WESTMINSTER COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION

A beginning workshop in which students develop skills in reading, evaluating, writing, and revising fiction.

COURSE DESCRIPTION SPECIFIC TO THIS SECTION

The fiction writing workshop is designed to give students an intensive study and practice in the art of fiction. The course will primarily focus on the production, reading, and constructive critique of student fiction. Students will practice their use of craft elements and refine their implementation of story structure by writing, reading, and exploring the fundamentals of craft through stimulating exercises and course readings. Much of the course will be spent in various types of workshop formats (smaller and larger groups) where the class produces responses and suggestions to student work in a respectful and honest manner. Each student will compile a final portfolio of rigorously revised work by the end of the semester.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

❖ Read and analyze different styles of literary fiction.
❖ Identify and analyze the work of established writers of fiction.
❖ Analyze the effects of particular elements of craft in your work and the published fiction surveyed.
❖ Implement some of the craft strategies used by practitioners of fiction.
❖ Become a more precise, nuanced, disciplined, and productive fiction writer.
❖ Articulate constructive critiques (oral and written) in peer workshops.
❖ Implement the rules of craft (and perhaps artfully break them).
❖ Cultivate an ability to revise self-authored work.
❖ Gain an awareness of local and national literary circles and outlets for publication.

Required Texts and Materials

❖ A journal that you will bring to class each day.
❖ A folder to compile supplemental readings that you will print from D2L.

*Hard Copies of the blackboard readings are highly suggested.*
Additionally, you will be expected to read several texts that will be available on D2L. **You must print the materials out and bring them to class annotated.** If you must read them on a computer, you will be required to bring a list of your annotations and the computer/tablet to class. Students must be responsible for obtaining all the materials needed for the course in advance. Students are responsible for scheduling enough time during the course to complete their writing and reading assignments on time as well. **Please plan ahead for your workshop dates and allocate about $25-50 dollars for various printing costs.**

**GRADING SYSTEM AND COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

**Grade Breakdown:**

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<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Critiques</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal Writing and Reading Notes</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**GRADING SCALE**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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**ASSIGNMENTS AND THE GRADING SYSTEM**

**Portfolio 50%:** At the end of the semester, you will hand in a portfolio consisting of **at least 2 literary fiction stories between 7-16 pages and one revised piece of flash fiction.** Students may workshop fiction in these forms: novels, novellas, short stories, and literary hybrids; however, they must be literary. Literary Fiction separates itself from Genre because it is not just about escaping from reality; instead, it provides a means to better understand the world and delivers real emotional responses. The story must have a beginning, middle, and end (go through a narrative arc cycle) and be complete. If you share a novel excerpt, you must submit a completed novel chapter (or two) that fits within the page limit.

You will workshop both of these stories in class at least once during the semester. All drafts must have been commented on by your professor in order to be placed into your Portfolio. If you missed your in-class workshop due date for any reason, you will lose 5% off the top of the Story Revision. Your portfolio should also include a **2-page self-assessment statement** that addresses 1.) a critical analysis of the revisions you’ve made on both workshop pieces and 2.) a reflection on your progress throughout the semester. Be specific! Your Final Portfolio is due on: **Monday, May 6th at 3pm.**
**Final Portfolio**

- Story Draft & Revision 1: 20%
- Story Draft & Revision 2: 20%
- Flash Fiction Draft & Revision: 5%
- Self-Assessment Statement: 5%

**Peer Critiques 20%**: You are responsible for writing line comments and typing up peer critiques for each workshopped story. You are responsible for writing 3/4 - 1 full page (single-spaced) commentary. This commentary should be printed and given to the writer along with the annotations on the hard copy of the story. You will then keep a running file document of all the critiques you write and hand in a copy to me on the last day of workshop.

**Participation & Attendance 15%**: This is a discussion and workshop-based course and, therefore, is only fully productive when everyone is present, when everyone honors their commitment to read and comment on the stories of their classmates, and when everyone is willing to respectfully share their insights. Do your part to make this class successful or your grade will suffer. Also, you are responsible for bringing enough copies for us to read the class before your workshop. You will not be given a chance to make-up a missed workshop. You are expected to come ON TIME to class when your workshop piece is due to be handed out. Print your stories the night before they are due in class. If you are absent, you must find a way to distribute your workshop copies. If not, you relinquish your chance to workshop your story and you will have to seek help during office hours.

**Journal Writing and Reading Notes 15%**: You will keep a handwritten journal that you will bring to class each day. In the journal, you will write the prompts given in class and compile reading notes on each assigned reading. For each class, if there’s a reading assigned, you should write a two to three sentence summary of one of the stories read and write a paragraph discussing what makes the story unique/what makes it stand out. In your discussion of what makes the story unique, you should make it clear that you understand why and how different craft elements were used. Make sure to create clear headers for your prompts and reading notes to delineate the different content.

**Grade Breakdown**:  
It is especially difficult to grade creative writing. Grading involves an assessment of talent, quality, imagination, ambition, engagement, effort, and attention to revision. Creative assignments in this class will be graded on your effort, your individualized growth, and your understanding of the concepts we discuss. I want you to have an awareness and control of the techniques and elements of creative writing, but I also want you to experiment, take risks, and not be penalized for taking these risks. If you are engaged with the subject matter, if you show an understanding of craft and form, if you care about your writing, your work, your critiques, and your peers, and if you do all the work, you will earn a good grade. In a nutshell, if you miss assignments, lack engagement, and turn in work late, you will do poorly. Since most of your grade is calculated at the end of the semester, feel free to visit me to inquire about your grade-in-process.
COURSE POLICIES

Attendance Requirements
Students are expected to attend all class meetings. It matters that you come to class on time, every day. If you are repeatedly late, it will negatively influence your grade. Excessive tardiness, early departure, or lack of preparation will result in an absence.

❖ After you miss three classes, your final grade will be reduced 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional class missed. For example, if you miss 4 classes and you end the course with a B+, it will be converted to a B, and so forth. All absences count towards this total, with the exception of school-sanctioned activities that I am aware of in advance via email, illness that requires confinement to bed on a physician’s orders (documented), death/severe illness in the family (documented), or court appearances. “Self-reported sick in room” notices from the Student Health Center will not count as an excused absence. You must keep a tally of your absences.

❖ Students who arrive to class late will be counted as absent. Late arrivals disrupt our class; therefore, excessive lateness will affect your participation grade and, potentially, your final grade.

❖ If you are involved in Westminster athletics or other extracurricular activities and will miss class meetings because of games, performances, etc., please notify me in advance via email of any class sessions you will miss. All work is to be submitted prior to the excused absence. You cannot miss class to go to a sporting practice. If you are involved in an extracurricular or co-curricular activity at Westminster College, you must make it known to me before the end of add period of each semester via email. In the email, please include the dates you know you will miss.

❖ If you do miss class for any reason, you are still responsible for the missed material. Connect with a classmate to get the class notes and then come to office hours if you have questions about the notes. Please do not come up to me at the beginning of the next class to ask what happened and waste your classmates’ time!

❖ That said, if you experience a crisis that prevents you from completing your work, speak to me about it privately during office hours, or ask an appropriate campus official to document your situation.

D2L Supplemental Readings
If I’ve assigned a supplemental reading from D2L, it is my suggestion that you print it, read it, and annotate it carefully. Please think about the printing costs as textbooks costs, as I’ve really tried to keep the costs down! It is highly discouraged, but if you must use a computer or tablet to read the supplemental readings on, bring the computer/tablet with you to class. You will immediately lose your privilege of bringing a computer/tablet to class if you are caught reading anything other than the supplemental reading. This is very distracting to others and me! You shouldn’t use phones to read the supplemental material. Research has proven that this is very ineffective. You cannot have computers/tablets open during workshops or prompt-writing.

Office Hours
I strongly encourage you to meet with me at least once during the semester during office hours to discuss CW manuscripts, class topics, comments on manuscripts, etc. It’s best to make an appointment with me about a week after a workshop to debrief and discuss revision strategies. I want you to succeed in the course and, therefore, I am happy to discuss your progress at any time. Office hours will be held on Tuesdays 9:30-10:30am, Mondays and Wednesdays from 2-3, or by appointment. Lastly, because I have a toddler at home, please avoid coming to Office Hours if you are sick. Send me an email instead at cowentm@westminster.edu.
Workshop Manuscript Submission
You should distribute your manuscripts by hardcopy (15 copies) before your workshop date and submit a file of your story on D2L under the “Workshop Manuscript Distribution Discussion Board,” just in case a student is absent from class on your distribution day. Manuscripts must be submitted at the beginning of the class prior to your Workshop date. If you are sick on your distribution day, you must find a way to get the copies of your manuscript to me (or to my mailbox in Patterson on the 3rd floor) before class. In addition, if you are absent on a day when manuscripts are distributed, you must print the draft from the D2L Discussion Board.

Formatting your Manuscripts for Workshop
Typing and formatting your documents isn’t simply a matter of following arbitrary rules; it’s something that helps your colleagues and facilitates the reading of your work. How are we supposed to discuss a particular sentence on page seven if we can’t find page seven? How can we write comments if there’s not enough space in the margins? Please follow these guidelines for all of your creative work (unless you are doing something experimental with form.) Your typed peer critiques can be single-spaced.

❖ Typed
❖ Double-spaced
❖ Name in MLA formatting
❖ Size 12-font, with one-inch margins
❖ Times New Roman font
❖ Number your pages
❖ Use a staple
❖ Check for spelling and grammatical errors

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity Code Specific to this Section
Students are responsible for the academic work they submit (including papers, examinations, reflections, PowerPoints, reports, etc.), and that work should be completed honestly and according to the requirements and restrictions for academic work based upon the Westminster College Academic Integrity Policy. Please see the current Undergraduate Catalog for official definitions of cheating, misconduct, plagiarism, and providing false information. The following is a list of some representative examples of academic misconduct specific to this section, though it is not comprehensive:

• Plagiarism: the representation of someone else’s words, ideas, or work as one’s own. This includes quoting, paraphrasing, or condensing another’s work within one’s own without giving proper attribution, or purchasing or receiving another’s work and submitting it as one’s own. When quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing, students must identify the extent to which a source has been used and must cite with precision. This applies not only to written work, but also designs, photography, video, art, and other media.
• Misconduct: submitting the same work, including oral presentations, for different courses without the explicit consent of the teacher, sabotaging the work of others, unethically obtaining answers or other information about a quiz, test, or examination before it has been administered to all students, even if not a member of the class, etc.
• Dishonesty in Examinations: unauthorized use of notes, study aids, electronic or other equipment during an examination; unauthorized possession of examinations; copying or
looking at another individual’s examination; taking or passing information to another student during an examination; taking an exam for another student; allowing another student to take one’s examination.

- **Fabrication of Data**: unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation during an academic exercise.
- **Cheating or Inappropriate Assistance**: unauthorized use of any study aids, equipment, tutoring, or another’s work during an academic exercise; unauthorized collaboration on projects, homework, take-home examinations, or other work. Students are responsible for clarifying with instructors what forms of collaboration or assistance are acceptable for each assignment.

**Consequences for Breaking Academic Policy in this Section**

If a student has violated Westminster’s Academic Integrity Policy, the student will be reported to the college and receive the appropriate sanctions determined by the VPAA. Please see the Undergraduate Handbook for further information about the respective consequences.

In regards to the course, if a student breaks the college’s Academic Integrity Policy or the policies listed above, the student will receive an F on the assignment that broke policy for a first offense. If the student violates the policy a second time, they will fail the course.

**Disruptive Technology**

Electronic devices are prohibited in the classroom unless specific permission is given. Electronic devices include: cell phones, digital media players, recording devices (video and audio), iPods, electronic readers, headphones, and laptops. If a student needs to use technology due to a disability, please let me know.

**Course Accessibility**

Westminster College actively strives for the full inclusion of all our students. Students with disabilities who require access solutions for environmental or curricular barriers should contact Faith Craig, Director of Disability Resources at 724-946-7192 or via e-mail at craigfa@westminster.edu. Please do not hesitate to discuss your situation with me.

**Honor Code**

Lastly, as we frequently deal with sensitive topics and personal reflections in this class, professionalism and maturity will be expected from you during class discussion and in your written responses. Sensitivity is especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, ableness, gender identity, and nationalities. In addition, I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun than your legal paperwork if you wish. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.
**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

Below you will find the tentative schedule for our semester. Please be aware that these due dates may be subject to change if we move too slowly or quickly through a section, or due to inclement weather. Be sure to check the D2L online module and/or your email before class each day for any modifications to the schedule, or class cancellations.

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<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings and Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
<td>Course Introduction &amp; Essential Craft Overview</td>
<td><strong>Tuesday, January 15th:</strong> It’s the first day! No reading is required. Overview of Essential Craft Elements.</td>
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<td>Jan. 14th-18th</td>
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<td><strong>Thursday, January 17th:</strong> Read “Plot: A Question of Focus” and “Hint Fiction” from D2L. Overview of Narrative Arc. Write a Hint Piece.</td>
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<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
<td>Very Short Fiction &amp; Overview of Literary vs. Genre Writing</td>
<td><strong>Tuesday, January 22nd:</strong> Read Hollowell’s “A History of Everything, Including You” and Amir’s “Before and Again” from D2L. Start a Flash Piece.</td>
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<td>Jan. 21st-25th</td>
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<td><strong>Thursday, January 24th:</strong> Read “Indian Education” by Alexie, “The Fat Girl” by Dubus, and “Theme” by Bain from D2L.</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
<td>Novel Openings (Inciting Incident) &amp; The Literary Short Story</td>
<td><strong>Tuesday, January 29th:</strong> Bring 3 copies of your Flash Draft for Small Group Workshops. Read novel excerpts of <em>The Book Thief</em> by Zusack and <em>Raising Stony Mayhall</em> by Gregory from D2L.</td>
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<td>Jan. 28th-Feb. 1st</td>
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<td><strong>Thursday, January 31st:</strong> Read “A Temporary Matter” by Jhumpa Lahiri.</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Short Story Collection</td>
<td><strong>Tuesday, February 5th</strong>: Read Campbell’s <em>Mothers, Tell Your Daughters</em>, pages 13-46. (‘Sleepover,’ ‘Playhouse,’ and ‘Tell Yourself.’) <strong>Thursday, February 7th</strong>: Read Campbell’s <em>Mothers, Tell Your Daughters</em>, pages 65-104. (‘My Dog Roscoe’ and ‘Mothers, Tell Your Daughters.’)</td>
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<td>Feb. 4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; - Feb. 8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Short Story Collection</td>
<td><strong>Tuesday, February 12th</strong>: Read Campbell’s <em>Mothers, Tell Your Daughters</em>, pages 105-153. (‘My Sister in in Pain,’ ‘A Multitude of Sins,’ ‘To You, as a Woman,’ and ‘Daughters of the Animal Kingdom.’) <strong>Thursday, February 14th</strong>: Read Campbell’s <em>Mothers, Tell Your Daughters</em>, pages 197-262. (‘Children of Transylvania, 1983,’ ‘Natural Disasters,’ and ‘The Fruit of the Pawpaw Tree.’)</td>
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<td>Feb. 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; - Feb 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td><em>Workshop Authors 1-2 handout today!</em></td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Prompt Writing &amp; Workshops</td>
<td><strong>Tuesday, February 19th</strong>: Prompt Writing. <strong>Thursday, February 21st</strong>: Prompt Writing.</td>
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<td>Feb. 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; - Feb. 22&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td><em>Workshops 1-2.</em> <em>Workshops 3-4.</em></td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Short Story Collection &amp; Workshops</td>
<td><strong>Tuesday, February 26th</strong>: Read Adichie’s <em>The Thing Around Your Neck</em>, pages 3-42. (‘Cell One’ and ‘Imitation.’) <strong>Thursday, February 28th</strong>: Read Adichie’s <em>The Thing Around Your Neck</em>, pages 43-56, 74-94. (‘A Private Experience’ and ‘On Monday of Last Week.’)</td>
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<td>Feb. 25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; - March 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td><em>Workshops 5-6.</em> <em>Workshops 7-8.</em></td>
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| Week 8 | March 4th – March 8th | Short Story Collection & Workshops | Tuesday, March 5th: Workshopping All Class.  
*Workshops 9-11.*  
Wednesday, March 6th at 7pm: Ilya Kaminsky Poetry Reading Tonight at 7pm. Students get extra credit if they attend and write a short reflection in their journals.  
Thursday, March 7th: Workshopping All Class.  
*Workshops 12-14. Peer Critiques Due Today.* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Week 9 | March 11th -March 15th | Spring Break | Tuesday, March 12th: No Classes  
Thursday, March 14th: No Classes |
| Week 10 | March 18th- March 22nd | Short Story Collection & Prompt Writing | Tuesday, March 19th: Read Adichie’s *The Thing Around Your Neck*, pages 95-114, 115-127. (“Jumping Monkey Hill” and “The Thing Around Your Neck.”)  
Thursday, March 21st: Read Adichie’s *The Thing Around Your Neck*, pages 142-186. (“The Shivering” and “The Arrangers of Marriage.”) |
| Week 11 | March 25th -March 29th | Short Story Collection & Workshop | Tuesday, March 26th: Read Adichie’s *The Thing Around Your Neck*, pages 187-218. (“Tomorrow is Too Far” and “Headstrong Historian.”)  
*Workshop Authors 1-2 handout today!*  
Thursday, March 28th: Prompt Writing.  
*Workshops 1-2.* |
| Week 12 | April 1st - April 5th | Graphic Novel & Writing Openings | **Tuesday, April 2nd:** Read the first half of *The Last Man.*  
*Workshops 3-4.*  
**Thursday, April 4th:** Read the second half of *The Last Man.*  
*Workshops 5-6.* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Week 13 | April 8th - April 12th | Workshops | **Tuesday, April 9th:** Prompt Writing.  
*Workshops 7-8.*  
**Thursday, April 11th:** Workshopping All Class.  
*Workshops 9-11.* |
| Week 14 | April 15th – April 19th | Workshops | **Tuesday, April 16th:** Workshopping All Class.  
*Workshops 12-14. Peer Critiques Due Today.*  
**Thursday:** No Classes for Easter Break |
| Week 15 | April 22nd - April 26th | The Experimental Short Story | **Tuesday, April 23rd:** No Class today. Attend Monday Classes.  
**Thursday, April 25th:** Read “Ragnarok: The Day the Gods Die” and “The Foundations of the Earth” from the collection *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead* by Kenan from D2L. |
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<th><strong>Week 16</strong></th>
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<td>April 29&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; - May 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Revision &amp; Publishing</td>
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<td><strong>Tuesday, April 30&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;:</strong> Read “Gotham’s Guide to Revision and the Business of Writing,” Burroway’s “Development and Revision,” and Lamott’s “Shitty First Drafts” from D2L. Course Evaluations.</td>
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<td><strong>Thursday, May 2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;:</strong> Final Prompt. Class Party. <strong>Journals Due Today.</strong></td>
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<th><strong>Finals Week</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>May 6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; - May 9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam Period</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Final Portfolio Due at:</strong> Monday, May 6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; at 3pm.</td>
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Some Elements of Fiction

Here are a few items to investigate while reading your peers’ and your own work. Ask yourself these questions, then address them where appropriate. Note that this is just a cursory list, by no means exhaustive. There is much more that could and should be taken into account. Please use these questions to help guide your peer critiques and the revision of your work.


- **Agency:** Who controls the action? Whose decisions move the plot? Whose desires? Does the main character have enough agency to be a main character? How does the main character show her agency? How does she use it or give it up? How can she have more agency? What does the amount of agency the characters have say about their position in society? About an aesthetic sensibility? About theme?

- **Arc:** How does the protagonist change (or try hard to change and fail)? (Character arc) What is the inciting incident/rising action/clinic/falling action? (Story arc) Are these arcs satisfying/resonate? Do they work together?

- **Audience:** For whom/to whom is this piece written, ideally? How can you tell? How does it affect the writing? What expectations are being assumed? Met? Undermined? Disregarded? What kind of publication would this be published in? Is there a regional audience? Gendered? Raced? What is explicit and what is implicit? What would more focus audience-wise mean for the story?

- **Conflict:** What is standing in the way of the character getting what s/he wants? Does this conflict escalate/complicate as the story progresses? Is the writer letting his/her characters off the hook? Does this conflict come from outside and inside? Do the various conflicts work together thematically?

- **Context:** What information does the story need to present in order to make sense to its audience? Does the story present too much information? Too little? In the right places? What larger context is it engaging with? What larger context is it disregarding or assuming? Does the material give the right information for us to make sense of things where we are in the story/on the page? Do we get information too early? Too late? How does the story convey information? How could it convey information more efficiently?

- **Characterization:** Do we have a clear vision of who the characters are? Do we know their physical details, age, gender, locale, socio-economic status, race, sexuality? Should we? What is left out and why? What does it say about theme, purpose, audience? Do we know their wants and fears? Their attitude? Is it clear where they work? Live? Do they have families, friends, lovers? How much
do we need to know? Are the characters shown through decision and action? What is their prevailing attitude in the situation? In general?

- **Grounding**: Do we know what is happening? Where we are? Who the characters are? When we are? What the premise is? When time is passing? How much time has passed?

- **Inside/Outside Story**: Is there an inside and outside story going on? I.e. Is there an internal change happening versus an external plot happening? Is there action and change both outside of the protagonist and within her/him?

- **Language**: Does the language feel appropriate for the story? Syntax, diction, etc. What does it reveal about characters? Audience? Theme? Where does it seem to pick up in energy? Where does it seem to lose energy? Why?

- **Pacing**: Are transitions between scenes smooth? Do we have an appropriate balance of summary and scene? Does backstory slow the story down or help deepen the stakes and make us want to read faster? Do we spend enough time with the most significant characters and actions of the story? Do we spend too much time on trivial items? What can be cut? What should be added?

- **Perspective/Point of View**: Is the point of view clear and consistent through the story? What does the POV choice mean thematically? Aesthetically? Does form match content? Is the psychic distance appropriate? Too far? Too close? Not enough variety/movement? Whose story is it? Would first or third (or even second) work better? Why?

- **Timing**: Why this story on this particular day, at this particular time, in this particular place? Is this the most important moment in this character’s life? Is this the right moment to tell the story? What is going on at the point of telling?

- **Setting**: How does the setting affect the story? How does it factor into what happens and who people are? Why this setting and no other? Does the setting appear on the page both explicitly and implicitly? Does it affect the inside and outside story?

- **Stakes**: Is it clear what stands to be gained or lost during the events of the story? Are the stakes high enough? Are they different for different characters? Does the protagonist care what happens? What are the objective stakes? What are the subjective stakes? Do the stakes rise as the story progresses?

- **Structure**: Do the passages of the stories appear in the most effective order? Do early sections of the story foreshadow later parts? Are transitions effective? Are all scenes “doing something” to advance the story in the order that they are in? How is the story organized and how does that help accomplish (or not) the story’s effect? How does form represent/do justice to content? How would the story be different if it were organized differently? What does the structure say about how we make meaning?

● **Voice:** How is the story told? How much is narrative summary and what is told in narrative summary? Are there parentheticals? Italics? Where is the emphasis? Why? How old is the narrator or point-of-view character? How educated? Cultural background? Formal? Informal? What makes this voice different from any other? Why this voice and not another? What is shown and what is told? Why? What are the metaphors used and how do they create a sense of voice? How much detail comes into play? Who is telling the story?

● **Vulnerability:** What does the story risk? How is the story the author’s and the author’s alone? Does the story challenge the status quo? Does it challenge its characters enough? Does it challenge its author? What is still in hiding?

● **Beginning:** Does the beginning introduce us to characters and conflicts effectively? Does it set up our expectations for the rest of the story? Does it teach us the rules of the story? Is it extraneous? Does it explain too much/not enough? What promises does it make? What stakes does it establish? Does it ask us to keep reading?

● **Ending:** Does the ending follow what's been set up by the rest of the story? Are our questions answered or addressed or purposely and satisfyingly unanswered? Do we need more to happen? Less? Does the ending explain too much/not enough? How has it delivered on or subverted the promises the story made in the beginning? What does the ending mean to how we make meaning of the action in the whole?

“Some Elements of Fiction” adapted from www.pleiadesmag.com by Matthew Salesses.