Creative Writing 1

Day 20
October 24th

Daily Description: Write out the process for making and eating your favorite meal. Add as many details as you can.

• Agenda:
  – Daily Description
  – Baby Steps
  – Thought Shots
  – Personal Narrative or Memoir Assignment
Today’s Objectives

• Students will know the requirements for the personal narrative or memoir assignment.

• Students will be able to use baby steps and thought shots to add detail and interest to their stories.
Baby Steps and Thought Shots

Information and Examples from Barry Lane's Reviser's Toolbox
Baby Steps

- Used to describe an action step by step - or baby step by baby step.
- Baby steps give the reader meaningful details.
- Another way to think of it is “Exploding the Moment” - when a moment is slowed down and extremely detailed.
Baby Steps Example

– You could write
  • “He walked through the doorway.”

– Or you could use baby steps and write:
  • “He grasped the cold doorknob and turned it slowly to the right. He pushed the door inward. The hinges squeaked and cold air rushed past the opening door. The room was dark. He darted his eyes to the right. Nothing. He pushed the door open a little farther, and slowly moved his right foot into the room. His shoe creaked a bit as it hit the polished hardwood floor.”
It was 4:00 a.m. of a cold Saturday morning in January. We were going to see my cousin take off to Massachusetts and then to Saudi Arabia. We were at the air base in Burlington, VT. When my mom got in the door she started to cry. I could feel the urge to cry but I held it in. All my relatives were there. Finally we went into the big cold room where we would see them go. Everyone was crying but I held it in. I felt like a walking teddy bear because I would walk over to someone and they would give me a hug, then to another person and the same thing would happen.
Thoughtshots

• Allows the writer to pause and reflect on a particular event or a detail.

• A thoughtshot lets you go deeper into your own mind, and it allows you to go deeper into the mind of someone you are writing about.

• A famous writer named Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. said the “When we read we meditate with other minds.”
  
  – A thoughtshot lets you do that as a writer, and sets things up so your reader can do that, too.
Thoughtshots Example

• You could write
  – “My mother always sat down in front of the television after dinner.”

• Or you could use thoughtshots and write
  – “I don’t know why my mother always sat down in front of the television after dinner. Perhaps it was the only time she really had for herself. My sister and I always had to do the dishes. My step-father usually went out to the garage to work on the old Buick that he always thought he could get up and running someday. Maybe Mom just liked being alone with her game show. She always watched Jeopardy with Alex Terbeck. I think she thought Alex was handsome and smart…”
Finding Baby Steps and Thought Shots

• With your group, read the example memoir “Liferower” from our textbook.
• Identify examples of baby steps and thought shots.
• Discuss how these examples contribute to the overall piece.
Assignment

• Take one of the sentences/notes from your prewriting from last time and write each of the following:
  – One (1) Baby step
  – One (1) Thoughtshot

• Each must be minimum one (1) - maximum two (2) paragraph(s) long
Personal Narrative  
- Focuses on a particular event  
- Told as a story with setting, characters, dialogue, and plot

Memoir  
- Focuses on a theme  
- May include narration  
- Includes reflection and the narrator’s conclusions about the events/theme

A personal narrative about the September 11 attacks might consist of an individual’s direct experience of escaping from the towers down a staircase, the smell of the smoke, and the confusion and the helplessness that he felt on that day. That person’s memoir about the same exact event might also include his indirect experiences: stories of other people’s experiences who lived through the tragedy and the impact that their stories had on his own recollection of that time and place.
Personal Narrative or Memoir Assignment

• Write a 2-3 page personal narrative or memoir.
  – Use your prewriting and the exercises we’ve done so far to come up with an idea to write about.
  – Creativity, grammar, and spelling will come into account during grading.
Discuss who you think you are in relation to:

- An interesting personal experience
- How you see yourself
- A fear that you have
- A negative aspect that has shaped you
- Any way that you can use words to create a picture of you

Use baby steps and thought shots to insert your reflections upon the events.
Due Dates

• Drafts due 10/30 for peer review
• Final Draft due 11/1
Wrapping Up

• Any concerns about your memoir?