

Some adapted tips from Mary Karr for memoir writing:

- 1) Paint a physical reality that engages all senses; use a singular place filled with believable people and things.
- 2) Let your readers know where they are. Setting details should include time, place, season, etc.
- 3) What is at stake in your memoir? WHAT IS AT STAKE? Why should/do your readers need to care? Your memoir piece should have an emotional conflict about something that matters.
- 4) Your inner thoughts and wonderings need to matter. Relate inner thoughts and wonderings to WHAT IS AT STAKE.
- 5) Don't only show the conflict or struggle; show your survival and tenacity within the struggle. What was overcome?
- 6) Don't exaggerate. The truth is your truth, and that is enough.
- 7) Love your setting, yourself, and the people and places you represent.

Try to avoid some of these trappings in your memoir writing:

- 1) Write the way you speak. Avoid grandiose language that you *think* should be in your writing. Remember that you are enough, and your story will resonate the more it sounds like you!
- 2) Do not lie!!!! Lying in writing is fine if it is fiction. Memoir writing depends upon your truth. If you lie, you switch genres and are writing fiction, not memoir.
- 3) Overusing pronouns. Good writing is concrete. Be sure your reader is engaging with strong nouns.

Individual Editing Checklist (Before Peer Edits):

- 1) Read your work aloud to yourself! I catch many editing errors doing just this. This is a huge tip that will improve your writing across genres and disciplines.
- 2) Use Karr's tips to revise your work.
- 3) Refer to the model texts we read in *Tales of Two Planets*:
 - A) What techniques did the authors of those climate stories use that you want to emulate? Underline or star where you emulated them in your work. If you underline or star nothing, then...back to revising your work!
 - B) What structural decisions did you most admire in the model texts we read? Have you tried to emulate that structure? If not, try revising with structural edits.
 - C) All the climate memoir pieces we read had a distinct sense of place. Go through your climate memoir piece and underline or star where you create a distinct sense of place. If you cannot underline or star anything, then you must revise.
- 4) Read your work aloud to yourself again!

Texts Referenced:

- 1) *Tales of Two Planets*, edited by John Freeman, Penguin Books, New York, 2020.;

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2) *The Art of Memoir*, Mary Karr, Harper, New York, 2015.