



# Dream of Travel Writing

## The Art of the Essay and How to Find Them Everywhere

As you may just have heard, there's an excessive amount of noise in the background right now because I'm actually doing this webinar from the airport just before I am boarding a flight. So it turned out that yesterday when we usually have the webinar, I had postponed it because I had a flight that day and got canceled. And so, now this is the only flight that I can get out, and so, now we're gonna talk from the airport.

So if you have any trouble hearing me over the sound of the airport at any point, let me know. And we will just roll with it and hopefully my mic is good enough that you're mostly just hearing me.

So what we were talking about today similarly to last week when we talked about narrative... thanks Alicia for putting your name on there. Similarly to last week when I talked about narrative forms in story structure, it's something very near and dear to my heart that I spend a lot of time studying these days, and that is the art of the essay. And for those of you that read either the newsletter or the blog post preceding this call, you probably heard or saw me mention that you're likely already writing essays without realizing it on your own blogs if you do in fact have a blog. And you may even be writing essays for clients. Especially those of you that do ghostblogging or other forms of writing for other business owners, you might be writing essays in their newsletters. Newsletters are a really common place to find essays as well.

And a dear friend of mine who now is a multiple New York Times bestselling author, when he first started he was like, "I wanna be a writer and I wanna be an essayist." And he did that by starting a blog, and he would say, "I publish essays two days a week or three days a week." And he always very clearly classified his blog posts as essays. So one of the things we're gonna talk about today is what exactly does that mean if you're calling something that you're writing an essay? What does that mean? What does that look like? How is that different from other types of writing?

So first we're gonna talk about what that distinction is and then we're gonna talk about a couple of different approaches to the process of writing essays. And what I mean by that in terms of approaches is actually the, sort of, structural elements as well as things like different topics that you can take that are unique to the essay market. So, yeah, so it's interesting. I see there's about... it seems like maybe two-thirds of those of you on the call, your names aren't showing up. So if you wanna just drop in the chat box like I said, like Alicia did right here. If your name isn't showing up when you ask a question just drop your name in because it will help me with context, as I do know many of you.



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So at the end, we're gonna talk a little bit about the different markets for personal essays in terms of where you can sell them, but we're also gonna talk about how they fit into the greater marketplace. And it might be unsurprising to those of you who follow this particular outlet, but one of the touch zones that I'm gonna talk about several points during this call, both in terms of learning the essay style and structure as well as publication, is "The New York Times" because they also secretly have some things to help you write essays besides just get them published.

So one of the things that I've noticed on here...of course, we say the Travel Magazine database which is a big cornerstone of what Dream of Travel Writing does. And something that I've noticed in putting together the Travel Magazine database is that a lot of this type of thing, such as essays, or what we talked about last week, narrative features, these are things that a lot of you come and tell, "I really wanna write things like this, but I just don't know where to publish them." And I've really been shocked, to be honest, about how many markets are out there for this type of thing. And in fact, one of the reasons in the Travel Magazine database that we have so, so many magazines is that a lot of these stories that you would write that are travel-oriented stories, whether features or essays, actually appear in magazines that aren't strictly about travel.

So we'll talk, of course, like I said, later in the call about markets, but one of the best places to place your first-person essays about travel is actually in women's magazines which pay very, very, very well. They pay, you know, \$2 a word if not \$1 a word. But you can definitely get \$2-a-word rates even as a first-time writer for those outlets. And those are magazines...like "Red" in the U.K. is a great one. "Town and Country" in America publishes quite a bit of travel as well. So we'll talk more about that.

And in terms of my background for what we're talking about today, those of you that were here at the top of the call, I said that this is something that's near and dear to my heart, but I really go out of my way because I have noticed that it's something that a lot of you are interested in. I'm not so much of an essayist myself, but because it's something that you guys are really interested in, whenever I go to the big writing conferences that are for, I don't wanna say writers, like we're all not writers, but they're for these more, you know, foofoo-y writers like novelists and fiction and people who wanna be starving artists just to create really artsy writing.

I go to a lot of these workshops on essays because it's really very eye-opening how this type of form as in, you know, an essay versus a narrative feature versus a poem versus a piece of journalism, how this type of form seems quite esoteric or hard to pinpoint how to do it. But it's actually one of the easier ones. And so, I'm gonna share with you a lot of tips and tricks that that I have picked up over the past couple of years of checking out those resources, and



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also I'm gonna show you some names and some specific places for you to check out if essay is a type of writing that really appeals to you.

So before we dive into that, before we dive into how to do it, where to do it, let's really zero in on what is an essay, and particularly, personal essays are what we're gonna talk about today. So it's very easy, especially if you look in, you know, say a newspaper. Or a really good example also is something less read now, but it's the Saturday...oh no, it's escaping me. "Saturday Evening Post" or something like that. But there's these magazines that I see less now that the "People" weeklies of the world have taken over.

But about, you know, 10, 15 years ago when you were in line at the grocery store, the magazines that you would see on the stand right at the checkout were more of these ones that are small, they're book-sized, they're quite thick and they're weekly, and they would include a mix of fiction and non-fiction, and writing on all sorts of different topics. And if you were to look at something like that or something like a newspaper, you're gonna see a mix of all of these different pieces that are inherently non-fiction and inherently first-person that could be thought of or referred to by some people perhaps as essays, but they aren't all essays. So I wanna really zero in on some things that aren't essays because that can help you understand what an essay is. Because like I said, it is a bit amorphous and diffuse, that definition.

So somebody, I think it was Carol...I'm trying to match. If you don't write your name in the same question then I'm not always sure if that was you. So somebody had asked, "How long is an essay?" And that's a great question because it really doesn't matter. There's not a, sort of, fixed length. Like I would say that feature, like a narrative feature wouldn't usually take place below 700 words, but I wouldn't say the same thing about an essay. An essay can be 10,000 words, and you can probably even do it in 250 words. So it's less about the length at hand.

So let's look at another thing here, an op-ed. So this, you know, comes more than anything from newspapers, but this concept of an op-ed is something that I see a lot of people confusing for an essay. And this is really important to note because an essay should not be something in which you are opining, in which you are very vehemently and aggressively stating your opinion. That is an opinion piece, that is not an essay.

And this is really important because I was doing, you know, some refreshing background for today's call, one of the things that I was reading quite about, that they talk about in several different articles in "The New York Times" in fact, is the death of the modern essay. There was something of a Renaissance of the modern essay when writing online came about, and "The New York Times" as they love to do has proclaimed the death of it.



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And I'm gonna get a little bit more into that trajectory in a bit, but one of the reasons is because of this opening, because of this opinion-expressing and vehemence in essays. And that's the thing, is that they aren't. And so we can look at what "The New York Times" has called the death of the essay as the loss of the craft of the essay, which we're gonna talk about, and the diversions into things that are more opinion-spouting than original essays.

So are all first-person thought pieces essays? Not necessarily, and we're gonna look superficially on the next slide about the difference between journalism and narrative first-person pieces in this vein. But one of the things I wanna look at here is this concept of the non-fiction short story. As you might be led astray if you go out on your own to do some research and say, "Hey, I wanna start these essays, let me read some, let me see what other people are writing." You might be led astray by book-length works or works published as books as a collection of essays that end up being more non-fiction short stories. So this is because the short story as a name, as a term has been rather appropriated by fiction writers as something that they do that we non-fiction writers do not. So occasionally you'll see things that are called a book of essays, but they're actually a book of short stories, but they are short stories that are all true.

So another question that we had, "Are essays good for newspapers?" I would say that newspapers are one of the places that you'll commonly see essays, but it's not necessarily the only thing that you should be pitching to a newspaper. And we're gonna talk a little bit, like I said, at the end about markets, but one of things that I just wanna add on that note, and thanks for this question Carrie, is that a lot of places for you guys to write essays, especially to get your first few essays out there, are going to be your local, not necessarily papers, so not necessarily like the Chicago Tribune affiliate or The Sun affiliate or The Times affiliate that's the main newspaper in your market, but the alternative weeklies that are printed on newsprint that are available for free in your city. That's gonna be a really great source of opportunities for essays.

And, likewise, I actually just serendipitously had a coaching call with somebody yesterday or the day before who has a very cushy gig of writing essays every issue just about, you know, what's on her mind or the change of the seasons for a regional magazine. So regional magazines, special-interest magazines, even trade magazines also can be a good place for that.

So somebody has asked, and I'll mention this because it goes back to the last slide, "So creative non-fiction, is that an essay form?" So creative non-fiction is, sort of, similar to narrative non-fiction, I would say it can be an essay, but it's typically not. Creative non-fiction is usually a term that's used more for those things that are, like I was saying, short



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stories that happen to be true. So they're more for narrative short stories is what the realm of creative non-fiction encases, let's just say.

So I pulled this quote out and this comes from a New York Times piece which is actually reviewing a book by one of the really major essayists of our time. And I love this quote because it, just in that first sentence of this New York Times piece, they really encapsulate a lot of the issue with essays. And for those of you who are working on improving your writing and especially working on improving your pitching and getting your point across quickly, this is also really important. This sentence, like I said, began this New York Times article, but it is inherently very factual, very foundation-setting. It's not flowery, okay?

And this is the way not just a lot of writing is going, but especially in essays. Essays are not meant to be places for you to take descriptive diatribes where you talk about what exists in a place through a lens of the senses. It's more meant to be through the mind. And I'll show this on another slide, but very poignantly, one of the main works today on essays and on essay writing and how to physically do it is called "To Show and to Tell," as opposed to "Show, Don't Tell," which is something you hear me mention a lot. Even though it's quite a trite phrase, it is still true and very useful.

So here in the beginning of "The New York Times" piece that I mentioned, they say, "The personal essay has always been a stepchild of serious literature, seemingly formless, hard to classify, lacking the tight construction of a short story or the narrative arc of a novel or memoir." Important, memoir here they're using as a stand-in for something that is not a novel, but is a first-person narrative which happens to be true. Okay, so this is narrative non-fiction that they're talking about here.

"So lacking the lacking the tight construction of a short story or the narrative arc of a novel or memoir, such essays have given readers pleasure without winning cultural respect." So, like I said, I love this because it encapsulates really what we need to know about essays. They have been around for a long time, they are a very legitimate and institutionalized way of writing. However, they aren't given as much play, so to say, even though people really like them. And this, in part, is why blogging has so much with to do with essays and why if you have had a really good run with your blog and people really like it, that you are well-positioned to move into the world of essays, okay.

Because an essay on your blog, or rather a blog post, does satisfy many of these things that we're talking about, right. It's like the stepchild of serious writing, it can seem formless and hard to classify, right, we just call it a blog post, we don't call it... sometimes we call it a round-up, but otherwise what is it if it's not a round-up or a narrative and it's on your blog,



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right? And it lacks this tight construction in terms of how a short story or a longer piece of the narrative arc would follow those tropes, those pathways that we talked about last week, like that 17-step incredibly detailed hero's journey. But readers really like them without the greater, sort of, editorial, you know, ivory tower understanding why or really giving them credit for that.

So somebody has a question on the side about explaining what third person and first person is, and if that's something you're not clear on I really recommend reading about it more in-depth. But just a short answer is first person is when you're writing as "I" and third person is when you are writing as omniscient or as, you know, everybody has a name and there's no "I" character. Second person is when you are writing with the dominant person as "you," but I really recommend reading more about that because that's kind of outside to the scope of what we're talking about now.

So let's look at a couple of different ways that essays are not certain things because I know this is something, as several of you have put in your questions, it's a little hard to grasp onto. So an essay, as opposed to what I'm always telling you about your other writing, that you need to make sure for instance, that when you put in together a pitch, when you're working on a piece that there is a point, that there is something that you are convincing your reader of, and that every single detail in your pitch, in your eventual piece is in service of convincing the reader of that thing.

Essays are quite the opposite, really. So essays are not only the lack of a point that you're trying to convince people of and an assemblage of unrelated things. But they go even further...and we're gonna talk about this in a second. They go even further in that they shouldn't have a point. It's not even that they don't have one, it's that they shouldn't. It's that you should not lead the reader to a specific conclusion, but rather present information to them that offers them the opportunity to themselves think in the same way that you have been thinking on the page and come to their own personal conclusion, not one that you've lead them to by offering examples, but their own personal opinion on the situation. So this is why it's really important, like I was talking about, that your opinion is not prevalent, aggressive, dominating, and dictating the flow of your essay. Because the point of the essay is for the reader to come to their own.

So we've talked about how it's different than opinion pieces, but let's talk about it's different than narrative. So narrative, as we looked at last week, and that was why I looked at the narrative last week before we talked about this essay market this week, even though you might think of the features as, sort of, higher on the rung of articles, is that you need to understand the idea, the tenets of narrative, how narratives work, why they work before you break that, right. It's like learning the rules of cooking or construction...my friends like to



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say that they have no idea why I'm constructing the things the way that I do, but they work, before you break them.

So the whole idea of writing an essay that isn't driven by narrative means that you need to keep the reader interested throughout with each of the things that you are saying, but that you aren't following that strict narrative path that we looked at last week where you set the scene, you present an obstacle, you try to overcome that obstacle, you encounter another obstacle, and another obstacle, and then things get really terrible, and then there's the triumphant success. And then the story resolves, and the hero or the protagonist or the main subject of the piece is in a different better place at the end than they were at the beginning, right? That's the very short form for those of you who weren't with us last week of what a narrative arc entails.

So in that, like an opinion piece where, by the end, I want you to also believe something that I have set to prove to you, a narrative arc sets out that the conditions at the beginning of the piece by the end have changed in a positive way most likely, but there has been some transformation. However, in an essay you might be presenting scenes or anecdotes. You might only be presenting your thoughts, you might only be presenting statistics or other types of analytical evidence...we'll get to that in a little bit. But the idea, like I said, is that you do not arrive somewhere. So it's as if you are taking the reader on the journey with you, but then you stop before you get to the end. That's, kind of, one way of thinking about it.

Okay, so let's look at journalism. So how is an essay different than journalism? I had, on a coaching call this week, somebody tell me not that it stresses her out per se, but she just doesn't love when she's writing pieces that are about other people or telling other people stories and she has to make sure that she has completely fact-checked everything, that she's got all these details, that they are absolutely right, and that she is faithfully representing the people that she's discussed.

In essays, you don't have to worry about that faithful representation. Now I'm not telling you, again, that this is the place to be aggressive about your opinions and so on, but that this is place where the important thing is what you think, the important thing is your observations or your take on this topic. And that is actually, kind of, the key to unlocking how you can write an essay about anything because you have your own personal opinion on every single thing that you come across, you know, in the world.

Like, for instance, right now, I'm in the San Francisco Airport so in California where they're eco-conscious. And here we have not just a trash and recycling, but they also have a compost here in the airport. And I just got into a very unusual spat with my typically very tranquil best



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friend over throwing something in the trash can that she said should be recycling, and it was a type of plastic that we can't even recycle in my building in New York. And that the point of me, sort of, treading together all of these disparate things....right, I'm in San Francisco, then I'm in Boston with my friend last week, then I'm thinking back to my building in New York, is that this is how essays work. They take these disparate moments that are around a theme and they are viewed through the lens of your experience with them.

And this is why, like I was saying, essays can be hard to really put your finger on because they are all about your opinion and your experience. They are inherently different to every writer. The essays that come from every writer are different in how they come out because different writers remember things differently, or their memories, not just that they remember an experience differently, but the way that they jump from one memory to another, the way that they make associations are inherently different. And that's why essays are such a personal form of writing. So unlike journalism where your job is to faithfully represent the facts, the "objective reality" of the world, in an essay you are endeavoring to present your personal take on things.

So then how is that different than a diary, right? Somebody who is or was predominantly a fiction writer and has now moved into, let's call it the creative non-fiction memoir, narrative non-fiction world, her first book of that take was called "A Diary." And she was talking at a conference about how she came up with that title. And it was, in part, because in a book-length form, narrative non-fiction is somewhat new, but also because it was essentially one long essay that she was writing, and she didn't really know the name for a book-length essay was. But here's the thing, is that a diary inherently has, yes, your take on different things, your thoughts. But what diaries also have much more than essays and even much more than this person's book who I just referred to is a play-by-play of what happened.

So I have a good friend who, when we lived in Italy, would journal every night and then she would read her book for a while. And so, I knew that if we were sharing a room together somewhere, you know, going to bed meant about 45 minutes from when she was actually gonna be able to turn the light out. And that's because she would sit there and write down in her diary what had happened that day. And then I noticed when weren't living in Italy anymore and I was staying with her one time that she didn't journal. And I asked her, I said, "Why aren't you writing in your journal or your diary?" And she said, "Because interesting things aren't happening now."

So this is what I mean by a diary much more than an essay is about the play-by-play. It's about the recording of events that have taken place. But that's not something that we're looking to do in an essay. Can you just hold on one moment, guys? Okay great, got it, okay. So what you're doing in a diary is much more about recording the facts as they have





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happened than sharing your opinions. Sharing your opinions is something that happens in your diary, but it's not the gist of it. Whereas what the essay should be, as opposed to a diary, is it should be all the opinions and observations, and just that modicum, just the tiniest bit of...you could call it narration, but I just like to think of it as events, of relaying of events, the smallest bit of relaying of events possible and the most your observation and your connections.

So as we've talked about what essays aren't, what this is really boiling down to is that the essay is about your observations and the connections that you draw between those things and things that have happened in the past or other things that you know about. So I took a workshop on the personal essay with this lovely, lovely gentleman who is the editor of "The Traveler's Tales" books which put out a book of, you know, non-fiction short stories, let's call it, having to do with travel every year. They do the best women's travel writing and some other collections. He also publishes book-length works. And he has been a newspaper writer for a long time. He's written features. He's done lots and lots of different writing, but now he specifically teaches personal essays.

And I remember the first day in his workshop, I was just flabbergasted because he basically got up there and wrote out loud for us a personal essay that came from him sitting on the highway on the way to the workshop venue that morning. And he talked about how he was there and this reminded him of this other thing and then he jumped back in time with this thing that had happened with his son, and that reminded him of this other thing that happened with his son, and so on and so forth until he came back at the end to that initial moment of sitting in the car after this journey. But the journey didn't necessarily go somewhere, right? It came back to him sitting in the car, and it wasn't that he wasn't a different person.

And we're gonna get into now, we're gonna start talking about ways of constructing essays, but I just wanted to share that as we're talking about what essays aren't. Because, like I said, essays are gonna be slightly different for each of you, but what that means is that part of them is the freedom. So narrative has arcs, journalism has roles. Diaries are also free but that also means that they are free from the need to keep readers interested, which is not the case when you are writing essays for the greater market.

So I mentioned these names before but I just want to give these to you so that you have to look up later. And I'm gonna drop here in the chat box...this is the actual link to that New York Times page that I was talking about, which is "The New York Times" page where they really give you a lot of tools, and they give you particular essays to look at. And this page from "The New York Times" was put together in response to essays that are pitched to "The New York Times." So this is really great because it's from editors who know why they reject things and have put together a list of tips to help you to not get rejected in the same way.



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These two at the top, “The Art of the Personal Essay” and “To Show and to Tell,” these books are by that gentleman that I mentioned who is really, kind of, one of the leading figures of personal essays today. And “To Show and to Tell,” even though “The Art of the Personal Essay” sounds like it should be the title which is telling you how to do it, “To Show and to Tell” is much more of that how-to manual about how to go about doing it. And this gentleman, I’ve seen him speak, he’s really lovely, but quite academic. So if academic style of information dispensation is your style, check out these items by Phillip. If you like something that’s a little more web-based and quick, check out “The New York Times.” They’ve got a very round-up style list of their favorite tips on writing essays, and a lot, a lot, a lot of links for you to read as well. Both of Phillip’s books also have many essay examples for you to look at as well.

And another great resource is the salon.com essay section. And I’ve seen the woman who used to be the essay editor at “Salon” speak several times, and she’s just lovely and a really great...her name is Kim. And a really great essay of hers to look up to see what essays are like today, even though it’s not within the realm of travel, is her essay on when she left her child in her car. And I mentioned this, and there’s another place I’m gonna type here in the chat box called “Granta”. “Granta” is a literary magazine, but they have many articles available online. But it’s non-fiction and it has a lot of these essays similar to the one of Kim’s on “Salon” that I had mentioned.

So let’s get into actual ways to put these “formless” essays together, all right? I’ve got five for you that I wanna look at in particular. And, like I mentioned, don’t forget that “The New York Times” also offers a lot of exercises and starting points for writing essays as well. So that link that I put there in the chat box is definitely worth checking out. So here are five approaches.

The first one, I’ve already mentioned to you, this time dilation to give weight to the present. This is what Larry did in his car on the highway that day before he presented the verbal version of his essay to us. So I remember after leaving his workshop that I was home in New York and I was crossing the street between about the Guggenheim and Central Park, which is across the street from the Guggenheim, and I was just waiting at the stoplight. And sitting there at the stoplight, I couldn’t tell what it is now because I wrote this essay years ago, but this entire essay just came to me from sitting at the stoplight.

So this time dilation thing is really a useful technique that you can be sitting somewhere looking at something and that reminds you of something which reminds of something which reminds you of something. And then from that you get not, like I said, a conclusion. But from that you get this thought piece, this essay. So somebody said they’re not seeing the link. It



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should be right here in the chat box. I just put it two chats back. It's the [mobile.nytimes.com](https://mobile.nytimes.com) link.

So the second way that I wanna invite you to look at personal essays is this one that I mentioned with Kim and her piece about leaving her child in the car and getting arrested. And this is something that "Granta," which I mentioned also in the chat box, particularly specializes in. These are essays where you take an anecdote, you take something that happened, and then you examine through the lens of larger societal complications.

So for instance, in this piece about leaving her child in the car, Kim uses it to talk about parenting has changed from when she was young and you could just go run around in the neighborhood and your parents had no idea where you were...you might have gotten kidnapped, you might have gotten hit by a car, or you might have run down the street, and the concept of the good Samaritan. And the person who called the police when she was in the store for exactly a minute and a half and took a picture of her child sitting in the car without her there, what is that role? What does it say about that person or about society, that somebody did that? And this is where, like I said, it's very important to avoid opinions and even to avoid presenting the details in your essay in a way that makes the reader be pushed towards one opinion or another.

Now a, sort of, complication or an extension of the larger societal complications of a single incident is something called an object lesson, which is the larger implications of a single object. So again, I'm gonna take a non-travel example here. So there's actually a series of small books called "Object Lessons." And I saw this delightful panel in Reykjavik over the summer of some people who have written object lesson books. There's entire books just about socks, about trash.

Those of you who are foodies are probably familiar with Michael Pollan. One of my favorite books of his is called "The Botany of Desire." And he takes four foods and essentially gives you four quite long essays about these foods, about their place in history, about what they mean to people. A newer book of his called "Cooked" does the same thing with four different cooking methods. These object lessons essentially take something as a point of departure and then dig and dig and dig both through the lens of your own observations and your own experiences beside them, as well as how other people experience them. But always digging, going below the surface and never settling on a specific conclusion.

Now another thing that's sort of related to these object lessons is this concept of vignettes. So these are the essays that are most commonly miscategorized as non-fiction short stories. So this is when...and these are some quotes that I pulled a New York Times piece about Phillip's



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work. But these are ones where the essays themselves are almost like snapshots. And this is a word that you've probably heard me use before to talk about different types of articles that you can be writing.

So these snapshots are just tiny scenes that are designed to give you a glimpse of something. However, they should be giving you a glimpse not just in a purely descriptive way. They should give you a glimpse in a way that makes you wonder. And I've mentioned this in the past, but a really great example of this is in Don George's book "The Way of Wanderlust," which is a collection of his own past published pieces. And he has one that takes place in art museum on the French Riviera that I absolutely recommend reading if you wanna get into this snapshots style of writing essays.

Now the last one is the question. So rather than taking a specific object as a point of departure or a moment or the larger implications of that moment, as opposed to the historical lead-up to that moment, you can take a question. So in this case, I've pulled out this quote which really shows the types of questions that are useful for a departure point for an essay. So, in this case, it says, "The ultimate question may not be, 'What is the correct critical judgment to make a particular film?' but, 'What are our different needs and understanding at various stages in life?'"

And so what this means is that if you're gonna write an essay which starts from a question as a point of departure, that question needs to be open-ended. The same as when we talked about doing interviews, that you wanna give people questions that are not yes or no questions, as an essayist, you need to give yourself open-ended questions if you are going to use a question as a point of departure for an essay.

So someone's asked me to repeat. So "The Way of Wanderlust" by Don George is the book that contains the story about the art museum, which I was saying is a great example of this vignette style.

So just one more point on this question process. So question essays can be things, like, you know, "Why do different airlines board differently?" And you could talk about some different airlines that you've taken and some hilarious incidents or harrowing incidents that happened during the boarding process, and how different airlines give different reasons that they board in different ways. And, you know end... and I'm gonna talk, again, about endings and how to do them in this soft-landing way. And end with saying something akin to that, you know, each airline gives its own psychological rationale for the boarding process, but humans inherently defy logical categorization, or something like that where you're showing that there



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is no definitive answer to the boarding process, to how to board correctly, or even why different airlines do it differently.

So I said we're gonna talk about landing. So just a, sort of, funny clip on this...I don't have the link readily available to drop in the chat box. But if you look up the anniversary of Shakespeare, there was a major Shakespearean anniversary recently, and there was a delightful collection of really, really top British actors and even Prince Charles who did a very funny skit about the "Hamlet" phrase "To be or not to be, that is the question."

And this skit was all about which word you should land on, which word you should emphasize, and how that emphasis means different things and what is correct. So it's a really delightful little YouTube video, and I invite you all to watch it because it really talks a lot about this concept of landing and makes you understand how what you emphasize in your piece, even at the smallest level, can have a really big impact on how that piece is perceived.

And so, one of the big actors talk about how it's very important to land. But in essays, it's quite the opposite, as I mentioned a few times. But in essays, the key is not to land. So it's not to land or it's not where to land or where not to land, it's not to land, period. So what that means, and this is the delicacy of writing essays, is that if your essay goes along with this wonderful exploration, your own observations like a pastiche of different scenes, but then you come to a conclusion at the end, it's gonna feel flat. That essay is not going to have accomplished its form as an essay because you've, by making a conclusion at the end, turned it more into a different type of piece.

So if you write an essay and you read it, or if you write an essay and you send it out and you're not getting good feedback, check your ending because you may have tried to give it a trite little wrap-up rather than just letting it sit there. And this is really key both with the ending and with the whole piece itself. And this is actually something that I've stolen...oh, there's an extra "it" in there. But this is something that I've stolen from Kim who is the former "Salon" essay editor that I've mentioned, which is that "If the piece doesn't make you uncomfortable, it's not honest." You know, "writers" in air quotes are really big about honesty in your writing. But this is one of the best ways to know, is that if you are not uncomfortable, then you are not, then your essay is lacking some details.

So I talked about five different points of departure. If you've got an idea already, now what do you do with it? Where are some places that you can publish that as an essay? So first and foremost, somebody had asked something early on, "If my submission is considerably less words that suggested in the guideline, should I send it anyway?" And this is a great point that I wanna make sure to clarify, is that essays are the only time that you absolutely have to write



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the piece before you send it in, before the editor can possibly consider it. Because like I said the ending and just the observations that you make along the way are what makes the essay. So the editor needs to see all of it there on the page to decide if they like or not.

So this is not question of treating you as a professional or not. All essayists must write the complete essay before they turn it in. So if a particular essay section has asked for essays of a certain word length, I would recommend writing the editor before you send the piece and saying, “You know, I have a finished essay of this length for your section. I know this section is typically this many words, would you accept a submission that’s less than that?” And they’ll let you know, and that way you have the opportunity to change the essay before you send it in.

Now Carrie had asked earlier about newspapers, “Are newspapers good place for essays?” They can be, and we talked about that quite a bit, so I’m gonna leave that one be for now. The women’s magazines, this the big place, guys. A lot of the women’s magazines have annual contests for essays. “Real Simple” has one quite famously. But all of the women’s magazines accept essays. They all do. They are very well-paid clips and they can be a really great way to get into a magazine that has a lot of cachet that you wouldn’t get into otherwise. And even more importantly, these essays that you have about travel, their home is most likely not in a travel magazine. It is in a magazine that publishes essays, and that is something like the women’s magazines, okay?

Another one is columns. So I gave you an example already of somebody that I coach who does have a delightful column that she does, but these are the types of things that come up once you have written for an editor for a certain amount of time, okay? So you can’t just go to an editor that you don’t work with and pitch her a column of your essays. The only caveat there is if you already are a column essayist and you have a back catalog of essays that you have had published in other places and a record. But otherwise, you’ll need to work with an editor for a while before you pitch them for you to do a column for them.

Another really big gold mine of essay sections is back-of-the-book. So this is the articles that come after the feature. These are really often overlooked, but I’m seeing a lot of essays these days come up in that portion of the magazine, and especially with airline magazines as well. So as you’re looking at magazines, especially when you’re on a flight, make sure to flip to the back because that’s where a lot of these essays live right now.

And then the main place, in fact the easiest place to get these essays published is in independent magazines. We talked about these quite in-depth during the workshop over the weekend for those of you considering whether or not to get the replay. We talked quite in-



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depth about how to pitch and what they are looking for and how to know if they pay. But the thing about the independent magazines is that they tend to be...I usually call it “all feature,” but they’re just really open. They don’t have any rubriced formats about what they publish and they to publish a mix of narrative features, essays, and photo essays, okay?

So thank you so much for joining us. We’ve got one question, “What is a photo essay?” A photo essay is completely different than what we talked about today. It’s not an essay in structure at all, like what we’ve talked about. It’s a series of photos with short captions that tell a story.

And that actually might be a topic for a future webinar. So thanks for asking that question. I’ll look into doing a webinar on photo essays in the new year.

So thank you guys so much for joining me for this a-little-bit-short-today webinar, but hopefully you were able to hear me okay and not too many airline announcements in the background, and I’m really glad that we were able to get this to work out.

So thank you guys so much and have a really, really lovely weekend. Bye-bye.