

Patterns to Analyze in the Forms of CNF

How are the works narrated?

- What is the distance between the living author and the “I-character”? How is that managed?
- What is the point-of-view? Does the work attempt a perspective other than the author’s?
- What is the level of intimacy between author and reader?
- To what extent is voice an obvious and telling expression of persona?

What is typical subject matter?

- Ordinary things or public events? The past or the present?

How do works like this approach meaning?

- What is the level of thematic ambiguity or explicitness?
- Is the question or idea driving the work explicit or implicit?
- What is the balance between showing and telling, narration and exposition, the language of rendering and the language of thought?
- Are the works typically end-weighted, with meaning emerging late, or front-weighted, with the meaning billboarded at the beginning?

What are the primary sources of information?

- Of the four sources of information in nonfiction—experience, observation, interview, and reading—on which does it most rely?
- What kinds of evidence give works like this their authority?

What are the dominant approaches to time?

- Is there a preoccupation with past or the present? Which seems the richest source of material or insight?
- How much explicit emphasis is there on the “now-narrator,” or the perspective on events from the present?
- Do works like these encourage departure from chronological treatment?

How do they typically approach language?

- Is there a level of poeticism? Do works like these value lyricism or clarity, verbal play or directness?
- What is the level of formality?

How do the works handle form or structure?

- Is the form or design of the work an explicit element of its meaning? Or is the structure meant to be largely invisible?

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- Are these works often—or rarely—discontinuous or fragmented, breaking with more conventional linear or logical structures?

What tends to be the approach to truth telling?

- Fidelity to what happened, or a commitment to emotional truths, even at the cost of accuracy?
- Closer to journalism or to fiction?