Multiple Ownership of the Past

“Memoir writers must manufacture a text, imposing narrative order on a jumble of half-remembered events. With that feat of manipulation, they arrive at a truth that is theirs alone, not quite like that of anybody else who was present at the same events.”


“The truth is somewhere between my mother’s version and mine. But she was like that to me—that’s the only truth a memoir writer can work with.”


1. What does the phrase “multiple ownership of the past” mean?

   • If there is “multiple ownership of the past,” then how can we know what is true?

2. What are the connotations of the phrases “manufacture a text” and “feats of manipulation”? If writers are “manufacturing” and “manipulating,” do you trust them? Why or why not?

3. How will you decide which events to include and which events and facts to omit in the memoirs you are writing?

   • Do you believe the memoir you write will be true? Why or why not?