



Georgia *writers*

Cinelle Barnes' Essay Forms: Shapes as Idea Generators and Revision Guides

The Companion Guide

These exercises are meant to tease out ideas. They are best used in conjunction with [Cinelle Barnes's workshop video](#). Once you've completed the exercises, sit your work to the side and leave it to marinate for a while before completing your work.

These are self-timed exercises. As you write, it's okay to leave off at a spot where you can pick back up at a later time or date and continue to write. The times below are suggested. Take as much or as little time to complete the exercises.

Exercise 1: Central Questions (5 Minute Exercise)

For this exercise, think about the central question you're focusing on for your work. Consider the [concentric circles](#) (personas, identities) that radiate from that question.

Exercise 2: Story Entry Point (7 Minute Exercise)

Think of an object/image that functions as an entry point to the story. Try to annotate this a little (why did you choose this, etc.?)

Exercise 3: The Three Spaces (17 Minute Exercise)

Think of the following three spaces: story, exploration, and deconstruction space.

Definitions:

Story space - the narrative that you were told or the narrative you grew up with; the narrative that the family believes and upholds; the narrative of religion, country, a history of a people as told to you (again and again).

Exploration space - The writer as narrator as investigator or journalist.

Deconstruction space - the narrator, after playing journalist, deconstructs and/or reclaims the story. The application of new information gleaned during the exploration phase. What is being done with this information?

What do those three spaces look like for you? What do they mean to you? Begin to develop some ideas around these three points. Make notes. What tools (photographs, news articles,

diaries, art, travelogues, receipts, data, medical research, interviews, tapes, film, documentaries, etc.) might you need in order to do this?

Exercise 4: Illuminating Persona Aspects

Think about the characters in your work. Is there a person/character in your story who, by describing them, might help illuminate aspects of your own persona? This exercise is based on [the worksheet Shape as Form](#).