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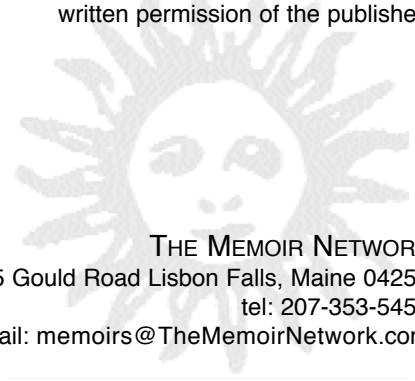
Memoir Building Basics:

Develop Vivid Characters

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The *Develop Vivid Characters Package* is also available as Module 4 of the *Write Your First Memoir Draft Program*. In this package, the audio of the text and the affirmations make occasional reference to Module 4. This reference does not alter the value of the content in any way.

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Introduction

Writing a memoir—and this is true of creating any work of art—is fueled both by inspiration and by craft.

You probably have a "feel" for what must go into your memoir—including certain people, covering particular events, elaborating on specific messages. These seem crucial, and you do not want to slight them. We call this "feel" part of getting the writing done "inspiration." This "feel" arises from the "inner you."

There is a mushy aura that surrounds the concept of inspiration, however, which has sometimes made it difficult to trust inspiration. Inspiration is said to be a "gift of the gods," bestowed only on select individuals—some will even say it is only poets who are inspired.

"I'm not a poet," some will say. "I don't deal in inspiration."

Well, no and yes. Of course, you are not writing verses nor likely in direct communication with the gods, but you are writing from the inner you. Whether you are writing a poem or a memoir, the inner you—and not the gods—is where inspiration comes from. Memoir writing is fueled by this inspiration, this inner prompting, that is available to all of us.

But this inspiration is not enough. You also need craft. In this module, you are learning both to recognize and trust your inspiration and to become more skilled at crafting your story. In doing this, you are learning to manipulate your writing for meaning and effect.

Gaining a deeper understanding

You can think of your writing as a craft to be learned.



Develop Vivid Characters *will help you implement writing techniques and concepts to write better characters into your memoir than you might have thought possible.*

You feel inspired to write today, you write. You don't feel inspired to write today, you write. Writing is best undertaken as a decision and not as a feeling.

Perhaps thinking of writing in terms of craft is still hard for you. You may persist in thinking—or wanting to think—of writing as inspired. But, craftsmanship is at the base—if not at the core—of shaping a work of art. To make this clear, let's shift from writing to another art form. This will provide perspective.

Let's consider the visual artist. He gets up one day and has an inspiration to paint. He intuits his painting will be about turmoil and resolution and anger. He does not know yet how he will achieve this but he knows there will be a lot of red and black on the canvas. So, he begins to paint. He is under the influence of inspiration. You get this about inspiration. It's what you have been told—and have believed—all your life. It's a feeling about what to best do at this moment.



So, too, as you write your memoir, will you be under the influence of inspiration. You will begin to write perhaps knowing your story will be about poverty and surviving and abuse. You sense you must include the angry words between your parents and the tense scenes when creditors, banging against the locked tenement door, demanded redress. These facts will chill the reader, but while you know that it will add up to something, "you do not know yet how this will come together as enough" in the memoir. How should you write this so that you communicate not only the fact of the pounding on the door but the feeling of being in hiding? You are inspired, but are not sure of your craft, of how to put the words on paper to create the right effect.

Are you really getting your message across? You are not sure. Why can't working under inspiration be easier if it's so great!

Getting back to the painter, we see him, after he has gessoed his canvas, choosing colors that he senses will add to the tension of the painting and creates shapes that, because they are discordant, will also add to the sense of turmoil he wishes to dominate the canvas. This is inspiration at work, but it needs craft before the artist's vision can to come across to the viewer. From experienced study, the painter knows how to mix his

primary colors well to get the right shades and he makes sure they are constituted well so as to remain fast on the canvas. He is making use of craft.

Action Steps

1. In your Writer's Journal, write about how you have thought of inspiration over the years. Is it a force you have trusted—or is it something you have distrusted? Perhaps you have not given it any consideration? Have there been nuances to your thoughts about inspiration? When and why? What have the results been?

2. If someone were to ask you if you are inspired as you are writing your memoir, what would you answer? Elaborate your answer.

3. How do you approach your writing process?

    - What works for you right now? Especially, but not necessarily exclusively, write about inspiration and craft. How do you think of these elements as they apply to you? Which do you tend to prioritize?
    - Is there any change in approach that you think might work for you better? How can you effect that change? Decide on one thing you can do today.

That part of the writing process—that part where you are consciously manipulating the elements of your memoir—is called craft.

Building basics

You, too, as a memoirist, must make decisions that are technical—linked to craft rather than inspiration—to affect the reader. You begin to work with elements that you may not think of as craft but which are. These elements are your *characters*, your *actions*, your *settings*, your *themes*, your *dialogs* and your *scenes*. Each will be developed by right technique. There are "best practices" in writing as in everything else.

Fueled by inspiration, you make use of each of these elements somewhat unconsciously, but soon, you are also consciously thinking about craft, about how to better develop character, action, setting, theme, dialog and scene to enhance the story. Will the reader get what you are trying to say? Will you be able to manipulate each of these elements so they snag the reader not only into continuing to read but into finding the book meaningful and worthwhile to have read?

"Whatever you're meant to do, do it now. The conditions are always impossible."

—Doris Lessig writer

The Primacy of character

Although ideas are pivotal for many individuals, relationships with people are even more commanding. The people who populate your memoir—including your younger self—are what we call your characters. Without people, our memoirs—and our lives—risk becoming dull.

"Who's that? What are they doing? Why are they there?"

These questions about people intrigue us as we go about our days, and we want them answered. To write a strong story, capitalize on this interest in character.

Character is, of course, a basic element of fiction. Here, you will come to understand that it is also an essential element of a successfully crafted memoir. In the next module, we will see how you must be careful to develop action that is consonant with character, but…

Let's stay with *Developing Vivid Characters* and begin to do the work.

"Good characters are why most people read, I think. However, in order to create a character people want to be BFF with, the characterization is secondary. In fiction, plot reveals character."

— Joe Bunting writer

A Framework for Developing Character

Character, as a memoir building basic, is right up there in addressing what the reader wants from a memoir. The need to develop vivid characters is fixed and solid—and always in some flux.

Don't worry: handling the mix of solid and flux is a writing challenge you can master—just as you once mastered the difficult and seemingly impossible challenge of riding a bicycle!

If we look again at the larger picture to understand why people read memoirs, there are two concepts that come immediately to mind. These influence what you will write under the imperative to write character and are the two overarching reasons for which people read a memoir.

Ok, here are the two concepts again. They are my take on why people read a memoir. They do so for:

- entertainment and
- instruction.

Yes, your reader will want to find your book entertaining, interesting, and even possibly, captivating. Your memoir may not be what we call a "good beach read," but it ought to be interesting enough so that your reader is turning a few more pages before calling it quits at bedtime. If your memoir does this, then it's entertaining.

Other than for entertainment, we also read memoirs because there is much we want to learn about living a better life, about what it means to be a person and about how to be a better, happier person. I'm not telling you anything when I say that life has its challenging moments. Although you may not have thought of this before, people will read your memoir to find out how you and your characters lived your lives and to find out whether or not your path is a good example for how they might live their own lives. They are looking for instruction.

We can say that all of us live surrounded by an existential

"You are writing your remembered self, which is different from who you are now. You have to step into the skin of the person you were then, and see through her eyes."

—Mary Karr
writer

darkness on which we seek to cast light. We do so to find our way out—of course, not ultimately, but certainly day by day. Your memoir, in a real sense, ought to be a light shining in the darkness of our lives—or, at least, in the lives of your audience.

You must keep these two fundamental reading drives—entertainment and instruction—in mind as you write—always.

Memoir over fiction

Why do people looking for instruction in life often prefer a memoir over fiction? I believe this preference arises because it is a hard to dismiss the witness of a memoir.

In fiction, you can say that the author made the story up and that perhaps no one has ever lived what is being depicted in the novel or short story. You might say the conclusion is a contrivance to make the plot "work" rather than a truth.

In a memoir, however, the author makes a compact with the reader to depict only what she has lived. She is not making the story up. Because of that, we are willing to believe a memoir writer's theme in a way that we are not willing to believe a fiction writer's. We can say that we don't know if the fiction writer has lived the story or not. As such, he can be trusted for entertainment but not necessarily for instruction. That's why oftentimes, people way, "That's only in novels!" People do not say that about a memoir because the memoir is a lived experience.

A fiction proceeds from theme to story while a memoir proceeds from story to theme. The memoir story is set. It is true in as much as the memoirist can make it so.

"I have more freedom when I write fiction, but my memoirs have had a much stronger impact on my readers. Somehow the 'message,' even if I am not even aware that there is one, is conveyed better in this form."

—Isabel Allende writer

Your Memoir Needs Vivid Characters

The people you choose to write about in your stories are your characters (either you or someone else). Although they are people you've loved and known, your characters are often strangers to your children and grandchildren—and certainly to the larger audience you might aspire to.

"What do you mean—a character! That's not a character. That's my sister."

Well, yes, this is a portrayal of your sister, but your sister herself is not on the page. What's on the page is a depiction, a character, that's based on your sister. She is much more complex than that character in your memoir.

In some real way, you are making your sister character up. How can I say that? I feel confident saying so because she (or another character that you are making up!) must serve as a prop for the protagonist which is usually—but not exclusively—you.

You must be selective about what to include. Some of what your sister did or said impacted you—otherwise, she would only be an "also mentioned." Her involvement is depicted in your memoir. Most of what she did and said in her life, however, did not impact you. She was involved in so many activities that, were you to try to portray her as a well-rounded character, the volume of what she did and said would take over your memoir. So, details that are only about her life do not find their way into your story. After all, there's only so much room in any memoir. (Perhaps someday you can write her memoir, but this memoir you are writing now is not that one.) Only what is about you and how she interacted with you finds its way into your story.

"People—and characters—are made up of their past experiences. When crafting a character, one of the most important aspects we consider is her past."

—Skye Fairwin

When you consider what to say in your memoir, what will support your story, you decide to leave this and that out of the text which describes your sister and choose only what supports your memoir itself, but in selecting to omit details about her, you are, of course, distorting our view of her. You are not truly representing her as she was. You are creating a fiction of your sister—a girl/woman who may be said to be truly a stranger to the person your sister really was.

A memoir may borrow techniques from fiction, but it must never be a work of fiction. Never.

Of course, you cannot tell everything—about anybody, not even about yourself. The memoir would sink under the weight of details so we resort to selective depiction, which is a bit of "fiction," isn't it?

Ourselves as characters

Perhaps by this point, you are willing to accept that your family and friends figure as characters in your memoir. Are you ready now to accept that you yourself are a character in that same memoir?

What is true about writing your sister's life is also true about your life. You can never truly write about your life. You can only recreate parts of it that contribute to the message you wish to impart. In that way, you are using fiction techniques but you are not writing fiction.

"You own everything that happened to you. Tell your stories. If people wanted you to write warmly about them, they should have behaved better."

— Anne Lamott
writer

Fiction techniques are necessary.

We memoirists consistently bring fiction techniques to the task of creating vivid characters out of the people in our lives. This brings our characters to the attention of our readers.

In a novel or a movie, it is not difficult to understand—and accept—that you only know certain things about a character.

- You probably don't know who her best friend was in the fourth grade.
- You probably don't know that he flunked chemistry in his junior year of high school.

"Actually, the true story of a person's life can never be written. It is beyond the power of literature. The full tale of any life would be both utterly boring and utterly unbelievable."

—Isaac Bashevis Singer
writer

These turn out to be irrelevant in the story. The writer of the novel or the screenplay is intent on telling only a certain kind of story and not all possible stories in the same way that the memoirist's intent is not to portray a whole life but only a part of a life that is relevant to her story. A novel may be about heroism during a war or about a marital infidelity. In either case, the writer wants to tell one story and only one story. Writing about the bankruptcy that the war hero experienced a few years earlier just obfuscates the story as does knowing that the character's aunt Sandra had a lame leg.

No, these details are not necessary, and the author will leave

them out. Most likely, these details would also prove to be uninteresting to the reader or viewer. Even if interesting to them, they would weigh the story down and possibly lead the audience to a wrong appreciation. If writers were to tell the whole story about each of their characters, they would have to include something about unimportant details—the best friend in fourth grade and the bad chemistry marks in third year of high school—but the novelist or the screenwriter has no intention of writing the complete lifestory of the character.

And neither should you.

You, too, must not write about everything that ever happened to your characters—and you must not feel guilty about leaving details out. Your goal is to write about a specific segment of your life, to create order out of the chaos.

The politician who writes a memoir will leave out much material that is not important to understanding her career. (Aunt Sandra's weak leg has no role to play here.) Nobody is surprised when this happens. We accept it as natural—and it is.

So, too, when you write about yourself, you do not tell everything that there is to tell. You know tons of personal information, but you are writing about your business life or your marriage—not about everything that has ever happened to you.

"Memoir isn't the summary of a life; it's a window into a life, very much like a photograph in its selective composition. It may look like a casual and even random calling up of bygone events. It's not; it's a deliberate construction."

—William Zinsser writer

Action Steps

This is an exercise to desensitize you to irrelevant elements of your characters and to sensitize you to the important.

1. Make a list (a Memory List) of five incidents / events in one of your characters' lives that was important to them but which was not important to your development and so will not figure into your memoir. I hope this will help you to see what is important to them but not important to you.

2. Make a list of five incidents / events in your characters' lives that were important to you. These do not have to be important to them. For instance, your older brother went to college and so vacated his room. You were able to move out of a room that you shared with your over-active younger brother and so were able to buckle down to study and this saved your high-school transcript.

Sense details make for vivid characters.

As we have seen in an earlier module, it is a mistake to believe that a story has to have some characters who are well-known to make the book interesting. Some writers search their pasts for when they might have crossed paths with the famous. Consequently, they write about when they were in an elevator with some luminary back in 1978. Studding your memoir with luminaries is not something that will make your story necessarily interesting.

A representation of *vivid* characters *rather than influential* characters is more likely to be interesting to your reader.

As in fiction, vivid memoir characters are created and not merely transcribed from life.

How is this done?

"I believe that the memoir is the novel of the 21st century; it's an amazing form that we haven't even begun to tap… we're just getting started figuring out what the rules are."

—Susan Cheever writer

Use the five senses.

We know so much of the world through our senses. The senses, of course, are: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

Were I to look at you in person (and the same is mostly true of looking at a photograph of you), I would see height, weight, color, clothing, hair, etc. Depending on how evolved I am, I make—or resist making—judgments based on these sense details.

If you were a film maker, you would choose actors who conform to what you know of the script character's physical details and then you would improvise to replace what is missing by resorting to costuming, dyeing beards and hair, coiffuring, etc.

In depicting your literary characters, you do not have a choice about finding just the right person to portray your sister. She is who she is, but you do have a choice in the selection of the sense details you will reveal her to your reader. In that way, you have an easier task than does the filmmaker.

"The past is never dead. It's not even past."

—William Faulkner writer

Action Steps

Select one or more—or all—of your written stories for scrutiny of their use of sense details. Use the following to assess your characterization of the people in your memoir.

1. Sight: what do you see when you "see" the person you were writing about?

    - her height, weight, race, shape, posture, contours of the face, prominent features, hair color, hairstyles.
    - How did that person move, talk, walk, sit? Were there specific mannerisms? How did they carry themselves?
    - Describe the person's clothing: texture, flare, sense of style, how did he wear his clothing (elegantly, sloppily).
    - In what ways did that person typically express emotion with body posture?

2. Sound: what do you hear when you listen to the other person whose "real life" voice perhaps still resonates in your ears:



- Voice modulation, timber, and pitch
- Favorite expressions, words and sayings, accents, dialectical usage. (Have you written phonetic transcriptions—writing according to sound rather than grammar?)
- Laughter, sighing, exclamations.
- Throat clearing, foot scraping, or the knocking of a wedding ring against glass as a hand cleared frost from a windshield.

A memoir may have many stories and vignettes, but in the end, it adds up to only one lifestory.

3. Smell: how are olfactory references used in your characterization? Smell is one of the most evocative of the senses. A particular herb or soap or cleaning fluid can immediately return us to another time and place.

Can the writer ascribe articles of clothing to an individual? He can't really be sure that individual wore that article on a particular day.

- The scent of perfumes, colognes, pipe tobacco, cigarettes.
- The scent of a kitchen, the aroma of a bath, the smell of a workshop, or odors of a cellar.
- Perhaps the smell of animals or things associated with the person. Eg. The odor of a dog, the scent of plumbing materials on clothing.



4. Taste: This is a more challenging sense to include in a memoir but it can be done.

- Let the reader taste foods associated with your past or with the person you are writing about.
- Perhaps a food image or a metaphor in describing a person will give a deeper sense of her/his personality.

5. Touch: Even touch is possible in a memoir.

    - The roughness your character's skin.
    - How gently his hands touched you.
    - The smooth finish of her clothing.
    - The feel of a furtive caress.

Present your sense details in a "show, not tell" format.

The old adage "Show, don't tell!" is as true today as ever.

In a way, this whole module has been a "show, and don't tell" exhortation, but let's just get into "showing" explicitly for a few moments.

Showing your story rather than telling it is one technique that will almost always improve your writing. I admit that there is some great writing that makes a precedent for the possible primacy of "tell," but as a rule, "show" is more effective.

Consider this:

- **Your pen is your movie camera.** In a film, a director (let's pretend that's you!) doesn't have an actor go on screen to tell the audience that someone is angry. Instead, he shows the character in a scene where anger is in action.

    In writing, this means you do not say, "Naomi was angry." You show the action (create a movie picture) that makes it clear: "picking up a dish from the drying rack, Naomi throws it across the room. It crashes against the door Henry has just walked through." You may choose to include words (dialog) ("And don't you ever say that to me again!") that underscore the action. But the words should not replace the action. (We will have more on action in the next module.)

    Your writing itself must show as much feeling as



there was in life. Remember: you don't need to tell the reader how the character felt if you depict an action, as I did above, that successfully shows that emotion. In fact, it takes away from the pleasure the reader has in interpreting and understanding your story for herself when you tell too much.

- **To understand your story, the reader shouldn't have to have any special info that is not "in the eye of the camera."** You must challenge yourself to include everything the reader needs to know in order to understand what you want him to understand (you are the director!). "Show, don't tell" goes a step further: you must exclude anything in your story that has not been shown in a scene where action makes the info clear.

  Showing rather than telling is fairly new to writing. In most writing prior to the twentieth century, plenty of information was conveyed by a character who told what had happened: Macbeth, for example, committed his infamous murder offstage, and we are told about it. But movies—those paragons of showing—have been in our culture for over one hundred years now. They have changed the way we expect to experience a story on the page as well as on the screen.

  Today, because of improved technology, we are habituated to observing actions on the screen that earlier storytellers had to describe through a narrator. Shakespeare was forced to tell and not show: his stage was small and the cost and complication of making scene changes were prohibitive. Today's movie director not only wants to—and can—portray the death of Duncan but must do so because the audience expects it. The same expectation is true for your memoir readers.

"Great memoirs are never about the main character surviving. Most people survive. They are about what the main character does after surviving. Readers love to be filled with hope. They love to read about characters who triumph against the odds, even in small ways. If you get this right you will appeal to a large audience."

— Amanda Patterson writer

- **Showing is almost always more convincing than telling.** In a film, I saw recently, the hero meets a woman who seems more suitable for him than his wife—"seems" is crucial here—since we don't ever see the hero and his new woman in a "real life" situation—they never take the garbage out or prepare dinner after a stressful day at work, etc. We have, however, seen how he and his wife interact destructively. The movie shows us his wife is not right for him—the scenes in which they don't get along make that clear.

  The hero leaves his wife for the other woman and a narrator—**there actually was an overvoice**—tells us they lived happily ever after. I couldn't believe what I was hearing! It was a huge flaw in the film. As an audience member, I wanted to see how these two lovebirds would get along going grocery shopping and clearing the yard after yet another snow storm, etc. The film did not even hint at how infatuation could turn into an enduring relationship. As written, the ending fell flat. I didn't believe what I was told by an overvoice. Your readers will react similarly to your "tells."

"I gather together the dreams, fantasies, experiences that preoccupied me as a girl, that stay with me and appear and reappear in different shapes and forms in all my work. Without telling everything that happened, they document all that remains most vivid."

— Bell Hooks writer

Action Steps

Look at your writing with the direction "show, don't tell" in mind. Let the reader experience your stories for herself by giving her the scenes she needs to understand.

Review a story you have already written.

1. Print it out.

2. Select one highlight color to mark every instance

where you have failed to provide a detail for one or several of your characters.

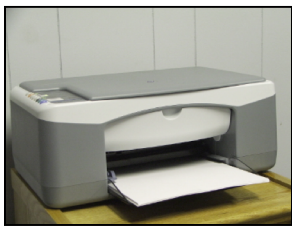
- Memory List details—both sense details and historical data—that are relevant.
- Insert those details into your story.

3. Select another highlight color and mark all the instances in which you tell rather than show.

    - In as much as you can right now, convert the tell into show.

4. Do this exercise for as many stories as you wish. This is good practice to get you in the know about writing your future stories to show and not tell.

5. Write future stories in this style.



Fear of telling too much about ourselves

In writing a memoir, all of us, at one time or another, come against the fear of revealing too much about the main character—you. The fear is founded—it's not always a friendly world out there.

But, excessive revealing—especially about ourselves—is generally not the problem memoir writers face—in spite of the predominance of the fear.

Revealing too little, however, is a much more frequent problem. Too little can come about because:

- **You want to conceal something**. If this is you, you are probably heading for writer's block. You can move ahead with some of the inner work in the Action Steps below.

- **You had not thought through what you are writing.** This comes about with fast writing or with lazy writing.

- **You are generalizing.** You are not revealing much because you simply have not taken the time to consider deeper feelings. On the most basic level, when you write something like "in those days, everyone did / had / was…," you are writing too generally. Generalizing is a way of not revealing your truth. Ask yourself "What do I really mean to write here?"

  As you answer that question, you will create more vivid characterization.

- **You find telling the truth to be to technically difficult.** Sometimes the situation requires a bit of nuanced writing. This requires writing more background and perhaps a variety of images and metaphors than you are not willing to take the time to create. One coaching client completely changed the family dynamic because "it was easier to write it that way." Fortunately for the memoir, it was easy to spot her inauthentic writing. With some rewriting—actually a lot of rewriting—the text began to reveal the writer's truth.

"I don't write to tell stories, I write to find out what the stories want to tell me."

— Valeria Teles writer

Action Steps

In your writer's journal, address the following questions.

- What are you concealing—or what did you almost conceal? Have you articulated the truth clearly to yourself? (Sometimes people are inhibited by vague feelings that they are not quite aware of.)



- Why are you concealing this? Who is benefitting from this concealment? Who is being harmed?
- What would happen if you told your truth and wrote about what you are concealing?
- What do you need to resolve or to whom do you need to speak to be freed ("feel free") to tell your truth?
- Give yourself permission to write only for yourself—for the moment.

Words to Know

Inspiration: a deep inner source of knowingness. Sometimes believed to be otherworldly but it is not so.

Craft: practical techniques used in trades, art and professions to produce best results—more predicable results.

Characters: the people your memoir is about.

Fiction techniques: techniques usually thought of as belonging to fiction.

Vivid character: a character whom the reader accepts as "real."

Sense details: pertaining to the five senses. Sense details make a story strong.

Show, don't tell: depict rather than describe; a basic tenet of modern writing.

Take Aways

Memoir borrows from fiction and needs fiction techniques to flourish.

Your memoir cannot do without vivid characters.

Sense details make for vivid characters.

Revealing too little is more frequent than revealing too much.

Concealing your truth is a path to writer's block.

"Memories are just moments that refuse to be ordinary."

— Diane Keaton actress

Topics for Memoir Writing

Develop Vivid Characters' writing assignments—if you should choose to take them on—bring you through your education years. Again, compile a Memory List around each set of memories and write with as much detail as possible. Keep your focus on characterization. How do all the details add up to understanding you and your characters better? With each of the questions below, write about how the experience felt to you and how you reacted.

As with previous writing assignments, remember that you are producing material for a first draft. Be kind to yourself and let a first draft be a first draft. All of this will be reworked later.

1. Write about your first day of school. Focus on your feelings without shortchanging physical details. Where was your school? Did you take a bus, walk, or go with your parents? What were you wearing (perhaps what you wished you might have been wearing)? Who was your teacher? What was she/he like? Describe the building. What happened when you first entered the building, the classroom? Did you feel good about being there? Can you remember some activities? Who were the other children? Were they nice to you—and you to them? How many were there? What sorts of things did they do?

2. Describe later schooling. List all the schools you have attended. Using the cues in #1 above, write about each subsequent school or grade. Remember to focus on your feelings and reactions to the experiences. Give names and describe buildings, teachers, classmates and anyone else who was important to you. Write about classes

and activities that you enjoyed. What did you learn that seemed important? What would you have changed about each teacher, class, or school? Were these years happy years or not? Why happy or not happy? (This is a big question and you might consider that you are writing a sketch now and will return to the story later.)

3. Learning outside of school: dance, theater, art? Give all the details. Did you attend camps or programs or clubs? Compare what you learned there with what you learned in school.

4. Did you go to college or take further education or training? Whether yes or no, how was this decision regarded in your family? Amongst your friends? How did you choose your college and your major, your continuing education? Describe your post high school education—physically, emotionally, and intellectually.

5. What was it like to leave college and go to work? Was college or training program a significant learning experience for you? Would you do it over again? What would you change with hindsight? Did you use knowledge from your college education or training in your work? How so?