In addition to new works, the books I always required for my memoir class were *The Boys of My Youth* by Jo Ann Beard, which I discovered when I read her essay "[The Fourth State of Matter](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1996/06/24/the-fourth-state-of-matter)," which is included in the book. I also require *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* by Dave Eggers, whose projects include [*McSweeney's Internet Tendency*](https://www.mcsweeneys.net/pages/about-dave-eggers). Each time I taught Memoir class, I also added recent works, and had I been teaching the class again, I would add Westover's [Educated](https://tarawestover.com/book). Finally, I always include Nabokov's [*Speak, Memory*](https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2016/summer/feature/why-nabokov%E2%80%99s-speak-memory-still-speaks-us), which exemplifies the first writing tip I offer, which I call "privileged position":

Privileged position: Writing and reading in the English language teaches us to invest a bit more attention to the beginning and end of every sentence, paragraph, chapter, section, and book. Accordingly, we end every paragraph with the image we want our readers to take with them to the next paragraph. Here's one lesson from a previous memoir class on this craft exercise:

\* \*

Privileged position is the term I use for the beginning and end of each sentence, paragraph, section, and chapter. For our purposes, we’ll apply this technique to the end of each paragraph. As writers practicing our craft, we must take deliberate advantage of the half-beat of time that it takes our readers to transfer focus from the end of one paragraph to the beginning of the next. We place a strong image—and certainly the sentence’s strongest image—at the end of the paragraph, making the most of the extra attention the reader assigns to this important position.

 Here’s an example from *Blonde Indian, an Alaska Native Memoir*:

Fall soon changes to winter. The long month approaches. Days are short; dark months whisper soft calls, pushing clouds and wind before them, warning all who have not returned to winter camp: now it is time to go home.

**Think about the privileged position at the end of the paragraph**. Would it have equal force if it read: “it is time to go home now”? Read it aloud. Listen to the rhythm. It is often the stronger choice to end on a stressed syllable, especially when the preceding phrases construct a patterned rhythm. This example illustrates the choice to end with the image/trigger “home” as well as the choice to end with an eye to the created music.

\* \*

Of course there are a number of craft tips I share with students, most of which can be found in craft articles and books, but the one above is not something regularly found in writing books. A second one not always found in such texts asks writers to direct the reader's attention to the image rather than to the speaker/narrator experiencing the image:

\* \*

**In creative nonfiction, the default voice is the first person “I.”** Memoir writing speaks in the first person. Once that narrative voice has been established—once the speaker’s perspective is clear—the reader will understand that sensory impressions, memories, and other images are presented as they are experienced by the speaker. Phrases like “I heard” and “I saw” can almost always be eliminated. The experience of other sensory impressions is similar. Unless you want to emphasize your ability to see or hear, focus on the image rather than the narrator experiencing that image.

\* \*

Probably the most important lesson for a writer is to remember that writing is a transaction not fulfilled until the reader picks up the page.

\* \*

Hope this helps! Thank you again for a fun trip. I very much enjoyed the conversations and fellowship with other writers! Gunalcheesh! E.