

# CREATIVE WRITING AS ACADEMIC WRITING

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Which genres are academic writing genres?

How do we determine whether a kind of writing is academic or not?

## PREMISE #1

Let's teach (and evaluate) writing so that students come to perceive it as a continual PROCESS (of trial, failure, dialogue, experimentation), and so that they view any one "finished" piece of writing as only a byproduct of this process (though of course, a useful one).

## PREMISE #2

Let's show students that a good writer **CREATES** a unique form every time she writes, to suit the unique rhetorical needs of her audience.

Presenting a genre as an already set form with "rules" and teaching students to follow it is a backward and dead-end strategy (and an easy way to produce boring nonsense).

(see Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," 1968)

## PREMISE #3

The most essential values of good writing in genres traditionally called “creative” apply to academic genres as well. If practice with “creative” techniques and forms helps students internalize these values, then these techniques and forms have an important place in an academic writing classroom.

## 3 STYLE VALUES IN ENGLISH WRITING

- **ACTION**

- (evoked by strong *verbs*, as opposed to the **STASIS** of nouns)

- **IMAGE**

- (direct appeal to the senses)

- **ECONOMY**

- (if you can do the same work in fewer words, that's better)

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- see Lanham, "Revising Prose," and the Plain English Campaign:

- <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html>

Some ways to make bring creative writing into  
the Academic Writing classroom:

APPLYING OVERALL PRINCIPLES

ADAPTING STRUCTURES FROM CREATIVE GENRES

EXPERIMENTING WITH CREATIVE FORMS

APPLYING OVERALL PRINCIPLES  
(OR, "THINGS MY CREATIVE WRITING  
TEACHER TAUGHT ME")

"Show, don't tell."



“Think of 50 pounds. Think of a 50 pound dog. Think of that 50 pound dog sitting on your head.”

Rhett Allain, *Wired*

<https://www.wired.com/2015/11/holly-holm-ronda-rousey-destroying-kick-packed-a-lot-of-force/>

Three steps on the way from telling to showing:

1. Stating a concept
2. Turning the concept into an image (a concrete example)
3. Putting the image into direct relation with the reader's body/senses (putting it into ACTION with a verb)

## **Activity:**

**Get students to identify an abstract “telling” sentence in their paper (or their classmate’s paper), and take it through 2 more stages on the way to “showing.”**

- 1. “We are going to make America great again!”**
- 2. We are going to build a wall made of concrete and razor wire.**
- 3. We are going to build a wall made of razor wire that will slice open the legs and arms of desperate women and children who try to get across.**

## ADAPTING STRUCTURAL TRICKS FROM CREATIVE GENRES

<https://www.oxford-royale.co.uk/articles/techniques-creative-writing-improve-essays.html>

# EXPERIMENTING WITH CREATIVE FORMS

Modernist Poetry

Centó

Erasure

# This Is Just To Say

William Carlos Williams

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

I use this poem to show:

- the importance of image, directness, rhythm, tone
- that there can be (and almost always are) multiple audiences and purposes. (Here, who is the audience and what is the purpose? What is the genre?)

## **Activity:**

**Students take one of their paragraphs and turn it into a poem by giving it line breaks**

**(This brings out rhythm (or lack of it); tends to emphasize key ideas, makes repetition more obvious)**

Here's a cento I made from the sources I read for this presentation:

In order to clarify  
the next lips  
beside the white  
poets often bring spaces  
**into places**  
a communication so peculiar  
The dictionary  
a 50 pound dog  
defines erase  
**(without words, please)**  
for the sake of something  
a form of flesh and blood  
rope-dancing  
beyond itself

## Cento:

Ancient Roman poetry form  
made from lines taken from  
other sources

### **Activity:**

- Ask students to keep a research notebook of interesting/useful quotations (a good idea anyway).
- Ask them to make a cento poem from the quotes.
- Share with another student who then rearranges the lines (Students talk about how the meaning changes; why they chose these lines in particular)

# Erasure

A literary form in which words (or parts of words) are erased from an existing text. The results can be funny, surprising, satirical, subversive, and profound.

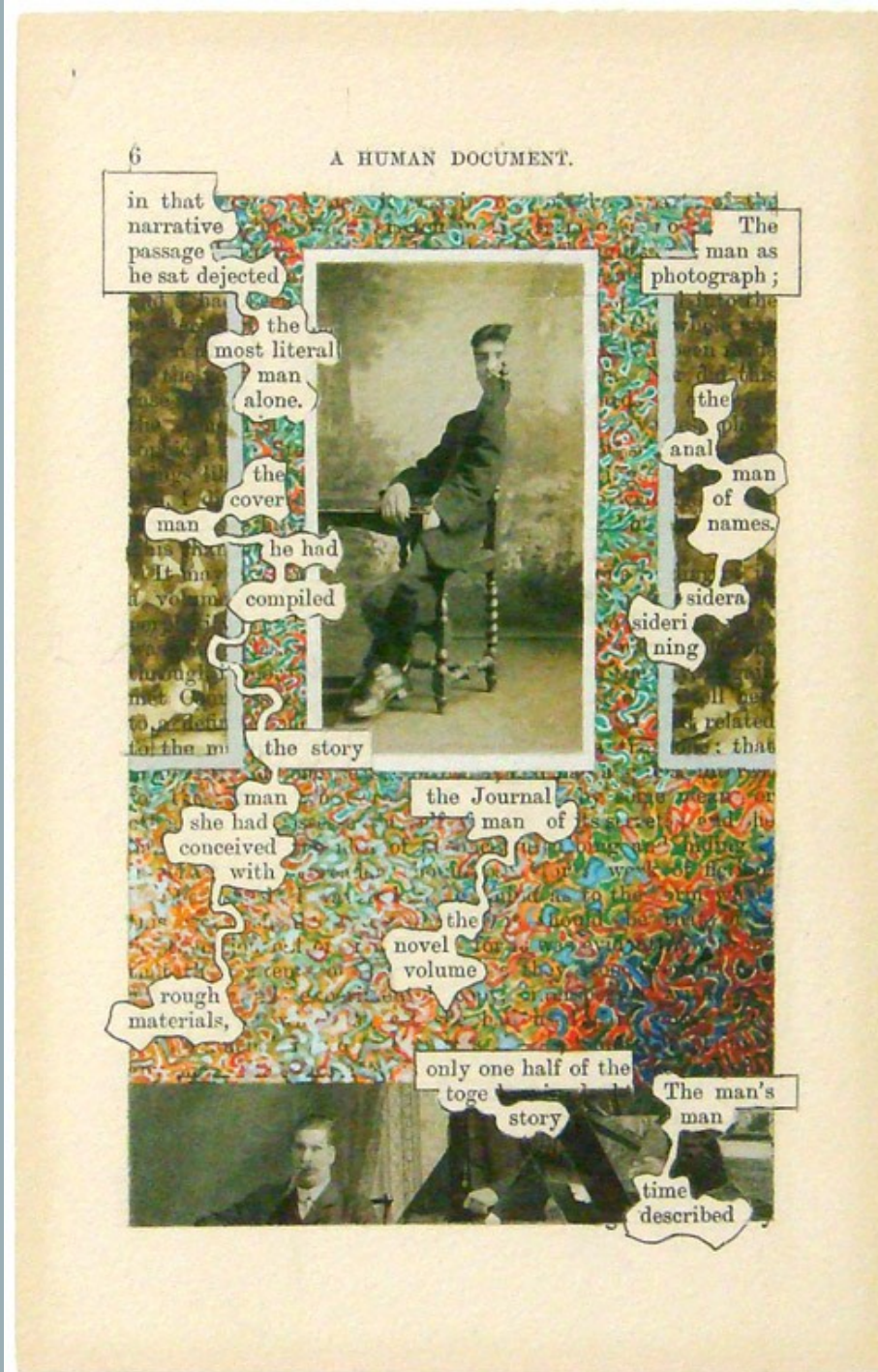


# Erasure

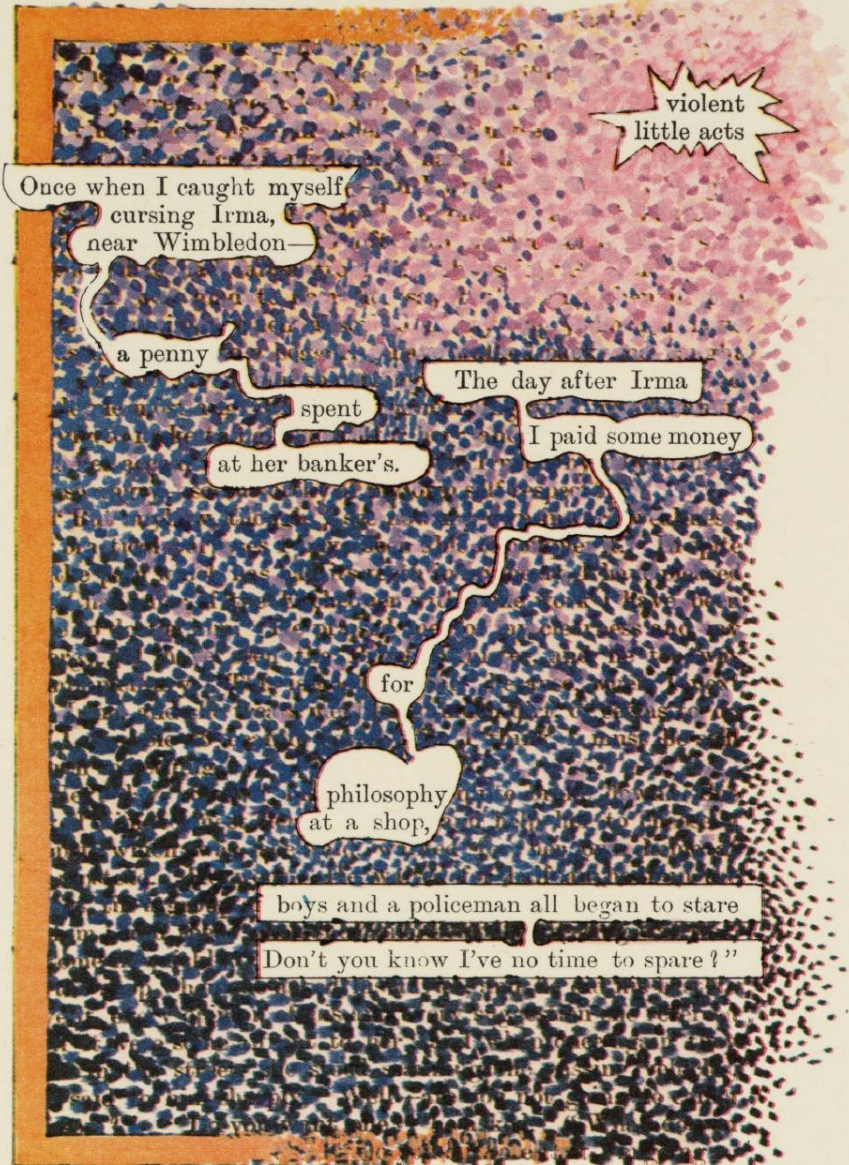
A literary form in which the author plays with the possibility of erasing words, phrases, or sentences from a text. It is often used to create a sense of mystery, suspense, or irony. The technique is also used in modernist and postmodernist literature to challenge the reader's perception of reality and to explore the limits of language. Erasure can be a powerful tool for creating a sense of depth and complexity in a work of art.

# *A Humument*

Tom Phillips, 1970







bp



bp



# Nets

Jen Bervin, 2003

20

A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted,  
Hast thou, the **master-mistress of my passion**;  
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted  
4 With **shifting** change, as is false women's fashion;  
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,  
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;  
A man in hue all hues in his controlling,  
8 Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.  
And for a woman wert thou first created,  
Till Nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,  
And **by** addition me of thee defeated,  
12 By **adding** one thing to my purpose **nothing**.  
But since she **prick'd thee out for women's pleasure**,  
Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure.

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy **Will,**  
 And **Will** to boot, and **Will** in overplus;  
 More than enough am I that vex thee still,  
 4 To thy sweet **will** making addition thus.  
 Wilt thou, whose **will** is large and spacious,  
 Not once vouchsafe to hide my **will** in thine?  
 Shall **will** in others seem right gracious,  
 8 And in my **will** no fair acceptance shine?  
 The sea all water, yet receives rain still  
 And in abundance addeth to his store;  
 So thou, being rich in **Will,** add to thy **Will**  
 12 One **will** of mine, to make thy large **Will** more.  
 Let 'no' unkind, no fair beseechers kill;  
 Think all but one, and me in that one **Will.**

Against my love shall be as **I am** now  
 With Time's injurious hand crushed and o'er worn;  
 When hours have drained his blood and filled his brow  
 4 With lines and wrinkles; when his youthful morn  
 Hath travelled on to age's steepy night,  
 And all those beauties whereof now he's king  
 Are **vanishing or vanished** out of sight,  
 8 Stealing away the treasure of his spring;  
 For such a time do I now fortify  
 Against confounding age's cruel knife,  
 That he shall never cut from memory  
 12 My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life:  
 His beauty shall **in these black lines** be seen,  
 And they shall live, and he in them still green.

**SAFETY GUIDE**

**Please follow all the precautions listed below for safety and to reduce the risk of fire, injury or electrical shock.**

- This appliance can be used by children aged from 8 years and above and persons with reduced physical, sensory or mental capabilities or lack of experience and knowledge if they have been given supervision or instruction concerning use of the appliance in a safe way and understand the hazards involved.
- Children shall not play with the appliance.
- Cleaning and user maintenance shall not be made by children unless they are older than 8 and supervised.
- Keep the appliance and its cord out of reach of children less than 8 years.
- This appliance is intended to be used in household and similar applications such as : Staff kitchen areas in shops, offices and other working environments; farm houses; by clients in hotels, motels and other residential type environments; bed and breakfast type environments.
- Do not touch the body of the toaster when it is hot.
- Disconnect the appliance at the mains supply when filling or emptying the toaster, before cleaning, adjusting or removing any components, and when it is not in use.
- The toaster must not be operated by means of an external timer or separate remote-control system.
- Do not immerse the appliance, connecting cord or plug in water or liquids.
- Do not cover the appliance when it is in use, or has recently been used.
- Do not place this appliance on or near a hot gas or electric burner, or in a heated oven.
- Do not insert oversize items, foil packages or metal implements in the toaster wells.
- The use of accessory attachments not recommended by the appliance manufacturer may cause injury.
- Do not let the connecting cord overhang the edge of the work surface or allow it to touch hot surfaces or sources of heat or flame.
- Do not attempt to change the appliance connecting cord. Refer this to qualified service personnel as specialist tools are necessary.
- If any part of this appliance is visibly damaged or malfunctions in any way, or the connecting cord or mains plug is broken do not continue to use it. Take it to a qualified service centre for service and repair.

**SAFETY GUIDE**

**Please**

- The toaster
- Do not
- Do not
- Do not
- Do not
- Do not attempt to change
- any part of this
- Do not
- Disconnect

## **Activities:**

**Students can do erasures on a reading text, on their own writings, on classmates' writings...**

**Have them discuss: How has the meaning changed? The genre? The purpose? The audience?**

**You could ask them do an erasure with a specific goal (change the text from one genre into another, make the text appeal to a specific audience, erase everything but the verbs...)**

**Get them to articulate WHY they did what they did!**

