Short Fiction Assignment / Term Paper

The writing assignment for this class can be either a piece of original short fiction or a term paper using appropriate resources and cited in MLA style. You may write an original short story, a one-act play, a screenplay, or a cycle of at least five poems for the fiction alternative. I would like you to tell me as soon as possible that you plan on writing one of these.

As for the research assignment, normally, I give every student the freedom to choose what writer or writers (or genre or period) he or she wants to study for the term paper. But this year, I want us to look behind the process of creating literature. Instead of any aspect of world literature, I want us all to look at the single aspect that unites all literature. According to E.M. Forster, the basis of fiction is “its story-telling aspect” which is to be, he says, regretted (Forster 1927). I believe there is an even more primal connection, however. For me the lowest common denominator is the process of writing stories, the “mechanisms,” that is, of story-telling.

So, I want term papers to be about how stories are told. I am interested in what narrative techniques are available and used by writers. In the library, you will be given instruction on how to find journal articles for this topic. I also have a collection of books on this topic (which I have been interested in for the last half century). You may borrow from me these sources:

- **Prose Style**
  - James, R. Bennett

- **The Rhetoric of Fiction**
  - Wayne Booth

- **A Writing Life**
  - Annie Dillard

- **Aspects of the Novel**
  - E. M. Forster

- **On Writing**
  - Stephen King

- **Bird by Bird**
  - Anne Lamott

- **Literary Theory**
  - Julie Rivkin & Michael Ryan

- **An American Rhetoric**
  - William W. Watt

- **How Fiction Works**
  - James Wood

We are meeting in the library for class on Friday, October 23. Everyone is required to be there, including anyone who has already chosen to write a piece of short fiction.