say? (You can choose someone of any age.)

There doesn't seem to be a shortage of letters written to advice columnists like Dear Abby. People are always asking for and giving other people advice on how to run their lives. If "Dear Abby" were around in other centuries, do you suppose she got letters like this....?

From the cave man era:

Dear Abby,

My husband is a good provider (we have a freezer full of mammoth) and barbecues a terrific steak. But, Abby, I have a confession -- I think saber-toothed tigers are really cute (except the one that ate our friend in the next cave) and I want to tell my husband to stop killing them. Do you think it would work if I served a nice salad instead?

- Saber-Tooth Sally

16. Pretend you are Dear Abby and reply to this letter.

17. Write a letter to Dear Abby from a person living in another time, (before 1960).

18. How would Abby reply?

One CG student takes us back in history with this idea:

19. Write a letter to an historical figure (from over 100 years ago).

Now write a reply to your letter.

And one more letter – back to serious subjects:

20. Write a letter to your warden (about anything you choose).

(Think about the purpose of your letter -- are you sounding off or do you really want him/her to listen?)

Please check that you didn't use your last name in signing the letters!

Cards are a kind of letter, with pre-written messages. You are a writer hired by a company that manufactures greeting cards.

21. Write a birthday message for the insides of three different cards -- the three designs on the front are:

a dog eating a cake

a photograph of the ocean

two people (you choose what they look like)

22. Design a birthday card for yourself!

There is one kind of letter that goes out to hundreds, even thousands of total strangers. One purpose is to advertise a product, but I'm thinking of those sent by people running for political office. Let's say that's YOU, (and feel free to make up a position to campaign for).

23. What office are you running for?

24. What is the major issue you are running on?

25. Write a campaign speech.

You want your name to be seen by as many voters as possible, including those on the street and those in their cars. Candidates have to convince the voters to vote for them using words big enough to be read from a distance.

26. Design a bumper sticker for your campaign.

27. Why would a small-space writing exercise like that be useful for a writer?

Now turn yourself into a reporter who is part of the press corps following this candidate around.

28. Write an editorial stating your opinion of the candidate and the issues s/he is running on.

At the bottom of this page is a poem by Arthur Sze. Although “The Moon Is a Diamond” is written as a free verse poem, it is also the story about a character named Flavio Gonzales. You could even look at it as non-fiction, the story of a real person. Maybe he’s running for political office!

29. Interview Flavio Gonzales, candidate for Governor of California. Think of 5 questions you (as a reporter) would ask him, then answer them as if you were Flavio.

30. As a reporter, write a human interest story about Flavio Gonzales for your newspaper.

The Moon Is a Diamond

Flavio Gonzales, seventy-two, made jackhammer heads during the War; and tells me about digging ditches in the Depression for a dollar a day. We are busy plastering the portal, and stop for a moment in the April sun. His wife, sick for years, died last January and left a legacy – a \$5,000 hospital bill. I see the house he built at fifteen: the ristras of red chili hanging in the October sun. He sings “Paloma Blanca” as he works, then stops, turns: “I saw the TV photos of the landing on the moon. But it’s all lies. The government just went out in the desert and found a crater. Believe me, I know, I know the moon is a diamond.

Arthur Sze

SPELLING & GRAMMAR

COMMON VERBS

"Is" is used for a singular noun, "are" for more than one -- they are used for actions that take place in present time.

The lion is found in the jungles of Africa.

Grandmothers are supposed to be good cooks.

For an action that takes place in the past, "was" refers to the singular and "were" to the plural. Examples:

John was a great basketball player.

The new Toyotas were sold out when we went shopping.

Here are two other commonly used verbs with different words for singular vs. plural nouns:

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>
Singular:	He <u>does</u> .	He <u>did</u> .	He <u>has</u> .	He <u>had</u> .
	I do.	I did.	I have.	I had.
Plural:	They <u>do</u> .	They <u>did</u> .	They <u>have</u> .	They <u>had</u> .
	We do.	We did.	We have.	We had.

Add "n't" to all these verbs and you have the negatives: doesn't, didn't, hasn't, hadn't, haven't and don't.

It's common to hear, "He don't." or "She have." – these are not correct.

31. Why?

As always, there is an exception to the rule. You is followed by "are" instead of "is" whether it refers to one person or more than one. The same is true for you do vs. does, and you have vs. has.

32. Write a sentence each for the following verbs: don't, does, did, has, haven't and had.

Examples: The fox has beautiful fur. The husband does the vacuuming every day.

Spelling Quiz for frequently misused words - a CG student's idea

Match the words (#1-12) with the definitions (a-l). I hope you know those last two! (Answers below.)

- 1 - accept 2 - except 3 - affect 4 - effect 5 - assent 6 - accent
- 7 - eminent 8 - imminent 9 - embarrass 10 - embrace 11 - its 12 - it's
- a - looming b - hug c - acclaimed d - receive e - stress f - belongs to
- g - impact h - excluding l - it is j - aftermath k - humiliate l - agreement

[Answers: 1d, 2h, 3j, 4g, 5l, 6e, 7c, 8a, 9k, 10b, 11-f, 12i]

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes.