



WHAT TO KNOW about Sherrie Flick



Sherrie Flick is the author of the novel *Reconsidering Happiness* (University of Nebraska Press) and two acclaimed short story collections: *Whiskey, Etc.* and *Thank Your Lucky Stars* (Autumn House Press). *Whiskey, Etc.* won the Foreword INDIES bronze prize and was named a 2016 Entropy best fiction book. Her stories have been featured on NPR's Selected Shorts and at NYC's Symphony Space.

Her work appears in notable anthologies including Norton's *Flash Fiction Forward* and *New Micro*, as well as journals like *Ploughshares* and *Booth*. Flick's nonfiction has been published in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Creative Nonfiction*, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, where she wrote the column "From a Writer's Urban Garden." Her latest publication is an essay collection entitled *Homing: Instincts of a Rustbelt Feminist*. For more information, see sherrieflick.com/about/.

QUESTIONS: *Homing: Instincts of a Rustbelt Feminist* (2024) and *I Call This Flirting* (2004)

As a master of the flash fiction genre, Sherrie Flick knows how to use words so that they are carefully placed for full effect. Her story "Flight" ends with the last two sentences: "I wait. The clouds are low."

- To examine form and style, consider the effect if the story ended with "I wait." What happens when the author adds: "The clouds are low"?
- Skilled writers use a variety of devices to control the reader's reaction. The title of Flick's story "You Have a Car," tells you that you have a car. But the story begins: "Assume you have a car. It's blue. Get in it." Suddenly, the reader owns a blue car and is driving it... West, as instructed.
- If brevity is the key to successful flash fiction, how important is it to control the reader, to ensure that the reader is being taken along for the ride—if not actually driving the car.
 - What devices are employed here to put the reader in control, instead of assuming the role of the backseat driver, or going along for the narrative ride?

The essays in Flick's *Homing* move back and forth between adolescence and adulthood. Many of the stories take place in 1980 but they are always brought to the present.

- What role does memory play in crafting successful memoir or personal essays?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

- How do Flick and Benjamin Sáenz (*Aristotle and Dante*) achieve emotional depth when exploring moments of self-discovery and vulnerability?
- How does Flick's connection to Pennsylvania landscapes and Cather's detailed portrayal of Nebraska in *One of Ours* shape their characters' identities?
- In what ways do Flick's use of culinary experiences and Natalie Diaz's references to consumption in *When My Brother Was an Aztec* serve as metaphors for family dynamics and cultural identity? Why do so many writers reference food to make a point or share a memory?
- How does Flick's exploration of complex relationships in *Homing* compare with Benjamin Sáenz's portrayal of friendship, family bonds, and emerging identity in *Aristotle and Dante*, particularly in terms of how their characters grow through interactions with others?
- How do both Flick and Cather (particularly in *One of Ours*) examine themes of nostalgia, lost innocence, and the passage of time in relation to the American experience?

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

[Association of Writers and Writing Programs](#)
[Human Rights Campaign](#)
[International Flash Fiction Association](#)
[National Council of Teachers of English](#)
[National English Honor Society](#)
[Sigma Kappa Delta](#)
[Sigma Tau Delta](#)

- How does memory speak to a reader, even if it is not a shared memory?
 - How does a writer control emotion while dealing with some subjects like grief, loss, aging, or the past?
- In her story "[Pittsburgh Women](#)," Flick provides a fictionalized view of women's roles.
- How do these roles match the persona of the Rustbelt Feminist in *Homing*?
 - Can a writer's fiction have an impact on their actual identity? Can you find examples of the personal becoming fictionalized in any of your favorite writers or artists?



LITERATURE AS PRAXIS

- How could your chapter highlight female and non-binary writers from your region through readings, discussions, and creative responses, by drawing on Flick's "rustbelt feminist" perspective?
- What efforts can your chapter make to let younger students know that it is good to celebrate their interests and pursue experiences that are independent of others' rules?
- Flick often leads Flash Fiction workshops which emphasize the ability to find meaning in daily activities and occurrences. How might such an activity be beneficial to your (and others') creative writing abilities, and how could you use this skill to benefit the wider community?
- Flick references many teachers in her essays, from inspirational high school teachers to the women who taught her how to bake. In her own classroom and workshops, Flick teaches from the heart, with deep concern for the material and with respect and kindness toward her students. How much difference does it make to have a teacher who cares? Is empathy equal to knowledge in the classroom? What could you do to let your most inspirational teachers know that their work and lives mattered?

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Neema Avashia, *Another Appalachia: Coming Up Queer and Indian in a Mountain Place* (2022)
 Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* (2013)
 Lorraine Hansberry, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* (1970)
 Ann Patchett, *Commonwealth* (2017)
 Richard Rodriguez, *Days of Obligation* (1993), *Hunger for Memory* (1982)
 Richard Russo, *Empire Falls* (2002)
 Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (2006)
 Jeannette Walls, *The Glass Castle* (2006)
 Jesmyn Ward, *Men We Reaped* (2014)
 Eudora Welty, *The Optimist's Daughter* (1972)