

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Writing Prompt: Family Story

Charity Hume · Wednesday, April 2nd, 2014

A new writing prompt for the week from Charity Hume

Many families have stories about intriguing relatives who have lived adventurous lives, or who emigrated from foreign lands, or who faced hardships, or personal challenges. I remember a story about my great grandmother, who lived in Colorado in the 19th century. A rattlesnake had been seen in several hen houses throughout her area, destroying the eggs, and slipping away into the darkness. A hunt was organized by all the men in the neighboring farms; they went through fields in a line, sweeping rakes carefully through the tall grasses in search of the dangerous snake. They were gone all day and came back empty handed.

My grandmother greeted them on their return at dusk.

“Go look in the hen-house,” she said.

They found the snake with a pitchfork through its head. My great-grandmother had killed it earlier in the day when she heard a ruckus among the hens.

In this creative writing exercise, think of a family story that has always awakened your interest and curiosity. Use photographs, interviews, or letters to help you learn more about the world and the people involved. Research and imagine, and begin to write. You can use this exercise as a “memoir,” or an article that is historical, accurate and researched, or you can let your characters inspire you to create a fictional world, where you take on the character’s point of view.



Mrs. Cassat Reading to her Grandchildren, (1885), by Mary Cassat, courtesy of Wikipaintings

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