

Pen to Paper – Creative Writing

Background Information

You do not need to know about literary terminology to begin experimenting with writing, but you may wish to think briefly about three core elements that apply to all types of creative writing. These three elements are sound and word choice, imagery and description, and form.

Sound/Word Choice: the way language sounds and the words that are chosen

Sound is important in creative writing because language is not only written down. It is also *spoken and heard*, even if only in the reader's head. Sound also relates to word choice. There are many words that mean similar things, but not all of them sound the same or have the same connotations. For example, a writer may develop a character's background through the specific words they choose. A character might use a geographically-specific word like 'nowt', which also has a particular sound. Sound can include other techniques such as alliteration (when the same sound occurs in words near each other) as in Malika Booker's prose poem 'Nine Nights': 'Them mourners arrived, shuffling with the shock. The priest opened up that wake with plenty prayers. Corn soup bubbled in the iron pot, red beans slowly...'



Imagery/Description: the way language involves the senses

Through their use of language, writers evoke how something tastes, feels, looks, smells, and sounds. Referring to the quote from Malika Booker's poem above, you will notice that there are many descriptions that appeal to the senses of sight ('shuffling with shock'), taste ('corn soup bubbled'), and hearing ('plenty prayers'). Detailed descriptions bring writing to life and make a reader feel that they are in another world, the world the writer creates with language. Descriptive images can also be developed by comparing one thing to another in a metaphor as in the famous metaphor from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: 'Juliet is the sun.'

Form: the way language is placed on the page

Like sculptors, writers continually play with form, carving and shaping language so it creates a particular effect on the reader. For example, you might have noticed that this sheet is broken into paragraphs and the sentences are not very long. How might your experience of reading differ if it was broken into lines like a poem or written as a single long sentence, possibly without any punctuation? One thing to consider when writing is how the shape of your phrases and sentences will impact a reader of your work.



Different types of creative writing

The different types of creative writing are:

- Poetry (short pieces of writing that convey an intensity of real or imagined emotion/experience through an interesting use of language)
- Novels (a long narrative form that tells an imagined or true story that involves various characters)
- Short stories (a short narrative form that tells an imagined or true story that involves various characters)
- Memoirs (writing that tells the story of one's own life)
- Scripts (writing that actors perform on stage or screen to tell an imagined or true story)

Now that you have begun to consider some core elements of creative writing, you are ready to begin! Please see our Creative Writing Exercises sheet if you would like some more support.

Once you have finished you will have some writing that you can re-visit any time to develop and redraft. As you do this, pay special attention to the description/imagery, sound, and form. Remember that these exercises can be repeated endlessly as no attempt will ever be exactly the same. Enjoy!

Share

Please share snippets of your writing with us:



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Many thanks to Dr Kimberly Campanello for creating the Pen to Paper Background Information and Exercises.

