**Memoir**—a LITERARY NONFICTION genre. More specifically, it is a collection of memories that an individual writes about moments or events, either public or private that took place in the subject's life.

**What are the characteristics of an effective memoir?**

* **TITLE**

The title invites and fits. It should come last, chosen from among meaningful possibilities that the writer brainstormed.

* **LEAD**

The lead brings readers right into the action of the story.

* **BACKGROUND**

Background information that a reader needs is woven in – the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* context is embedded in the narrative.

* **SETTING**

There’s a setting – a time and a place.

* **FIRST PERSON**

There’s lots of “I” – lots of thoughts, feelings, and observations of the memoirist.

* **VIVID DETAIL**

A reader can see, hear, and feel the experience because the writer provides concrete sensory details and descriptions of people in action.

* **VIVID VERBS**

The language is interesting – verbs like *sputter*, *knead*, *curl*, *polish*, *pinch*, and *grip* that a reader can see, feel, and hear.

* **SLOW PACE**

The pace is slowed down; readers can make a movie in their minds.

* **ZOOMED-IN**

The small details show what matters to the people in the memoir. The reader feels he/she is inside of that very moment.

* **DIALOGUE**

There is dialogue. The writer uses it to show what people are like, how they’re feeling, and to express relationships among characters.

* **FLASHBACKS**

The action flashes back and forward in time and creates questions in the reader’s mind about what will happen next.

* **SO WHAT?**

There’s a So What? or lesson – a meaning or significance that was discovered by the memoirist during the act of writing the narrative. The memoirist ends the piece having changed in some way and leaves the reader thinking.