

College Guild  
PO Box 6448, Brunswick ME 04011

# CREATIVE LANGUAGE

## Unit 5 of 6

### FICTION

The author of a STAGE PLAY has to write more than just the dialogue. The characters, sets, props and action have to be spelled out in very specific terms. (See the appendix at the end of the unit for an example.)

The curtain opens in a dark theater – opening night and you are the playwright. You can write a comedy, drama, musical or a fairy tale. Instead of a screenplay for a movie, make it as challenging as possible by writing for a live stage audience.

#### 1. Where and when does the action take place?

#### 2. List the cast: names, descriptions and relationship to other characters.

Remember that their personalities and backgrounds have to be conveyed to the audience solely through the dialog and the acting.

#### 3. What does the audience see when the curtain goes up?

#### 4. Write the dialog and actions for Scene 1. It should reveal something about the characters and the plot and pull the audience into the story so they want to see what happens next.

You are writing dialogue here which takes careful wording – in other words, this is a hard assignment! This is a different kind of writing because it is not being read; it is being heard by actors speaking your lines. Make sure your actors sound like real people.

Play-goers have to know about your play and want to come see it. So how do you convince them it's worth shelling out the cash to buy a ticket? There are posters outside the theater, descriptions in newspapers, ads on radio and TV. Endorsements from famous people are a big help.

#### 5. Write comments about your play from 3 famous or prestigious people, including their claim to fame, and feel free to make them and their credentials up.

*Example: "The best drama New York has ever seen!, Fritzie Frump, Miami Theater Critic*

#### 6. Don't keep me in suspense – how does it end??

One CG student really got into drama and had this to say: "Writing for the stage can be excruciatingly fun. Creating characters and dialog are in themselves an exercise in insane glee." The assignment he came up with was to "create a one act play in which there are 4 female characters (if you are a male CG student) or 4 male characters (if you are a female CG

student). Each character is a different age. The youngest is 13, next 26, then 42 and last 68. The characters may or may not be related, and they may be any race, religion or ethnicity. Have fun." If you actually wrote the play he suggested:

**7. What relationship would your characters have with each other?**

**8. Would you write a comedy or a drama, and when would it take place?**

**9. Write the first 20 lines of dialog.**

## POETRY

Here is a list of subjects: farm animals, colors, dancing, prison visiting rooms, poetry, Thanksgiving, loneliness, joy, television, space travel, coffee, vegetables, forest fires, and climbing Mount Everest.

**10. Pick one and write a couplet (2 line poem) about it.**

**11. Pick another and write a four line poem about it.**

**12. Pick a third and write a six line poem about it.**

Remember that poems don't have to rhyme. Write at least one of these in free verse.

Some poems have strict guidelines by definition. A "haiku" is an ancient form of poetry with specific requirements as far as number of syllables and lines. The definition is "an unrhymed Japanese verse form with 3 short lines of 5, 7 and 5 syllables." Here is one by a CG student titled "Wildfire":

<i>blazing embers send</i>	(5 syllables)
<i>dry autumn russets and golds</i>	(7 syllables)
<i>crackling in anguish</i>	(5 syllables)

**13. Write a haiku on any subject you want.**

**14. Go back to the beginning of this section and pick two subjects you haven't used yet. Write a haiku about each of them, one serious and one humorous.**

Then there is the limerick, a humorous 5 line poem with the rhyme scheme aa-bb-a. That means the first, second and fifth lines rhyme with each other, and the third and fourth lines rhyme. The CG student who suggested a limerick assignment thoughtfully gave you an example. (The great thing about limericks is that you can get away with words like "Foo"!)

*There was a skinny young man from Foo  
Who got himself in a bit of a stew  
The cannibal man  
Threw some carrots to Stan  
So there'd be enough dinner for two.*

**15. Write a limerick.**

In addition to limericks, Mike also tackled a villanelle, the absolute hardest poetic format. Notice the rhyme scheme in the following poem, not just within one stanza, but connecting all of them – there are only two rhymes altogether! Now look at the pattern formed by the repetition of the first and third lines of the first stanza.

*Speak With Candor*

*But of course I must speak with candor  
About the nation and its state  
And all I'll speak is truth, not slander.*

*Capitol Hill is but Mount Pander  
Where politicians' desires are sate  
But of course I must speak with candor*

*In Ottawa the Elite do banter  
Speak I must, it's getting late  
And all I'll speak is truth, not slander*

*The corporate oil and mortgage lenders  
Strangle us at this date  
But of course I must speak with candor*

*They're bringing down Old Glory's splendor  
By their grab for Power's Gate  
And all I'll speak is truth, not slander*

*I warn all who love her standard  
About the nation and its state  
But of course I must speak with candor  
And all I'll speak is truth, not slander*

**16. What would be the purpose of having poems (like haikus and villanelles) with such strict guidelines?**

No, I'm not going to ask you to write a villanelle, (unless you want the ultimate poetry challenge), but it's worth the time to read one carefully.

Here are a few more poetry formats:

The sonnet is a 14 line rhyming poem with 10 syllables per line.

A Shakespearean sonnet has a rhyme scheme of abab cdcd efef gg.

A poem of 5 lines of 2, 4, 6, 8 and 2 syllables is an American cinquain.

An epitaph is a poem for or about someone who has died.

**17. Why is studying different kinds of poetry formats relevant to prose writing?**

The following poem is by Mary Oliver from her book Dream Work.

### **Wild Geese**

*You do not have to walk on your knees  
For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.  
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on.  
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clear blue air,  
are heading home again.  
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.*

#### **18. What do you like or not like about “Wild Geese”?**

It isn't always easy to put the reason for your reactions into words, but it's a good way to help you figure out what techniques you want to use for your own work, prose as well as poetry.

Only one more poetry assignment!

#### **19. Write a free verse poem -- your choice of subject and length.**

## **SPELLING & GRAMMAR**

### **CONSISTENCY IN VERB TENSES AND PRONOUNS**

You should be careful to avoid changing from the past to the present or future in the same sentence or story. For example:

*I look (present) out the window and saw (past) a UPS truck.  
Yesterday the wolf ran (past) and howls (present) at the moon.  
The prince will (future) take over the throne and can (present) rule.*

This attention to consistency also applies to nouns and pronouns (he, she, they, etc.) The English language makes this particularly difficult, because we so frequently have to say “he or she” (or the shortened form “s/he”) to be grammatically correct. For example:

*A writer (singular) is always happy when his or her book is read.*

It's less awkward to say, “when their books are read”, so you would have to go back and make your subject plural – “writers” instead of “writer”.

It's also easy to mix up singular and plural in the same sentence.

*On Sundays, men frequently watch football on his television set.*

*A woman should be careful when they take a walk before a thunder storm.*

#### THE "i" BEFORE "e" RULE

Usually, words with the letters "i" and "e" together are spelled so that the "i" goes first:

*field, believe, grief*

However, if they follow the letter "c", the opposite is true:

*receive, deceive, perceive*

There is one more exception! If the word is pronounced like the letter A (as in hay or say), then "e" comes before "i".

*neighbor, sleigh, weigh*

So the complete rule reads like this:

*i before e except after c except when the word sounds like "-ay"*

There are still a few words that are exceptions to the exceptions (caffeine, seize). As I said, the English language is a hard one to master. If English is your second language, you have my utmost admiration for tackling this course!

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

Hi Readers!

When I read the following poem by Mary Oliver, I thought it would convey the same message to a prisoner that we try to convey with every letter. I substituted it for “Ending It All” by Vincent Johnson at the end of Unit 5 of Creative Language. I also included it in the unit on Mary Oliver in the retake of Poetry Club. Please make a note if you have either of these units (CL-Unit 5 and P Club Retake-3) students might make reference to “Wild Geese”.

### **Wild Geese**

*You do not have to walk on your knees  
 For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.  
 You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
 love what it loves.  
 Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
 Meanwhile the world goes on.  
 Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
 are moving across the landscapes,  
 over the prairies and the deep trees,  
 the mountains and the rivers.  
 Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clear blue air,  
 are heading home again.  
 Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
 the world offers itself to your imagination,  
 calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –  
 over and over announcing your place  
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Also, the appendix is not available on line. The appendix students receive includes a list of the characters from the play *Fifth of July*, by American playwright Lanford Wilson, as well as the first page of Act I. It is provided only as a reference for students.