

## Sample Draft #3

### My Music Teacher Always . . .

by Donna Poppe

My elementary music teacher always wore tannish-beige orthopedic shoes with ~~holes~~ were cut around her bunions, so they would not be so painful. *[this is understood.]* The sides of the plastic around the cutouts curled upward and crackled audibly (adverb is unnecessary) when she tapped them on the piano pedals. These peeling shoes also caused runs in her bright, nursing white -nylon stockings, obviously bright “nursing” white. *(obviously is another adverb that is unnecessary and not “obvious” to the reader – be careful with such assumptions about the reader’s notions)*

Cruel juveniles that we were, this was just cause for daily mocking in our secret discretionary 6th-grade girlish ways. *This phrase: “secret, discretionary sixth grade girlish ways” deserves a second look – how to make the point a little more powerfully and succinctly?*

Absolutely contrary to these her mishapen feet: her magical hands. They brushed the piano in any key at any the first hint of a melodic request from us, and she knew many verses that went well into recess. *Scene here! Show us how the typical day unfolds before recess!* We thought this so incongruous—how appendages of her body could be so

functionally opposite. Having no other observable models in our small town, we also thought those were the requirements to be a music teacher. *More! More! Earn this last line. Write toward it. Show us the life lived.* Well into my career, I will never own her keyboard wonders, but the bunions are progressing quite nicely.

### **Summary Comments**

This remembrance has great potential and begs for more scenes to flesh out both the teacher and the particular phase of human development of her judgmental students. The author has set up a classic tension between ugly feet and beautiful hands, between youth and age, between the physical awkwardness and the aural magic coming out of one person. The image, brief but clear, suggests much more to be told.

It is interesting to note that the voice here is a bit self-conscious, starting out in a kind of sixth grade sensibility -- *obviously* -- and making a transition to the wry voice of age as she admits her own bunions. What all has transpired in that transition is powerful subject matter.