

Characteristics of Nonfiction

Nonfiction: prose that deals with real events and people

- ❖ Characters, settings, and events must conform to what is true
- ❖ Story cannot be manipulated by the writer's imagination

Types of Nonfiction:

- ❖ **Essay**: brief examination of a subject in prose, usually expressing a personal or limited view of the topic
 - **Formal Essay**: serious in tone and subject and more objective in point of view. This form is basically identical with prose writing in which the literary effect is secondary to a serious purpose.
 - **Informal Essay**: have informal tone, as if the author is speaking directly to the reader.
 - **Purposes of writing informal essays**:
 - To entertain
 - To inform
 - To explain
 - To persuade

Informal Essays use all 4 major forms of discourse:

1. **Exposition (explains a subject)**
 - a. Writer's main purpose is to inform
 - b. Most objective type of nonfiction
 - c. Facts are presented as neutrally as possible
 - d. Author's opinion on the subject **DOESN'T** intrude
2. **Persuasion**
 - a. Attempts to influence the reader's ideas of actions
 - b. Major purpose is to convince the reader to think, feel, or act in a certain way
 - c. Writer selects and arranges facts so that the reader will share the writer's opinion
 - d. Successful only if the reader believes that the facts support the writer's opinion
3. **Description**
 - a. Presents a picture or an impression of a subject
 - b. Re-creates for the reader a person, a place or an event, largely through language that appeals to the senses
 - c. Tells us how something looks, smells, tastes, sounds, and feels to the touch
4. **Narration**
 - a. Author's purpose is to relate a series of events
 - b. Events usually related in chronological order

- c. Has the form of a story , but the events are factual and actually recorded
- d. Author depicts characters and may even use dialogue

- **Biography – an account of someone’s life, written by another person**

- Focus of a biography**

- The character
 - His/her career
 - His/her place in history
 - Uniqueness and universality of the character’s experience

- Characteristics of a Good Biography:**

- Accurate presentation of the life history from birth to death of an individual
 - Honest effort is made to interpret the life so as to offer a unified impression of the character, mind and personality of the subject

Bios = life graphia = writing

- **Autobiography (story of a person’s life as written by that person)**

- Characteristics of an autobiography**

- Usually a chronological, narrative account of a person’s life.
 - Author relates person’s life story to crucial historical events
 - Author offers personal evaluations of actions and speculates on the significance of certain actions and events

Auto = self graphia = writing

- **Journal:** form of autobiographical writing including a day-by-day chronicle of events, usually a personal and intimate record of events and thoughts kept by an individual
- **Diary:** specialized journal that is a day-by-day chronicle of events, usually a personal and intimate record of events and thought kept by an individual
- **Oratory:** formal speech intended to inspire some action. Carefully prepared and delivered in an impassioned manner, the oration carries its greatest power in its emotional appeal.
- **Psalm:** lyric composition of praise, usually applied to sacred themes
- **Sermon:** formal discussion, usually oral, of a serious subject for the purpose of religious instruction or urgent advice and recommendations
- **Letters:** communication in writing to another person or a group of persons; correspondence. A specialized form of letter, called an epistle, is a more formal document prepared for public reading.

- **Aphorism or Proverb:** brief statement of usually one sentence that expresses some truth about life in terse, easily remembered form.
- **Epitaph:** commemorative verses or lines inscribed on tombs or headstones. This information usually includes the name of the deceased, the dates of birth and death, age, profession and some pious motto.