

Weekly Writers' Group

Purpose: This writing group is open to any age, skill-level (beginner or experienced), and intention for writing. The group will build your personal confidence as a writer, and even more so engage you with writing as an act of self-discovery as well as spiritual and mental well-being. You'll experience the joy of creating with a community who writes and shares in a safe and nurturing environment. Ultimately, the goal of this powerful group is to free the voice of the creative artist that resides within all of us.

Schedule:

- Fee/Group:
 - \$160/8 weeks

Contact:

Jaime Mendelis

jslater1021@icloud.com

(607) 227-5295



Meeting Structure (times are estimates based on number of participants)

- 6:00 – 6:30: **Writing exercise and writing**
 - Members gather to start the meeting
 - Members are offered a writing prompt/exercise and then disburse to write independently in response to the prompt (prompt-responses are optional)
- 6:30 – 6:50: **Sharing/responding to newly written work**
 - Members return to group circle
 - Writers who choose to do so may read aloud what was just written
 - Group members treat the piece as fiction
 - Group responds with resonations only: “parts I remember are . . .” or “parts that stay with me are . . .”
- 6:50–7:00: **Weekly announcements**
 - Announcements of upcoming manuscript readings and “writing news”

7:00 – 7:15: Break

- 7:15–7:45: **Manuscript Critique**
 - Members take out manuscripts that were passed out during announcements the previous week. Over the week, members have marked up their copies of the manuscripts with what they like as well as what troubles them. During this time, members share with the manuscript author first what works well and then what’s troubling. The author is then given all marked-up manuscript copies and may decide whether to change anything.
- 7:45–8:00: **Second writing exercise and writing; share**
- 8:00 – **Closing**



This writers' group model is crafted on principles of Amherst Writers & Artists and the work of Pat Schneider. The foundations of the group include:

The Five Essential Affirmations

1. Everyone has a strong, unique voice.
2. Everyone is born with creative genius.
3. Writing as an art form belongs to all people, regardless of economic class or educational level.
4. The teaching of craft can be done without damage to a writer's original voice or artistic self-esteem.
5. A writer is someone who writes.

The Five Essential Practices

1. A nonhierarchical spirit (how we treat writing) in the workshop is maintained while at the same time an appropriate discipline (how we interact as a group) keeps writers safe.
2. Confidentiality about what is written in the workshop is maintained, and the privacy of the writer is protected. All writing is treated as fiction unless the writer requests that it be treated as autobiography. At all times writers are free to refrain from reading their work aloud.
3. Absolutely no criticism, suggestion, or question is directed toward the writer in response to first-draft, just-written work. A thorough critique is offered only when the writer asks for it and distributes work in manuscript form. Critique is balanced; there is as much affirmation as suggestion for change.
4. The teaching of craft is taken seriously and is conducted through exercises that invite experimentation and growth as well as through response to manuscripts.
5. The facilitator writes along with the participants and reads that work aloud at least once each writing session. This practice is absolutely necessary, for only in this way is there equality of risk-taking and mutuality of trust.

Manuscript Responses Protocol

In our workshop, as in many traditional writing workshops and classes, we will offer group response to work in manuscript form. In the context of our writers' group, a manuscript is a piece of writing on which the author would like feedback.

There are many reasons that a writer will choose to submit a manuscript to the group! Maybe the writer would like to submit the piece for publication, or maybe they would like to just receive feedback on how their voice and message is received by others. There is no right or wrong reason to submit a manuscript to the group and, while submitting a manuscript is optional, each group member should aim to submit one at least once during our 10 weeks together.

Guidelines for Submitting Work in Manuscript Form to the Group:

- The manuscript must be typed
 - Prose, double-spaced, maximum 3-4 pages
 - Poetry, maximum 3 poems
- There must be enough copies of the manuscript for each group member

Procedure for Submitting Manuscripts & Group Responses:

1. The author provides enough copies for each participant in the group and passes out the copies during announcements the week before the manuscript will receive the group response
2. Group members take the manuscript home to read and critique:
 - a. Write honestly both questions and praise; balancing both
3. Group members bring the annotated manuscript to the next Writers' Group meeting

During the portion of the Writers' Group dedicated to manuscript responses:

1. The writer reads the poem or approximately one page of prose aloud to the group (if the manuscript is more than one page, the writer chooses which page/part to read aloud)
2. The writer remains silent while:
 - a. Group members first share the strengths of the piece
 - b. Group members share questions and problems
3. The writer has a chance to briefly respond
4. All group members write their names on the annotated copies of the manuscripts and give all copies back to the writer.
5. The writer may use the group's feedback in any way they choose, and is encouraged to bring a new draft of the manuscript in again if they want to



Poets & Writers Magazine

www.pw.org

Association of Writers & Writing Programs

The Writer's Chronicle

www.awpwriter.org