



Unit 1: Creative Nonfiction

Unit Goal: Students will write a nonfiction narrative that engages the reader with vivid imagery and characterization.

Warm Up: Song in my Head

- Write a favorite song lyric that easily comes to your mind.
- Explain what the song lyric means to you?
- How do you feel about the song and why?
- Describe what was happening the last time you heard that song?
- What event or person does this song remind you of and why?

Mentor Text *from East of Eden*

- Notice how the listing of images builds of a clear view of the setting and the reader can clearly hear his feelings about this place and these memories without being told.

Student Sample

I don't know why I remember going fishing with my father. He'd come over to the apartment where my mother and I were living since the divorce, bringing a cup of coffee sweetened to the point of making me choke when I sipped it. Dawn would still be an hour or so away, but he insisted on getting started early because that's when the fish would bite, he said. We'd drive from the grimy streets of Oakland out through the lush rolling hills of Alamo and Walnut Creek, and into the dry dusty Sacramento valley there existed a man-made reservoir. The water was a dull grey reflecting the dirty earth that rose, raw and bleak, from its edges. We'd join the band of early fishermen who were always there, standing on the edge of the gravelly beach, waiting patiently with their lines in the water. Most of them were drinking beer even though it was so early, crushing the cans and throwing them into a pile when they were emptied. My dad would drink two beers during the four hours we would fish, never more, never less. We never caught anything. As far as I remember, no one did. But we stood there, in wordless camaraderie, Saturday, for the two long years until my father moved to Arizona without me.

Exercise 1: I don't know why I remember



1. Gather materials: scan back to your life and think of events people, or objects that have stuck in your mind for no obvious reason.
2. Visualize those things in detail as if you were physically experiencing them.
3. **Imagine your audience member is a close friend and trustworthy confidante.** Describe them precisely and in detail using concrete sensory details, beginning each one with the phrase, "I don't know why I remember."
4. Don't try to explain or interpret the meaning of these details or this memory, just put the reader there.