

## Using Creative Writing Pedagogies to Teach the Job Application Package in Technical Communication

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*Abstract:* Cools-Stephens describes a creative writing assignment aimed at helping ELL learners in second-year technical communication write effective resumés and cover letters and engage in better self-presentation in job interviews.

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In technical communication classes, students are always very enthused about learning how to construct and design cover letters and resumés because they see those items as having immediate relevance. There are often job fairs on many university campuses where students will take their resumés in the hopes of obtaining a job. Additionally, students are often applying for internships, which require submitting a cover letter and a resumé. Thus, for many students cover letters and resumés seem more practical and relevant than learning about Readers and their Contexts of Use, Usability, and Ethics, for instance, all common topics in technical communication classes. While most students are often enthused about “Starting Your Career” or “Job Application Materials,” as it is often labelled in technical communication textbooks like Johnson-Sheehan’s (2017) *Technical Communication Strategies Today* and Markel’s (2013) *Technical Communication* respectively, they often have great difficulty constructing those documents.

Teaching here in Puerto Rico, for instance, I continue to be surprised that semester after semester, students to whom I’ve taught technical communication are often oblivious to one of their most marketable skills--being bilingual. I often have to draw this skill to their attention. Undergraduates, even those about to graduate, have often never done a resumé or cover letter and, consequently, lack self-presentation skills, knowledge of the skills they bring to the workplace, and knowledge of how to engage a potential employer. Beyond their lack of self-awareness, I’ve found that many, understandably so, often have difficulty

translating the experiences that they do have into a format and a language which will engage a potential employer.

In this paper, I describe a creative writing assignment aimed at helping ELL learners in my second-year technical communication course write effective resumés and cover letters and engage in better self-presentation in job interviews. I discuss why I chose this assignment, situating it within Creative Writing across the Curriculum and technical communication pedagogy. I incorporate student voices to discuss their engagement with this assignment and end with a call for more creative writing strategies in technical communication.

### **The Grounding of the Assignment**

My exercise is a modification of a creative writing assignment used in Stephens' creative writing classes at our university (see appendix 1), discussed in his article "Transferable Skills and Traveling Theory in Creative Writing Pedagogy." The assignment is primarily based on Lopate's (2013) "On the Necessity of Turning Oneself into a Character," included in his craft book *Show and Tell*. In this essay, Lopate shares his concern that personal essayists believe that using "I" in their writing is enough to convey a sense of themselves to the audience. Essayists, he writes, need to give readers "a clear picture of who is speaking ... the writer needs to build herself into a character" (p.17). Knowing that character requires essayists to "take inventory" seeing themselves as characters with various habits and motivations. As Lopate writes, "You need to be able to see yourself from the ceiling: to know, for instance, how you are coming across in social situations" (p.18).

Lopate's advice for how to construct the self as a character became the basis for an assignment in Stephens' creative writing course. The assignment involved a three-step process in which students listed qualities about themselves, analyzed those qualities, interviewed others to find out more about themselves, and wrote the "character" that emerged from the interview and analysis into a social situation. I adapted this creative writing assignment for my technical communication class, which introduces students to

the fundamentals of technical communication, focusing on the planning, writing, ethical considerations, audiences, and production of technical documents. The course is mandatory for Engineering and Agricultural Science students, so they make up more than 90% of any section. There are three levels of English students at UPRM--Basic, Intermediate and Advanced--with most of those in technical communication generally falling into intermediate, with their skills ranging from rudimentary to quite good. These students are sophomores unexposed to technical communication and likely never knowing its existence as a field. Therefore they have no special interest in the course prior to attending. I could see why and how this assignment could be useful for my technical communication students, especially in the context of teaching cover letters, resumés, and job interviews. One reason for this was that I was becoming increasingly aware of the pedagogical benefits of creative writing strategies.

### **Some Pedagogical Benefits of Creative Writing Strategies**

One of the benefits of creative writing strategies is that, in allowing students to break away from “the structure of traditional writing,” it helps to promote self-expression (Goma, 2001, p. 150) and builds students’ self-confidence (Bahls, 2009, p. 77). As Goma writes:

Through creative writing, students gain a voice and have a forum to legitimize their ideas, and their writing becomes more personal and insightful. They are no longer passive recipients of information but active disseminators. Students have a tool to explore their experiences and knowledge. (p.150)

Creative writing is thus uniquely positioned to help students engage with the “self.” Beyond this, these strategies help instructors achieve critical thinking. Peary (2015) points out that creative writing strategies are useful for promoting critical thinking “in both low- and high-stakes writing tasks,” allowing students to adopt “alternative points-of-view, give consideration to context, and search for multiple possible outcomes or conclusions” (p. 195). Young (1982) makes a similar argument when he states that “Poetic form creates a sense of distance. Its distinctive function as a learning tool is to draw the

writer into a different role or stance” (p. 83). Here, he points to the critical distance that creative writing promotes. Additionally, creative writing promotes motivation and enthusiasm (Stillar, 2013) and helps engage less motivated students (Arshavskaya, 2015, p.17). Creative writing strategies have also been found particularly useful in second language contexts (Smith, 2013). For example, according to Craik and Lockhart (as cited in Maley, 2009), “it requires learners to ... engage with the language at a deeper level of processing than with most expository texts.”

Creative writing’s utility as pedagogical tool is one reason why it has been argued that “Through creative writing students from any major can master course content as well as critically consider information in their disciplines” (Peary, 2015, p. 195). In *Writing across the Curriculum*, Young (2006), for example, advocates for Creative Writing across the Curriculum (CWAC) and explains that:

students can benefit from writing creatively in any course because such language can generate new and fresh perspectives, develop creative language abilities, and provide a better understanding of the various functions of written language ... [Creative writing assignments] can function as opportunities to make discoveries about the material under study and to increase the quality and the quantity of student-teacher interaction. (p.17)

Here, Young points to the multifaceted benefits of creative writing and its multifaceted nature, which helped me realize that drawing on creative writing strategies, such as a version of Lopate’s self-characterization exercise, would facilitate many of my objectives in my technical communication class. It would allow me to introduce a non-traditional assignment to my second language students, which could still achieve my objectives of critical thinking and writing. It would provide my second language students with opportunities for a deeper engagement with language, while at the same time allowing them to engage in self-expression and fulfilment. A creative writing assignment, I believed, would also help maintain the interest of those taking my Tech Comm class not because they wanted to, but because it had been dictated by their Agriculture and Engineering departments.

## **Technical Communication and Creative Writing across the Curriculum**

But this assignment appealed to me for other reasons, mainly as an attempt to address what I saw as a deficiency in approaches to teaching technical communication. Unlike many other disciplines, technical communication seems to have largely ignored the call to integrate creative writing strategies across the disciplines, as in economics (Goma, 2001), medicine (Kerr, 2010), sociology (Samuels, 1987), and the sciences (Morley, 2012). Interestingly, Bahls (2009), for example, discusses that using poetry in his math classes “created a safe place where they [students] felt more at ease in exploring mathematical ideas” (p.83).

Yet, despite a movement from the windowpane theory approach to teaching technical communication, little attention has been paid to integrating creative writing strategies into these courses. In their review of publications in professional communication on the use of narrative in professional and technical communication, Perkins and Blyler (1999) conclude that narrative, what I see as being the most visible form of creative writing strategies in technical communication, was “relegated to an inferior position” (p.11) and operated more as “an occasional topic for research, rather than an important perspective” (p.11). Through articles written by leading scholars in the field, Perkins and Blyler attempt to right this wrong by highlighting the importance of narrative and the central role it plays in professional and technical communication.

Seemingly taking up the baton, Bridgeford (2004) and Batorsky and Renick-Butera (2004) highlight the belief that storytelling is a viable and useful pedagogical tool to help students contextualize, generate, and understand technical documents. Given the title of the book in which the two articles were published, *Innovative Approaches to Teaching Technical Communication* (Bridgeford, Kitalong, and Selfe, 2004), it is clear that using stories and storytelling is far from the norm in technical communication. Bridgeford describes using stories in her class to help students “make connections between what they already know--in a form they already know it (narratives)--and what they are learning about technical documentation” (p.116). She explains that while the stories were limited to print narratives (for the purpose of her article), she also uses other narrative genres such as poetry, movies, song lyrics, and cartoons in more advanced technical

communication classes (p. 331), which highlights the central role that creative writing strategies play in her classes.

Batorsky and Renick-Butera contribute to the conversation by demonstrating that role play in their technical communication courses promotes “problem-solving strategies that enable them to creatively and confidently address a broad range of technical communication tasks” (p.152). They explain that role-play helps facilitate teaching the principles of technical writing as surely as textbook assignments, and that writing assignments that emerge out of the context of role play prepare students for more traditional academic assignments (p.160). Despite these few glimpses, narrative does not appear to have gone far as a practice in teaching technical communication. Nearly a decade after the publication of *Innovative Approaches to Teaching Technical Communication*, while advocating for the use of storytelling in teaching public policy in technical communication, Moore (2013) makes this evident when she declares:

Perkins and Blyler’s prediction that, by 2009, narrative will become a prevalent and well-respected mode of knowledge-making has not come true--at least not within the field of [professional and technical composition] PTC. In fact, after their 1999 book and a subsequent special issue in *JBTC*, the issue of narrative and storytelling fell to the wayside. (p.66)

Thus, the form of creative writing strategies which technical communication seemed positioned to embrace appears to have been largely abandoned by the time of Moore’s research. This, I believe, speaks to a still lingering programmatic and deficient approach to teaching technical communication, one echoed in textbooks in the field. As Bridgeford mentions, most technical communication textbooks present technical documents in a neutral, decontextualized manner failing to “address the content (how writers understand what they are saying) at a level in which students feel connected with the text” (p.115). This decontextualized manner is evident in the treatment of cover letters, resumés, and approaches to job interviews in major technical communication textbooks. In choosing to

use a creative writing assignment in my technical communication class, I attempt to address this deficiency.

In many textbooks, students are informed of the three types of resumés and provided with basic information about general layout and design. In Sorby and Bulleit's (2006) *An Engineer's Guide to Technical Communication*, for instance, the writers explain the function of a resumé, the form, the types, and the various sections, and they provide examples, discuss the importance of proofreading, and include a checklist, but there is no attempt to connect the readers with the resumé.

Additionally, while all technical communication books discuss the rhetorical situation, addressed in Johnson-Sheehan's *Technical Communication Strategies Today* as subject, purpose, readers, and context, technical communication textbooks from major publishers often present cover letters in a formulaic manner as well, omitting more needed emphasis on the author as part of the rhetorical context: follow a block, modified block, or semi-block style and ensure that the cover letter has an introduction, body, and conclusion. However, when there is a focus on the self in job application materials, it is often in the context of listing one's skills in preparation for an interview, as occurs in Pfeiffer and Adkins's (2011) *Technical Communication Fundamentals*. Such an approach fails to cover self-presentation adequately, which, as Socas (2014) discusses, "has come to be understood" as a type of literacy (p. 18-19) that students need as part of the job application process. Without taking stock of one's self, it is not possible to market that self and write that self into documents.

I felt that an adapted version of the self-inventory, with its emphasis on the self as a character, would help address this issue. I saw Lopate's description of the need to flesh out the "I" as being totally relevant to teaching job application materials. In cover letters, resumés, and job interviews, we must craft personas and sell that persona to our potential employers, much in the way that the personal essayists in Lopate's essay strive to construct a sense of the "I" with whom readers can engage and that readers will find credible. Thus, in both instances, the self must be "crafted for the audience," and seeing oneself as a character is an important part of the process.

My aim with the technical communication class was to encourage critical thinking and critical distance, with more emphasis on self-knowledge. One of my students captured the essence of the assignment when he wrote:

For this assignment, I had to leave my body to see who I really am, to better understand myself. I got to do this by thinking about how others see me, by observing myself and gathering information on who I am. By doing this, I try to see what are my flaws and strengths to help me know how to show myself in a way I am attractive to where I want to work.

Here, the student alludes to defamiliarization of the self and to critical distance in an attempt to better understand that self. He understood the importance of reading himself as a text, engaging with the spectator role, when students “stand back from the give and take of events in order to attend to their patterning” (Harris, 1988, pp. 44-45). These competencies, I believed, would translate into writing effective cover letters and resumés and extend to better approaches to job interviews as students would have greater insight into their physical selves, their social selves, and their skills.

Similar to the creative writing assignment on which it was modeled, the exercise for my technical communication class contained three parts with a workplace slant/perspective included:

- A. Students take stock of themselves
- B. They connect the dots and analyze the picture that the list suggests about them and how they might operate in workplace contexts
- C. They interview someone who knows them well enough to provide an accurate and honest outsider’s view of them.
- D. They write a scene in which they place the self that emerges in a social context, such as in an interview.

In my adaptation, in the first part of the assignment (Part A), I asked students to list the skills they believed they brought to the work place as well as their pet peeves, quirks, and idiosyncrasies. To make the importance of this visible, I used myself as an illustration of the importance of knowing one's physical self in professional situations. I explained that knowing that I have a very expressive face has helped in face-to-face interviews, as that awareness has meant that I put on a neutral face. I'm aware too that I tend to be very expressive with my hands, thus in interview (and teaching) settings I need to control my hands so that I don't shift focus from what I'm saying. I often say "okay," so I self-monitor to ensure that I don't repeat it too often--a skill similar to what one might learn at a Toastmaster's Club.

The awareness of their physical selves and its importance which this self-inventory exercise made visible is one which is supported by research. In "On Smiles, Winks and Handshakes as Coordination Devices," Manzini, Sadrieh, and Vriend (2009) explain that in a job interview it is important that a candidate make eye contact, smile, and give a firm handshake within the first minute in order to build trust (p.827). In "Managing the Initial Job Interview," Muir (2005) adopts a similar stance when he advises readers that "in addition to appropriately highlighting academic and work experience, *you must display the requisite physical image, eloquence, and bearing,*" (p.156, emphasis added). Smiling, he explains, is a necessary part of this physical image. What both articles highlight is something which technical communication textbooks fail to emphasize: the importance of knowing and managing one's physical self when crafting a persona, especially in an interview context.

In Part B of the assignment, in a manner similar to Peary's (2012) assignment in which students were tasked with imagining themselves in a futuristic workplace situation, my students had to connect the dots and analyze what their quirks and idiosyncrasies might suggest about how such a person (the person outlined in part A) would operate in the world of work. One student wrote:

After seeing all the details presented above, we can conclude that [this persona] is a very organized and friendly person. His outgoing and funny personality help him connect easily with others in his surroundings, which can mean that he may be a good team player and can easily work well with others. But anxiety he feels when facing a disorganized situation may cause him some trouble in the workplace. Often unplanned situations present themselves to employees and they must be able to work and around them. With this being said, his persistence in reaching his goals may be the thing that helps him overcome the adversities that he may face in the workplace.

The student's critical distance is evident in the use of the third person point of view, but just as important is the ability to project physical traits and skills into a workspace and anticipate how that personality may handle different situations. This part of the exercise is useful on a number of levels. When confronted with job ads, students may begin to more concretely discern which jobs are suited to their personalities and what aspects of their personalities can be emphasized in cover letters and highlighted in resumés. Acquiring critical distance from the self also helps in constructing a persuasive and convincing narrative for a cover letter. Viewing themselves as characters, students can make choices about what to emphasize and what to get rid of as they craft a persona for their letters.

The next part of the assignment (Part C) requires students to interview someone who knows them well enough to point out aspects of their personalities, aspects the interviewee may not be aware of. In asking students to see themselves through eyes other than their own, and to come to terms with themselves as social beings, this part helps bridge the gap between school and work. One student, for example, wrote that she was

hesitant about being interviewed because she was scared that she would be told something she didn't like; however, in work situations, this is a reality which must be confronted. Retaining a job is often dependent on being evaluated, essentially a way of seeing oneself through others' eyes. This means that it is important for students to realize, as one student put it, "that the perception I have of myself will vary from the perception others have of me," thus they begin to see themselves with more objectivity and begin to realize that how they see themselves is not how friends, family, and potential employers may see them. This insight can become the basis for how students craft cover letters and resumés because they are now more attentive to taking stock of themselves, deciding what they should include and exclude as they construct these documents.

Students not only begin to ponder how potential co-workers and bosses might see them, but also how they might respond to this perception. One student, for instance explained that the person she interviewed "said that usually when I'm eating, I don't offer anybody what I'm eating, something I found very harsh on my part." Another wrote that "there are things I did not recognize I do, but at least I had time to know a little more about myself and what I do. Possibly, there are some things that I have to correct, and others I can improve. I hope this can help me be a better me." Thus, the insight provided by the interviewer affords students an opportunity to learn about skills they were not aware they had and opportunities to address what they perceive as flaws.

We were able to complete only Parts A through C, but I also planned to complete a fourth part to the assignment, prevented by a two-month student strike. This part involved students choosing a job ad in which they were interested and for which they qualified or would qualify in the future, then writing a scene in which they placed the persona who emerged from Parts A through C in a job interview with that company. Here, with critical distance, they would reflect on how they might function in a job interview and think about questions they might be asked, how they would respond, and how aspects of themselves might be manifested. They would also be attentive to small details, such as how they would be dressed.

The inevitable question readers will have focuses on the impact that the self-inventory had on the resumés and cover letters. Personality characteristics, quirks, skills, and additional information in their lists and interviews, where relevant, were incorporated into these texts. A blatant form of this was when many students transferred the skills listed in the self-inventory directly to the resumé, or they used the self-inventory as a basis for their cover letters. For example, one of my students realized, more so than she thought, that she was an “outgoing person, who enjoyed being around strangers.” In her cover letter, seeking a position with her local government office, she used this as a selling point.

I’ve found that students often write their resumés and cover letters as if they were not meant to have a relationship with each other, so the assignment seemed to address this problem of asynchronicity. One of my animal science students serves as an example. In his self-inventory, he listed his ability to work independently, a self-assessment confirmed in through his interview. He listed this skill in his resumé and referenced it in his cover letter to PetSmart by writing that “I have the ability to work unsupervised and follow instructions with no problem, which will benefit the company, leaving the manager more time to supervise other sections on the job.” By bridging their abilities and the character traits observed by both themselves and those who know them well, the self-inventory perhaps helped some see how the job application package documents work together. Additionally, one unintended benefit was that some students seemed to see the use of narrative as a viable option for their cover letters. One, for instance, opened her letter by explaining why “from an early age” she’d wanted to be in the medical field. The inclusion of narrative, rather than formulaic writing, made for more engaging cover letters.

My recommendation is that, instead of moving from self-inventory directly to resumés and cover letter, like I did because of our disrupted semester, instructors should include an interim step: It would be useful to have students identify the particular traits and qualities from their lists and interviews that would be suited to the position for which they apply. It would also be useful to spend time focusing on the value of narrative when writing cover letters. My weaker students could have benefitted from such a step. To fully measure the impact of the assignment on the resumés and cover letters, I will need to do this assignment again under different conditions.

However, I believe that using a creative assignment requiring students to see themselves as characters supplements the current approach to the job application package in technical communication textbooks. It highlights the importance of self-presentation and self-knowledge as part of the job application process by placing emphasis not only on a knowledge of genres in a social context, but also on students at the center of the process. Using a creative writing exercise such as the self-inventory assignment also highlights a very important aspect of the job hunt, especially for STEM students: It makes visible to them that creative writing and technical communication are not diametrically opposed. Making creative writing visible to technical communication students is important because, as Florida (2002) claims, organizations place a high premium on creativity for the “results that it can produce,” and individuals in the workplace value it “as a route to self-expression and job satisfaction” (p.18)

There is another reason to make creative writing strategies visible to technical communication students, the “fact that it takes a great deal of creativity when performing tasks within ... STEM domains” (Larkin, 2015, p. 1184). Anderson (2011), for instance, explains that while technical topics “may seem to defy a narrative or storytelling approach” (p. 108), such an approach is an overlooked but necessary art in presentations by engineers. Incorporating storytelling, he argues, makes for more engaging and dynamic presentations and for more audience retention. The lament for engineers to be exposed to more humanities speaks to this issue, as does the complaint by employers that engineers are often ill prepared.

My overall hope with this assignment is that students interrogate and examine themselves from a critical distance, which involves looking at themselves through the eyes of others and evaluating and making connections about what they know about themselves. Such a skill allows better insight into themselves, and such an approach emphasizes the important role that self-knowledge plays in the job application process. Having recently done campus visits at three institutions, the value of the assignment has become more evident to me. It was my awareness of both my physical self and of my skills and attentiveness, along with my qualifications and experience, that helped me along the stages of the job process. Technical communication and creative writing strategies are not

incongruent. Given the many pedagogical benefits of creative writing strategies, including making the importance of creativity visible, I would encourage fellow instructors to introduce them in technical communication classes.

## **Appendix A: Self-Inventory & Self-Characterization Exercise**

This assignment has both a practical and a creative component:

1. On a practical level, knowing yourself is important in a number of contexts. Self-knowledge is a *transferable skill*.
2. As creative writers, being able to “see ourselves from the outside,” as characters, is a key skill in writing scenes (such as in memoirs and essays) in which we ourselves play an important role. It is a means of de-centering the self.

*Assignment.* As you do the self-inventory, use Di Yanni’s four-part interpretation lens 1) Observe; 2) Connect; 3) Infer; 4) Make a provisional conclusion. You will complete this assignment (writing an inventory of yourself) in stages:

**A)** Compile an inventory of your characteristics.

**B)** Write a one-paragraph analysis about what this suggests about yourself as a character. Try to see yourself from outside: especially as a dramatized character in social situations.

**C)** Interview someone: ask them what they know about you that you may not be aware of. Write up a summary of this interview in one page.

**D)** Building on parts A-C, now write a scene in which you are a character. It should be a scene with conflict, or in which you reveal something of your character. But this should be narrated by a perspective outside yourself.

On your syllabus, the self-characterization assignment is listed both as one of six short writing assignments, each worth 10 points, and as a separate “self-characterization narrative,” also worth 10 points. This will be split into two parts.

*Part One.* We will emphasize the narratives of Part B, in which you develop inferences by connecting the dots of your self-inventory, and the Part C interview. The interview should be written up as a scene, so you will need to give specifics. Who did you interview (you can change the name), where did it take place, how did you conduct the interview, what did you learn, what might be useful from this interview in writing a scene?

**NOTE.**

1. Parts A, B, and C are due in typed form on the first class of Week 5 (Feb. 10).
2. Include an MLA header (no cover page is necessary).
3. The format of inventory is at your discretion, but use classifications as sub-headings.
4. Remember that paragraph “B” is not the scene (part “D”), which we will begin working on after doing a peer review of parts 1-B.
5. The Paragraph “B” should be a short summary (150 words) of *core elements of your character*. When you connect the dots (inventory), what picture emerges? What is at the core, the essence? How would you fill in the blank: “Juan(ita) tiene un carácter \_\_\_\_\_.” You can write that paragraph from any point of view-- whichever perspective best helps you to achieve an overview of your character: an imagined portrait, seen from the outside.

## Part 1A

**Objective.** To obtain the **necessary distance** needed to see yourself as a character with various habits and motivations, Lopate writes: “You need to be able to see yourself from the ceiling: to know, for instance, how you are coming across in social situations.”

1. Observe. Take stock of what you have, and what you don’t have. Think about what you want to “order” (obtain or acquire), and what you want to discontinue/phase out/get rid of.
2. Imagine being a camera on the ceiling, or a “wallflower” at a party. From that distance, record some of the following suggestions. Look for:
  - Quirks – unusual habit or way of behavior
  - Pet peeve (how you manifest that)
  - Idiosyncracies –what sets you apart—not necessarily odd, as with quirk
  - stubborn tics – unconscious reflex
  - foibles (charming flaws—but only charming in small doses)
  - body language
  - gestures or words you repeat over and over
  - “warts and all” (could be literal, physical features, but meant more metaphorically, as a well-rounded portrait with strengths and weaknesses intertwined).

## Part 1B: Connect

The next step is to reflect on what these details suggest and “connect the dots” in a **one-paragraph narrative**. This is a self-portrait from the perspective of the camera or wallflower.

*In-class.* Narrate your character using elements of the self-inventory, that is, “connect the dots so that a picture emerges.” You are trying to see yourself whole, like the point of view of the camera on the ceiling. You may write this in first-person.

**Please note.** More than “good and bad habits,” we are looking for the small details outlined above, which are revealing of what “sets you apart from the majority.” This is not necessarily good or bad. The “**inventory of yourself**” is designed not to pass judgment, but to acquire necessary distance so “you can present that self to the reader as a specific, legible character.”

**Part 1C.** Over the weekend, interview someone who may know something about you that you cannot see: ask them what they know about you that you may not be aware of. Write up a summary of this interview in one page. Make sure to Set the Scene and describe when, where, and how the interview took place.

Peer review of Parts A, B, and C **Tu Feb. 14**; final revised version due **Th Feb. 16**)

## **PART 2**

Use the initial list, the preliminary paragraph, and the interview as source material to write a scene featuring yourself as a character.

*Infer and Conclude.* In about 300-350 words, describe *one specific character in one specific scene*. That character should be you, but seen from the outside, which means you will narrate it from another point of view--any point of view except first person. (Peer review **Th. Feb. 23**; final version due **Tu Feb. 28**).

*Suggestion.* Choose a scene in which the character shows his or her true colors or “takes off the mask” (or has a revelation/change of direction). Concentrate on one moment--what he or she did or said in a particular situation. **SLOW THE TIME DOWN. GO INSIDE THE SCENE, IN DETAIL.** Dialogue may be part of this, but I am looking for **description of the character in the immediate environment**. Be attentive to specific detail, the

ways in which **things on the surface**--clothing, ways of movement, nervous tics, and manner of speech--**reveal inner character** (interiority). Pay close attention to details and use all of your senses. For examples, look at Esmeralda Santiago's "How to Eat a Guava," and Chang-Rae Lee's "Sea Urchin," which use all of the senses in their narrations.

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