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Throughout this course, I have studied different craft techniques. In *Wings of Crimson*, I used three specific craft elements while writing the story, which include dialogue, forward movement, and internal access to encapsulate the themes of friendship and loss while also showing the reader the wants and desires of the characters.

In *Wings of Crimson*, I used dialogue to characterize each character in a very few sentences. One example of this when the school nurse speaks to Sasha's mom. She says::

“Yes, yes, she's okay, I just think you should maybe pick her up. Yes, I know it's the middle of the workday, but your child may be contagious. Yes, yes” (Shosteck 2).

This dialogue between the school nurse and Sasha's mother could make the reader infer that Sasha's mother is possibly consumed by her work and isn't a particularly caring mother, at least not one who swoops in to care for her sickly daughter. Another piece of dialogue that characterizes well is Claire's line on page five, “Shut up. It would be fun, like one of those memories people recall when they think of college.” The readers can somewhat gather from this line that Claire likes to live in the moment and do things for the fun of it, which I wrote into the story because in college, there are two very different, yet present mindsets; either to go wild or live a quiet life. Claire's dialogue here also directly contrasts from the narrator's thoughts at her “desperate attempt at making friends in all the wrong places, even at age six” (Shosteck 1) since the narrator's goals throughout the story are solely invested in other people's wants. The reader can see this with the narrator's actions both in the forward movement plane scenes and in the

flashback scenes with Sasha. On the plane, the narrator has thoughts of doing something about how uncomfortable she feels about flying such as puking on the couple sitting next to her and yelling at the kid sitting behind her, yet she doesn't even move her arm away from the old man next to her to adjust the air vent. Therefore, Claire is the direct antagonist and foil character in *Wings of Crimson* because she is carefree while the main character cares too much about pleasing the world around her. I based this way of characterization through dialogue on Toni Cade Bambara's *Gorilla, My Love*. Bambara used this craft element of dialogue at the end of the story with the lines:

‘Watcha mean, Peaches?’

‘My name is Hazel. And what I mean is you said you were going to marry me when I grew up. You were going to wait. That’s what I mean, my dear Uncle Jefferson’ (Bausch 68).

In this excerpt, the reader learns about Hazel’s wishes and desires as a young girl, how she wants to be addressed as a grown up but also retains her innocence. This dialogue used by Bambara pinpoints the struggles of Hazel throughout the story as she battles with growing up, and I wanted dialogue in my story to have a similar effect of showing the reader my character’s wishes and desires.

The second craft element I used throughout the story is the craft element of forward movement. I took inspiration from *where we must be* by Laura van den Burg as I wanted to try to incorporate seamless flashbacks into my story as Burg did with her story. However, I wanted to incorporate these flashbacks into my story to create a nostalgic effect on the audience, truly homing in on coming-of-age themes such as friendship and loss. Burg used flashbacks in a way to illustrate the love between Jean and Jimmy while I used flashbacks as a way to show why the

narrator has a fear of flying (for the fear of falling). If I told the story without seamless flashbacks, the story would be very short and direct without knowing truly why the narrator is important or why the story itself is important. I believe that Burg wanted to use flashbacks in a non-chronological way to show Jean's trust in the reader, so I wanted to use flashbacks in a similar way to implicate the climax towards the end of the story to show how the narrator has learned to trust the reader with the reason why she is afraid of flying. Although the narrator in *Wings of Crimson* has a fear of flying because of the loss of her friend and not a loved one, I could see how a reader with a different background could see this story as a queer romance between the main character and Sasha. However, I, as someone who is uninterested in dating and prioritizes her female friendships, only sees it as a story about the loss of a friend.

Lastly, I used internal access to keep the reader engaged throughout the story while also showing the dynamic between Sasha and the main character.

I closed my eyes and tried to see our future. Me and Sasha, flying from the monkey bars, ruling the playground. With wings of blue and gold, nothing would stop us from soaring above it all. I could feel it all as I closed my eyes. I could feel the breeze through our hair as we flew (Shosteck 2).

In this excerpt, the narrator shows the contrast between flying and falling, which is something I play on a lot throughout the story, foreshadowing Sasha's untimely death. It's also a look into the human psyche as people only think about their fears surrounding failing when they are flying in some capacity, creating the fear of flying all together, which was a concept I wanted to explore in this piece. It also shows the contrast of being free versus being trapped. The narrator through indirect characterization in her internal access feels trapped by trying to please everyone in the world around her. When she was younger, it was her trying to make friends.

When she was older, it was her trying to protect herself and what she had while Claire wanted to be free to do whatever she wanted, including being free to wield power over those who feel trapped.

I dreamed of that golden wing as it flapped over me like a fairy. The stars blurred by the water looked like streaks of wet paint on my easel. Crimson lips, crimson water, crimson, crimson, crimson. Living in white, being in black, then remembering the golden, and crying at the crimson, crimson, crimson (Shosteck 6).

In this excerpt, I wanted to show through internal access what happened vaguely after Sasha presumably died. My intention was for the reader to dissect what's happening in this passage by the colors used. I established crimson lips as Claire by this line in the story on page five, "The most skull shattering scream you could ever imagine came from Claire's crimson lips." Crimson water can be interpreted as Sasha's blood. "Living in white" is what I intended to be a nod to a possible hospital setting. "Being in black" is what I intended to be a nod to Sasha's possible funeral. "Remembering the golden" is what I intended to be a nod to Sasha's personality and possibly Sasha and the narrator's relationship as a whole. "Crying at the crimson," is what I intended to be a nod to the pain associated with grief. I wanted to use color imagery throughout this story to make the narrator's form of expression through the visual art known by the reader, making the story more cohesive as a whole as Margaret Atwood did with *Death by Landscape*:

She looks at the paintings, she looks into them. Every one of them is a picture of Lucy.

You can't see her exactly, but she's there, in behind the pink stone island or the one behind that. In the picture of the cliff she is hidden by the clutch of fallen rocks toward the bottom; in the one of the river shore she is crouching beneath the overturned canoe. In the yellow autumn woods she's behind the tree that cannot be seen because of the other

trees, over beside the blue sliver of pond; but if you walked into the picture and found the tree, it would be the wrong one, because the right one would be farther on (Bausch 40).

The use of color here makes the ending of the story feel almost like a painting as Atwood describes color to make the images of this narrator's summer vivid in the narrator's mind as if it just happened as well as vivid in the reader's mind. I wanted to use this same sad nostalgia of colorful imagery as Atwood did towards the end of the story to truly show the vaguely what happened to Sasha, but also what happened to the narrator at the end of Sasha's story as she suffered, and one reader could infer that she threw herself into her art as Sasha's mom did with her accounting job.

In conclusion, I used three specific craft elements while writing the story, which include dialogue, forward movement, and internal access. I did this to investigate the irrational or rational fears behind flying anxiety, especially when trapped on a plane. In *Wings of Crimson*, I wanted to use craft elements as well to hone in on the themes of loss and friendship that comes nearly hand-and-hand with any coming-of-age story. Overall, my hope is that a reader of mine will understand half of my intentions with this story if not all, but I would be excited to see what else they believe the story could be about.

Leah,

Thanks for giving me the chance to read a longer fictional work of yours! Although for this class and this assignment, I am not making manuscript comments on student fiction, I will say that I enjoyed reading it and, although you didn't mention it in your analysis, the *voice* in this story is really strong! You've also done a good job with characterization, and the friendship is well-written. Good work!

Your essay does a good job of examining several craft elements in your own work. It is focused, clear, organized, and thoughtful. You've done a particularly impressive job placing yourself in conversation with other writers and identifying the ways in which your story is inspired by others' use of craft elements we have discussed this semester.

I'm looking forward to reading your self-assessment and seeing all your future success.

Prof. Clark

### Works Cited

Bausch, Richard, and R. V. Cassill. *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2015.

Berg, Laura Van den. "Where We Must Be." *What the World Will Look like When All the Water Leaves Us*, Dzanc Books, Westland, MI, 2010, pp. 10–32.