

Creative Writing Workshop – Program Plan

Modeled for Hinsdale Public Library

OVERVIEW: WHY CREATIVE WRITING?

“And where will we be as a nation if we graduate a generation of young people who can write an academic paper on the Civil War but have no power to convey the human experience?”

- Rebecca Wallace-Segall, founder and executive director of Writopia Lab, a national non-profit that runs creative writing programs for ages 8 through 18

Self-expression is important to young adults, as evidenced by their Tumblr communities, blogs, Snapchat and Instagram profiles, and poetry slam communities, as well as the art and writing they share in online communities like DeviantArt (fine arts) and Archive of Our Own (fan fiction). Providing young adults with the tools and resources to express themselves thoughtfully can build a skill that will benefit them throughout their lives.

Aside from career opportunities, writing can also provide benefits to those who deal with depression and anxiety (Community Reach Center, 2016; Moore, 2015). Exploring and practicing creative writing can also increase critical thinking skills (WriteLab, 2017).

Hinsdale Public Library Strategic Plan Connections:

<https://hinsdalelibrary.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/strat-plan-postcard-website.pdf>

- Create opportunities for community members to share their expertise and their stories
 - Participants can share their own stories via the program
 - Local authors can share their expertise by partnering with the Library to share writing tips and advice
- Deliver programs that match community interest
 - Both students and parents have asked for more creative writing programs after the Creative Writing Workshop held in Summer 2017
- Foster opportunities to engage with the community through the Library’s Art Collection, rotating exhibits, and related programs
 - Program participants could volunteer to feature their stories in an in-house collection/display in the Teen Lounge

AUDIENCE

Age

This program is for young adults in high school (grades 9-12; ages 14-18).

Prerequisite Skills

- Reading
- Writing
- Computer/word processing
- Critical thinking
- Desire to learn and an interest in writing

OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

- Provide teens with tools and resources needed to begin writing creative stories
- Participants will gain an understanding of basic story structure, themes, motifs

- Participants will learn methods for generating story prompts using story cards
- Participants will begin working on their own creative story, which can be finished during or outside of the workshop
- Participants will have an opportunity to add their finished story to an in-house collection in the Teen Lounge (Teen Librarian, Library Director, and Marketing Manager will set content restrictions for eligible stories, which will be communicated to participants at the beginning of the workshop)

PROCEDURES & RESOURCES

Workshop format

- Two 1.5hr sessions; sessions are one week apart
- Held in the Community Meeting Room with classroom setup (tables with two chairs each, facing toward stage area/projector)
- Potentially facilitated with the help of local authors
- Maximum 15 participants
- Participants can bring a laptop from home if they prefer to work on their own machines or we can have laptops on hand for them to check out (laptop use will not be required, participants can use pen and paper, as well)

Program Resources Already on Hand

- *Once Upon a Time Storytelling Card Game*: cards will be used to illustrate story components and can also be used as prompt generators (<http://www.atlas-games.com/ouat3/>)
- *Once Upon a Time Writer's Handbook*: this would act as a text for the program as the Handbook is a guide to creative writing with information about character, plot, and setting building (http://www.atlas-games.com/product_tables/AG1007.php)
- Pens, pencils, erasers, loose leaf paper
- Laptops for use during program (participants will be able to save their work and email it to themselves)

Program Resources to Purchase

- *Once Upon a Time Writer's Handbook*: Work into program budget to purchase a PDF copy for each participant: \$2.99/download (<http://www.warehouse23.com/products/AG1007PDF>)

Handouts

- Workshop program/outline, which includes a bibliography of all resources
- Story timeline worksheet: a tool for outlining a story plot chronologically
- Idea worksheet: a tool for identifying and developing the following story components, as outlined in the *Once Upon a Time Writer's Handbook*
 - Characters: the people and animals that populate your story: the heroes, the villains, and the innocent bystanders
 - Things: objects that have some function in the story — maybe as the object of a quest, or a prized possession, or an obstacle between one of your characters and his goal
 - Places: settings mentioned in the story as locations where the characters are, have been, or are going
 - Aspects: descriptive words like “hidden,” “cursed,” or “friendly” that can describe a main character, a setting, or the overall tone of the story
 - Events: things that happen in the story, or perhaps before the story, and affect the plot
 - Ending: how the story should resolve
- Two sheets, each with a scanned set of cards from *Once Upon a Time Storytelling Card Game*: to be used as practice examples of how to use the cards as story prompts

ACTIVITIES

- Session one: introduce resources/tools, explain new in-house collection kept in Teen Lounge where participant stories can be shared, discuss story structure/themes/motifs, explain prompt generation tools, practice writing a five-minute story using one of two provided prompts, explain worksheet aids and start working on ideas for stories
- One week between sessions: participants can work on their stories during this time --- though it is not a strict requirement, some participants wanted more time between sessions during a similar program in the past, so one week will allow time for those who want to work on their stories more before the final session
- Session two: question and answer period as participants share their successes and challenges so far, time to work on writing and to seek individual assistance, opportunity to share what they have written, remind participants about the in-house collection and collect contact information from interested parties

MARKETING

- List program in the Library's quarterly newsletter
- List program on the Library's website in the events calendar, as well as sharing it as a featured event on the Teen webpage
- Post an event flier in the Teen Lounge
- Connect with high schools to have the event listed in the school newspaper, announced in English/Writing classes (English is required each year, so all students should be reached this way; target any writing classes to reach students interested in writing)

EVALUATION STRATEGIES

- Participants would be required to register prior to the program – monitoring the registration list for interest would be the first step in evaluating the program and interest level within the community
- Compare the number of participants to show up to the first session versus the number of sign-ups
- Compare the number of participants who return for the second session
 - Contact anyone who does not return to seek feedback on the program
- Solicit feedback at the end of the second session and send a survey to participants
 - Ask if they enjoyed the program overall
 - Ask what worked and what did not work
 - Ask if there is anything else they would like to see in future programs
 - Ask if they found the resources useful – will they continue to use them
- We often get feedback from parents about programs that they are happy to see for their teens, so it would also be appropriate to ask parents if this kind of programming is something they would like to see continued
- By offering the in-house collection, we can evaluate whether or not our teens are interested in having a community-sourced space like this and potentially do it with other programs, such as fine arts or crafts

POTENTIAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Local authors
- Local school districts, English teachers, writing teachers
- Writopia Lab: based in Chicago, they offer a variety of writing labs, could potentially partner with them for additional resources; their half-day workshop is too long for a three hour program, but if there is enough interest in writing programs, we could offer one of their half-day labs in the future (<http://www.writopialab.org/regions/regions-chicago/chicago-half-day-chicago>)

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