

## MAPS: The Components of Craft

- **Mode:** the genre of a text.
- **Media:** the form in which a text is created.
- **Audience:** the reader, listener, or viewer of the text, both intended and incidental.
- **Purpose:** the action the author takes, in both an academic and a personal sense.
- **Situation:** the context for the writer herself or himself, as well as the demands of the writing task/assignment.

From *Crafting Digital Writing: Composing Texts Across Media and Genres* by Troy Hicks (Heinemann, 2013)



**Mode:** Narrative Text / Memoir

**Media:** Google Doc

**Audience:** Family and Friends, possibly outside audience at some point (maybe *Reader's Digest*)

**Purpose:** To share a message of heartache, healing, hope, and love with others. To remember those I've held dear.

**Situation:** To reflect on lessons learned through loss and the blessings of love that I hold dear.

## “For Better, For Worse”

By: Kimberly S. Gorman

I flipped open my computer lid this morning to a blank page entitled, “The Ways of Death.” Well, that’s a morbid thing to see when you first wake up, I thought. It was a piece that had lay dormant within me for years. Last night I thought the time had come for it to come to fruition, then I thought differently, closed the lid, and went to bed. There are many ways to die, but there are also many ways to grow.

My grandmother and I were extremely close growing up. I lived across the street from her in what once was a small town, on a small street, in a small house. I remember learning to cross the street and be able to go to Grandma’s all by myself. That was ultimate freedom and from then on I saw her almost every day until we moved to the other side of town when I was about thirteen. Grandma had 13 grandchildren in all. I was the second youngest -- but in grandma’s eyes, I was her baby and her fav-or-ite. I know, because this is what she told me, actually, this is what she told everyone. It probably wasn’t right for Grandma to do that, but she minced no words when she spoke her mind.

My grandma wasn’t your typical grandma. She only wore dresses that she had sewn herself, she always wore white canvas tennis shoes but left them untied, she only watched hockey - football wasn’t allowed on her television, as she didn’t like the men rolling in the mud in their underwear. She hated soap commercials and would scowl and shake her head saying, “How do you like that Kimmy, people bathing in your living

room!" She read her Bible every day, crocheted every day, ate only peeled tomatoes, prayed before every meal, ate popcorn every Sunday night after church, and made you laugh every time you saw her.

She was a quiet woman, minded her own business, and could find humor in everything. She also knew how to use a hammer and saw. She used them to make dividers for her kitchen drawers, which fit perfectly and matched the color of her kitchen. Most granddaughters cherish their grandmother's jewelry after they pass away, I have my grandma's ball-pein hammer. It's a tiny little thing and the perfect fit for a tiny woman's hand. It still has flakes of yellow on its handle from the last time she painted her kitchen.

She was raised by her Grandmother. Grandma Hovey. She would talk about her fondly and often. It was always the same, "I was raised by my Grandma, ya know." Her mother had died shortly after the youngest child was born. Her father had remarried, but things went awry somehow and he was killed by his second wife. That's when she and her six siblings went to live with her Grandma Hovey. We had never known how her father had died, until after Grandma died and my aunt found a news clipping that had been tucked away all those years. My grandma was a strong lady and lived through several other tragedies in her life including the loss of her oldest son, yet always chose to find the laughter in life. My family tells me that I am just like Grandma. I don't know if that's true, but I hope so.

Grandma and Grandpa were married for over 60 years. They were married the same weekend that they met, just two kids who decided to drive up north and get married on a whim. With a twinkle in her eye, she would laugh and say, "Martin thinks he's the boss because he's one day older than me." That was all that needed to be said. Everyone would smile a knowing smile, as grandpa chuckled and just shook his head. They ended up in a nursing home together, sharing a room. They were together to the end. Grandpa died first. Sitting upright in his recliner. Grandma didn't say much; she never shed a tear at his funeral. We never really saw any emotion at all, but the nurses would tell us later after he died that she cried all night long, night after night.

After Grandpa died, I would take her black cherry ice cream, and play Bible records for her on the record player in her room. She would smile and pretend to enjoy it, but I knew her heart wasn't in it. Exactly one month after Grandpa died, Grandma died. I was with her on the day she died. She was sitting up in Grandpa's recliner. I had arrived about 10:00 in the morning, as it was Saturday and I didn't have class on

Saturdays. I had planned to spend the day with Grandma. Upon my arrival, the nurses told me that she wasn't doing well and they didn't think it would be long.

I made the calls to my family members, who came and said their goodbyes. My parents and my aunt tried to get me to take a break, but I stayed with her. I sat on the arm of her chair all day, stroking her hair, holding her hand. I couldn't let my pillar of strength go. She had been my rock, my solace, and my friend. She gave her love unconditionally; it never mattered what kind of trouble I was in or what stupid thing I had done. She always loved me for me. Finally, at about 8:00 that evening, I had some time alone with Grandma. I had watched her labored breathing all day and knew she was hanging on just for me. I leaned over and told her I was going home. I kissed the top of her head and gave her a lingering hug. I whispered in her ear, "It's ok, Grandma. You can let go now. Go see Grandpa, and Uncle Hugh, and your Grandma Hovey."

About an hour later, sitting at my parents table, eating tasteless pizza, the phone rang. My dad answered it. My grandma was gone. I heard myself cry and in an instant he was there, my husband, wrapping his arms around me.

My Grandma died of a broken heart, in the same chair as Grandpa, sitting up, knowing she was loved beyond all measure, but longing for her loved ones who had gone on before her.

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After ten years of marriage, my husband putting me through college, and starting my career, the time had come. We drove to the doctor's office, giddy with anticipation. This being a first, I had no idea what to expect. All I knew was that three months prior, a little pink plus sign appeared on a white plastic stick, indicating we were going to have our first baby. We had been trying to conceive for well over a year, so today was the day of many dreams. If I were 15, like my students, it wouldn't have been such a difficult process, but apparently at 28 you need charts and basal thermometers, and in the end fertility pills. Whatever the case, something had worked and I was floating on a cloud.

Sitting on the examining table, waiting for the doctor to come in, my husband and I joked and laughed -- as we always do when locked in a room together. I was physically shaking, I was so excited. The doctor came in, made small talk, asked me all the questions that were routine to her, but terribly exciting to me.

There was a small knock on the door and a nurse brought in a large, white machine that I had never seen before. It was an ultrasound machine. The doctor completed the exam that was routine to her, but terribly exciting to me. I watched the gray blobs on the monitor float in and out of focus. Why couldn't I see anything in all that gray? I watched the doctor looking, looking, and then I watched the doctor's mouth move as my ears refused to hear. This is when we discovered, there was no heartbeat, there was no longer a baby. What was once alive and growing within me, my body would soon physically discard.

I don't remember much after the doctor left. But I do remember having such a strong hatred for that white machine that I had to fight the impulse to push it over. We walked to the counter to make a follow up appointment, or check out, or something; I don't remember. But I do remember seeing a pregnant woman sitting in the waiting area. I left my poor husband standing at the counter and ran out of the building. I had never done anything like this in public before, but my heart was so broken. I made it to the wall outside the building and slid down onto the mulch in the flower bed and sobbed.

And there they were, my husband's arms, pulling me up and wrapping around me. Safe. Secure. For better, for worse. He held me until I could breath and then helped me to the car. I stayed in bed for a week. Later, some well-meaning family members would end up saying that I should've been over it by now, it wasn't a viable pregnancy anyway, or that I should taken in and have the doctor prescribe something for me. Thankfully, he loved me enough to ignore all of them. He loved me enough to let me grieve as long as I wanted; he loved me enough to wrap his arms around me night after night.

My unborn little one died cradled in my belly without ever seeing the world. Instead of seeing the world, the little one was gently rocked into a permanent sleep before it ever got the chance to wake.

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I was working on my Master's and in class taking a final exam. It was a beautiful spring day as I left the building and headed for my car. Ecstatic that this semester was finally over, I walked leisurely to my car. I lived about 30 minutes from campus, so I had time to joyously celebrate the end of another semester in my own mind on the way home. Upon arriving at home, I found my husband showered, sitting on the couch, and tying his shoes. This was highly unusual. He always lounged a bit before cleaning up, and he never wanted to go somewhere the minute either one of us walked in the door.

He looked up, as the screen door slammed shut. The color drained from his face. He was wearing his white tennies, jeans and a burgundy shirt. Man, he looked good in that shirt. Our eyes locked, his full of concern and mine full of curiosity. This is when he spoke. "Your dad committed suicide. Everyone is waiting for us at Kreg's house." I don't remember the drive. I don't remember if I cried, or screamed, or ran to the car. Sometimes God takes the memories so that we don't have to endure things over and over in our mind.

There are only a few bits that I remember between the moments of walking in my door that night and the funeral days later. I remember sitting in my brother's bedroom telling my boss on the phone that I wouldn't be in. My lips refused to formulate the word "suicide" so I said, "he did it to himself," instead -- like that somehow took this stigma of suicide away. I remember all of us caravanning to dad's house only 10 minutes away. Mom, myself, my two brothers, and all of our spouses.

There was an eerie feeling as we walked into the house and someone, I don't know who, was talking about something, I don't know what. We walked through the house together, as if seeing it for the first time. I'm not sure why we walked through the house; it didn't even happen in the house. But there was some internal need to go through the house, as one large, floating herd. After we had been through the house, we all landed in the family room and someone began saying what needed to be done next. I don't know who. Then I counted, one, two, three. Three! Three pieces of dad's artwork taken off the walls and randomly set up around the room, leaning against the furniture. Three! This was more than I could bear. An agonizing wail from somewhere deep inside came out of me. It kept groaning, "Three! Three! Look, there's three! What does that mean? Did he leave one for each of us? Did he? Did he?" And there they were. My husband's arms wrapped tightly around me. Holding me close, holding me together, holding me up when I was too weak to stand on my own.

I never went through the stage of grief where you get angry at the person for dying, like I've always read about. All I could think of was the extreme mental pain my father must have been in to commit such an act. My dad died alone, not realizing how he was adored.

I've had a lot of time to think about suicide since then. When you've been as close to it as I have, you find it carries a certain stigma and shame that you want to avoid. It took years for me to be able to say the word, and it's taken even longer to be able to write about it. I hate when people recite the usual saying, "The most selfish act a person

could do, is commit suicide.” As if they know. As if they know anything about it at all. Someday, I’ll have the courage to share my story with people. Someday, I’ll put my volunteer hours in, on a suicide prevention hotline, because I’ll have empathy for those who suffer. And I’ll give hope to those who have the courage to call.

I’ll know they aren’t necessarily selfish people, but people who are filled with such mental pain and turmoil that they see no other way out. No other avenue for relief. While I ache for my dad every day, I could never be angry with him or call him selfish. He was one of the most unselfish people I know. Just as you don’t want to see a loved one suffer with cancer and you want to find cure, so do you also not want to see a loved one suffer with the enormity of that kind of mental anguish.

There aren’t too many days that go by where I don’t think of my dad. I see and hear things all the time that I know would make him laugh. I went on to have two children, Jacob and Jamie. Jacob is the spitting image of my dad. He cares about the same things my dad cared about - people. As a 17 year old young man, he gave the message at a nursing home last week, just as my dad had done week after week when I was a child. My daughter Jamie, bears my Grandma’s middle name. Grandma would adore her and her love for life. Just like Grandma, my daughter can find laughter in anything. I often think of how much my dad loved my husband. They worked together for years and were the best of friends. Dad always said, “I don’t have to worry about Kimmy, Dan will take good care of her.” And he does.

And when life gets tough, and I don’t think I can bear it any longer, I go to him, my husband, and I wrap my arms around him. I hold him tight and try to take in every moment God has granted us together. I hold him tight because sorrow has taught me that life is short. I hold him tight because Grandma taught me to love unconditionally, forever. I hold him tight because my little one taught me there is peace in a hug. And I hold him tight because my Dad taught me to always let others know they are loved.