



# PREFACE AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

## *The Practice of Creative Writing*



*Heather Sellers*



---

### **A note about the cover**

Our new cover reflects the main themes of this new edition: how multiple elements—shapes and genres—work together to create interesting patterns, and how a two-dimensional space (such as a screen or a page) serves as a vehicle for making meaning.





# THE PRACTICE OF CREATIVE WRITING

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

**FOURTH EDITION**

**HEATHER SELLERS**

University of South Florida



bedford/st.martin's  
Macmillan Learning  
Boston | New York

*Vice President:* Leasa Burton  
*Program Director, English:* Stacey Purviance  
*Program Manager:* John E. Sullivan III  
*Executive Marketing Manager:* Joy Fisher Williams  
*Director of Content Development:* Jane Knetzger  
*Executive Development Manager:* Susan McLaughlin  
*Editorial Assistants:* Alex Markle, Bill Yin  
*Marketing Manager:* Vivian Garcia  
*Director, Content Management Enhancement:* Tracey Kuehn  
*Senior Managing Editor:* Michael Granger  
*Senior Manager of Publishing Services:* Andrea Cava  
*Senior Content Project Manager:* Pamela Lawson  
*Assistant Director, Process Workflow:* Susan Wein  
*Production Supervisor:* Lawrence Guerra  
*Director of Design, Content Management:* Diana Blume  
*Interior Design:* Jerilyn DiCarlo  
*Cover Design:* William Boardman  
*Text Permissions Manager:* Elaine Kosta, Lumina Datamatics, Inc.  
*Photo Permissions Editor:* Allison Ziebka  
*Director of Digital Production:* Keri deManigold  
*Project Manager, Media Training Specialist:* Allison Hart  
*Project Management:* Lumina Datamatics, Inc.  
*Project Manager:* Jogender Taneja, Lumina Datamatics, Inc.  
*Editorial Services:* Lumina Datamatics, Inc.  
*Copyeditor:* Nancy Benjamin  
*Indexer:* Sunny Khurana  
*Composition:* Lumina Datamatics, Inc.  
*Cover Image:* Peter Goldluc   
*Printing and Binding:* LSC Communications

Copyright © 2021, 2017, 2013, 2008 by Bedford/St. Martin's.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, except as may be permitted by law or expressly permitted in writing by the Publisher.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020936185

ISBN 978-1-319-21595-8 (Student Edition)

Printed in the United States of America.

1 2 3 4 5 6 25 24 23 22 21 20

### ***Acknowledgments***

*Text acknowledgments and copyrights appear at the back of the book on pages 507–509, which constitute an extension of the copyright page. Art acknowledgments and copyrights appear on the same page as the art selections they cover.*

*For information, write:* Bedford/St. Martin's, 75 Arlington Street, Boston, MA 02116

# PREFACE FOR INSTRUCTORS

For many years, I taught creative writing in the same way it had been taught to me. I took my students through inherited lessons on developing character in fiction, deepening theme in drama, measuring out meter in poetry, and studying great literature to learn. But as I did so, I felt like a fraud (a well-intentioned fraud) in the classroom; my own writing process bore almost no resemblance to the approaches I offered my students.

In my writing room, I always began — and still do — as many writers do: with *an image*. Literary terms never entered into the generative phase of my writing process. Instead, I always concentrated on a kind of movie in my mind's eye; in fact, I would have been hidebound and blocked as a new writer if I had consciously thought about metonymy, theme, or diction. I sensed intuitively that what made good writing good lay underneath and in advance of genre considerations. Then, as now, I delay genre decisions until I know more about what it is I have on the page. Genre is as much a question as it is a container.

In fact, what trips us up as writers often isn't line breaks or thematic considerations or specific genre conventions — not at first. Most writers I know, students and colleagues, have to work at actually getting to the desk and staying put. To improve as writers, we know we have to figure out how to create, extend, and sustain productive focus. I firmly believe the creative writing course must begin with instruction in process. Thus this textbook begins with strategies for building a thoughtful, meaningful writing practice, and then moves, step-by-step, through the strategies writers use, across genres, to develop and enhance their efforts.

For years, I was aware of the gap between what I did in my writing studio and what I did in the classroom, teaching my writing classes as though they

were literature courses with creative-writing assignments mixed in. It wasn't until I took a life-changing class with Lynda Barry that I found entry into a rich body of material on the artistic process and the nature of literary art. I found a way to teach writing as deep play, akin to the kind of focused imaginative state of mind we sustained for hours on end when we played as kids. In interviews with artists and writers, we hear this same sort of “dreaming deep” method described again and again. As I studied creativity and method, my classroom transformed. My students—spending more time learning about the nature of imagination, the way humans tell stories, and the psychology of concentration—focused for longer periods of time, wrote more, and they wrote *better*. It was truly thrilling.

As my writing life and my teaching practice came into better alignment, I wanted to create a textbook for students that foregrounded this new approach to the creative-writing process, a book that would also teach sophisticated and nuanced reading skills in an approachable, welcoming, and *creative* way. This is that book.

*The Practice of Creative Writing* has three overarching objectives. In this course of study, I seek to help students:

1. Apply sophisticated close-reading skills to a wide range of innovative literature in order to develop as writers.
2. Build a healthy writing practice with a high level of self-observation, regularity, and focus.
3. Compose exercises to hone specific micro-skills, while building more sophisticated and layered writing projects—poems, memoir and essays, stories, plays, and hybrids and experiments.

Making the move from personal expression to powerful, reader-oriented creative writing is demanding. Ultimately, this book seeks to assure writers: *It takes time to learn to write well. The endeavor is a weirdly maddening mix of fun and difficulty. You can do this, and it's worth the trouble.*

## NEW IN THE FOURTH EDITION

This edition of *The Practice of Creative Writing* contains five new features.



***Process micro-interviews with authors included in the text.*** For the new edition, I interviewed ten writers whose pieces are presented in these pages. These interviews provide a special glimpse into each author's particular writing process and prompt process awareness and self-reflection assignments for students.

*Clearly stated course and chapter objectives.* Especially helpful for designing online course modules, building a syllabus, assessing learning throughout the course, and deftly guiding students' reading and learning, objectives are posted here in the preface and at the head of each chapter, providing a visible framework for learning. Based on Bloom's taxonomy, these objectives aid instructors in certifying their courses meet institutional standards and requirements.

*Genre-based writing assignments.* To improve the flexibility and usability of the text, each chapter now concludes with writing projects labeled by genre: experimental/hybrid, poetry, nonfiction, fiction, and drama. Instructors can organize the course by writing strategy or by genre; students can easily see how writing strategies apply across genres.

*New readings.* With a specific focus on innovation, flash, and micro-forms, as well as new speculative readings, each new selection is chosen because of its proven success in providing inspiration for student writers. New writers such as Thao Thai, Och Gonzalez, and Jarod Roselló are presented alongside beloved contemporary authors such as Ted Chiang, Natalie Diaz, and Ross Gay. Brief excerpts from student favorites, Joy Harjo's "She Had Some Horses" and Beth Ann Fennelly's *Heating & Cooling: 52 Micro-Memoirs*, for example, provide fresh new models for writing projects.

*Fresh approach to revision.* How do we help student writers develop revision skills? Typically they often resist making changes to existing text, and often mightily. We know that complex, fresh, and memorable writing comes from a wide range of revision skills. The fourth edition presents a fresh new set of approaches to this crucial and challenging part of the writing process; new Chapter Nine, Shape, groups revision strategies and will help students where they struggle the most.

In addition to these five new features, a fully revised and updated **Instructor's Manual** is available for **face-to-face and online** teachers adopting the book for use in their classroom. Sample syllabi, additional writing projects, and suggestions for designing and leading a successful course are included. Instructors who wish to teach by genre will find various classroom-tested options for course design. And instructors who teach by writing strategy will find tips for organizing their course as well. I've also created a series of videos that teachers can access. The Instructor's Manual and the videos can be accessed on the Macmillan Learning website **macmillanlearning.com**.

## FEATURES OF THE PRACTICE OF CREATIVE WRITING

The hallmark features of *The Practice of Creative Writing* are all in the fourth edition.

*A flexible, process-based approach for writers in every genre.* *The Practice of Creative Writing* is based on the premise that good writing is good writing. Regardless of which genre you are working in, effective writing has six components: images, energy, tension, patterns, insight, and shape. These universal principles of good writing are best learned by experimenting across genres before settling into a home genre or taking a course devoted to a single genre. The six strategies are presented in order of difficulty so students can build facility with each one and layer the techniques to produce more sophisticated pieces as the course progresses.

Cross-training works, and students like it. For many students, a concept is made clear only when presented and practiced in several forms. Studying formal poetry strengthens the fiction writer's ear for rhythm; prose writers can create better dialogue by reading monologues and plays; and observing a nonfiction writer's use of insight helps student writers see the world more astutely. Every selection in the text displays the six core strategies so each lesson is consistently reinforced as the course unfolds.

*Instruction in creative process and creative concentration in every chapter.* Part One of *The Practice of Creative Writing* presents effective strategies for building a writing practice, distinguishing "life blocks" from "creative blocks," and how to use reading as the foundation of one's writing life. In Part Two and Part Three, students build on the skills they learn in Part One, designing more complex writing projects as they practice new skills. *The Practice of Creative Writing* also presents revision as an act of shaping, and something writers do throughout the writing process, not an activity they tack on at the end. Workshop guidelines and self-assessment opportunities appear throughout the text. Writers who wish to explore process and creativity further will find a detailed updated list of resources in Part Four.

*Instruction for giving and receiving feedback, working well in a writing group, and building a portfolio of polished work.* In every chapter, practical prompts and checklists aid students in distinguishing between revising and editing, and encourage higher levels of reader awareness. Workshop sections in each strategy chapter provide guidance for self-guided revision as well as peer response. Writers' tips and checklists also help students continually assess and revise their own work and make constructive



suggestions to peers. At the end of the course, a class might offer a live reading, publish its own literary magazine, require students to make chapbooks of their best work, or turn in portfolios. Chapter Eleven presents detailed information to support writers in bringing their work to an audience.

*Writing in forms and genres.* After learning the six strategies of effective creative writing in any genre, students move to Part Three, Forms. Various forms of writing from across the genres—from the list to the sonnet to the one-act play—are presented as recipes, and students are set loose to create a body of work. Most courses will ask students to show their strengths across the genres, and a helpful chart on page 423 shows which forms meet the criteria for each genre.

Instructors usually ask students to tackle these longer, more formal genre-based projects late in the course, after the six strategies have been mastered. But some organize their course around the forms in Part Three, and those assignments drive the study of strategies throughout the course as students work their way through a series of assignments and move toward a portfolio of complete projects. Examples of many of the forms presented in Chapter Ten appear throughout the text, including journeys, graphic narratives, sonnets, and villanelles. Readers are referred to additional examples as well.

*Lively readings in all genres.* The readings in the book are vibrant, fresh, and popular among both students and their instructors, including works by contemporary authors such as Raymond Carver, Terrance Hayes, Pablo Neruda, Akhil Sharma, Kim Addonizio, Julia Koets, and Ira Sukrungruang. A wide range of lively work is presented, including short stories, flash fiction, essays, memoir, poems, prose poems, comics, monologue, and drama. Most important, every piece included represents aspects of the six strategies; each piece can be used to illustrate image, energy, tension, pattern, insight, and shape; and each chapter encourages review of previously introduced concepts. Throughout the book, box quotes from writers around the world provide inspiration for students and can be used as prompts for journal writing and/or discussion posts about the writing process—particularly helpful in online versions of the course, where building daily meaningful instructor presence is crucial.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Allyson Hoffman has been my editorial assistant for this project and I'm grateful for her professionalism, good cheer, research skills, spot-on suggestions and support. I'm similarly indebted to the MFA students in my

graduate creative writing pedagogy courses at the University of South Florida; our discussions about teaching **creating** writing have improved this project in many ways. I want to thank LaSaundria Bass and Victor Ventor in Innovative Education at the University of South Florida for helping me learn how to teach online effectively and for our many discussions about best practices in course design and the essential role of textbooks in online education. I'm part of a truly wonderful English Department with supportive and kind colleagues—thank you, especially to Laura Runge-Gordon, Debra Garcia, John Fleming, Rita Ciresi, Jay Hopler, Jarod Roselló, Karen Brown, Mark Leib, and Julia Koets. It is a privilege and joy to be your colleague. I'd also like to thank Jennifer Phypers, Heide Nelson, Helen Wallace, Jane Bernstein, Elaine Sexton, Susanna Childress, Silvia Curbelo, Adriana Casteneda, and Victor Casteneda, for their kindness and support. I'm grateful to all of the writers who contributed work to this edition and am especially appreciative of those who agreed to be interviewed about their writing process: Jarod Roselló, John Brehm, Och Gonzalez, Lee Herrick, Vincent Scarpa, Brenda Miller, Dylan Landis, Beth Ann Fennelly, Julie Hakim Azzam, and Julia Koets.

At Bedford/St. Martin's, my wonderful development editor, Susan McLaughlin, provided terrific guidance during all stages of the writing and revision process. I am lucky to have had this opportunity to work with her—I'm indebted to her. Special thanks to Leasa Burton, who has been with this project from its original inception, and to Jane Knetzger, John Sullivan, and Lauren Arrant for their leadership during the preparation of this edition. Pamela Lawson skillfully handled production, while Alex Markle, Samantha Storms, and Bill Yin helped with countless details, Joy Fisher Williams coordinated marketing efforts, and Elaine Kosta managed permissions. I also want to thank Billy Boardman, who designed the cover—a perfect visual representation of craft, play, and creativity—featured on the cover.

Many thanks to the following reviewers, who have helped shape each new edition of *The Practice of Creative Writing* with their excellent feedback and suggestions. For this edition, I relied on the collective wisdom of these colleagues: Maria Brandt, Monroe Community College; Ayse Bucak, Florida Atlantic University–Boca Raton; Michele Cheung, University of Southern Maine–Gorham; Robert Cowser, St. Lawrence University; Thomas D'Angelo, Nassau Community College; Patricia Francisco, Hamline University–St. Paul; David Galef, Montclair State University; Bill Gary, Henderson Community College; Joyce Kessel, Villa Maria College–Buffalo; Kathleen McCoy, Adirondack Community College–Queensbury; Berwyn Moore, Gannon University; Jeffrey Newberry, Abraham Baldwin Agri College; Christina Rau, Nassau Community College; Lindsay Starck,

Augsburg University; Scott Ward, Eckerd College; Martha Webber, California State University, Fullerton; Stephanie Webster, Ivy Tech State College; Courtney Huse Wike, Black Hills State University; Kevin Wolfe, Eckerd College.

Heather Sellers

The University of South Florida

## BEDFORD/ST. MARTIN'S PUTS YOU FIRST

From day one, our goal has been simple: to provide inspiring resources that are grounded in best practices for teaching reading and writing. For more than thirty-five years, Bedford/St. Martin's has partnered with the field, listening to teachers, scholars, and students about the support writers need. We are committed to helping every writing instructor make the most of our resources.

### How can we help you?

- Our editors can align our resources to your outcomes through correlation and transition guides for your syllabus. Just ask us.
- Our sales representatives specialize in helping you find the right materials to support your course goals.
- Our learning solutions and product specialists help you make the most of the digital resources you choose for your course.
- Our *Bits* blog on the Bedford/St. Martin's English Community (**community.macmillan.com**) publishes fresh teaching ideas weekly. You'll also find easily downloadable professional resources and links to author webinars on our community site.

Contact your Bedford/St. Martin's sales representative or visit **macmillanlearning.com** to learn more.

### Print and Digital Options for *The Practice of Creative Writing: A Guide for Students, 4e*

Choose the format that works best for your course, and ask about our packaging options that offer savings for students.

- To order the fourth edition, use ISBN 978-1-319-21595-8.
- *Achieve Writer's Help*. Achieve puts student writing at the center of your course and keeps revision at the core, with a dedicated composition space that guides students through drafting, peer review, source check, reflection,

and revision. Developed to support best practices in commenting on student drafts, Achieve is a flexible, integrated suite of tools for designing and facilitating writing assignments, paired with actionable insights that make students' progress toward outcomes clear and measurable. With trusted content from the widely used Hacker or Lunsford handbooks, *Writer's Help* takes students through first-year writing and beyond. For details, visit [macmillanlearning.com/college/us/englishdigital](http://macmillanlearning.com/college/us/englishdigital).

- *Popular e-book formats*. For details about our e-book partners, visit [macmillanlearning.com/ebooks](http://macmillanlearning.com/ebooks).
- *Inclusive Access*. Enable every student to receive their course materials through your LMS on the first day of class. Macmillan Learning's Inclusive Access program is the easiest, most affordable way to ensure all students have access to quality educational resources. Find out more at [macmillanlearning.com/inclusiveaccess](http://macmillanlearning.com/inclusiveaccess).

## Your Course, Your Way

No two writing programs or classrooms are exactly alike. Our Curriculum Solutions team works with you to design custom options that provide the resources your students need. (Options below require enrollment minimums.)

- *ForeWords for English*. Customize any print resource to fit the focus of your course or program by choosing from a range of prepared topics, such as Sentence Guides for Academic Writers.
- *Macmillan Author Program (MAP)*. Add excerpts or package acclaimed works from Macmillan's trade imprints to connect students with prominent authors and public conversations. A list of popular examples or academic themes is available upon request.
- *Mix and Match*. With our simplest solution, you can add up to fifty pages of curated content to your Bedford/St. Martin's text. Contact your sales representative for additional details.
- *Bedford Select*. Build your own print anthology from a database of more than 800 selections, or build a handbook, and add your own materials to create your ideal text. Package with any Bedford/St. Martin's text for additional savings. Visit [macmillanlearning.com/bedfordselect](http://macmillanlearning.com/bedfordselect).

## USING *THE PRACTICE OF CREATIVE WRITING* IN YOUR ONLINE CLASSROOM

Using a textbook gives your students a second teacher, a vital “instructor at home.” In addition to these five new features, the fourth edition of *The Practice of Creative Writing* has been updated specifically for ease of use in the online classroom, where students crave presence and consistency.

Chapters convert easily to modules and assignment sequences are clear and student-tested. Those without reliable internet connections easily access material anywhere. All permissions are legal, and all material is proofread and fact-checked.

For teachers, your course is pre-built:

- *Module Objectives.* You’ll find student-centered objectives at the beginning of each chapter.
- *Discussions.* The new Practices in each chapter are designed to serve as online Discussions; students are asked to respond to posts in their groups.
- *Reading Quizzes.* Use bold-faced terms in each chapter to help students read closely and internalize key vocabulary.
- *Rubrics.* The objectives at the beginning of the chapter can be used to create simple, clear rubrics for assessing each assignment in the chapter. Grading assignments is simplified.
- *Writing Projects.* To complete each module, students create a piece of writing that demonstrates the key concepts in that chapter.
- *Live Readings by Authors.* Insert live readings from YouTube and other platforms into your module so students can see and hear the authors in each chapter’s anthology perform their work. The Instructor’s Manual has specific suggestions.

One of the most important features of a successful online course is, of course, instructor presence. With the textbook at hand, students connect to a cohesive and substantive body of material; you coach and guide them through the course. The Instructor’s Manual helps you increase instructor presence by outlining ideas for making a welcome video for each chapter, downloading videos that come with the book, responding to Discussions, and pointers for locating key concepts in chapter readings.



Photo Credit: Steven Le

## About the Author

**Heather Sellers** is professor of English in the graduate and undergraduate writing programs at the University of South Florida, where she was honored with a university-wide teaching award. She offers courses for creative writers in hybrid and experimental writing, fiction, memoir, essays, and poetry, as well as a course for creative-writing teachers. Born and raised in Orlando, Florida, she earned her PhD in English/Creative Writing at Florida State University. She has taught at New York University, the University of Texas–San Antonio, St. Lawrence University, and for almost two decades, Hope College, where she was elected Professor of the Year.

A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for Fiction and a Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers award for her short story collection *Georgia Under Water*, she has published widely in a variety of genres. Her work appears in the *New York Times*; *The Pushcart Prize* anthology; *The Best American Essays*; *O, the Oprah Magazine*; *Good Housekeeping*; *Reader's Digest*; *Parade*; *Real Simple*; *On the Seawall*; *Adroit*; *Longreads*; *Creative Nonfiction*; and frequently in *The Sun Magazine*. Her memoir *You Don't Look Like Anyone I Know: A True Story of Family, Face Blindness, and Forgiveness* was a Michigan Notable Book of the Year and Editor's Choice at *The New York Times Book Review*. Other publications include *Drinking Girls and Their Dresses: Poems*; and *Spike and Cubby's Ice Cream Island Adventure*, a children's book. She lives in Saint Petersburg, Florida. Her website is [heathersellers.com](http://heathersellers.com).

# CONTENTS

Preface for Instructors *iii*  
About the Author *xii*



## INTRODUCTION

How *The Practice of Creative Writing* Works 2  
Asking Generative Questions 4

## PART ONE

### FOUNDATIONS 7

#### 1 FINDING FOCUS 9

The Mind's Eye 10

Write What You See 12

Moving Images 13

Subject as Focus 15

Write What You Know 15

Developing Focus 18

The Writing Habit 18

Writing Rituals 19

Flow 20

Lack of Focus 22

Writer's Block 22

Distraction 23

Procrastination 25

Judgment 26

■ Neil Gaiman's "8 Rules for Writing" 27

WRITING PROJECTS 27

READINGS 29

- Jarod Roselló, *Robot Camp* 29
- Writers on Writing feature (Roselló) 42
- John Brehm, *The Poems I Have Not Written* 43
- Writers on Writing feature (Brehm) 44
- Och Gonzalez, *What I Do on My Terrace Is None of Your Business* 46
- Writers on Writing feature (Gonzalez) 46

## 2 READING AS A WRITER

Tips for Reading as a Writer 48

Be Curious 48

Read Widely 49

Explore Genres, Question Boundaries 49

Embrace Discomfort 50

To Read Is to Travel 51

Strategies for Close Reading 52

Read Multiple Times, Take Notes 53

Read Aloud 53

Experiment with Copywork 54

Memorize 54

Annotate 55

Genres: An Overview 57

Hybrids and Experiments 58

Poetry 59

Creative Nonfiction: Memoir and Literary Essay 60

Fiction 61

Drama: Spoken Word, Monologue, Play, and Screenplay 61

Closely Reading Your Own Work 63

Reading Work By Peers 64

Reading to Write 65

Inspiration 65

Imitation 66

Close Imitation 67

Loose Imitation 68

WRITING PROJECTS 69



## READINGS 71

- Van Jordan, *after•glow* 71
- Sebastian Matthews, *Buying Wine* 71
- Lee Herrick, *My California* 72  
Writers on Writing feature (Herrick) 73
- Ira Sukrungruang, *Chop Suey* 75
- Nancy Stolham, *I Found Your Voodoo Doll on the Dance Floor After Last Call* 76
- Vincent Scarpa, *I Go Back to Berryman's* 76
- Writers on Writing feature (Scarpa) 78
- Ted Chiang, *The Great Silence* 79
- Marco Ramirez, *I am not Batman.* 82

**3 CREATING FROM COMPONENTS**

## Core Components of Creative Writing 87

Words 88

Metaphor 89

Polarity 91

## Genre-Specific Components 92

## Components of Narrative: Memoir, Creative Nonfiction, Fiction 92

Yearning 93

Sentences 94

Conflict 96

Scene 97

Building Narratives Using Conflict-Crisis-Resolution 99

## Components of Poetry 101

Sound and Rhythm

Sound 102

Rhythm 103

Lines 105

■ Gwendolyn Brooks, *We Real Cool* 105

Line Length 107

Polarity in the Line 108

Turns 108

Stanzas 111

Building Poems Using Form 113

A Word on Poetic Thinking 114

Plays 114

## Components of Plays 114

Exposition 115

Dialogue 116

Set	117
Action and Sound	118
WRITING PROJECTS	119
COMPONENTS WORKSHOP	120
READINGS	121
■ Kim Addonizio, <i>First Poem for You</i>	121
■ Terrance Hayes, <i>Liner Notes for an Imaginary Playlist</i>	121
■ Dylan Thomas, <i>Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night</i>	123
■ Brenda Miller, <i>Swerve</i>	124
■ Writers on Writing feature (Brenda Miller)	124
■ Raymond Carver, <i>Cathedral</i>	125

## PART TWO

### STRATEGIES 139

#### 4 IMAGES

The Principles of Images	141
Images Are Active	142
Reading Is Image Viewing	142
Images Are the Opposite of Thought and Feeling	145
Generating Images	147
Creating with Images	149
Focus on People in Action	149
Think from within Images	150
Use Specifics	151
Move Around in Images	152
One Sentence, One Action	154
Summary Images	156
Sliding	158
A Word on Ideas	160
WRITING PROJECTS	162
IMAGES WORKSHOP	163
READINGS	164
■ Ross Gay, <i>Ode to Sleeping in My Clothes</i>	164
■ Natalie Diaz, <i>My Brother at 3 a.m.</i>	165
■ Dylan Landis, <i>In My Father's Study upon His Death</i>	166
■ Writers on Writing feature (Dylan Landis)	167
■ Thao Thai, <i>Counting Bats</i>	168

- Mary Robison, *Pretty Ice* 169
- Akhil Sharma, *Surrounded by Sleep* 174

## 5 ENERGY

- The Principles of Energy 187
  - Subject: Focus on What's Fascinating 189
    - Tricky Topics 189
    - Movement and Heat 190
  - Leaps: The Energetic Power of Gaps 192
    - Format Leaps 193
    - Symbol Leaps 193
    - Object Leaps 194
    - Dialogue Leaps 195
    - Line Leaps 196
  - Sparky Word Choices 197
  - Super-Specifics 200
  - Filters 201
- Manipulating Energy 202
  - Pace 203
  - Camera Work 205
  - Too Much Energy? 208
- TROUBLESHOOTING ENERGY 210
- WRITING PROJECTS 211
- ENERGY WORKSHOP 212
- READINGS 213
  - Betsy Sholl, *Genealogy* 213
  - Brian Turner, *What Every Soldier Should Know* 213
  - Jamila Osman, *Fluency* 214
  - Beth Ann Fennelly, *One Doesn't Always Wish to Converse on Airplanes* 215
  - Beth Ann Fennelly, *Small Talk at Evanston General* 215
  - Beth Ann Fennelly, *Why I'm Switching Salons* 216
  - Beth Ann Fennelly, *Two Phone Conversations* 216
  - Writers on Writing feature (Beth Ann Fennelly) 216
  - Brian Arundel, *The Things I've Lost* 217
  - Rick Moody, *Boys* 219
  - Brenda Peynado, *What We Lost* 223
  - Rebecca Roanhorse, *Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience* 226
  - Kristina Halvorson, *Now We're Really Getting Somewhere* 240

## 6 TENSION

- The Principles of Tension 247
  - Tension = Yearning + Obstacles 248
  - Tension, Stakes, and Cause/Effect 250
- Maintaining Tension 254
  - Work with at Least Two Characters/Elements 254
  - Match Your Opponents 256
  - Tension in Poetry 256
- Manipulating Tension 258
  - Creating Oppositions 258
  - Thermostat Control: Adjusting the Temperature 259
  - Layers: Adding Dimension 263
    - Layering with Images 263
    - Layering with Triangles 265
    - Layering Dialogue and Action 267
  - Façade 269
- WRITING PROJECTS 271
- TENSION WORKSHOP 272
- READINGS 273
  - Natalie Diaz, *Abecedarian*.... 273
  - Jenifer Hixson, *Where There's Smoke* 274
  - Rod Kessler, *How to Touch a Bleeding Dog* 277
  - Marisa Silver, *What I Saw from Where I Stood* 279
  - Jessica Shattuck, *Bodies* 291
  - Peter Morris, *Pancakes* 303

## 7 PATTERN

- Pattern by Ear 311
  - Rhymes and Other Echoes 311
  - Word Order 314
    - E. E. Cummings, (Me up at does) 316
  - Rhythm 318
    - Meter 319
    - Free Verse 321
- Pattern by Eye 321
  - Object Patterns 321
  - Gesture Patterns 324
  - Pattern on the Page 326
    - Lists 328
    - Anaphora 329

WRITING PROJECTS 330

PATTERN WORKSHOP 331

READINGS 332

- Gregory Orr, *The River* 332
- Randall Mann, *Pantoum* 332
- Edna St. Vincent Millay, *What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why* 333
- Julie Hakim Azzam, *How to Erase an Arab* 333
- Writers on Writing feature (Azzam) 335
- Ken Liu, *Paper Menagerie* 337

## 8 INSIGHT

Reading for Insight 348

Principles of Insight 353

Accuracy 353

Gestures 353

Dialogue 354

Generosity 355

PRACTICING INSIGHT 356

Reflect on Your Personal Experience 356

Ask Questions 356

Reverse Expectations 358

Create Deep Context 359

Surprise Yourself 361

Create Subtext 362

Rely on Form 363

Three Pitfalls 364

WRITING PROJECTS 366

INSIGHT WORKSHOP 367

READINGS 369

- Julia Koets, *Boys* 369
- Writers on Writing feature (Koets) 369
- Pablo Neruda, *Ode to My Suit* 370
- Joy Harjo, *She Had Some Horses (part one)* 372
- Dana Spiotta, *Control* 373
- Brian Doyle, *Two Hearts* 375
- Michael Cunningham, *White Angel* 376

## 9 SHAPE

- Principles of Shape 391
  - Shaping, Editing, and Proofreading 392
  - Revision = Seeing Again 394
  - Shaping by Strategy 395
- Additional Techniques for Shaping Your Work 396
  - Look Closer 396
  - Work by Hand 397
  - Be Bold: Let Go 398
  - Sketch 399
  - Cut 401
- Pitfalls 403
  - Perfectionism 403
  - Anxiety and Fear 404
  - Overwhelm 404
  - Darlings 405
- Shaping a Story: A Writer at Work 406
  - Letting Go 407
  - Applying the Wheel of Strategies 408
  - Getting Feedback 409
  - Sketching Not Drafting 410
  - Building a Personal Process 412
- EDITING AND PROOFREADING 413
- WRITING PROJECTS 416
- SHAPE WORKSHOP 417

## PART THREE

### FORMS 419

## 10 FINDING FORM

- Forms: Recipes for Writers 421
  - Writing in the Genres 423
  - How to Create with Form 424
    - Read, Read Again, Then Write 424
    - Try Each Form at Least Twice 424
    - Begin Boldly 424
  - A Note on Poetry 425
- Creating a Portfolio of Forms 425

Abecedarius	427
Reading the Abecedarius	428
Writing an Abecedarius	429
Anaphora	429
Reading Anaphora	430
Writing an Anaphora	432
Braid	433
Reading Braids	434
Writing a Braid	435
Comics and Graphic Narratives	437
Reading Comics and Graphic Narratives	438
Writing a Comic or Graphic Narrative	439
Flash	442
Reading Flash Fiction and Micro-Memoir	443
Writing Flash Fiction	444
Writing Micro-Memoir	445
Ghazal	446
Reading Ghazals	448
Writing a Ghazal	448
Journey	449
Reading Journeys	450
Writing a Journey	451
List	452
Reading Lists	453
Writing a List	454
Monologue	455
Reading Monologues	456
Writing a Monologue	457
Pantoum	458
Reading Pantoums	458
Writing a Pantoum	460
Play/Screenplay	462
Reading Plays and Screenplays	463
Writing a Play	464
Tips for Formatting a Play	466
Tips for Formatting a Screenplay	466
Sestina	466
Reading Sestinas	466
Writing a Sestina	468
Sonnet	470

Reading Sonnets	470
Writing a Sonnet	472
Villanelle	474
Reading Villanelles	475
Writing a Villanelle	476

**PART FOUR**

**THE WRITING LIFE** 477

**11 REACHING READERS**

Preparing to Publish	479
Live Readings	480
Attending a Live Reading	480
Tips for Attending a Live Reading	482
Giving a Live Reading	483
Literary Magazines: Print and Digital	484
Rely on Guides and Directories	485
Research a Wide Range of Publications	486
Submit Your Work	487
Get Rejected	488
Portfolios and Chapbooks	489
Portfolios	489
Chapbooks	491
Artist Statements	492
QUESTIONS TO ASK: Writing an Artist's Statement	493

**12 WRITING RESOURCES**

Smart Searching	496
Social Media	498
Instagram	498
Twitter	499
Resources	500
Creativity and Inspiration	500
In Print	500
Online	500
Images: Seeing More Closely	501
In Print	501
Self-Expression and Personal Writing	501
In Print	501
Online	501



Literary News 502



The Business of Writing: Agents, Freelancing, Book Proposals,  
and Publishing 502

In Print 502

Online 503

Appendix: Terminology for Creative Writers 504

Acknowledgments 507

Index 00

