

STUDENT HANDOUT · UNIT III · MEMOIR



Session 10

Revision — How Writers Actually Re-See

Sunday, July 19, 2026 · 4:00–5:30 PM · The Community Room

Student handout · readings · in-class practice · discussion questions · homework · worksheet

The Art of Telling

A free creative-writing salon for residents of 2601

Led by James F. Mulhern · Silver Current Press

Welcome to the Session 10 companion handout for *Revision — How Writers Actually Re-See*. This is the last regular session before our **Farewell** gathering next Sunday. This handout gathers the main points of the lesson, the reading for class, the in-class practice, the discussion questions with room to write your own thoughts, this week's homework and Farewell preparation, and the Four-Pass Revision Worksheet for your private notebook. For the full session materials, reading companions, and course updates, visit companion.art-of-telling.com.

Main Points of the Lesson

Revision is not editing. Editing fixes sentences. Revision re-sees the whole. The early draft is for the writer. The middle draft is where the writer learns what the piece actually is. The late draft is for the reader.

A four-pass sequence: read for boredom/confusion/interest → structure → scene-by-scene → sentences.

Most writers reverse the order — start with sentences, never reach structure. The result is a polished surface over an unstable foundation.

The discipline of cutting: cut by 25%, then another 25%, and notice what survives.

Reading for Class

- Sherwood Anderson, *Death in the Woods* — [read the full story \(Project Gutenberg, public domain\)](#).

Anderson was Hemingway's teacher and Raymond Carver's acknowledged foundation. This story explicitly turns on revision: the narrator tells the same story twice, each time finding more of what the story actually is. It is one of the great meditations on re-seeing.

Critical Reception (after our discussion)

- [Biblioklept on Sherwood Anderson's Death in the Woods](#) — a close reading of the story.
- [Walden — Background \(Wikipedia\)](#) — historical context, structure, and reception of Thoreau's book.

In-Class Practice

From the live site

Take a single page you have written for this course. Cut it by 25%. Then cut another 25%. We'll discuss what survived — and why.

stays in your notebook. Two or three volunteers may share what the cut taught them — what they lost, what they were surprised to keep. The page itself is yours; nothing is collected.

Discussion Questions

Use the space below each question to write your own thoughts before or during our discussion. Nothing here is collected.

Q1. What is the difference between editing and revision in your own working practice?

Q2. In Anderson's *Death in the Woods*, the narrator tells the same story twice. What changes the second time? What does the re-telling reveal that the first telling could not?

Q3. What is the hardest thing about cutting? Where do you resist?

Q4. If you read your draft tomorrow, what would you give yourself permission to remove?

Homework / Farewell Preparation

The read

Read the second chapter of Thoreau's *Walden* — “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” — linked below in the Farewell box. Read it slowly. It is the closing text of our course.

Bring one sentence

Bring one sentence to next Sunday's Farewell — any sentence, from anything you wrote during the ten weeks. Just one. We will go around the circle.

Before Next Sunday — Farewell

The Writing Life. Our closing meditation. We read Thoreau together — the most famous American sentence about choosing a life — and each of us reads aloud one sentence from anything we wrote during the course. Coffee or tea if we can arrange it. A slow ending.

Four-Pass Revision Worksheet

From the live site

Copy into a Word document. Run a piece of your own writing through all four passes. This stays in your private notebook — never collected, never read aloud unless you choose.

Pass 1: Read whole, aloud if possible. Where did I get bored? _____
Confused? _____ Interested? _____

Pass 2 — Structure: Are the parts in the right order? What is missing? What is redundant? _____

Pass 3 — Scene by scene: What can be cut? What needs more?

Pass 4 — Sentences: Three sentences I can shorten: _____

The Cut: Cut the piece by 25%. Then by another 25%. What survived?

Closing Note

This is the last handout before our **Farewell**. Bring your page, your sentence, and yourself.

Because there wasn't time to tell everything, the companion site — companion.art-of-telling.com — gathers session materials, reading companions, and course updates so residents can follow along and review after each Sunday.