

“The Amazing Particle/Wave/Field Formula for Creating Powerful Personal Essays”

Adapted from material developed by Gretchen Legler

What follows is a “magical formula” for generating material for a personal essay. The “Particle/Wave/Field Technique” is a creative twist taken from the world of quantum physics. I’ll leave it to you to do a deep dive into quantum field theory if you want to know more, but for the purposes of this exercise, we’ll explain it this way:

- We’re going to consider “objects” as three things: standalone objects (particles); objects that change over time (waves); and objects that exist in the world around them (in “fields”).

When these ways of seeing and thinking are combined, a powerful storytelling tool is unleashed. It can be both a generating tool to help you create an essay or story out of thin air, as well as a tool to help you deepen existing writing by making you rethink how you view certain objects.

Here’s how it works:

1. **Pick an object.** In later attempts, you can be more abstract by picking an idea or even a person, but to start off learning this technique, it’s important to be as concrete as possible. So pick a real, physical object.
2. **Describe the object as a static object,** meaning just the facts about how it exists right now – it’s color, weight, size. Just describe it. When you feel like you’ve exhausted yourself here, keep going and try to notice at least one more thing.
3. **Next, write about how your object changes or will change over time.** How is it different today than it was five years ago? What is its history? Was it changed due to some particular event?
4. **Finally, explore how the object relates to other things around it.** This could mean what does it remind you of? What is it similar to or very different from? What does it have in common with things like it and unlike it?

What we’re going for is that this will help you SEE the object in new and different ways. It gives you a focused and different perspective on what might be an every day thing (think of how a dementia patient’s slippers might seem straightforward at first but have SO much story to tell if you look at it through this lens!).