

# RETAINING THE NARRATOR'S VOICE

The Push & Pull of Correct and Respect

# MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S DEFINITIONS

- ◉ Memoir: a narrative composed from personal experience
- ◉ Autobiography: the biography of a person narrated by himself or herself
- ◉ Biography: a usually written history of a person's life
- ◉ (Personal histories most closely resemble autobiographies.)

# MEMOIR

VERSUS

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BOOKRIOT.COM



Autobiographies cover the author's entire life.

Autobiographies are usually about famous and important people. People read them to learn about the author.

Autobiographies are usually written in chronological order, from birth to the present day.

Autobiography places greater emphasis on facts and history.



Memoirs usually cover only part of the author's life.

Memoirs can be about anybody. People read them because of their subject, theme, or style.

Memoirs can be written chronologically but often move back and forth in time.

Memoir places greater emphasis on emotional experience and interiority.

# Memoir Vs. Autobiography?

“A memoir is how one remembers one’s own life, while an autobiography is history, requiring research, dates, facts double-checked.”

-Gore Vidal

# WHOSE TRUTH?



# SPEAK TO THE NARRATOR

Listen to the cadence of the voice and word usage

- ◉ Identify type of editing desired and budget
- ◉ Identify the goal
- ◉ Identify the audience
- ◉ Identify the overarching theme

# USE FICTION TECHNIQUES

- ◉ Hook the reader
- ◉ Theme
- ◉ Point of View
- ◉ Show, don't tell
- ◉ Narrative and character arcs
- ◉ Kill the darlings
- ◉ Basic editing
- ◉ Revise and rewrite

What should the editor do?

# LEGAL LIABILITIES



# IF YOU DON'T USE REAL NAMES

- Disguise as much personal information as you can.
- Try not to describe physical appearances; or change physical appearances.
- Do not use biographical information to describe why a person did something.
- Use a pseudonym if at all possible.
- Talk to a lawyer before you publish the book.

Noel Diem at Law Street Image Courtesy of Law Street Media

# PEOPLE WHO SHARED EXPERIENCES

- ◉ Thomas “Taj” Ainlay Jr., Legacy Memoirs, Las Vegas, Nevada
- ◉ Libby Atwater, personal historian, Ventura, California
- ◉ Kitty Axelson-Berry, Modern Memoirs, Amherst, Maine
- ◉ Wendy Bancroft, StoryCatcher Workshops, Courtenay, British Columbia
- ◉ Hella Buchheim, personal historian and author, Hovland, Minnesota
- ◉ Trena Cleland, personal historian, Eugene, Oregon
- ◉ Marion Duckworth, author of *Naked on God’s Doorstep* and *The Greening of Mrs. Duckworth*, among others, Vancouver, Washington
- ◉ Maia Fischler, LifeWriter, Corvallis, Oregon
- ◉ Joan Hamilton, Veterans History Project, transcriptionist, Tualatin, Oregon
- ◉ Denis Ledoux, The Memoir Network, Lisbon Falls, Maine (*He offered a 20 percent store discount: use seattle2019 through September 28*)
- ◉ Paula Rudberg Lowe, editor, event planning, and marketing communications, Olympia, Washington
- ◉ Karen Lynn Maher, LegacyONE, Seattle, Washington
- ◉ RJ McHatton, Inventive Productions, Bend, Oregon
- ◉ Pat McNeese, writer and editor, Bethesda, Maryland
- ◉ Gloria Nussbaum, Real to Reel, Beaverton, Oregon
- ◉ Ellen Roddick, personal historian, Monterey, California
- ◉ Shizue Seigel, Japanese American writer, editor, and visual artist in San Francisco, Write Now! SF Bay Writers of Color RJ McHatton  
<http://www.WriteNowSF.com>
- ◉ Connie J. Shipley, Capturing Your Life Stories, Portland, Oregon
- ◉ Paula Stahel, Breath and Shadows Productions, South Tampa, Florida
- ◉ Stephanie Kadel Taras, personal historian, Ann Arbor, Michigan
- ◉ Marty Walton, Storehouse Collection of Memories, Springvale, Maine
- ◉ Bruce Washburn, retired from Goosewings Passages, Greensboro, North Carolina
- ◉ Sarah White, personal historian, Madison, Wisconsin

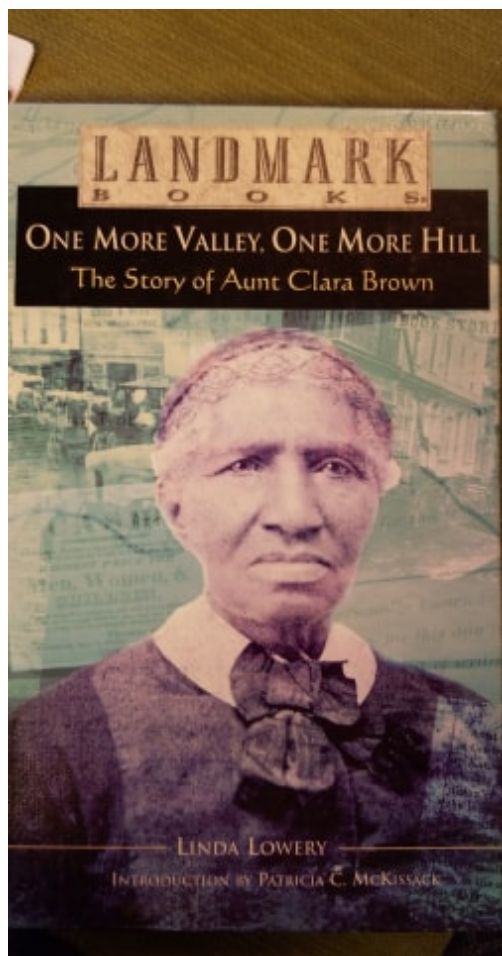
# QUESTIONS I ASKED

- ◉ How do you preserve the narrator's voice?
- ◉ How grammatically correct should a memoir be?
- ◉ What if a writer is politically incorrect?
- ◉ Where/when do you edit a narrator's language to avoid offending readers? Or do you?

# MORE QUESTIONS I ASKED

- ◉ Do we avoid publishing a book if a client retains something many would consider offensive?
- ◉ If we're too politically correct, do we do our readers a disservice?
- ◉ Do we diminish the narrator's struggle by sanitizing history and the biases they faced?
- ◉ Does the editor have a responsibility to fact-check claims in the book?

# DISCLAIMERS



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## Author's Note

In writing this book, I had to make a sensitive decision about language. Would I use modern terms when referring to Native Americans, African Americans, and multi-ethnic Americans? Or would I use words like *Indian*, *Negro*, and *mulatto*, which were typical of Clara's nineteenth-century America?

The terms used back then have connotations now that can be extremely negative. When I attempted to use contemporary language, however, I encountered two problems. First, the modern words were just that—modern. In the context of a narrative about the past, they seemed jarring and out of place. But second, and more importantly, the modern terms suggested a racial tolerance and respect that rarely existed in Clara's time.

With that in mind, I have decided to use the nineteenth-century language. I hope that, as uncomfortable as we are with them today, these words will serve as a reminder of the world Clara lived in.

# LOONEY TUNES



THE CARTOONS YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE ARE PRODUCTS OF THEIR TIME. THEY MAY DEPICT SOME OF THE ETHNIC AND RACIAL PREJUDICES THAT WERE COMMONPLACE IN AMERICAN SOCIETY. THESE DEPICTIONS WERE WRONG THEN AND ARE WRONG TODAY. WHILE THE FOLLOWING DOES NOT REPRESENT THE WARNER BROS. VIEW OF TODAY'S SOCIETY, THESE CARTOONS ARE BEING PRESENTED AS THEY WERE ORIGINALLY CREATED, BECAUSE TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD BE THE SAME AS CLAIMING THESE PREJUDICES NEVER EXISTED.

# LOONEY TUNES AGAIN

The Looney Tunes Golden Collection DVDs have a disclaimer at the beginning given by Whoopi Goldberg. She explains that the cartoons are a product of their time and contain racial and ethnic stereotypes that have not been censored because 'editing them would be the same as denying that the stereotypes existed.'



# QUESTIONS

- ◉ Julie McDonald Zander
  - ◉ Chapters of Life
    - ◉ Preserving the Past ~
- ◉ One Family's Story at a Time
  
- ◉ [www.Chaptersoflife.com](http://www.Chaptersoflife.com)
  
- ◉ [chaptersoflife1999@gmail.com](mailto:chaptersoflife1999@gmail.com)