

## Karen Schrier, Assignment 1

1) For me, personally-relevant storytelling is deeply engaging. An important aspect of my close friendships is verbally trading stories of our encounters and follies. Since leaving New York City for graduate school, it has been more difficult to share these tales. Thus, each week, I have been writing about the experiences in creative formats and sending them to my long-distance friends.

The creation of my personal (non)fiction is extremely engaging. Writing these stories is like solving a puzzle. In creating a sentence, I try to piece together words in unique, humorous ways. I search for the missing word, expression, or analogy that can illicit the most laughter. Beyond my engagement with the mental creation of sentences and ideas to create a story, I am also engaged with my own memories of my experiences, both in terms of the events that transpired and how I reacted to these events. While writing, I am simultaneously engaged with the memories I want to share with my friends; my personal sense of how to share these memories; how I imagine my audience might react to my stories; my general knowledge of pop culture, language, media, expressions, puns, etc.; the sense of humor of my audience; the relationships among events and people in my and my friend's lives; and my evaluation of my storytelling, as I reread my written words.

Thus, the process of writing my stories is highly engaging because it is extremely personally relevant—after all, I am writing about my experiences, emotions, and memories. I have a close relationship with the audience of the stories, both emotionally and mentally, in that I try to imagine how they will perceive my stories. I find pleasure in knowing that they will be affected—emotionally or intellectually—by my words. I receive pleasure in reliving my experiences through writing, and then reading my expression of those experiences. I enjoy discovering the puns, analogies, word plays, expressions, jokes, and verbal permutations that are inspired by my encounters.

2) I am often deeply engaged with media—viscerally, personally, and intellectually. Each week I choose a “song of a week,” which is a song that is personally meaningful, and post a description of it on my website. I select a song that literally strikes a chord with my thoughts, underscores an experience, or embodies my feelings. It fits within my emotional and social soundscape, and helps me reflect on my sense of self. It may be the lyrics, the ambience, the feelings it incited, or how it functioned as part of an interaction with other people, places, experiences, or media. Writing about it helps me reminisce on the events of the previous week, and gives me a new perspective on my values, goals, or relationships.

During this week, I listened to “Nowhere to Run” by Martha Reeves and the Vandellas in my room, alone. The lyrics were meaningful to me at that moment—I felt trapped in my apartment and trapped by social life. I had, as the song states, nowhere to run. But, the song was also woven into my memories. I heard it growing up on oldies stations. Even though I don't remember when it came out, it makes me nostalgic for the era when it was a hit. Furthermore, the song reminds me of my favorite cheesy 80s movie, called “Gleaming the Cube.” I must have seen it every day for a month. In the film, this song plays, but in Vietnamese. Thus, the intersection of current personal events, prior media experiences, and childhood memories, combined with the pleasure of listening to the song, led to me being deeply engaged with the song.

Similarly, I was deeply engaged when at a They Might Be Giants concert last night. I have a strong personal relationship with the band—I've listened to them for the past 11 years. I've share a love of their music with family members, former boyfriends, and best friends. I've had friendships form because of a passion for their music. Thus, my engagement at this concert was enhanced by my memories of previous shows and personal interactions with the music, my recognition and enjoyment of their songs, and my placement in the third row of a crowd of people who were equally enthusiastic about the show. Although I was alone at the concert, I felt like I was part of movement. Moreover, I could see the band playing their music. It seemed more real—as if I was more connected to their music. It was more physical, more tangible. I could actually sense others moving to the music and singing along to the lyrics. It reminds me of why I often listen to the radio rather than to a CD when I'm making a long drive. Even though I have less control over what is playing when I listen to the radio, it is nice to know that there is someone else out there listening to the same music. I feel more connected.

Thus, the second engagement experience was deeper because of personal relevance, but also a sense of community. I was sharing the experience with others who were also moved by the music. In my first experience, I am initially engaged with music because it is meaningful. But, by later sharing my reflection of my engagement with others, I am able to make the experience of the music even deeper. While listening to the songs, I imagine an audience outside myself. I am creating a community for my personal reflections that spans time and distance.

3) Personally relevant Intersects with other media experiences, people or places Builds a feeling of community Pleasurable Reflective Helps provide a sense of self/identity in the world Helps a person evaluate his/her values or beliefs Intellectually stimulating Challenging Reminiscent of other experiences Peers are engaged with it Brings up memories Activates thought and/or emotion

I think that the most important is that it is personally meaningful, in that the activity or experience interacts with a person's values, beliefs, experiences, feelings, and relationships.