



## *Author Asks & Writing Exercises*

*from Alex Taylor,*  
*author of **The Name of the Nearest River***

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- 1** What role does the natural environment play in these stories? Is it malevolent? Indifferent or adversarial? Helpful?
- 2** Images of water populate these stories. How do such images serve to expand the themes I am attempting to engage?
- 3** In your opinion, is the violence within these stories gratuitous or overwrought?
- 4** A few of the stories are set during specific historical periods while others are rooted in the present day. What is the effect of this juxtaposition within a collection of short stories?
- 5** Several folk beliefs and practices appear throughout the collection. By doing this, am I attempting to shade the tales with the aura of oral history and, if so, what is the result?
- 6** Within the collection memory often takes on the feeling of an apparition, of being a ghostly entity that seems to hold perhaps only partially to the rules of the terrestrial world. In your opinion, are the majority of the characters in these tales haunted by revenants from a reality that is perhaps partially of their own creation?
- 7** There are two stories in the collection that center around fishing. To what extent does the practice of fishing approach the intellectual and spiritual problems being addressed by both the characters and myself as the writer?
- 8** A few of the stories concern adolescent characters dealing with explicitly adult situations. What are the reactions of these characters? How do these stories address the trauma of transition?
- 9** How do my choice of language, his tone, diction, and implementation of simile and metaphor function to ratchet up the tension within these stories?
- 10** How do the lives of these characters differ from the typical American experience? How are they similar?

# Writing Exercises

## Exercise 1

Write a paragraph describing a specific place, using as many potent and sensory details as possible. Pay special attention that your images create a pattern, or build upon one another to create a unified exploration of a particular theme or emotion.

## Exercise 2

Write a paragraph describing a character using as many long vowels (a as in 'hay', etc.) and soft consonants (g as in 'gel', etc.) as possible.

## Exercise 3

Write a paragraph describing a character using as many short vowels (o as in 'cool', etc.) and hard consonants (ch as in 'chain', etc.) as possible.

For writing exercises from other Sarabande authors, visit our website at [www.sarabandebooks.org](http://www.sarabandebooks.org).

# Suggested Reading

*Suttree*, Cormac McCarthy  
*I Hate To See That Evening Sun Go Down*, William Gay  
*How Far She Went*, Mary Hood  
*Close Range*, Annie Proulx  
*Airships*, Barry Hannah  
*Kentucky Straight*, Chris Offutt  
*The Sound and The Fury*, William Faulkner  
*The Best Short Stories of William Kittredge*, William Kittredge  
*Charity*, Mark Richard  
*Tomato Red*, Daniel Woodrell

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