



Creative Nonfiction Composition

The First 1,500-word Assignment

101 – Me

102 - Submersion

Andrew Rusnak

Storytellers

For this first assignment, first and foremost, think of yourself as a writer, a storyteller.



Storytellers

I like narrative storytelling as being part of a tradition, a folk tradition.

[Bruce Springsteen](#)

It's all storytelling, you know. That's what journalism is all about.

[Tom Brokaw](#)

Storytelling is an ancient and honorable act. An essential role to play in the community or tribe. It's one that I embrace wholeheartedly and have been fortunate enough to be rewarded for.

[Russell Banks](#)

Rap is rhythm and poetry. Hip-hop is storytelling and poetry as well.

[Ajay Naidu](#)

Storytellers

Start (and end) by asking questions:

- How can work achieve meaning? What techniques are used to achieve meaning?
- Are there other meanings that can be leveraged to support and reinforce the main theme or meaning? What are the sub-themes?
- Who is my intended audience?
- What am I trying to convey thematically? Dramatically?
- Why should anyone care? Where's the relevance? Does my work beat the "so what" factor? Does it matter?



Storytellers

Although this is a creative assignment, unlike the expository research assignments you will be writing later, you will still need to come up with a creative “perspective” (not totally unlike a thesis) in the introductory graph of your story. You need to plant seeds, make the reader pay want to pursue what it is you have to say.



Storytellers

The “Me” assignment and the submersion assignment can be written in first person. The stories “Out West: Growing Up Hard” by Joe Wilkins in *The Best Magazine Writing: 2010* is a great example to turn to for the Me assignment. There are a number of great examples in Harper’s collection *Submersion Journalism: Reporting in the Radical First Person*.

