Fiction Project
Realism and Character

15 pts.

Due Date
Due dates: see schedule

Length
Aim for aprx. 4-7 single-spaced pages (negotiable)

OPTION 1 Instructions

Write a short story in the realist mode that is character-based and has a traditional, linear, rising-action plot with well-developed characters. It can include flashbacks and other plot devices, but the base plot should be chronological and mostly continuous, well-paced, with a clear narrative question.

It's important to make the story **character-centered** instead of plot-centered. That is, start with a character and then build a story around that person based on who they are, what they fear, what they want. Avoid needless exposition; show, don't tell! Use fresh, vivid language. This should NOT be genre fiction such as fantasy, sci-fi, action-adventure, techno-thriller, etc.--just a good, realistic, moving and interesting story worth re-reading and with characters that make an impression and are memorable.

OPTION 2 Instructions

Write several micro stories (flash fiction), in the realist mode, totaling 4-7 pages, no more than 300 words each, give or take. These should be ultra concise, elliptical pieces heavy on images and short on exposition (lots of *showing* rather than *telling*). You should aim to include most of the elements of any traditional story: plot, narrative questions, character development, setting, point of view. However, you will do so with great brevity and often *imply* meaning rather than say it *explicitly.* Do not make all of the stories mere summaries of what might be longer tales, or try to cover a long period of time in a few hundred words. This may work occasionally and for genres such as fables, but your micro stories should mostly take on just a brief few moments of time which are extra rich and evocative with brief actions and vivid images.

Be sure to read all of our library materials on flash fiction for help.

Evaluation Criteria

Outstanding = A = 14-15 pts.. Follows the assignment instructions exceptionally well. Characters are central, realistic, and memorable. Plot is very clear and well-paced, and a narrative question is present. Excels in inventiveness, originality, and energy, relative to work produced generally in 229. A good and re-readable story. Well-edited and proofed. Begins to meet criteria for actual publication.

Very Good = B = 12-13 pts. Follows the assignment instructions well. Characters are realistic and fairly memorable. Plot is clear with a narrative question. Story elements are very good with some flaws. Very competent overall, but may lack originality or inventiveness, relative to work produced generally in 229. Good attention to style and mechanics.

Fair = C = 10-11 pts. Follows the assignment instructions with some lapses. Characters show promise but are barely memorable. Plot may lack a narrative question or show other weaknesses. One or more story elements need a lot of work, or most need at least some work. Uninspired but minimally competent; or very inspired but seriously lacking competence in one or more key areas. Somewhat weak to weak proofreading and editing.

Poor = D = 8-9 pts. Meets few of the criteria. May not heed or understand most of the instructions. May be sloppy, unproofed, unedited, and/or very perfunctory and uninspired.. An unsatisfying story, saved by at least minimal attention to at least one important facet of the piece.

Unacceptable = F = less than 8 pts. Story either fails to follow instructions, and/or demonstrates severe oversights or weaknesses in significant areas. Excessive exposition, little to no character development, problems with cliche and hackneyed language may all be problems.

IT'S ABOUT

CHARACTER

NOT

clever plots, scary creatures, formula medieval-futuristic landscapes, suicide endings or trick endings.

Develop your characters!!!!

Make them MEMORABLE.

Leave *an impression*.

Make them DISTINCT.

Make them round.