

CREATIVE NONFICTION

DEFINITION FROM PURDUE OWL:

- “It is focused on story, meaning it has a narrative plot with an inciting moment, rising action, climax and denouement, just like fiction. However, nonfiction only works if the story is based in truth, an accurate retelling of the author’s life experience.”
- “The genre depends on the writer’s ability to render their voice in a realistic fashion. Writer Richard Terrill, in comparing the two forms, writes that the voice in creative nonfiction aims ‘to engage the empathy’ of the reader; that, much like a poet, the writer uses ‘personal candor’ to draw the reader in.”
- “First key element of nonfiction...is that the genre relies on the author’s ability to retell events that actually happened.”
- “The other key element, the thing present in all successful nonfiction, is reflection.”

DEFINITION FROM CREATIVENONFICTION.ORG:

- “It is a literary genre”
- Examples of the genre include: memoir, personal essays, biography, narrative history, and long form narrative reportage
- “What they have in common is that they are, in one way or the other, writing true stories that provide information about a variety of subjects, enriched by relevant and thoughtful ideas, personal insight, and intimacies about life and the world we live in. And this scope and variety is exactly what makes creative nonfiction significant and, these days, so incredibly popular.”
- “For the genre invites writers to push boundaries and open doors, offering them the opportunity to use all of the techniques of the fiction writer (or the poet)-- dialogue, setting, description, inner point of view- in order to capture a reader’s attention and enlighten and intrigue them through nonfiction.”

MEMOIR DEFINITION

- Autobiographical and based on real-life events
- A subjective retelling of true life, told from the author's point of view
- "A memoir is how one remembers one's own life, while an autobiography is history, requiring research, dates, facts double-checked." - Gore Vidal
- "A narrative, written from the perspective of the author, about an important part of their life. It's often conflated with autobiography, but there are a few important differences...Memoir authors choose a pivotal moment in their lives and try to recreate the event through storytelling. The author's feelings and assumptions are central to the narrative. Memoirs still include all the facts of the event, but the author has more flexibility here because she is telling a story as they remember, not as others can prove or disprove it." -Celadon Books

PERSONAL ESSAY DEFINITION

- “At its heart, the personal essay is a piece of nonfiction writing that shares an interesting, thought-provoking, entertaining, and/or humorous story for readers that is drawn from the writer’s personal experiences...the personal essay is different from the other essays, because it shares a story.” -Writer’s Digest
- “Personal narratives are a form of writing that recount and analyze personal life experiences, often aiming to reveal individual or universal truths...A hallmark of personal narratives is the blend of storytelling with personal reflection, frequently presented in the first-person perspective, allowing readers to connect intimately with the author’s emotions and insights...Authors typically employ creative strategies when composing these essays to achieve a certain impact on an audience.” -EBSCO Knowledge Advantage, Woltag, Laura

NARRATIVE HISTORY DEFINITION

- “What sets the genre apart from more traditional nonfiction is that narrative nonfiction aims to entertain as much as inform by building a compelling story around its central subject...By enhancing factual accounts with literary techniques like world-building, character development, rising action, and compelling dialogue, authors of narrative nonfiction connect with their readers on multiple levels-and, ideally, help them gain a more thorough understanding of the topic at hand. The key, of course, is applying these narrative enhancements without damaging factual accuracy.” - Celadon Books
- “Narrative nonfiction tells a real-life story about real people and events with stylistic elements akin to those that seem more in fiction. It often requires more research than traditional news reportage due to its creative flexibility, as narrative nonfiction writers must go to greater lengths to accurately express the facts and details of another person’s life in a literary way.” -Masterclass

LONG FORM NARRATIVE REPORTAGE DEFINITION

- “Narrative journalism is a form of storytelling that relies on fact-based reporting and conveys information in the form of a story, foregrounding stylistic elements such as character, plot, descriptive detail, and a point of view. The goal of narrative journalism is to create an immersive experience for readers, often eliciting strong emotions such as empathy and joy but potentially also outrage and disapproval. Whatever the actual intellectual and emotional engagement looks like, ultimately narrative journalism provides an opening for moral reflection.” - Schmidt, Thomas R. SAGE Encyclopedia of Journalism