

The Nonfictionist's Guide: On Reading and Writing Creative Nonfiction

By Robert Root

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Nonfiction_the 'fourth genre' (along with poetry, fiction, and drama)_is a literary field affecting bestseller lists, writing programs, writers' workshops, and conferences on the study of creative writing, composition/rhetoric, and literature. It is often labeled and/or limited as 'creative' or 'literary' nonfiction and subdivided into essay, memoir, literary journalism, personal cultural criticism, and narratives of nature and travel. A vital and growing form, nonfiction has, until now, needed a sustained discussion about its poetics_both the theory and the craft of this genre. The Nonfictionist's Guide offers a lively exploration of the elements of contemporary nonfiction and suggests imaginative approaches to writing it. Each chapter on a vital aspect of contemporary nonfiction concludes with a separate section of relevant 'notes for nonfictionists.' Beginning with a new definition of nonfiction and explanation of the nonfiction motive, Robert Root discusses the use of experimental forms, the effects of present and past tense and experiential and reflective voices, and the issue of truth. He provides groundbreaking explorations of the segmented essay and the role of spaces as an essential literary device, guiding both readers and writers through the innovative and stimulating ways we write nonfiction now.

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Editorial Review

Review
This up-to-the-minute, extraordinarily well-informed, and highly suggestive book cannot help but be valuable to writers and teachers of the genre. Robert Root has read widely and pondered deeply the patterns and perplexities that underlie the practice of literary nonfiction. A marvelously commonsensical addition to the literature. (Lopate, Phillip)

Root's is a welcome calm, clear voice in the often-confusing discussions surrounding what some refer to as the 'fourth genre,' i.e., literary nonfiction. Offering a 'poetics' of nonfiction, [he] provides an incisive exploration of the myriad terms for the genre and lively discussions of the range and depth of experimental forms within it and of research, truth, the segmented essay, and the role of 'white space.' (Choice)

[A]n invaluable tool for the classroom and any writer in the field. (Kristen Iversen)

The Nonfictionist's Guide is essential reading for all writers and teachers of creative nonfiction. In clear and elegant prose, Robert Root explores the deepest questions about the genre and demonstrates how to shape nonfiction texts that aspire to the condition of art. (Rebecca McClanahan)

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About the Author
Robert Root is a writer, editor, and teacher. A professor emeritus of English at Central Michigan University, he has spoken on creative nonfiction and the teaching of writing at national and international conferences and been a guest writer in nonfiction and creative writing programs.

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