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A Non-Fiction Series



THE 2023 WRITE AWAY STUDENT WORKBOOK
PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY

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Introduction

At the Bocas Lit Fest, a part of our mission is to foster a love for reading and writing among students.

We understand that finding the right books to read and learning to write well in preparation for the world of work after graduating can be challenging. This is why we are excited to introduce you to these lessons about narrative, descriptive, persuasive, expository, and creative nonfiction.

Our hope is that after engaging with our content and trying these practice exercises, you will get excited about nonfiction writing and have fun trying the activities in the workbook we have provided for you.

We want to help prepare you entering your chosen professions with this package and hope that you will fully engage with the activities provided.

We hope you'll enjoy our lessons, have fun reading and writing, and that they help you enter the professional work place.

Happy writing, happy reading, and happy rewriting!



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Section 1: Narrative Non-Fiction



Three Narrative Nonfiction Techniques to remember!

- 1 Dialogue:** Including dialogue can help bring characters and events to life and create a more immersive experience for the reader. It can also reveal character traits, motivations, and conflicts.
- 2 Description:** Vivid description of people, places, and events can help transport the reader to the scene and make them feel as if they are experiencing it firsthand. This can involve sensory details such as sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste.
- 3 Plotting:** A well-plotted narrative can help keep the reader engaged and interested. This can involve pacing the story, building tension and conflict, and including plot twists and surprises. A strong plot can also help convey the narrative's underlying message or theme.

Questions to try!

1. What is narrative nonfiction?
2. Who is CLR James and why is he significant?
3. What was CLR James' first published novel and what was significant about it?
4. What is "Beyond a Boundary"?
5. What is one of the jobs of a narrative?

Individual/Group Activities:

1. Research and write a short memoir about an interesting event in your life.

(25 minutes)

2. Write a narrative nonfiction piece about a current social issue using the structure and strategies discussed in the episode

(25 minutes)



See answers on next page →

Section 1: Answers



Q: What is narrative nonfiction?

A: Narrative nonfiction is a type of writing that presents factual information in a story style, complete with the use of chapters that you're accustomed to seeing in novels.

Q: Who is CLR James and why is he significant ?

A: CLR James was a writer, political activist, and deep thinker ahead of his time, whose pioneering work helped to change the way West Indians thought about colonialism. He was also an autodidact who taught himself anything he was interested in learning.

Q: What was CLR James' first published novel and what was significant about it?

A: CLR James' first novel was "Minty Alley," which was the first by a Black West Indian to be published in Britain.

Q: What is "Beyond a Boundary"?

A: "Beyond a Boundary" is a book written by CLR James that is widely thought to be the best book ever written about cricket, and possibly even about sport.

Q: What is one of the jobs of a narrative?

A: One of the jobs of a narrative is to connect ideas, hypotheses, or events.



Example answer for Activity 1:

One of the most memorable events in my life happened when I was in high school. I was a member of the debate team and we had a big competition coming up. I had been preparing for weeks, researching and practicing my arguments. The day of the competition arrived and I was nervous but excited. When I got up to speak, I felt confident and in control. But then, in the middle of my speech, I completely blanked. I couldn't remember what I was supposed to say next. I stood there in silence, feeling like a failure. But then something strange happened. I started to laugh awkwardly, then convincingly. I laughed at myself for taking it all so seriously, for putting so much pressure on myself. And as I laughed, I found my words again. I finished my speech with a smile on my face and a sense of relief in my heart. That moment taught me the importance of not taking myself too seriously and the power of laughter to help us through tough times.



Example answer for Activity 2:

The issue of climate change has been on the forefront of the world's collective consciousness for years now. The scientific community has been warning us of the dangers of a rapidly warming planet, but it seems like many people are still not taking the issue seriously. The consequences of inaction are dire, and we are already seeing the effects of climate change in the form of extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and the loss of biodiversity. As a society, we need to take action to reduce our carbon emissions and transition to renewable energy sources. We also need to address the systemic issues that have led to this crisis, such as the influence of big oil companies on politics and the lack of political will to make significant changes. It's time for us to come together and take responsibility for the planet we live on before it's too late.

Section 2: Descriptive Non-Fiction



What is the difference between Narrative and Descriptive nonfiction?

Narrative nonfiction tells a true story, often in a dramatic and compelling way, with a focus on the characters, setting, and plot. It is similar to fiction in that it uses narrative elements to engage readers and create a sense of tension and emotion.

Descriptive nonfiction, on the other hand, focuses on describing a particular subject or event in detail. It is more informative than narrative nonfiction and often presents facts, statistics, and other data to support the description. The aim of descriptive nonfiction is to inform and educate the reader, rather than to entertain or engage them with a story.

Questions to try!

1. What is the importance of descriptive nonfiction writing?
2. What are some examples of descriptive nonfiction writing?
3. How does figurative language make ordinary details pop in descriptive nonfiction writing?

Individual/Group Activities:

Write a descriptive nonfiction piece about a recent event in your life, and share it with the class or with a group of friends.

(25 minutes)

See answers on next page →

Section 2: Answers



Q: What is the importance of descriptive nonfiction writing?

A: Descriptive nonfiction writing allows readers to gain a deeper understanding of a topic or experience through vivid and detailed descriptions. It helps to paint a picture in the reader's mind and can evoke emotions, making the writing more engaging and memorable.

Q: What are some examples of descriptive nonfiction writing?

A: Some examples of descriptive nonfiction writing include travel writing, nature writing, memoirs, and biographies. These types of writing often use sensory language to transport the reader to a specific place or time.

Q: How does figurative language make ordinary details pop in descriptive nonfiction writing?

A: Figurative language, such as metaphors and similes, can make ordinary details more interesting and memorable by comparing them to something else. For example, describing a sunset as "a golden blanket wrapping the sky" creates a more vivid and memorable image than simply stating "the sun set."

Q: What is spoken word poetry?

A: Spoken word poetry is a type of poetry that is meant to be performed out loud, rather than read silently. It often focuses on social and political issues and uses rhythm, rhyme, and repetition to create a powerful and emotional effect.

Q: What makes spoken word poetry different from other forms of poetry?

A: Spoken word poetry is different from other forms of poetry because it is meant to be performed out loud and often incorporates elements of theater and performance. It is also more focused on the spoken word and the rhythm of the words than on traditional poetic forms like rhyme and meter.

Q: What role do hand gestures, gesticulation, and facial expressions play in spoken word poetry?

A: Hand gestures, gesticulation, and facial expressions can add emphasis and emotion to the spoken word in spoken word poetry. They can also help to convey the meaning of the words and create a more powerful and engaging performance.



Example answer for Activity 1: Descriptive nonfiction piece

Last weekend, I went hiking with my family at a nearby national park. We arrived early in the morning, just as the sun was starting to rise, and the air was cool and crisp. As we started up the trail, the tall trees provided a welcome shade from the sun, and the sound of the nearby river added to the peaceful ambiance. The trail itself was rocky and uneven, which made for a challenging but rewarding climb. As we got higher, the view became more and more breathtaking, with the mountains in the distance and the bright green foliage all around us. We stopped to take in the scenery several times, and I couldn't help but feel grateful for the opportunity to spend time with my loved ones in such a beautiful place.



Example answer for Activity 2: Spoken word poetry piece

Verse 1:

We stand together, side by side,
In unity, we won't be denied.
Our voices loud, our spirits strong,
We're fighting for what we know is right, all along.

Chorus 1:

We won't be silenced, we won't back down,
We'll rise above, and stand our ground.
Together we'll fight, for justice and peace,
And one day, our struggles will finally cease.

Verse 2:

We've been ignored for far too long,
But we refuse to be silenced, we'll sing our song.
We'll march and protest, day after day,
Until our voices are heard, and things start to change.

Chorus 2:

We won't be silenced, we won't back down,
We'll rise above, and stand our ground.
Together we'll fight, for justice and peace,
And one day, our struggles will finally cease.

Verse 3:

Our fight is far from over, but we won't give up,
We'll keep on pushing, until we reach the top.
Our future is bright, and our hope is strong,
Together we'll create a world where we all belong.

Chorus 3:

We won't be silenced, we won't back down,
We'll rise above, and stand our ground.
Together we'll fight, for justice and peace,
And one day, our struggles will finally cease

Section 3: Persuasive Non-Fiction



7 Techniques to Writing an effective Persuasive Essay:

1. Strong thesis statement: A clear and concise thesis statement that conveys your main argument is essential for persuasive writing.
2. Emotional appeal: Using emotional language and personal anecdotes can help engage the reader and create a sense of empathy.
3. Evidence: Supporting your argument with facts, statistics, and examples can add credibility to your writing and make it more persuasive.
4. Logical reasoning: Presenting a well-reasoned argument that follows a logical progression can help convince the reader of your point of view.
5. Rhetorical questions: Asking rhetorical questions can encourage the reader to think about your argument and its implications, which can make them more likely to agree with you.
6. Counter Arguments: Addressing and refuting counter arguments can demonstrate your knowledge of the topic and strengthen your argument.
7. Call to action: Ending your essay with a call to action can motivate the reader to take action or consider your argument more seriously.

Questions to try!

1. Why does the host think persuasive nonfiction is an important skill to have?
2. How can persuasive nonfiction writing be useful for entrepreneurs?
3. What are some examples of persuasive nonfiction writing that the host mentions?
4. What is the difference between persuading someone with facts and trying to fool them?
5. How did Dr. Eric Williams' speeches help pave the way for Trinidad and Tobago's independence?



Individual/Group Activities:

Write a persuasive speech about a topic you care about and present it to your friends or family.

(25 minutes)

Have a debate club where members can practice persuasive nonfiction writing and speaking skills

(25 minutes)

See answers on next page →

Section 3: Answers



Q: Why does the host think persuasive nonfiction is an important skill to have?

A: The host thinks that persuasive nonfiction is an important skill to have because it allows individuals to effectively communicate their ideas, opinions, and arguments in a way that can influence and persuade others. This skill is particularly useful in various professional and personal contexts, including business, politics, and activism.

Q: How can persuasive nonfiction writing be useful for entrepreneurs?

A: Persuasive nonfiction writing can be useful for entrepreneurs because it can help them convince potential investors, customers, and stakeholders of the value and potential of their business. By crafting a well-written and persuasive argument, entrepreneurs can gain support, secure funding, and ultimately achieve success.

Q: What are some examples of persuasive nonfiction writing that the host mentions?

A: Some examples of persuasive nonfiction writing that the host mentions include political speeches, opinion articles, and marketing materials such as advertisements and product descriptions.

Q: What is the difference between persuading someone with facts and trying to fool them?

A: The difference between persuading someone with facts and trying to fool them is that the former relies on presenting accurate and truthful information to support a particular point of view, while the latter involves using deceptive or false information to manipulate someone's beliefs or actions.

Q: How did Dr. Eric Williams' speeches help pave the way for Trinidad and Tobago's independence?

A: Dr. Eric Williams' speeches helped pave the way for Trinidad and Tobago's independence by promoting a sense of nationalism and inspiring a movement towards self-rule. His speeches also addressed issues such as social and economic inequality, which were important concerns for the country's citizens.



Example answer for Activity 1: Short persuasive speech

Topic: Why we should prioritize reducing plastic waste in our community

"Good evening everyone, I want to talk to you about something that's been weighing heavily on my mind lately: plastic waste. Every day, we see it on the streets, in our parks, and even in our waterways. It's harming our environment and our health. But there's something we can do about it. By taking simple actions like bringing reusable bags and water bottles, we can reduce the amount of plastic waste in our community. It's not just good for the environment, it's good for us too. Let's make a commitment to reduce our plastic waste and create a healthier community for all of us."



Example answer for Activity 2: Debate club

Welcome to our debate club, where we can practice our persuasive nonfiction writing and speaking skills. Today's topic is whether schools should require students to wear uniforms. I will be arguing in favor of school uniforms. Uniforms promote a sense of community and belonging among students. They also remove distractions from fashion and create a more professional atmosphere for learning. Additionally, uniforms can reduce bullying and peer pressure based on clothing choices. I look forward to hearing the opposing argument and engaging in a lively debate.

Section 4: Expository Non-Fiction



Tips for Expository Writing:

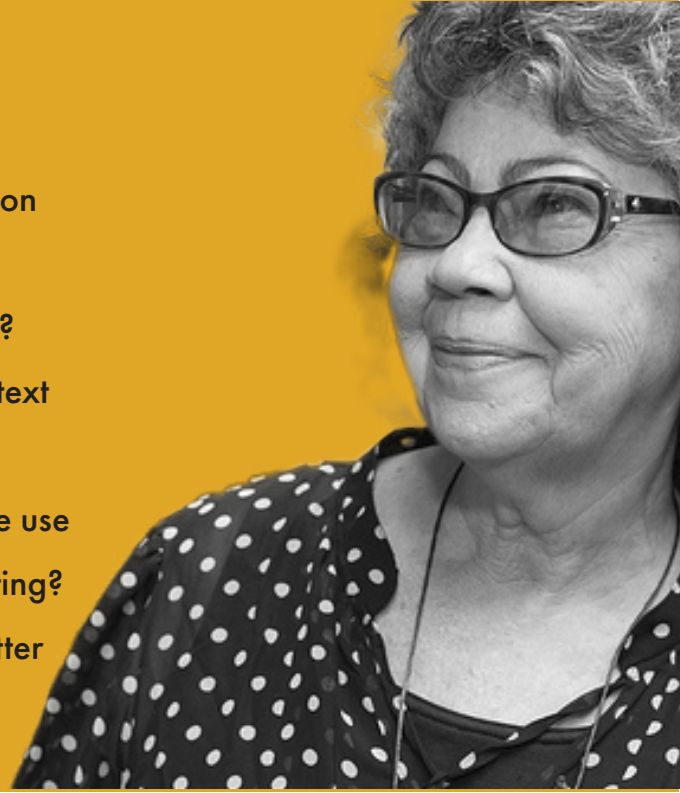
- Read and analyze the prompt carefully: Make sure you understand what the prompt is asking you to write about before you start writing. Read it carefully and underline or highlight key words and phrases that will guide your writing.
- Plan your essay: Before you start writing, take a few minutes to plan out your essay. Create an outline that includes an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. This will help you organize your thoughts and ensure that you stay on track.
- Use a clear and concise writing style: Expository writing should be clear and concise. Avoid using overly complicated language or trying to sound too academic. Instead, focus on communicating your ideas in a straightforward and easy-to-understand way.
- Use evidence and examples: To support your arguments and ideas, use evidence and examples from reliable sources. This will make your essay more persuasive and help to reinforce your points.
- Edit and proofread your work: Before you submit your essay, make sure you take the time to edit and proofread it. Look for spelling and grammar errors, as well as any areas where you could improve the clarity or flow of your writing.

Section 4: Expository Non-Fiction

- Manage your time wisely: The CSEC exam is timed, so make sure you manage your time wisely. Allow yourself enough time to plan, write, and edit your essay, and try to stay focused and on task throughout the exam.
- Expository writing and persuasive writing are two different types of writing that have different purposes and goals.
- Expository writing is meant to explain or inform the reader about a specific topic or subject. It is meant to be objective and present information in a clear and concise way. The main goal of expository writing is to educate the reader about a particular topic, without trying to convince them of any specific point of view.
- Persuasive writing, on the other hand, is meant to convince the reader to take a certain stance on a topic or issue. The goal of persuasive writing is to persuade the reader to believe in a particular point of view or take a specific action. It uses rhetorical devices and techniques to appeal to the reader's emotions and logic to convince them of a particular argument.

Questions to try!

1. What is the purpose of expository nonfiction writing?
2. What are the 5Ws (and 1H) of journalism?
3. How does expository writing provide context around difficult issues?
4. Who is Bridget Brereton and how does she use history and journalism together in her writing?
5. What is Olive Senior's book "Dying to Better Themselves" about?



Individual/Group Activities:

Research a Caribbean historical event and write a short expository nonfiction piece about it.

(25 minutes)

Choose a topic you are interested in and create a list of questions based on the 5Ws (and 1H) to use as a guide for writing an expository nonfiction piece.

(25 minutes)

See answers on next page →

Section 4: Answers



Q: What is the purpose of expository nonfiction writing?

A: The purpose of expository nonfiction writing is to inform or explain a topic, idea or concept to the reader, using facts, evidence, and examples to support the author's argument or thesis.

Q: What are the 5Ws (and 1H) of journalism?

A: The 5Ws (and 1H) of journalism are who, what, where, when, why, and how. They are used to gather information and provide a complete and accurate report of an event or situation.

Q: How does expository writing provide context around difficult issues?

A: Expository writing provides context around difficult issues by presenting information in a clear and concise manner, with the goal of helping readers understand the background, causes, and effects of the issue at hand. This type of writing can also help to dispel myths or misinformation about a particular topic.

Q: Who is Bridget Brereton and how does she use history and journalism together in her writing?

A: Bridget Brereton is a historian and journalist from Trinidad and Tobago. She uses history and journalism together in her writing by drawing on primary sources, oral histories, and other forms of evidence to tell stories that are both informative and engaging. Her work often focuses on the social and cultural history of the Caribbean.

Q: What is Olive Senior's book "Dying to Better Themselves" about?

A: Olive Senior's book "Dying to Better Themselves" is about the experiences of Jamaican migrant workers in Canada during the early 20th century. It explores the economic, social, and political factors that led to their migration, as well as the challenges they faced while living and working in Canada.



Example answer for Activity 1:

The Haitian Revolution was a significant historical event in the Caribbean, and its impact is still felt today. It was a slave rebellion that led to the establishment of the Republic of Haiti in 1804. The revolution began in 1791 and was led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, a former slave who had risen to become the commander of the rebel forces. The revolution was successful due to several factors, including the tactics used by the rebels, the support of other nations, and the weaknesses of the French colonial forces.

Choose a topic you are interested in and create a list of questions based on the 5Ws (and 1H) to use as a guide for writing an expository nonfiction piece:



Example answer for Activity 2:

Topic: Sustainable agriculture

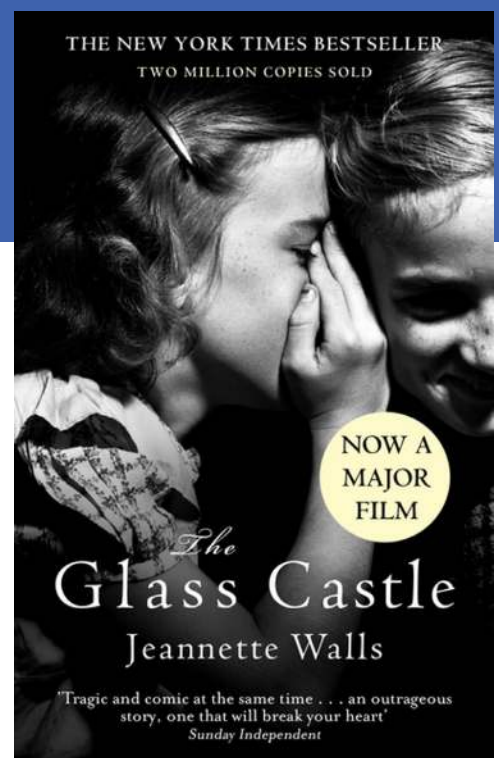
1. Who is involved in sustainable agriculture?
2. What are the benefits of sustainable agriculture?
3. When did sustainable agriculture practices begin?
4. Where is sustainable agriculture practiced?
5. Why is sustainable agriculture important?
6. How can individuals support sustainable agriculture?

Section 5: Creative Non-Fiction



Check it out:

"The Glass Castle" by Jeannette Walls is a memoir that tells the story of her unconventional and poverty-stricken upbringing with her dysfunctional family. While the events and people depicted in the book are real, Walls uses creative storytelling techniques, such as dialogue, vivid descriptions, and internal thoughts and feelings, to bring the story to life in a way that reads like a novel. The book is both informative and emotionally compelling, making it an excellent example of creative nonfiction.



Questions to try!

1. What is the Golden Rule of non-fiction writing?
2. What is creative nonfiction, what are some styles and elements that make creative non-fiction?
3. What are some of the styles of creative nonfiction?
4. What is André Bagoo's book "The Undiscovered Country" about?
5. What is Bagoo's piece "You can see Venezuela from Trinidad" about?



Individual/Group Activities:

1. Write a personal essay on your experience during a recent trip.

(25 mnutes)

2. Create a satirical piece about a current event that you find humorous.

(25 minutes)

See answers on next page →

Section 5: Answers



Q: What is the Golden Rule of non-fiction writing?

A: The Golden Rule of non-fiction writing is to always be truthful and accurate in presenting facts and information.

Q: What is creative nonfiction writing?

A: Creative non-fiction is a type of writing that is creative and imaginative while remaining true to the facts. It involves playing with elements such as structure, point of view, and premise to create something new and original.

Q: What are some styles of creative nonfiction writing?

A: Some styles of creative nonfiction writing include poetry, interviews, literary writing, sports writing, travel pieces, personal essays, and comedy/satire.

Q: What are some of the elements that make creative non-fiction?

A: Some elements that make creative non-fiction include using literary techniques such as plot, character development, and dialogue, as well as including personal experiences and emotions in the storytelling.

Q: What is André Bagoo's book "The Undiscovered Country" about?

A: "The Undiscovered Country" by André Bagoo is a collection of short stories that explore the complexities of Trinidad and Tobago's social and political landscape.

Q: What is Bagoo's piece "You can see Venezuela from Trinidad" about?

A: "You can see Venezuela from Trinidad" is a personal essay by André Bagoo in which he reflects on the political and cultural differences between Trinidad and Venezuela, as well as the shared history and connections between the two countries.



Example answer for Activity 1: My experience during a recent trip:

During my recent trip to the Dominican Republic, I experienced a culture shock that I was not prepared for. I had heard so much about the country's beautiful beaches, friendly people, and vibrant culture, but I never imagined how different it would be from what I was used to. As soon as I stepped out of the airport, I was hit by the heat and humidity, and the constant noise of people and traffic.

As I explored the local markets and tried the traditional cuisine, I realized that there was so much more to this country than just its tourist attractions. I was fascinated by the mix of African, Spanish, and indigenous cultures that had shaped the Dominican identity, and the resilience and optimism of the people despite their many challenges.

Overall, my trip to the Dominican Republic was an eye-opening experience that made me appreciate the diversity and richness of the world we live in.

So, my fellow drivers, let us join hands (or at least honk our horns in unison) and salute our leaders for their tireless efforts to improve our roads. Let us embrace the sand, the coconut shells, the banana leaves - nay, let us embrace the very potholes themselves! For in this chaotic, unpredictable world of Caribbean driving, the only constant is change. And potholes. Lots and lots of potholes.



Example answer for Activity 2: Pothole Pandemonium: A Caribbean Driving Adventure

It's a jungle out there on the roads of our fair island - a pothole jungle, that is! Everywhere you turn, there's another gaping chasm in the pavement, just waiting to swallow up your wheels and send you careening off course. But fear not, fellow drivers, for the government has assured us that they are hard at work on a solution to this crisis. In fact, just last week, the Minister of Infrastructure announced a new plan to address the pothole problem once and for all: they're going to fill them with sand.

Yes, you read that right. Sand. Apparently, the idea is that if we dump enough sand into the potholes, it will somehow magically smooth over the rough spots and create a blissful, bump-free driving experience. Of course, there are a few minor details to work out - like where to get all the sand, and how to keep it from washing away in the next rainstorm - but hey, let's not get bogged down in the details. Sand in the potholes - what could go wrong?

As I bravely navigate my way through this obstacle course of a road, dodging potholes left and right, I can't help but wonder: what other ingenious solutions does our government have up its sleeve? Perhaps they'll start using coconut shells to patch up the bridges, or banana leaves to pave the sidewalks. Who knows, maybe they'll even try to train the stray dogs to act as traffic cops. After all, anything is possible in this land of endless ingenuity and resourcefulness.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. Narrative non-fiction is a type of writing that tells a story, while descriptive non-fiction uses vivid language to describe a person, place, or thing.
2. Persuasive non-fiction aims to convince the reader to take a particular action or adopt a particular viewpoint, while expository non-fiction is meant to inform and explain a topic.
3. To write an effective narrative, use sensory details to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind and incorporate dialogue to bring the characters to life.
4. To write an effective descriptive essay, use sensory details and descriptive language to paint a picture of a person, place, or thing for the reader.
5. To write an effective persuasive essay, use evidence and logical arguments to convince the reader to take a particular action or adopt a particular viewpoint.
6. To write an effective expository essay, choose a clear and concise topic, organize your thoughts logically, and use facts, examples, and evidence to support your claims.
7. Creative non-fiction combines elements of narrative, descriptive, and persuasive writing to tell a true story in a compelling and engaging way.
8. To write effective creative non-fiction, use literary techniques such as plot, character development, and dialogue to tell a true story in a way that captures the reader's attention.
9. When writing any type of nonfiction, it's important to know your audience, use appropriate language, and revise and edit your work thoroughly.
10. Finally, practice is essential for improving your writing skills in all forms of non-fiction, so make sure to read widely, write frequently, and seek feedback from others to help you improve.

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Project Creator



The Bocas Lit Fest is a year-round writing and reading development organisation, with numerous initiatives forging links and opportunities between writers, readers, publishers and sponsors. We run the NGC Bocas Lit Fest, Trinidad and Tobago's annual literary festival, and administer major regional writing prizes which provide crucial support for Caribbean writers. Find out more at bocaslitfest.com.

Project Sponsor



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