

Writing Center Handouts

Creative Writing Tips

Elements of Creative Writing

- **Theme:** The message you are trying to convey with the piece; the “Big Idea.” What lesson do you want your reader to learn? What questions do you want them to ask?

Examples: “Love conquers all,” “Family is more than blood,” “Anyone can change the world,” “What do we owe our children?”

- **Character:** The people, animals, or things in a story that drive the plot. Who are your characters? What is their history? How has their world shaped them? How do they change by the end of the story, if at all?

Note: Not every piece will have traditional human characters, but objects or settings referenced in a poem may take on this role.

- **Point of View:** The perspective that the story is told from. Is it a character who’s telling the story, or the author? Are you writing in first person, second person, or third person?

Note: Second person is uncommon in fiction but can be very effective in poetry.

- **Plot:** The sequence of events that happen in a story. What is the central conflict? How does it get resolved? Do you want to place events in sequential order, or tell the story some other way, like starting at the end or moving scenes out of order?
- **Tone:** The overall intended “feeling” of a piece. Is it a fun, happy story, or a dark, dramatic tale? For a poem, is it a love poem, or a melancholic introspection? How do you want the reader to feel while they’re reading?
- **Literary Devices:** The tools a writer uses to enhance a story such as symbolism, figurative language, metaphor, allegory, personification, alliteration, onomatopoeia, etc. Which of these and other literary devices appear in your story? What message do they send? How could you employ these devices deliberately to emphasize your theme?

Revising Creative Writing:

- **Beginnings:** Look through the beginning of your piece and find at least five provocative sentences (startling/jarring/strong opinion/etc.) or lines. Consider how the story might change if it began there.
- **Middle/Endings:** Identify the tension/conflict of the story. Brainstorm at least four possible resolutions. How might these resolutions make your audience feel? Do these resolutions change the tone of the story?
- **Change Point of View:** Experiment with changing the point of view of the narrator in your story by choosing passages and changing the pronouns. How does this change your story?
- **Revising a Poem:** Count the number of words/sentences/stanzas in your poem. Cut half the words/sentences/stanzas. This will force you to use clear, vivid words and get rid of lengthy, confusing sentences or phrases.