

## Using Creative Nonfiction to Reflect on the Formal Research Paper

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### Introduction

In my high school, the senior project is a multi-step capstone project asking students to showcase all the writing, planning, researching, and service skills they have learned over their 4 years of high school. The project is done over the course of senior year and is a graduation requirement. Initially, the whole project was the individual student's responsibility, but glaring issues, struggles to meet standards, and some students not graduating prompted the 4-5-page background research paper to be folded into the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade curriculum to ensure students had extra supports from senior teachers. In addition to the background research paper, students are also required to write a reflection of their project. Most of this reflection asks students to discuss their experiences with the background research paper, and the guiding questions are, frankly, rote and dull. Add that to a chaotic March when all the other components are due simultaneously, these reflections are mostly monotonous, insincere, and inauthentic. I believe that the focus on and exposure to creative nonfiction in the classroom can remedy the quality and stake in these reflections. I want to use a more comprehensive knowledge of creative nonfiction to connect students to the papers they produce for this capstone. With creative nonfiction texts as models, I want students to try out new ideas about writing and practice how they will apply those skills and ideas to their own research and reflection papers. The culminating focus of these lesson experiments with creative nonfiction is to aid students in writing a reflection of their research papers that is meaningful and valuable *to them*.

### Background

Appoquinimink High School is a rapidly growing school in the booming district of Middletown, DE. Once a rural district, a population surge on top of increasing commerce and becoming the top-ranked district in the state means that AHS is and has been changing tremendously over the last few years. This coming school year we are expected to exceed our school's population maximum of 1600 students. To service grades 9-12 we have added more administrative bodies, are continuously working to implement Common Core State Standards, and are expanding our subject pathways and adding new courses. Though AHS comprises more of the affluent population of Middletown and the surrounding areas, we teach students from a variety of diverse racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds.

AHS functions on 90-minute block schedules with four periods that meet every day; students then change classes in January for the spring semester. In my 12<sup>th</sup> grade classes

last year, my breakdown looked thusly: 1 section of AP Literature (31 students); 1 section of English 12 honors that met every other day for the entire school year (34 students); 3 sections of English 12 honors and college prep (CP) (about 100 students total) over the fall and spring semesters.

The mantra at AHS is “college and career readiness;” we want our students to be well-rounded, global citizens that are prepared for life beyond high school. Indeed, that is the aim of any institution. As we continue to grow and aim for “college and career readiness,” we are taking inspiration from colleges to organize our courses and curricula via subject pathways, which function like college majors. As a 7<sup>th</sup> year teacher who has been teaching 12<sup>th</sup> grade ELA exclusively for four years, I have been working with my colleges to develop new courses for ELA in general and specifically for 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Last year we piloted two new courses as alternatives to our standard 12<sup>th</sup> grade British Literature course. I wrote and taught the American and British Gothic Literature class and this course, and I am now teaching that course exclusively while continuing to develop it and revamp the British Literature curriculum. In any senior English class, the background research paper component of the senior project has been added to the beginning of the courses and enriching that requirement will be the focus of my unit.

## **Rationale**

While nonfiction in the academic world still faces many growing pains, there is a large body contending that nonfiction is vital in formal schooling, perhaps even more so than the teaching and study of fiction. Though I will deal with the issues of formally defining nonfiction later, most sources often cite that the definition of nonfiction is truth. Carol Bly bluntly states that “Nobody knows what creative nonfiction is, and therefore it can be nearly anything. [...] All you have to do is be truthful.”<sup>1</sup> And if nonfiction deals solely with truth, how can it not be a genre worth teaching? Worth reading? And if we are forced to confront truth in our reading and writing, would it not also suit us to be able to do it well? And if we can do it well, how might that affect our lives outside of formal schooling? The rhetoric of nonfiction deals in high stakes; nonfiction is important because it forces us to confront our realities and become more self-aware, critical thinkers. Nonfiction requires us to pause for a moment and *see* what is in front of us, which is especially trying in an age of overwhelming distraction. As Emory University professor Mark Bauerlein explains, reading nonfiction is demanding because “complex texts require a slower labor. Readers can’t proceed to the next paragraph without grasping the previous one, they can’t glide over unfamiliar words and phrases, and they can’t forget what they read four pages earlier [...] Complex texts force readers to acquire the knack of slow linear reading.”<sup>2</sup> But the ability to read nonfiction well still does not offer complete proficiency; students must also be able to write nonfiction creatively. In addition to confronting truth and complexity, the practice of creative nonfiction writing is an exercise not only in story craft, but in psychological grit. This is the second-half of the puzzle in making students complex, critical thinkers,<sup>3</sup> which is a cornerstone of my

district's overall mission. While I do not want to ignore the psychological grit creative nonfiction can foster—indeed, practicing it will likely achieve this—I, rather, wish to draw attention to and tackle the first part of Bauerlein's declaration: story craft. In focusing on creative nonfiction within the parameters of research writing and reflection, I hope to explore ways that I, and other teachers, can pay more attention to the craft of their writing to promote the most intimacy, sincerity, and authenticity.

In my own experience, there has been a general discomfort with the nonfiction/persuasion unit. The persuasion component is often covered in lower grades and becomes rote even by 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and neither the nonfiction or the persuasion topics venture beyond a few articles and speeches. And, as common sense might suggest, both genres rarely rivet classrooms of students. Jay Matthews' article in *The Washington Post* deftly summarizes the nonfiction predicament: "Educators say non-fiction is more difficult than fiction for students to comprehend. It requires more factual knowledge, beyond fiction's simple truths of love, hate, passion and remorse. So we have a pathetic cycle. Students don't know enough about the real world because they don't read non-fiction and they can't read non-fiction because they don't know enough about the real world."<sup>4</sup>

The rationale of this unit's creation is two-fold: first, I want to explore and enhance the possibilities of nonfiction for students as a way for them to be reflective on their own writing, and, two, I want to add something meaningful to the debate on writing.

Though there are many reading and writing standards that would apply to the goal of this unit, the exemplar texts mentioned, and the suggested activities, I think there are two key writing standards that encompass the spirit of this unit and its many components. The first prompts students to "write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content" (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2). This standard is appropriate to both a formal and creative approach to writing, though the second most appropriate standard for this unit speaks specifically to the creative writing process: "write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3).

My complete unit begins with a look at the use of research papers in high school, specifically why we still assign them, what their value is, and how they also need a bit of tweaking and updating. I will not address how to write a research paper, how to structure it, how to give feedback, and so on. Rather, I want to bookend the research paper by framing how a teacher might address certain writing skills and ideas before introducing the research paper assignment, offer suggestions about how to start the writing/research conversation, and how to reflect on the experience of researching and writing. This is modeled after the way a teacher might make/create a unit test, then create his/her lessons

for the unit on that test. Then, I discuss the development of creative nonfiction for context but concentrating more so on expanded research and data about the lack of creative nonfiction in high school classrooms, what causes this lack, and why we should be concerned about this lack. This will compel next a conversation about the advantages of creative nonfiction in the high school classroom and how creative nonfiction can help to bridge the gaps in curriculum, student interest, and teacher content confidence. From there, I attempt to marry a research paper with creative nonfiction that aims to help students craft a reflective narrative on the research writing process. In the class strategies section, teachers will find writing prompts, strategies, and exemplar texts for general creative nonfiction practice that would allow students to get their feet wet, as well as ideas for larger, extension projects.

## The Research Paper

### *The Purpose*

Why is the research paper required in high school? Well, because I'm applying to college and I'll have to write a bunch of research papers, so I need practice now. And, if I write a book someday, it'll basically be a long research paper about something I studied in college.

Right now, the argument for the purpose and place of research papers in high school curricula is intimately tied to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)<sup>5</sup>, a vestige of No Child Left Behind and the attempts of the federal government and states to ensure standards of teaching and learning across the country and bolster a student to be well-rounded in their education. As this is the standards our Delaware schools function under, the research paper is an integral part of addressing not only the writing standards, calling for the ability to comprehend research writing and integrate research into a student's own writing, but also the non-fiction reading standards that allow for an examination of both practicality and creativity when analyzing these types of texts.<sup>6</sup> The research paper is a useful tool to work towards those standards and prepare student for college where this kind of writing is required of them.

### *Why we need research papers*

In my experience at AHS, I have seen that though my colleagues in lower grades teach the research paper and go over its components, re-teaching and review is still essential in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. But it is time consuming. Because of this, it is easy to assume that previous instruction has been enough, and students should already know how to do this. So, we assign the paper, grade it, and move on. And while that is the reality of day-to-day teaching in high school, is there a space we can create to go more in-depth with this process? If it is so important, how can we ensure students have as many tools and knowledge as possible at their disposal?<sup>7</sup>

This question is essential because the research paper is the vehicle through which we may measure and judge writing abilities, the paragon and capstone of formal education—students leave high school with a practiced background and can write coherently. A research paper is the proof in the pudding. That is not to discount other kinds of writing, of course, but the extended nature of the typical research paper and the added requirements of research, citation, etc. lend to its pedestal status. Most research on writing enhances the earth-shattering, do-or-die urgency of the research paper and writing abilities. On a holistic level, a 2008 study from the National Survey of Student Engagement found that [college] “Students who wrote more achieved higher levels of deep learning, student-faculty interaction, and were otherwise more “engaged” in their own learning process. Student ‘engagement’ is associated with higher levels of satisfaction as a student, and therefore increases a student’s odds of continuing his or her education.”<sup>8</sup> Alarming, however, is that more quantifiable data is at odds with this well-meaning and inspirational statement. While that same 2008 study from the NSSE stated that “first-year students, on average, wrote 92 pages during the academic year, while seniors wrote 146 pages. For freshmen, the majority of these papers were around 5 to 10 pages, with some first-year students writing papers 20 pages or more,”<sup>9</sup> the National Commission on Writing bemoaned that “Although many models of effective ways to teach writing exist, both the teaching and practice of writing are increasingly shortchanged throughout the high school and college years. Writing, always time-consuming for student and teacher, is today hard-pressed in the American classroom. Of the three ‘Rs,’ writing is clearly the most neglected.”<sup>10</sup>

Considering this, many authors, researchers, and educators have questioned the necessity of assigning research papers rather than attempting to re-teach the paper. I’m not pandering to the suggestion that we need to completely abandon formal writing requirements<sup>11</sup>—these are as necessary as informal writing—but I am seeking a compromise that allows some adjustment to how those formal papers are approached and conceived by teachers and students. One section of the PEW study begins with a gloomy picture of the then-current state of writing: On how students define ‘writing,’ AP and NWP teachers say...“Most [students] define writing as something their teachers MAKE them do. While they do see it as necessary in academics (and even sometimes in life), few see the value and purpose in practicing writing. Most students today (even AP students) do not write enough, either in or out of the classroom.”<sup>12</sup>

However, this expected response is followed by a long list of positive observations about our students’ digital interactions, citing those interactions as the reasons why students are writing now more than they ever have. With this kind of momentum and access, most students report that they love to write and “these digital technologies give students a reason to write [because] Social media and texting are very engaging for them; they write reflexively [and] voice ideas in many different registers.”<sup>13</sup> Those interviewed in the PEW study certainly qualify that all of this engaging, reflective writing is certainly

not academic in the most traditional sense, but it is implied that those every-day digital practices can be harnessed in the classroom as a vehicle for teaching and learning more academic modes of writing. What it comes down to is that we need to see that students do actually, can actually, enjoy writing and that we can help them get beyond the initial, unexcited grudge of “I *have* to write this.” As one interviewee from the PEW study noted, “when you look at what they’re writing, they’re talking about themselves and expressing themselves. Maybe not well but they are speaking their minds, so they are, I think, exploring who they are and what they’re about and they’re reading what other people are writing and looking at, and exploring other people’s feelings and ideas.”<sup>14</sup> What teacher could ask for more?! Isn’t this, arguably, the point of reading and writing in some way? So, if we can marry creativity and the kind of writing impetus students do have, then perhaps we can re-create the concept of formal writing through creative nonfiction techniques that elevates language and style, challenges intellect, provides unique perspectives with renewed passion and curiosity.

### **Content Objectives**

Development of creative nonfiction as a genre

It seems that there is a lot riding on nonfiction as a genre—it is supposed to make up 70% of student reading in CCSS<sup>15</sup>; it is what most adults will read and be exposed to; there is a creative element to it that is surging in book sales and writing workshops. Where does this all come from? How do we as teachers divide and tackle such a hefty, controversial genre in the high school classroom? Why would we care to do it anyway? Isn’t it enough to read a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr., write your own text like it, then move on to the next unit/text/genre? If we are to put so much weight on nonfiction—indeed, to write nonfiction supposedly is to grapple with Truth and identity—then how can we expand our knowledge of the genre to expose our students to its variety?

Like many movements, creative nonfiction did not occur in a vacuum. It developed as a response to the dominance of fictionalized stories. The problem with creative nonfiction is that it is, in its name, a contradiction and, therefore, a scary unknown through which many teachers dare not venture. In *The Nonfictionist’s Guide*, Robert Root explores this seemingly undefinable unknown, attempting to pinpoint the trouble with defining nonfiction as a genre to consider why we don’t teach and may be so adverse to trying to teach it:

Part of the problem is using old words for new things. Take a term like “creative nonfiction,” for instance, an unexceptional term for those of us familiar with it but not necessarily acceptable to all its practitioners, let alone its critics. Both of the words are problematic to begin with; together they can sometimes even evoke outrage. “nonfiction,” to some people, is written and spoken only with a hyphen (“NON-fiction”) and includes everything that is not fiction [...] “Creative” always

gets someone's dander up, not so much when applied to "creative writing" but often when *not* [sic] applied (by inference) to other forms of nonfiction [...] Many people assume that "creative" and "nonfiction" are incompatible terms and that nonfiction is a strictly non-creative form of writing—just the facts, ma'am<sup>16</sup>

I find the conclusion of Root's exposé particularly intriguing as this is the same argument and perception of the research paper. Surely there is nothing necessarily creative about doing research and reporting back on it, looking up ideas from other people, marrying them to your own, and creating an argument or analysis out of that process. But what if it was okay, even encouraged, to infuse creativity into this very stringent nonfiction? I'm sure one of the first arguments against this possibility is the concern over "fake news," something that has been increasingly on our radar in the last year. If we allow creativity in something like a research paper, how do we delineate between creative nonfiction and research and simply making stuff up? I believe some of this fear comes down to our discomfort and lack of knowledge with the genre itself—do we as teachers even know exactly what creative nonfiction is and how to teach it?

Marrying reflections on the research paper and creative nonfiction

Another provocative claim from Root's *Nonfictionist's Guide* involves who he blames for the separation of creativity and nonfiction. According to Root, it is English teachers who are "among the most vocal of those striving to keep creativity out of nonfiction" as they "rail against the first person singular and the personal voice and the use of narrative composition papers at the same time that they assign readings in Annie Dillard, E.B. White, Henry David Thoreau, Alice Walker, George Orwell, and Virginia Woolf, creative nonfictionists all."<sup>17</sup> As an English teacher this accusation does sting a bit, but I also see the truth and contradiction in it. Is it so inappropriate to consider "creative nonfiction" when we consider the authors Root mentions? Though Orwell's *1984* is a work of fiction, is it more appropriate to label it creative nonfiction? Does the probability of Oceania allow us to see this fiction more as a nonfiction possibility? Are the nonfiction pieces of Orwell's own life creatively woven into *1984* in such a way that would allow us to re-define the genre of this book?

And that is the struggle. To alleviate that struggle, I will now discuss several classroom activities and practices with creative nonfiction that explore its place and possibility in the literature class both as a means of reading and analysis and research writing.

*The value of writing reflections*

Teachers too are driven by the product, the crack of the whip, as we slog through lesson plans, deadlines, meetings, and the like. And perhaps it is this march to slaughterhouse that we have continued to instill in our students—no one has time or care to acknowledge

the process, and perhaps that is our greatest missed-lesson. In the book *Research Writing Revisited*, Dan Melzer's chapter on responding to research writing points out the importance of emphasizing the *process* of writing a research paper, rather than collecting the one and only draft a student hands in. His cautionary remark, argued initially by Brannon and Knoblauch, reveals that "we reduce students' incentive to write when we project an 'Ideal Text' on a student essay rather than paying careful attention to the writer's purposes and choices."<sup>18</sup> If creative nonfiction is centered around the writer and his/her experiences, perhaps in having students write this way more they can then apply it to the research paper, and we can guide them through it by understand the process of research as we all the different subgenres in creative nonfiction and how to use them in the classroom.<sup>19</sup> I think a place to start this conversation *with our students* is in their reflections after a paper, and I propose we frame this as a "story of my research" that will allow us to integrate creative nonfiction. This intention is built upon Ken Macrorie's concept of the "I-Search Paper."<sup>20</sup>

### *The I-Search Paper Model*

The basics of Macrorie's I-Search Paper are predicated on his revelation that textbooks do not serve the purpose they ideally intend to and that he himself was misusing textbooks to teach writing and research. As a professor and student, Macrorie did not realize how textbooks functioned in academia, and it wasn't until his fourth book, discussions with experts, and development of his "I-Search" concept that Macrorie finally saw textbooks for what they were or had become: objects that provided guidelines and references that were ultimately forgettable, misunderstood, and misused. Macrorie needed the audience of his books—we the teachers and students—to realize that the typical way we have been taught and are teaching the research paper has been crafted by these textbooks that eventually—inevitably even—"do *not* [sic] result in well-documented, useful undergraduate research papers."<sup>21</sup> Instead, he wants his students to see the difference between the dried, disconnected texts and "true investigation" because "true investigators are excited, sustained in their work not by instructions but by curiosity."<sup>22</sup> And, of course, this is what a teacher would want in their own classroom and for their students—curiosity, passion, engagement, life. The hurdle is *how* despite, and because of, all the other extenuating circumstances of educational mandates, behavior, societal attitudes, student's perceptions, and on and on. What can we actually change? I suggest that we change our relationship to the writing and reflecting process and use creative nonfiction texts and strategies to do so. In the rest of this Unit, I sketch out some ways to apply Macrorie's concept of the "I-Search Paper" and create an "I-Search Reflection," allowing students to reflect on their experience with the hope that the creative structures will encourage them to be honest, engaged, and sincere. I hope, ultimately, that this will inspire a new way to structure the research paper once we can see how this testing grounds of the reflection go.



Chapter 6 of Macrorie’s book outlines what the I-Search paper entails, and it is his section on the form of the paper that best connects to how a teacher might re-purpose his concept for a writing reflection. He states that the best way to organize your [I-Search] paper is “to tell the story of what you did in your search, in the order in which everything happened.”<sup>23</sup> I would like to assert the same directions for the reflection paper—tell the story of your search and writings and discoveries. However, where Macrorie suggests a chronological order, I offer no limitation so that creative nonfiction techniques can be applied with free abandon. A student’s reflection is the story of their hunt, why they are undertaking it and what spoils they can share.<sup>24</sup> Macrorie paints a beautiful picture of a two-year-old “grabbing books off a shelf, seeing how they open, ripping pages, finding out how they taste.”<sup>25</sup> If we allow that creative license and a way to practice that creative thinking, then perhaps we can re-awaken the natural curiosity and excitement that can be found in searching and writing.

### **Classroom Activities**

The purpose of this section is to give the classroom teacher a few ideas and activities they might use to get more creative nonfiction into their research unit and, ultimately, how to use creative nonfiction to expand on and enhance the research students are doing. The goal is to help students become more personally invested in the research that they are doing and feel like they have a stake in what they produce and why it is valuable beyond a numeric score. As a general note, any of these activities could be extended to produce the reflection paper, or they can be used simply as smaller practices to work up to a separate reflection paper.

#### Writing for a different audience

Janel Atlas, the author of *They Were Still Born*, focuses her writing and her book(s) on the exploration of grief and trauma, especially in the realm of the pregnancy and birth experiences. The impetus of Atlas’ *They Were Still Born* came from her essays that meditate on the stillbirth of her daughter. In the span of a few years, Atlas edited her initial essay for a few publications. While they discuss the same topic, each essay considers a different audience and offers varied tones, creating potentially diverse messages in her essays. For the classroom, these essays could provide a fruitful discussion on how audience shapes the tone, structure, and message behind an essay.

#### RAFT activity ideas

As the acronym suggests, this is a writing strategy that creatively asks students to be hyper-mindful of their role as a writer, the audience they interact with, various writing structures, and possible writing topics.

- Role: Who or what are you as the writer? A student? A tiger? The President?

- Audience: To whom are you writing? Your teacher? Your cat? A friend?
- Format: In what format are you writing? A speech? A text? A rant? A poem?
- Topic: What are you writing about? Why? What's the subject or the point?

In the same spirit of “karaoke roulette” seen on Facebook and late-night TV, teachers and students can get as silly and out-of-the-box as possible with RAFT; teachers can even set in up like a roulette game. Here are a few RAFT examples:

R: the word/idea “Their”

A: High school students

F: angry Facebook rant

T: improper use of “there,” “their,” and “they’re”

R: the dog

A: you and your family

F: Twitter hastags

T: the ethics of euthanasia

R: a cookie

A: the oven

F: a love poem

T: completeness

Turning yourself into the main character in a narrative

In the tradition of the personal essay and memoir, our modern social media platforms can provide significant fodder to the creative process.<sup>26</sup> Teacher can have students review a month, week, or day of their Facebook, Twitter, Snap Chat, or Instagram account and craft a personal narrative based on what they posted. Essentially, they can create a narrative about a certain time or response to an event via a place where they are already writing continuously and observing the world around them. This could also become a longer extension of the RAFT activities. Ideally, this could serve as a springboard for the conversation about reflecting on writing, something that could be applied to a formal paper already completed in class.

Using Lamott—creating your own guide

To begin working with the I-Search concepts, teachers could share chapters of Anne Lamott’s writing guide *Bird by Bird*, then have students write their own guides in response, allowing them to play with voice by modelling Lamott’s informality and metacognitively explore how they write papers. Students should pinpoint a specific struggle or triumph they had in the writing or research of a formal paper and consider how they overcame that, what was exciting about that overcoming that obstacle/realizing

you did something well, and so on. Ultimately, teachers are asking students to share and tell their stories in a way that will help others.

What is your question?

Have students read the essay, “The Last Amazon: Wonder Woman Returns,” by Jill Lepore.<sup>27</sup> The introduction of the essay reveals Lepore’s strategy with her own writing students that “every argument worth making begins with a question.”<sup>28</sup> Since the research paper required by my school is argumentative, as most research papers are, this could serve as a good beginning strategy or reflective strategy. Once students have read the essay, have them answer (verbally or in writing) the following questions:

1. What topics did Lepore cover in her essay?
2. What could have been the question that inspired that topic and her research on it?
3. What might be the one overarching question that encompasses the questions you determined in #2?

Then, have students apply a similar thought process and questions to their own research. If a teacher wants to utilize this kind of inquiry in the beginning, have the students start off with creating questions that could drive their research. These questions could eventually help them craft an argument. If they are in the middle of the research process, this may help them find more pinpointed information for their argument. If they have already completed the research paper, this process would guide them through a reflection of what they found and argued. Ultimately, this latter remark was the impetus of this unit. If we are going to take the time to ask students to reflect, how can we make it more meaningful and personal? I think it is about re-framing the questions that allow for a bit more openness and play. Let’s change the question of “what sources did you use to meet the requirement?” to something like “what struck you about what an author said? Why did you just have to include it in your paper?” Instead of “what is your argument,” we should try “what story did you need to tell?” or “what problem did you want to solve?” I hope that the use of the classroom activities will un-rust the creative cogs so that students can find a voice to tell the story of the discoveries they have made in their formal writing, connecting them to an educational journey and an ownership of their learning.

## Resources

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--second half of book includes writing exercises, usage sheets/graphic organizers, examples of class agenda, and so on

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<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/introduction/key-design-consideration/>.

--CCSS information and easy-to-read charts demonstrating the growth model for how much fiction versus nonfiction is expected from elementary to high school.

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--collections of texts from an MFA program

--could be used for model texts, especially as they incorporate research and literary analysis into a piece of creative nonfiction

Jones, Brian Jay. "A Dose of Reality in High School Reading." Brian Jay Jones. March 08, 2010. Accessed August 23, 2017. <https://brianjayjones.com/2010/02/22/a-dose-of-reality-in-high-school-reading/>.

"July writing prompts." If found, make. September 05, 2015. Accessed August 23, 2017.  
<http://iffoundmake.com/writing/writing-prompts-things-to-write-creative-writing/>.  
--this is included as a helpful research for writing prompts for teachers to provide students with.

Klinkenborg, Verlyn. *Several short sentences about writing*. New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc., 2013.

--cute, quippy remarks; could be cool for students to model “advice” about writing

Lopate, Phillip. *To show and to tell: the craft of literary nonfiction*. New York: Free Press, 2013.

--second half of book offers explanatory essays on teaching practitioners of the nonfiction genre; offers guidance through model texts that are accessible to high school and would be appropriate for lexiles and CCSS

Ludovici, Jeff. "How Much Writing Will You Do As A College Undergrad?" Student Strategy Blog. January 12, 2010. Accessed December 16, 2017.

<http://studentstrategy101.com/blog/2010/01/12/how-much-writing-will-you-do-as-a-college-undergrad/>.

--Ludovici is an educational consultant focusing on helping students and parents with the transition to and success in college. This might be a helpful resource for teachers to share with students for their own personal reading.

Matthews, Jay. "Help pick non-fiction for schools." *The Washington Post*. February 21, 2010. Accessed August 21, 2017. [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/class-struggle/2010/02/help\\_pick\\_non-fiction\\_for\\_scho.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/class-struggle/2010/02/help_pick_non-fiction_for_scho.html).

Melzer, Dan. "Responding to Research Writing." In *Research Writing Revisited*, edited by Pavel Zemliansky and Wendy Bishop, 185-94. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2004.

Miller, Richard E., and Ann Jurecic. *The Habits of the Creative Mind*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2016.

--This book defines itself as a collection of essays about writing, providing guidance on how to reflect on one's own writing and exemplar essays from writers about their processes. The author's additionally sum up their book in this beautifully succinct way: "It is also a textbook, but a special kind of textbook—one that sees writing as a technology for confronting the unknown. As such, it promotes questioning over arguing; curiosity over arguing; curiosity over conviction; and mindful practice over mindless repetition."<sup>29</sup>

Purcell, Kristen, Judy Buchanan, and Linda Friedrich. "Part II: How Much, and What, do Today's Middle and High School Students Write?" Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. July 15, 2013. Accessed December 16, 2017.

<http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/07/16/part-ii-how-much-and-what-do-todays-middle-and-high-school-students-write/>.

Prentiss, Sean. *The far edges of the fourth genre: an anthology of explorations in creative nonfiction*. East Lansing: Michigan State Univ. Press, 2014.

Root, Robert. *The nonfictionist's guide: on reading and writing creative nonfiction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

"Schools' Nonfiction Problem (True Story)." *The New York Times*. March 08, 2010. Accessed August 23, 2017.  
<https://ideas.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/03/08/schools-nonfiction-problem-true-story/>.

Singer, Margot. *Bending genre: essays on creative nonfiction*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Schuman, Rebecca. "Students Hate Writing Papers. Professors Hate Grading Papers. Let's Stop Assigning Them." *Slate Magazine*. December 13, 2013. Accessed December 16, 2017.  
[http://www.slate.com/articles/life/education/2013/12/college\\_papers\\_students\\_hate\\_writing\\_them\\_professors\\_hate\\_grading\\_them\\_let.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/life/education/2013/12/college_papers_students_hate_writing_them_professors_hate_grading_them_let.html).

"Teach more content, please." RSS. March 30, 2009. Accessed August 23, 2017.  
<http://edudiva.com/files/content.php>.

"The Neglected 'R': The Need for a Writing Revolution." The National Writing Project. April 2003. Accessed December 16, 2017.  
<https://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2523>.

--offers convincing statistics on writing in the job market, some interesting numbers that teachers may find worthy or sharing with their students; emphasizes that good writing is not just for college-bound students and those who choose a specialized career in the humanities

Tutor Tips: Creative Writing. Accessed October 1, 2017.  
<https://www.uvm.edu/wid/writingcenter/tutortips/nonfiction.html>.

Wallace, David Foster. "David Foster Wallace's mind-blowing creative nonfiction syllabus: 'This does not mean an essayist's goal is to 'share' or 'express herself' or whatever feel-good term you got taught in high school'". *Salon*. November 10, 2014. Accessed August 23, 2017.  
[http://www.salon.com/2014/11/10/david\\_foster\\_wallaces\\_mind\\_blowing\\_creative\\_nonfiction\\_syllabus\\_this\\_does\\_not\\_mean\\_an\\_essayist%E2%80%99s\\_goal\\_is\\_to\\_share\\_or\\_express\\_herself\\_or\\_whatever\\_feel\\_good\\_term\\_you\\_got\\_taught\\_in\\_h/](http://www.salon.com/2014/11/10/david_foster_wallaces_mind_blowing_creative_nonfiction_syllabus_this_does_not_mean_an_essayist%E2%80%99s_goal_is_to_share_or_express_herself_or_whatever_feel_good_term_you_got_taught_in_h/).

Weil, Jonathan. *Creative Nonfiction* (Period 6&7). 2011. Accessed August 23, 2017. [http://stuy.enschool.org/apps/classes/show\\_class.jsp?classREC\\_ID=442385](http://stuy.enschool.org/apps/classes/show_class.jsp?classREC_ID=442385).

Young, William H. "Common Core State Standards: Nonfiction Versus Fiction." National Association of Scholars. August 1, 2013. Accessed December 16, 2017. [https://www.nas.org/articles/common\\_core\\_state\\_standards\\_nonfiction\\_versus\\_fiction](https://www.nas.org/articles/common_core_state_standards_nonfiction_versus_fiction).

-- Provides details demonstrating the CCSS's growth model for how much fiction versus nonfiction is expected from elementary to high school.

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Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Bly, Carol. *Beyond the writers' workshop: new ways to write creative nonfiction*. New York: Anchor Books, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Matthiessen, Connie. "The nonfiction revolution." *Parenting*. July 2, 2015. Accessed August 24, 2017. <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/non-fiction-why-its-important/>.

<sup>3</sup> According to Carol Bly in *Beyond the writers' workshop: new ways to write creative nonfiction*, "half the skills that a present-day creative nonfiction writer needs to learn, therefore, are the skills of psychological sturdiness. (The other half are the skills of literary craft.) I am using the term sturdy [sic] with psychological [sic] because it pulls together two ideas that all of us need to see together. One is that psychology means understanding what our soul grapples with and making sure that our soul goes on grappling with it instead of pretending all is well. And, two, learning some ways to strengthen ourselves so that we can keep writing literature" (xix).

<sup>4</sup> Matthews, Jay. "Help pick non-fiction for schools." *The Washington Post*. February 21, 2010. Accessed August 21, 2017. [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/class-struggle/2010/02/help\\_pick\\_non-fiction\\_for\\_scho.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/class-struggle/2010/02/help_pick_non-fiction_for_scho.html).

<sup>5</sup> Implementation of CCSS is directly linked to the emphasis on non-fiction reading across curricula and especially in the ELA classroom. The general percentage split discussed is 70% non-fiction and 30% fiction.

<sup>6</sup> I think the standards that align best to the idea of looking at a nonfiction text both critically and creatively would be the following: "Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text" (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4); "Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.5); "Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6). All the reading standards for an informational text for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade can be accessed via the following citation: "English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text » Grade 11-12." English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text » Grade 11-12 | Common Core State Standards Initiative. Accessed December 16, 2017. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/11-12/>.

<sup>7</sup> The report on "The Neglected R" offers convincing statistics on writing in the job market, some interesting numbers that teachers may find worthy of sharing with their students. What I like about this source is that it emphasizes that good writing is not just for college-bound students and those who choose a specialized career in the humanities. Indeed, it is just as important on Wall Street and in business. Some intriguing highlights include the following: "Writing is a 'threshold skill' for both employment and promotion, particularly for salaried employees. Half the responding companies report that they take writing into consideration when hiring professional employees;" "Two-thirds of salaried employees in large



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American companies have some writing responsibility;" "Eighty percent or more of the companies in the service and finance, insurance, and real estate (FIRE) sectors, the corporations with the greatest employment growth potential, assess writing during hiring" (pg. 5).

8 Ludovici, Jeff. "How Much Writing Will You Do As A College Undergrad?" Student Strategy Blog. January 12, 2010. Accessed December 16, 2017. <http://studentstrategy101.com/blog/2010/01/12/how-much-writing-will-you-do-as-a-college-undergrad/>.

9 Ibid

10 From page 22 of "The Neglected "R": The Need for a Writing Revolution." The National Writing Project. April 2003. Accessed December 16, 2017. <https://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2523>.

11 Articles by Rebecca Schuman from *Slate* and Richard Gunderman at *The Atlantic* offer compelling and even scathing reasons for abandoning the formal essay altogether. These could be interesting articles for the classroom as opinion pieces to explore the author's use of structure, diction, and so forth. For example, Schuman's title is "The End of the College Essay: An essay." Upperclassmen might enjoy delving into Schuman's cheeky choices.

12 Purcell, Kristen, Judy Buchanan, and Linda Friedrich. "Part II: How Much, and What, do Today's Middle and High School Students Write?" Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. July 15, 2013. Accessed December 16, 2017. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/07/16/part-ii-how-much-and-what-do-todays-middle-and-high-school-students-write/>.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Two helpful resources that provide this data can be found at the CCSS ELA resource page (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/introduction/key-design-consideration/>) and from William H. Young's article via the National Association of Scholars webpage ([https://www.nas.org/articles/common\\_core\\_state\\_standards\\_nonfiction\\_versus\\_fiction](https://www.nas.org/articles/common_core_state_standards_nonfiction_versus_fiction)). Both provide details and easy-to-read charts demonstrating the CCSS's growth model for how much fiction versus nonfiction is expected from elementary to high school.

16 Pages 2-3 of Root, Robert. *The nonfictionist's guide: on reading and writing creative nonfiction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

17 Page 3 of Root, Robert. *The nonfictionist's guide: on reading and writing creative nonfiction*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

18 Page 186 in Melzer, Dan. "Responding to Research Writing." In *Research Writing Revisited*, edited by Pavel Zemliansky and Wendy Bishop, 185-94. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2004.

19 This is contradicted in *Beyond the Writer's Workshop*—what should I say to this?

20 Macrorie, Ken. *The I-Search Paper*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1988.

21 From the preface of Macrorie, Ken. *The I-Search Paper*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1988.

22 From the preface of Macrorie, Ken. *The I-Search Paper*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1988.

23 From page 64 of Macrorie, Ken. *The I-Search Paper*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1988.

24 The essay "Could I become a firefighter" by Kathy Stacknick on pages 54-61 of Macrorie's book could be a great exemplar essay for teachers to use in the classroom.

25 On page 54 of Macrorie, Ken. *The I-Search Paper*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1988.

26 Lopate's chapter called "The Personal Essay in the Age of Facebook" (127-131) in *To Show and To Tell* address the concerns over students' dependence on social media and how that might be making them less creative. Lopate counters that we can harness these platforms as types of personal narratives and memoirs that allow for introspection, rather than zombie-like mindless drooling.

27 Found on page 300 in Miller, Richard E., and Ann Jurecic. *The Habits of the Creative Mind*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2016.

28 Found on page 300 in Lepore, Jill. "The Lost Amazon" Wonder Woman Returns." In Miller, Richard E., and Ann Jurecic. *The Habits of the Creative Mind*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2016.

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<sup>29</sup> From the preface, page v. Miller, Richard E., and Ann Jurecic. *The Habits of the Creative Mind*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St.Martin's, 2016.