Copyright © Dr Robert G. May

What are you writing about?



Writing Creative Non-Fiction

Unit 1 Defining CNF	**Unit 1a** What Is Creative Non-Fiction?	**Unit 1b** Truthfulness	**Unit 1c** Ten Writing Recommendations
Unit 2 Striking Balances	**Unit 2a** Public vs Private Writing	**Unit 2b** Research and Immersion	**Unit 2c** Narrative and Narrators
Unit 3 Building Blocks	**Unit 3a** Reading and Readers	**Unit 3b** Scenes	**Unit 3c** Information
Unit 4 Finishing Touches	**Unit 4a** Recreation and Reconstruction	**Unit 4b** Hook, Frame, and Focus	**Unit 4c** Revising Creative Non-Fiction

Telling vs Showing

telling

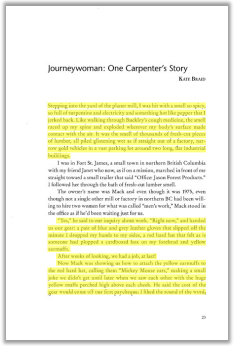
- "The lazy, uninspired [creative non-fiction] writer will *tell* the reader about a subject, place, or personality" (Gutkind 106).

showing

- "The [effective] creative non-fiction writer will *show* that subject, place, or personality, vividly, memorably—and in action" (Gutkind 106).

Creative non-fiction writers should always be conscious of *showing* their subjects to the reader rather than merely *telling* their subjects to the reader. In other words, they should write in *scenes*. Gutkind elaborates, "Just like the old cliché, 'a picture speaks a thousand words,' a good real-life scene can show readers an aspect of character and personality that a writer could never achieve [simply] by telling it" (Gutkind 113).

The Highlighting Test

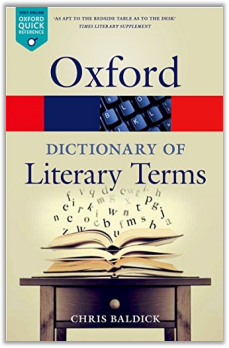

Journeywoman: One Carpenter's Story

"… take a yellow highlighter and … Highlight the scenes [of a creative non-fiction work] with yellow, just the scenes, large and small, from start to finish. Then return to the beginning and review your handiwork. Chances are, anywhere from 50 to 70 percent of each … excerpt you selected will be full of yellow blocks…. And why is that? Because the building blocks of creative non-fiction are little scenes or stories. The best and most successful work is constructed that way" (Gutkind 107).

Some Elements of Scenes

something always happens, preferably involving tension and suspense (114-16)	action
contains a beginning, a middle, and an end to help lend rhythm and coherence (119-22)	narrative
people speaking to each other realistically, to lend a cinematic quality and verisimilitude (122-23)	dialogue
details, images readers may not easily visualize on their own, often as metaphors for larger truths (127)	intimate details

verisimilitude



- the semblance of truth or reality in a work, or the literary principle that requires a consistent illusion of truth to life in a work
- term covers both the exclusion of improbabilities (as in *realism* and *naturalism*) and the careful disguising of improbabilities in non-realistic works
- originates in Aristotle's concept of *mimesis*, or imitation of nature (Baldick 375)

Author Biographies

Kate Braid

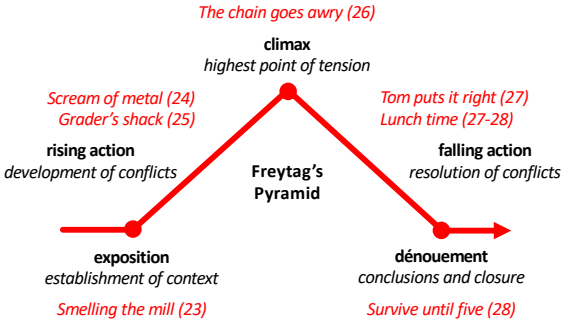
- writer and editor of personal essays and other creative non-fiction works
- has also written numerous prize-winning collections of poetry
- co-edited with Sandy Shreve *In Fine Form*, an anthology of Canadian form poetry
- "Journeywoman" is part of a longer memoir about her fifteen years in construction (387-88)

www.katebraid.com

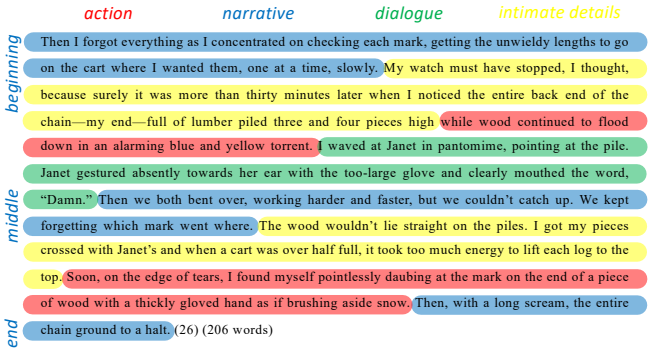
Evelyn Lau

- Vancouver-based writer and poet
- has published more than ten books, including works of non-fiction
- published *Runaway: Diary of a Street Kid* (1989) when she was eighteen; it became a bestseller
- *Runaway* was later made into CBC television movie (1994)
- winner of several Western Magazine Awards for her writing

Kate Braid, "Journeywoman: One Carpenter's Story"



🕮 Kate Braid, "Journeywoman: One Carpenter's Story"



Kate Braid. "Journeywoman: One Carpenter's Story." *Slice Me Some Truth*, Wolsak and Wynn, 2011, pp. 157-63.

🕮 Evelyn Lau, "Healer"

telling	showing
• "I remember giving him one pill after another" (157) • "I was eighteen; he was middle-aged" (159) • "they slept in separate rooms, passed each other silently in the hall" (159) • "He was a psychiatrist" (160) • "I was … working on a phone-sex line" (160) • "he was thirty years older" (162)	• "Part of me was waiting for rescue; when the police had come I thought that was what they would do. They would put an end to everything the way I had not been able to" (158) • "every time I opened my eyes and wished someone would walk in and put a stop to this" (161) • "I wanted her to acknowledge what was happening, but instead she glared at me as if I were the one leading him astray" (162)

Evelyn Lau. "Healer." *Slice Me Some Truth*, Wolsak and Wynn, 2011, pp. 157-63.

Queen's University Official Statement of Copyright: *This material is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in courses at Queen's University. This material shall not be distributed or disseminated to anyone other than students registered in courses at Queen's University. Failure to abide by these conditions is a breach of copyright, and may also constitute a breach of academic integrity under the University Senate's Academic Integrity Policy Statement.*