

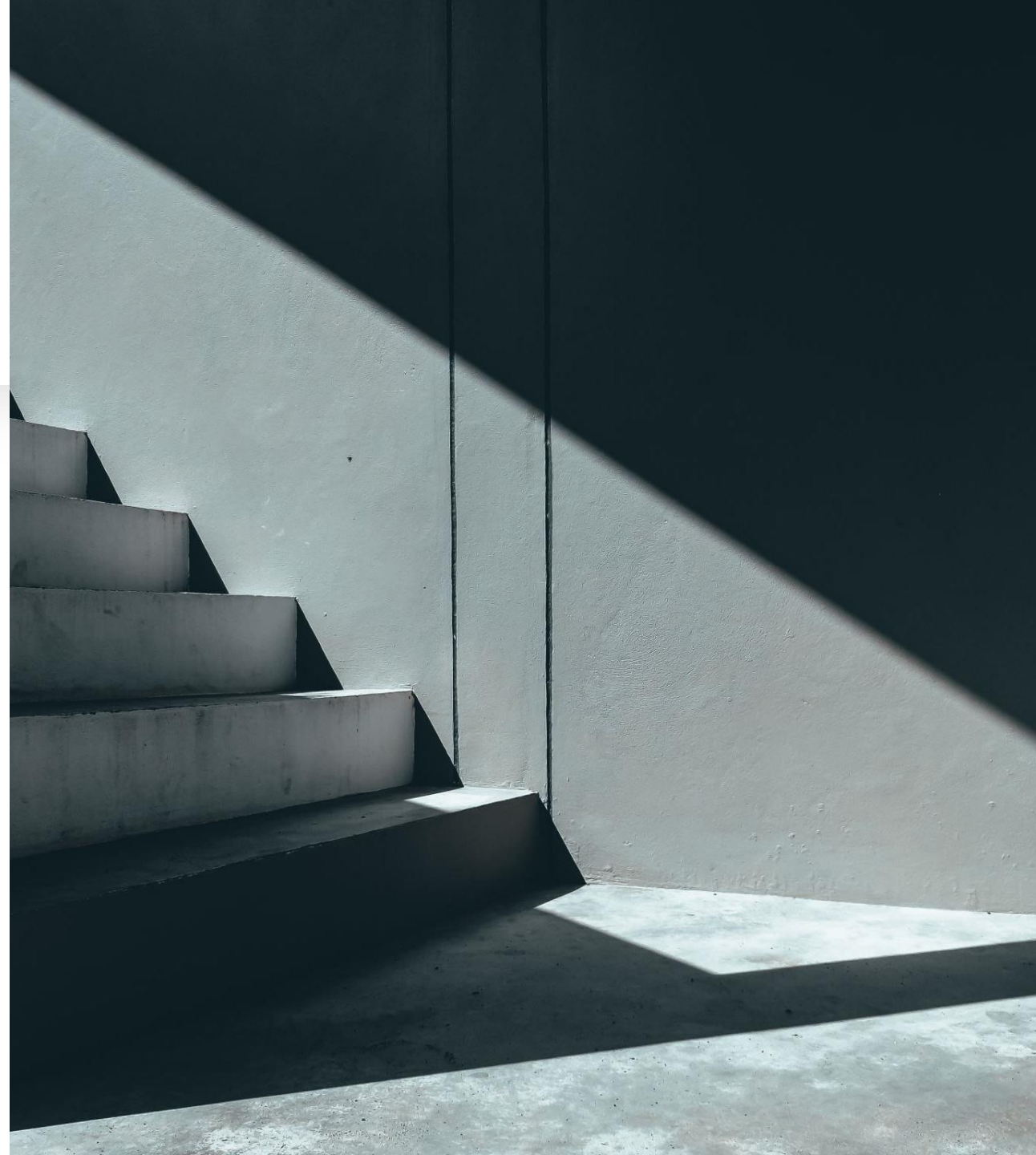


Day 3

Details, Details

Concrete Details As The Basic Building Blocks of Good Creative Writing

- Getting Started
- Details are the lifeblood of good writing – for both fiction and creative nonfiction.
- And not just any details, but *concrete* details, or details that are grounded in the five senses.
- By first and foremost relying on what we see, feel, hear, touch, taste when we render our thoughts and emotions on the page, we are ensuring that we immerse our readers in a concrete sensory world of our own making.





On Being Selective

You have to be selective of the details you choose. That's what being a writer is all about – **making choices.**

You can't show the entire video of your summer vacation; you have to be discriminating – that is, if you want anyone to be interested.

On Thinking Small

- Some definitions
- **Specific:** Limiting or limited. Precise. Peculiar to, or characteristic of, something. Exclusive or special.
- **Concrete:** Characterized by things or events that can be perceived by the senses. Real. Actual. Referring to a particular. Specific, not general or abstract. The reproduction, using descriptions embodying the five senses of a place, person, or thing.

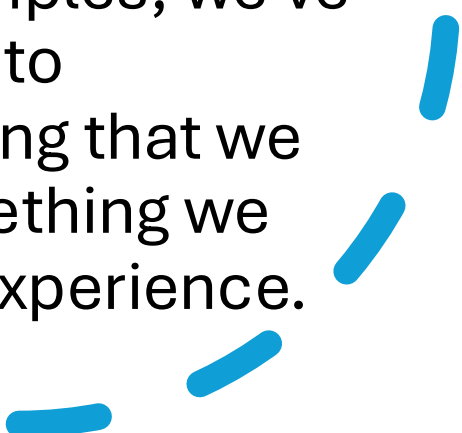
Abstract: An idea, quality or state that cannot be touched, seen, or physically experienced with the five senses.

Generalization: To emphasize the general character rather than the specific details of something. To make vague or indefinite.

Examples of General/Abstract and Specific

- **General/Abstract:** She was sad.
- **Specific:** She sat in her favorite rocking chair in her room, knitting a gray scarf and weeping into the unfinished woolen stitches.
- **General/Abstract:** My father hated noise.
- **Specific:** The neighbors became accustomed to my father throwing open the windows of our living room and dumping a bucket of cold water on neighborhood children who were playing too loudly near the front porch.



- 
- **General/Abstract:** She had a drinking problem.
 - **Specific:** Three times a week, she opened a bottle of white wine, not even chilled, and drank it from a coffee cup until it was dry. She brought the cup into the bathroom and would continue sipping even as she brushed her teeth.
 - Notice how, in each of these examples, we've moved from something indefinite to something definite; from something that we can understand in theory, to something we can actually see and, hopefully, experience.
- 

Defining "Image" within a Literary Context

When you hear the word "image" you probably think of something visual. She was the image of her mother. (*She looked just like her mother.*)

Yet Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines "image" as "a reproduction or imitation of the form of a person or thing; *especially* an imitation in solid form."



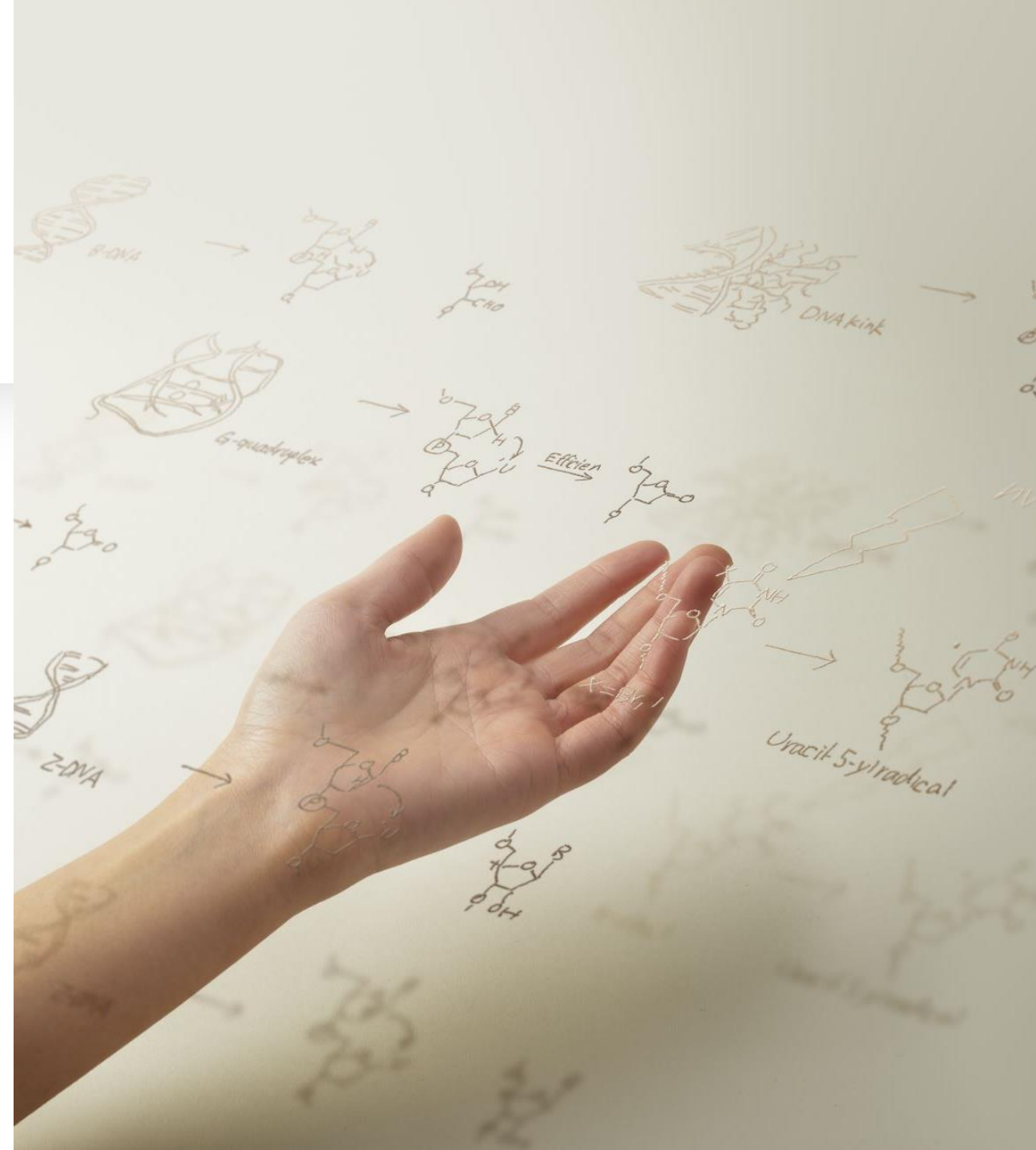
In other words, an image involves more than simply a visual – it includes something in "solid form" that presumably can be touched, heard, tasted, and smelled in addition to being seen.



And this is what we do with words: we try to reproduce a person, place or thing *in as solid a form as we can*.

Imagery That Works on Two Levels

- The notion that imagery works on two levels in a critical one. On the one hand, you want to portray the way things *are* in the world of your story or creative nonfiction piece.
- On the other hand, there is really no such thing as a completely objective image: just think of how things look differently on a day you are blissfully happy, and on a day you are rather blue.



Imagery is your way *in* to material.

- It's your way of reaching down into your subconscious and finding out what you really think about a person, place, thing, or event.
- This is what writing is all about. And it centers around the senses, and your ability to create complex, messy images that bring a situation to life – specifically the life *you* re-create through them.

From "the making of a story"

- Pages 114-115 handout



Not dog, but black dog. Or better yet that black dog with the white spot on its right ear.



Not house, but this house: with the broken front-door lock and the tomato bushes with fruit just beginning to ripen and the lone banana peel left on the lawn by the neighborhood child.



In order to evoke the universal reaction or emotion you must use the tools of specificity.

On Crowding the Reader Out of His Space

"What you're trying to do when you write is to crowd the reader out of his own space and occupy it with yours, in a good cause. You're trying to take over his sensibility and deliver an experience that moves from mere information," wrote the novelist Robert Stone.

Second example on page 117 from *The Years* by Virginia Woolf



Don't Lose Any of Your Senses

- An interesting exercise, after you've tried to describe something on the page, is to go through it and see what senses you have used to create the image.
- Chances are, you'll be depending primarily (if not completely) on the sense of sight alone. Yet imagery has to do with all five senses, not just one.
- Handout page 118. Emphasis on last paragraph

Use of Concrete Details in Creative Nonfiction

- Thinking small and particularly is just as critical with creative nonfiction as fiction.
- Just because something is factual (and we proclaim that it is factual) doesn't relieve us of the burden of making it real for our readers.
- Homecoming paragraphs from page 119.



Use and Abuse of Metaphors

A metaphorical statement is a comparison of two unlike things.

A simile is a metaphorical statement (or a comparison of two unlike things) using *like* or *as*.

The basic difference between a simile and a metaphor is that one is explicit and the other is implied.

Pages 120-126

Reference

- LaPlante, Alice. *The Making of a Story: ANorton Guide to Creative Writing*. WWNorton & Company Inc. , 2019.

Similes and metaphors in song

Similes and Metaphors in Songs

- 
- The slide features decorative curved lines in the top right and bottom left corners. These lines are composed of multiple overlapping layers in shades of light blue and green, creating a sense of depth and movement.
- The Things They Carried (handout)