

Third Street Writer's Workshop

As part of our mission to foster the literary arts in Laguna Beach, our Organization offers a writing workshop on Mondays in the Community Room of the Library.

This workshop is free and open to the public. Therefore, there will always be a fluctuating number of people in attendance who all have different projects they are working on and who come to writing from different backgrounds.

In order to respect these differences, we ask that everyone show courtesy to one another and follow these guidelines:

How to give comments:

1. Always state something positive first. Try to also conclude your commentary with a positive thought. This is known as the "compliment sandwich."
2. If you are thinking, "If I wrote this story, I would have..." you need to change your approach. Think about the writer's intentions and how those can be better served with your comments. If you are unclear about intentionality, then say so to the writer and ask for clarification.
3. Make sure your criticism is not personal. Address only the work in front of you. If you have a personal objection to the content, then state so at the beginning of your remarks, or decline from commenting if you feel those misgivings prevent you from being objective.
4. Let the writer know if there is something that you don't understand or follow in the plot, character development, timeline etc. and be as specific as possible showing places in the ms that triggered the misunderstanding or confusion.
5. Always respect the writer's creative process and understand that having rough drafts is part of the process.
6. If you are working on a similar project, disclose it at the top of the discussion.
7. It's acceptable to simply pass on commenting.

How to receive comments:

1. You can set the terms for the input you are looking for. For example, if you are uncertain about dialogue use, state that upfront so people can focus their commentary.
2. Please listen while people are commenting. Refrain from responding until everyone has finished.
3. Write down notes of what each person says. Sometimes it is hard to remember exactly what people say. You will want to review them later.
4. Ask the reader if there was anything in your piece that was confusing or that they didn't understand that lead to their comments. Remember to address the question specifically – this leads to useful discussion.
5. Don't defend yourself. Be sure to thank people for their time and opinions. If someone's notes were especially helpful, let them know. If someone's comments were not so useful, ignore them.

Workshop Leaders:

1. We ask that people sign up to lead the workshop. It is voluntary but participation is always welcome.
2. You will have to fill out and return a "Community Room" voucher to the front desk – it helps them keep track of numbers. Remember, this is a public space and we are using it at the Library's discretion.
3. If there are new people, a small round of introductions is a nice gesture. Make sure the new people sign the roll book and provide contact information.
4. You are responsible for providing a writing prompt or prompts. It can be anything, so get creative. You can ask people to share the work that is generated from the prompt but it is voluntary and some may choose to pass.
5. Find out who is sharing their work. Longer pieces will have been distributed beforehand. Decide on an order of presentation.
6. Provide a break around the halfway mark.
7. Try to keep everyone within the guidelines set out above. You may have to referee.

General tips:

Writing is a solitary endeavor. However, having people who are willing to spend time reading your work and commenting on it is a great advantage. Make use of it. But remember that it is your work and only you can decide how the final product represents your unique voice and personal vision.

Our workshop is voluntary. We rely not only on participation from our members but welcome and encourage thoughts and comments on how to make it a better vehicle for them. Please never hesitate to speak up.

***Adapted from "How to Give and Receive Notes" by Christine Fugate, founder of *The Laguna Beach Writing Workshop*.*