**Rachel Howard’s Recommended Memoir Reading**

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*To fashion a persona out of one’s own undisguised self is no easy thing [. . .] The unsurrogated narrator has the monumental task of transforming low-level self-interest into the kind of detached empathy required of a piece of writing that is to be of value to the disinterested reader.*

--Vivian Gornick, *The Situation and the Story*

**Overview of the memoir genre/useful surveys of the field:**

*The Art of Time in Memoir*, by Sven Birkerts

“The Meandering River: An Overview of the Subgenres of Creative Nonfiction,” by Sue William Silverman. Available here if you buy a subscription to the Writer’s Chronicle (which I recommend):

<https://www.awpwriter.org/magazine_media/writers_chronicle_view/2507/the_meandering_river_an_overview_of_the_subgenres_of_creative_nonfiction>

*Modern American Memoirs*, ed. Annie Dillard

**Finding your narrator voice/separating the narrator and character perspectives:**

*The Situation and the Story*, by Vivian Gornick

“Writing the Z-Axis: Reflection in the Nonfiction Workshop,” by Sean Ironman, AWP Writer’s Chronicle, September 2014. Available here if you buy a subscription to the Writer’s Chronicle (which I recommend):

<https://www.awpwriter.org/magazine_media/writers_chronicle_issues/september_2014>

**Finding the heart of your story:**

“What We Talk About When We Talk About Theme,” by Eileen Pollack, AWP Writer’s Chronicle, May 2010. Available here if you buy a subscription to the Writer’s Chronicle (which I recommend):

<https://www.awpwriter.org/magazine_media/writers_chronicle_issues/maysummer_2010>

*Wired for Story: The Writer’s Guide to Using Brain Science to Hook the Reader from the Very First Sentence*, by Lisa Cron

**Writing Immersive, vivid scenes; “showing not telling”:**

“Why You Need to Show *and* Tell,” from *The Making of a Story: A Norton Guide to Creative Writing,* by Alice LaPlante

“The Art of the Police Report: A Los Angeles cop writes ‘just the facts’ and tells one helluva story,” by Ellen Collett. Available here:

<http://www.utne.com/arts/the-art-of-the-police-report.aspx>

**Learning to read for technique and craft:**

*Reading Like a Writer*, by Francine Prose

A subscription to the New York Review of Books

**Some of the memoirs I find most helpful as models of strong storytelling and artful, honest, nuanced writing:**

*The Boys of My Youth*, Jo Ann Beard

*Don’t Let’s Go to the Dogs Tonight*, Alexandra Fuller

*Stop-Time*, Frank Conroy

*Never Let Me Down*, Susan J. Miller

*Another Bullshit Night in Suck City*, Nick Flynn

*The Men in My Country,* Marilyn Abildskov

*This Boy’s Life*, Tobias Wolff

*Autobiography of a Face,* Lucy Grealy

*My Dog Tulip,* J.R. Ackerley

*My Father, Myself,* J.R. Ackerley

*Why Be Happy When You Can Be Normal?*, Jeanette Winterson

*The Liar’s Club,* Mary Karr

*Growing Up,* Russell Baker

*The Water Will Hold You,* Lindsey Crittenden

*The Invention of Solitude,* Paul Auster

*The Year of Magical Thinking,* Joan Didion

*Blue Nights,* Joan Didion

*Bluets*, by Maggie Nelson

*The Glass Castle,* by Jeanette Walls