

2020 WRITE FOR YOUR LIFE
Sessions on Craft

SESSION I: Thursday, 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

CONCRETE POETRY

- Brionne Janae

Sounds like tough stuff, right? In this craft talk learn to mix your media and create poems that work not just on the level of lyric but as compelling works of art on the page as well. By studying some of the greats such as Rita Dove, Kieth S. Wilson and Phillip B. Williams among others, we will learn to ask how the parts of our poems, the words and stanzas, relate to each other not just in terms of narrative or lyric, but in terms of concrete space on the page as well.

“THEY SAID WHAT?”

- Jaed Coffin

Generating an Essay from Snippets of Dialogue

In this craft seminar, we'll use a very brief piece of remembered dialogue--uttered by someone else, to you--to generate a fully formed personal narrative. Writers should come to this seminar ready to reminisce about the past, to sit with words that stung, inspired, or catalyzed personal change. Come ready to make lists of the whos, wheres, whats and whens; be ready to make something grand out of the smallest slice of the past.

Writers might view this essay, written by your instructor, Jaed Coffin, for an example of where we're headed:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/13/opinion/my-absent-father.html>

CHANNELING FAIRYTALES

- Jenny Land

Are you hurting for writing material? Suffer the pain no longer! In this workshop, we'll mine the rich trove of fairytales, both known and lesser known. We'll take a look at how these stories have spun new and reinvented tales for centuries, including among modern writers. You're guaranteed to walk out with the start of your own rebranded tale. Poets and fiction writers and script writers are all welcome.

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE SHIP ISN'T LEAKING?

- Alex Smith

We writers live for the tumult. Anguish, heartbreak, loss--great, its material! But what to do when all is not lost? In this craft talk we'll explore the work of several artists who rose to prominence through work produced during times of great upheaval in their lives, but who also managed to find words worth writing after they'd plugged the holes and bailed the bilges--and we'll dive into ways to find inspiration in our own lives when it doesn't jump out and grab us by the throat.

SESSION II: Friday 2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

- GennaRose Nethercott

You've been confined to your home for months, floating from room to room, rarely stepping outside. The outside world seems distant and untouchable. History sweeps by. We're all living like this now— but know who's been doing this for centuries? Ghosts! Stories about haunted houses have been examining domestic claustrophobia for years—so let's learn from the pros! In this craft talk, we'll share spooky tales, dissect how to build the perfect ghost story (beginning with the question, "What IS a ghost?!), and of course, write a few phantoms of our own to keep us company.

SUPERHEROES, ORIGIN STORIES AND THE ENDGAME OF CHARACTER

- Philip Baruth

When I was a kid, we talked a lot about which superhero could defeat which superhero, if somehow they weren't both focused on making the world safe for Good and the American Way. And that obsession with pure power is fun, and involving. But the true reason America loves superhero comics, films, and graphic novels is that they create character in a vivid, palpable, time-honored way: through origin stories. Those origin stories usually attach a series of stark emotions to our perception of the hero; we read them through the events that shaped them, forever after. So we'll talk about character and origins in this craft talk, and we'll invent a powerful new team of heroes, with emphasis on their grief, their anger, their loves, and their final glorious vindication.

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

- Sheila Liming

Nonfiction is commonly thought to cover those genres of writing that deal in the presentation of truthful matter, including those like journalism and reporting, criticism and reviews, and personal writing and memoir. But how does a writer go about getting at “the truth”? In this craft talk, we'll discuss how research and investigation enter into the process and art of writing good nonfiction. We'll also cover strategies for presenting that true information in compelling and exciting ways, without altering the “true” nature of the content.

NO THERE THERE

- J. C. Ellefson

Yes, you've heard the phrase, which is attributed to the great Gertrude Stein from *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937), where Gertrude laments the fact

that her childhood home in Oakland, California no longer exists. However, in this workshop, we are not in the lamentation business. Instead, we will storm the barricades of *There* and expose the writerly possibilities that *There* offers us--like *There* as character, *There* as tension, *There* as power, *There* as atmosphere. Finally, if we are so bold, we may even make our own proclamation to the world--like the writer who creates *There* can go home again, figuratively that is, and bring along a bevy of no-good friends. Come in your work clothes; prepare to get dirty. I'll supply the picks and shovels.

SESSION III: Saturday 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

PROGRAMMING POETRY!

- Lillian Bertram

Can computer programs write poetry? Yes, they can! (Well, they can when you run programs that do just that!) What's more, it's actually really easy to use a few lines of code to generate some fun and funky poems and you don't need any prior knowledge or coding skills! In this craft talk (please have a computer handy) we will tinker with some newcomer-friendly example web-based tutorials that will get you—and your program—up and running and generating poems in no time at all! Impress your friends, parents, and grandparents with your tech-savvy wordsmithing!

LOSING YOUR MIND WHILE WRITING

- Geoff Gevalt

Join writer/photographer Geoffrey Gevalt as he leads you on a madcap race through your brain, tiring out your hands as you pour out ideas, characters, stories, opinions in a scattershot but fun kind of way. Writing as exploration. This craft talk will begin with a quick summary of Gevalt's theory on quick writing and you will then have a series of prompts in which you have 7 minutes to respond. He'll encourage you to do your work on <https://vywc.org> so all the participants can see, so you get used to the idea of

sharing imperfect work, so you can get some comments from others and so you can come back to what you write later if you want to do more with the idea.

SELF-PORTRAIT PROMPTS GALORE (poetry generative session)

- Paige Ackerson-Kiely

We'll look at several examples of self-portraits, and then students will be guided through a series of short prompts to create their own. Prose writers are most welcome, though example self-portraits will be poems.

ASK THE ORACLES (Where no writerly question will go unanswered)

- VYWC Faculty Panel

In ancient Greece, when people sought wisdom or advice, they often turned to an oracle--and for good reason: oracles were thought to be portals through which the gods spoke directly to the people. Here at the VYWC, we have assembled a brazen bunch of authors who can certainly compete with anyone holding court at Delphi. If you want to know absolutely anything and everything about being a writer, this workshop might be for you.