



Combining Voices Tip Sheet

Written by members of the Authors Club of Augusta, 2006

A poem or short story inspired by a piece of art doesn't have to explain or describe it, but it can. The artwork you choose should feed your imagination and emotions. When you write, consider the artist's color choices. Look at the brush strokes, if possible, and the thickness of the paint. Is there a frame? If there isn't, why not? Think about where people and objects are placed in relation to each other. Note any details that help you understand the art and bring it alive. Ask yourself how the art relates to your life now, and in the past. Feel free to have fun. Play with the words and thoughts you use.

Creating a Poem

A poem begins with an emotion and an idea. It may be happy, sad, or angry. Use words that tell how you feel. Use your senses of smell, sight, taste, touch, and hearing.

When you write a poem, there is a speaker or person saying the words. The speaker doesn't have to be the writer. It can be an invented person, an animal, or thing.

Poems are rhythmic. This means a poem, like a song, should have a beat you can hear and feel when you read and recite it.

Poems have beginnings, middles, and ends. The end may ask a question or answer one. The best poems make the reader feel that he or she has made a wonderful discovery.

A poem is written in lines. The line length can be long or short. Groups of lines are stanzas or verses. A poem can be composed of only one stanza. The word at the end of the lines is the most powerful. It's the last word you hear or say. Lines don't have to rhyme, but they can.

A poem should have a setting. A setting can be the time of day, a season, a place, or even the speaker's mind.

A poem may contain metaphors. A metaphor is a comparison that doesn't use the words *like* or *as*. For example: the sweet rock candy hail fell.

A poem may contain similes. This is a comparison that uses the words *like* or *as*. For example: the hail tasted as sweet as rock candy. Another example: the hail fell and cracked like rock candy.

Poems are built around images or word pictures. Since you're basing your poem on someone else's artwork, consider relating your images to the picture you're viewing, your memories, your dreams, and your daily life.

Creating a Short Story

A short story is written in prose. This means sentences, parts of sentences, and paragraphs. Think of prose as words you write in a letter or what you say to a friend.

A story usually has a structure. This includes a beginning, middle, and end. The beginning should describe the characters, time, place, and setting. It's the point where you grab the reader's attention. The beginning is the point where you make him or her want to continue. The beginning is also the point where you can hint a bit about what's going to happen in the middle.

In the middle of the story, you should create some sort of conflict or problem the characters face. The conflict can deal with actions outside or inside the characters' minds or both.

Details make the story come alive. Just as you do in a poem, use your senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and hearing. Also, try dialogue.

The end of the story wraps it up. The conflict or problem is usually solved. The solution may be happy or unhappy. You can also leave the reader with doubts. Whatever you decide about the conflict and ending, remember that the short story really hits home if you've drawn the reader into a new world for a while. A good piece of art should achieve the same result.