

HZ5101: Introduction to Creative Writing

**Division of English, Nanyang Technological University
Semester 2, AY 2021/2022**

Seminar Number:

Seminar leader:

Time:

Location:

Email address:

Office:

This course introduces creative writing through the practices of writing, reading and collaborative critical response. We will work with poetry, fiction, non-fiction and multimedia texts (which may include performance writing and text/image works of non-fiction). Each unit is designed to foster skills in language and creativity that can be applied beyond the given genre and beyond the classroom. In particular, we will work towards greater understanding and control of language's material presence, its referential power, and the relationships between content, form and reception. Students will be introduced to a range of composition processes intended to stimulate frequent and adventurous writing, and will be encouraged to make disciplined and inventive use of the revision process. They will also develop their abilities to create and participate in a fertile writing community.

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COURSE STRUCTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

SEMINARS:

Discussion & Readings

Students will attend one three-hour seminar per week during the semester. Seminars will include discussion of concepts and written examples, including those in the reader and others as nominated both by the lecturer and the students. The seminars are not a formal lecture. Your active engagement in the discussion is strongly encouraged, so please read, think, and be brave and generous in speaking. You are encouraged to share your own ideas and ideas from whatever you are reading.

Exercises

During the seminars, we will participate in generative writing exercises individually and collaboratively. These exercises are designed to help you get into the habit of writing, and of a regular creative practice. They will give you starting points for your assessed work, and let you try out new approaches. Not every exercise will result in a successful finished product, however you define that. Collectively, though, they should expand your view of what is possible and contribute to the body of draft material you have at your disposal.

Workshopping

Each student will be allocated workshop slots during seminar time, for which you are required to bring your own work (to be distributed a week in advance) for group discussion and feedback. We will work hard to make a culture of workshop discussion that is constructive, respectful, informed and imaginative.

Every writer's aims are different: this is what makes diverse literatures possible. When we read each other's work, our first task will be to glean something of the intentions of that work. Then we will offer responses about how those intentions correspond with the writing's actual effects. To some degree at least, different readers will experience different effects.

The thought of letting other people read and discuss your writing might seem frightening at first. Please remember, though, that a workshop is not a place for the presentation of perfect work; it is a place where we can fruitfully learn from our own and each other's experiments and adventures, including those that don't ultimately satisfy us. You are advised to bring work that you are receptive to hearing feedback on, and to remember that your fellow students are feeling nervous too!

Please see Appendix 1 for further notes.

SEMINAR NOTES:

- Please be present, and please be on time. If you enter late, there's no need to apologise, but settle into the class with the minimum disruption. If you are more than 20 minutes late to class, this will count as an absence.
- Use of the Internet during class time is not allowed.

- Eating is not allowed during class time.
- Please turn your phones off in class.
- The group needs your thoughts. Your comments, questions and contributions are invited, welcome, and absolutely necessary to productive creative discussion – however basic or as-yet-unformed those thoughts may be. However, make sure you listen as well as speak, and that you respect writing time as silent time, unless otherwise advised.
- Please let your seminar leader know as soon as possible if you have any disability or other issue that requires special accommodation in class (examples: you need to sit in a special position so you can see or hear well; you need to leave your phone on in case of a family emergency; you need to leave class early to attend a medical appointment, etc.).

BEYOND THE SEMINARS:

Writing time

Your participation in this course needs to be supported by substantial time spent writing outside of class. This is necessary for basic completion of the assignments.

For those of you who wish to have creative writing (or any creative practice) as an active part of your lives in the future, success in this course will not be measured by grades, but by how effectively you set up the physical and intellectual habits of writing, reading and engaging with new ideas. Dedication to these habits will show results in your grades, but also in the richness of your writing, and in the quality of your broader life experience. Please make the most of this rare opportunity.

Writing sources

Language is shared; texts always bear the traces of the texts that surround and precede them. You are encouraged to make conscious and creative use of source texts of many kinds and in many ways. You might, for example, re-situate in a poem the fragments of a conversation you've overheard, or use the narrative structure of a song you know as the basis for a story. Be aware of (and avoid) the problems of plagiarism, but also partake of the great storehouse of language around you. You can use a writing journal as a place to collect source material if you wish, or keep other notebooks.

Revision

Even though publishing writers occasionally (very occasionally) write work that achieves all its aims on the first draft, this is not a skill that can be learned in a semester. More often published work has gone through many phases of revision – and learning to revise is central to the aims of this class. Keep early drafts of your work, and take risks as you make new versions. Not everything you try will work, but if you are only willing to change the odd word or punctuation mark, you will miss at least half of the adventure of writing.

ASSESSMENT

Course Assessment Summary

1. Class Participation: 20%
2. Fiction, 1000-1500 words 20%
3. Poetry, 400-600 words 20%
4. Multimedia project, 300 word minimum 20%
5. Reflective Essay, 1000 words 20%

****Warning****

Plagiarism is an unacceptable practice in universities. See Appendix 3 for the English Division policy on plagiarism and additional notes for creative writers.

1. Participation

Requirement: Your participation mark will reflect your attendance, your willingness to come to class prepared and your contributions to class discussion and activities (such as writing exercises). Preparation for class includes bringing copies of your work on your allocated workshop dates. If you miss these dates without good reason, you will forfeit a portion of your participation mark. Preparation also includes reading and making notes on your fellow students' work before class time, so that you are ready to participate in workshop discussion with thoughtful comments.

Assessment weighting: 20%

2. Fiction

Requirement: 1000-1500 words of fiction. The fiction submission may be divided between one to three pieces of fiction, according to your tutor's guidelines. Please see the assessment sheets (Appendix 2) for an understanding of how this component will be assessed.

Assessment weighting: 20%

Due date: In Class Week 6

3. Poetry

Requirement: 400-600 words of poetry. This may be divided among as many poems and as many pages as your tutor advises. Poems may be in any style. Please see the assessment sheets (Appendix 2) for an understanding of how this component will be assessed.

Assessment weighting: 20%

Due date: In Class Week 11

4. Multimedia Project

The multimedia project asks you to combine your writing with other skill sets. You don't need to be an artist or a musician to make a great job of this assignment. You will be given guidance on how to participate in this part of the course, but some possible projects include: a film (and screenplay), a photo-essay, a screenplay and storyboard, a stage-play (and script), a travel-writing piece (with images), a report on a public or personal art event that you designed, a recorded radio play.

Requirement: 300 written words (minimum) presented in combination with another medium. The appropriate word length will vary according to your project: a script or fiction-based project is likely to require more words than a poetry-based project. Please use your discretion, and check with your seminar leader if you are at all unsure. The overall volume of work involved should be roughly equivalent to each of the Poetry and Fiction assessments for this course. Please see the assessment sheets (Appendix 2) for an understanding of how this component will be assessed.

Assessment weighting: 20%

Due date: In last class

5. Reflective Essay / Learning Journal

This component comprises a number of possible genres, all broadly under the umbrella of creative non-fiction. Each represents a “place” for you to reflect on and contextualize your writing process. You should show your thinking about your creative aims, the discoveries and problems of craft you are encountering, and the links you are making between what you read and what you write. Please see the assessment sheet (Appendix 2) for an understanding of how this component will be assessed.

Requirement: 1000 words of reflective essay / learning journal

AND: bibliographic details for any readings you refer to beyond the course reader

OPTIONAL: quotations or pasted-in excerpts from what you are reading – these must be clearly identified as quotes/excerpts, with bibliographic details provided.

Assessment weighting: 20%

Due date: In last class

ASSESSMENT NOTES:

- For the purposes of participation assessment, any unexcused lateness beyond 20 minutes of class start time will be marked as an absence.
- Please contact your lecturer immediately if you think you will have difficulty completing any of the requirements or submitting your work on time. Extensions are only granted in exceptional circumstances (for example, for medical reasons or in cases of family emergency), and documentation is required. However, support or resources may also be available to help you manage more minor difficulties, so please don't hesitate to contact me for an appointment to discuss anything that comes up.
- Late assignment submissions will be penalised by three percentage points per day. No work will be accepted more than seven days after the due date unless an extension has been pre-arranged.
- Assignments should be printed in a plain, legible 12 or 14 point font, except where your creative intentions demand otherwise (for concrete/visual poetry, for example). Please note that simply choosing a fancy font does not constitute concrete poetry or multimedia creativity – it can just make your work harder to read. Use unusual fonts with caution.
- Please detach the assignment assessment sheet from this syllabus and attach it to the front of each assignment.
- Fiction assignments should be 1.5 or 2x spaced.
- Please include a word count at the end of each assignment.
- Assignments should be stapled, or secured in a closed manila folder. Please DO NOT submit your work in clear-files. All submitted work must be typed.
- Assignments should be submitted to your seminar leader's assignment box at the English Division office.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE*

Week	Topics
1	National Holiday
2 Aug 16	Introduction
3 Aug 23	Fiction
4 Aug 30	Fiction
5 Sept 6	Fiction Workshop
6 Sept 13	Introduction to Poetry
	FICTION ASSIGNMENT DUE
7 Sept 20	Poetry
8 Sept 27	RECESS WEEK
9 Oct 4	Poetry
10 Oct 11	Poetry Workshop
11 Oct 18	Introduction to Multimedia
	POETRY ASSIGNMENT DUE
12 Oct 25	Multimedia
13 Nov 1	Multimedia
14 Nov 8	Multimedia Presentation Class
	MULTIMEDIA ASSIGNMENT + REFLECTIVE ESSAY DUE IN CLASS

*This is a tentative outline. Topics and readings will alter according to class and tutor interests and progress.

REQUIRED READING

A reader of compiled material is available at cost from Print Services, HSS Level B1.

APPENDIX 1: WORKSHOP LEARNING AGREEMENT AND FEEDBACK GUIDE

Workshops are an integral part of any creative writing class. At least twice during the semester you will present up to two pages of written work to your colleagues for discussion and critique. This may be poetry, fiction or a multimedia project draft or plan. Use this workshop time to help you prepare for whichever assignments are forthcoming. A schedule of allocated dates for these workshops will be drawn up within the first few classes. If you forget to bring in work to class, you will be responsible for distributing this work by email. Ensure you have your class's email addresses at the start of the semester. However, email is a very poor second to distributing the hard copies on the due date.

Learning Agreement

The purpose of creative writing workshops is not only to provide your work with an audience, though this is important. It is always useful to test the success of your writing on a community of readers in order to gain an idea of what works (what communicates or "carries") and what doesn't. You can then think about *why* some things succeed and others don't. This process of workshop-generated reflection is key to good revision and to informing the critical self-commentaries that form part of all assessed assignments.

But there is more to it than that. In submitting your work for discussion you are providing us – the group – with an opportunity to think about some of the key issues in creating stories, poems, novels, and scripts. These issues may be technical, ethical, perceptual, philosophical... And it isn't just you – the author – who benefits. In analysing your work, we are all pressed in to thinking about the issues your work raises.

The workshop provides us all with an opportunity to learn, regardless of whose writing is under discussion. For this reason it is crucial that you participate in every session. Your participation will benefit you as much as the person whose work is being discussed.

Although undertaking studies in creative writing demonstrates willingness to engage in the workshop process, not everyone enjoys having their work discussed, let alone dissected; not everyone feels comfortable in the spotlight. It *can* be a trying experience. It can also seem quite at odds with the day-to-day reality of writing, which usually involves silence and solitude. Even those of us who do feel at ease may struggle to cope with certain kinds – and levels – of criticism. It is therefore important that your criticism be constructive.

In order for your criticism to be constructive, you should endeavour to identify and praise what does succeed before you go on to talk about what might not. And in discussing what works less well, you should try always to think about solutions, remedies, the ways in which a difficulty might be resolved. What is the problem exactly? How do you think it might be fixed? Bear in mind that the improvement of technique and structure – insofar as these can be separated from theme and from one's personal philosophy – is our primary focus.

Needless to say, whatever your feelings about the writer, it is the work you should be focussed upon. The workshop is not a place to air personal grievances and the work itself should never become a pretext for other kinds of criticism. This guideline for conduct should, naturally, apply to correspondence outside the classroom as well. Moreover, the confidentiality of someone else's written work must be respected; that which is meant for discussion in the workshop should not be shared elsewhere.

Feedback guide

The writing workshop is an opportunity for you to share your creative writing in progress with the group, but also an opportunity for you to aid in the development of others' work. There are a few guidelines for giving and receiving feedback which will make the sessions as productive and useful as possible, so please bear them in mind. Refer to this list if you get stuck when giving feedback.

Giving Feedback:

- Give an overall response at the end that is positive and supportive and balances criticism with praise. Think 'critical sandwich' – a positive comment, followed by a more critical, questioning comment, followed by another positive comment.
- Everyone is expected to contribute in class, bear in mind the above when making comments in class.
- Avoid psychoanalysing the writer, assuming their work is biographical, or giving comments that are personal in any way.
- It is useful to write comments or mark/underline your copy, then give this copy to the person presenting

Things to consider when giving feedback:

Initial impressions:

- What's your 'gut feeling' about the piece, what first impressions do you have?
- When you have read it, what remains, are there certain images or ideas that linger in your consciousness?
- What are the most significant aspects of the piece?
- What were the strongest images or ideas?
- Did it feel fresh, original or distinctive?
- Was it hard to put down?
- What are its strong points? Its weaker areas?
- Does it feel complete?
- Are you left with a sense of satisfying mystery, or confusion?
- What do you think the piece is about?
- Did the piece provoke thought?
- Does the piece feel complete, rounded, or like a fragment?

After the initial impressions, you need to focus on more technical areas:

- Does the piece locate the reader?
- Do you know whose point of view the piece is written from? Is this the right choice for the story?
- What is the narrative voice like – distinctive and clear, or confusing or vague?
- Is the setting well-evoked? Is it appropriate for the story?
- Does it begin well, or could it lose its first paragraph?
- Does it end well, or could it lose its last paragraph? Is the ending resonant, leaving you thinking about the story? Is it satisfying? Does it 'tie' everything up too well, or does it leave frustrating questions?

- Does the writer ask the reader to connect emotionally and physically?
- Does the writer make good use of silence and absence, as well as description?
- Are the character's convincing? Do they have complexity, motivation and feel like real people, or are they stereotyped and one-dimensional?
- Are character actions plausible and interesting?
- Are there too many characters?
- Is the dialogue effective? – do voices feel distinctive from one another, as though they belong to characters? Does the dialogue 'do' anything in terms of moving the plot along? It's worth checking the dialogue to see that it does at least 2 things, e.g. forward the plot, illustrate motivation.
- Use of metaphor and simile – are these clichéd, or do they feel fresh and appropriate, or are they too oblique?
- Is there a good use of the senses, or do certain senses dominate?
- Is the piece overwritten – too much density of description?
- Are there moments of particularity and specificity, or moments of generalisation? Are these appropriate?
- Does the piece have a sense of rhythm?
- Is it well-paced?
- Does the piece use the same 'mode' too much (dialogue, description, action) or switch between them appropriately to inject energy?
- What is the form of the piece, how does this work with its content?
- Think about overall structure – is it coherent? How does the piece handle forward and backward movement in time?
- Does the piece give away too much or too little – how does it ask the reader to participate?

Please make sure you read all the work that is due to be workshopped that week, make notes on the work to help you participate in discussion, and bring your copies of the work back to class.

Receiving Feedback

- Remember you are in the privileged position of having a cross-section of your potential readership spending lots of time looking at your work in detail.
- During feedback in class it's useful to stay silent for the initial feedback. This avoids leading the reader towards a particular interpretation of your work, and means you will get an outside view of your writing.
- Be open to feedback and see it as a positive way to improve and develop your work.
- Don't take more critical comments personally, instead think constructively about how you can use that information to improve your work.

APPENDIX 2: ASSESSMENT SHEETS**STUDENT:****STUDENT NUMBER:****ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: 1. Participation**

CRITERION	SCORE / GRADE RANGE
	F D C B A
Attendance	/ 13
Distributed workshop copies on time	
Attended own workshop session	
Discussion contributions	-----
SUMMATIVE GRADE:	PLEASE NOTE: Criteria may not be equally weighted in their assessment value.

STUDENT:**ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: 2. Fiction****DATE SUBMITTED:**

CRITERION	GRADE RANGE				
	F	D	C	B	A
1. Exhibits care with language: demonstrates interesting word choice and dynamic sentence variation.	-----				
2. Shows awareness of and control over the combined effects of character, point of view and voice.	-----				
3. Shows awareness of and control over narrational choices including plot, event sequence and duration. The work is shaped so that it has a sense of ending.	-----				
4. Pays careful attention to texture and sensory detail. Conveys a sense of immersion in the physical world of the story.	-----				
5. Demonstrates control of grammar and punctuation, including any intentional manipulation of received conventions.	-----				
SUMMATIVE GRADE:	PLEASE NOTE: Criteria may not be equally weighted in their assessment value.				

STUDENT:

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: 3. Poetry

DATE SUBMITTED:

CRITERION	GRADE RANGE				
	F	D	C	B	A
1. Exhibits care with language: demonstrates interesting word choice and dynamic phrasings, with an awareness of the aural and/or visual qualities of the language.	-----				
2. Shows awareness and control over referential effects, including voice, situation, image and association.	-----				
3. The work is shaped so that it conveys a sense of structure, whether contained or exploratory.	-----				
4. Demonstrates control of grammar and punctuation, including any intentional manipulation of received conventions.	-----				
SUMMATIVE GRADE:	PLEASE NOTE: Criteria may not be equally weighted in their assessment value.				

STUDENT:**ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: 4. Multimedia****DATE SUBMITTED:**

CRITERION	GRADE RANGE				
	F	D	C	B	A
1. Exhibits care with language: demonstrates interesting word choice and dynamic phrasings, with an awareness of the visual and/or aural qualities of the language.	-----				
2. Achieves substance in the work with language, using structures such as plot, character, verse form, scene or other appropriate to the chosen form.	-----				
3. Shows originality in the choices and implementation of medium and concept. Creates imaginative and apt conjunctions of the written and non-written content, with an awareness of their effects on each other.	-----				
4. Demonstrates control of grammar , punctuation and presentation, including any intentional manipulation of received conventions.	-----				
SUMMATIVE GRADE:	PLEASE NOTE: Criteria may not be equally weighted in their assessment value.				

STUDENT:**ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: 5. Reflective Essay****DATE SUBMITTED:**

CRITERION	SCORE / GRADE RANGE				
	F	D	C	B	A
1. Shows breadth and/or depth of reading, and a serious, alert engagement with ideas.	-----				
2. Shows evidence of the conscious investigation and development of writing skills.	-----				
3. Critical links are made between readings and the student-author's own writing practice.	-----				
5. Correct and complete bibliographic details are included (if required).					
SUMMATIVE GRADE:	PLEASE NOTE: Criteria may not be equally weighted in their assessment value.				

APPENDIX 3: HSS English Division: Definition and Penalties for Plagiarism

Definition

Plagiarism (from the Latin word for ‘kidnapper’) is the deliberate or accidental presentation of someone else’s ideas or words as your own. This includes:

- The unacknowledged use of words, images, diagrams, graphs, or ideas derived from any source such as books, journals, magazines, the visual media, and the internet. Note: cutting and pasting words from the internet into your own essay, even if you reword them, is still plagiarism.
- Copying the work of a fellow student, having another student write one’s assignments, or allowing another student to borrow one’s work.
- Buying and/or copying essays, assignments, projects etc from the internet or any other source and handing them in as your own.

Please bear in mind that your lecturers know the subject and have read widely. They therefore can spot unreferenced quotations, and can tell the difference between university level writing and that of published scholars.

Penalties

- If a first year student is caught plagiarizing, and it is the student’s first offense, the student will have the opportunity to rewrite the paper with one grade reduction.
- After the first year of studies, it is expected that a student thoroughly understands the implications of plagiarism. Thus, after the first year, or if a student is caught plagiarizing a second time, the student will receive an F for the assignment.

Why plagiarism is academically dishonest

- The unacknowledged borrowing of another’s work is theft.
- Independent and creative thinking, as well as intellectual responsibility, are fundamental to a humanities education, and cannot be developed if one simply borrows the work of another.

How to avoid academic dishonesty

Plagiarism

- If you use an author’s exact words, you must put them in quotation marks. If you paraphrase another’s ideas, you again must indicate the source to your reader.

- Facts and statistics that are not “common knowledge” must be referenced.
- Be sure to use the method of citation recommended by your professor.
- If in doubt, it is always best to reference your material.
- Remember that your lecturer wants to see your ideas and interpretations. Avoid excessively quoting secondary sources and show your reader your thinking.

Collusion and complicity

- Ask your lecturer if you are allowed to work on assignments in groups.
- Get the approval of your professor if you want to hand in material that you have already submitted for another course.
- Do not allow students to copy your work (including work from previous semesters).
- Follow the examination rules set out by the university.

If you still have questions, please ask your professors, or consult the website:

<http://www.plagiarism.org>.

Sources for this document:

The Little, Brown Essential Handbook. Ed. Jane E. Aaron. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR CREATIVE WRITERS:

The conventions for acknowledgement in creative writing are somewhat different to those for acknowledgement in academic writing, but NO form of intellectual dishonesty is acceptable. It is acceptable to appropriate material from source texts, AS LONG AS your use of these texts is acknowledged, is within reason, and demonstrates substantial independent and creative thinking of your own.

There are a number of ways to acknowledge the use of source texts in creative writing, and these vary according to your stylistic imperatives, the level of dependence on the source text and the level of familiarity your audience is likely to have with the source text. For the purposes of this course, you need not always use quotation marks for quoted material if this interferes with your stylistic imperatives (they may be intrusive in a poem, for example). You MUST, however, acknowledge any source texts you use through reference integrated into the work itself, through footnotes or through endnotes. Do not “borrow” work from friends, books, the internet, song lyrics or any other source without acknowledgement, as this counts as plagiarism.

Guide for Poetry: Reviewing drafts-in-progress in preparation for workshop.

Author _____ Title _____

Reviewer _____ Date _____

The goal of this workshop is to *describe* to the author the current state of the draft and to help them *imagine* a future for its expansion and refinement. The workshop works because of reciprocity. The more effort and time you invest in someone's draft, the more they will invest in yours.

Prep:

1. Read the entire draft and all the poems. Prioritize comprehension by looking up unknown words and references.
2. Prepare the draft for review: add stanza numbers and line numbers to make referencing the text easy. e.g: S1L3 (for Stanza
1, Line 3)
2. The draft should be annotated and submitted to the author, along with notes.
 - i. Read by annotating shifts or important moments in point of view, voice, tone, imagery, diction, or style. This will help you refer to the text while workshopping.
 - ii. Read by annotating shifts in your comprehension and emotional response. Are there moments when these peak or subside? Are there moments when you experience confusion? When you don't understand your role as a reader? Moments where you lose a connection with the speaker of the poem? Where is your connection strongest and why? Which phrases or lines create the greatest impact on you/lose you? Mark these with an X or a ✓ for easy reference
3. Keep notes in response to the following questions. These notes should be submitted to the author so that they can keep track of your response to the draft. Avoid, at all costs, 'yes'/'no' answers and, instead, give examples of moments where the author is doing this well, or provide suggestions for how s/he might solve a problem in this area. Use stanza and line numbers to make your notes legible to the author.
4. Bring your notes and the marked-up draft to workshop and submit it to the author. I will examine your notes on occasion. Please remember that your participation in workshop is an assessed portion of your total grade.

Notes:**1. "The World" of the poem and setting:**

Is the world or scenario of the poem clearly defined? Is it convincing on a sensory level (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile etc.)? What do you need *more* or *less* of in terms of description? If this world is set in an alternative reality, can you believe/understand it? Is the ambience and mood clear? Do these fit with the main themes or concerns of the speaker in the poem?

2. Speaker and Voice:

Is the central concern of the speaker evident to you? Are there sub-concerns or resolutions? Can you describe the personality, attitude, and emotional condition of the speaker? How does the speaker convey their situation? How does diction and voice interact with their world-view? How do you feel when you "hear" the speaker?

3. Point of view and reader's relationship with the poem:

How would you describe the narrative point-of-view and scope of the poem? ? Would the prose benefit from a shift in point of view? How does the point of view and language define your relationship to the text— do you feel immersed, removed, or like you are lost? What is causing this response?

4. Music and Sound:

Poetry has been described as *eunoia* or 'beautiful sound'. Like music, a poem depends on its pauses and silences, as well as the arrangement of sounds. Consider how rhyme, rhythm, and other musical elements such as alliteration, consonance, or assonance help you *hear* the poem and help you understand its meaning. Are there moments that don't 'sound' good to your ear? Identify these and explain why.

6. Visual form and Organization:

Like all beautiful thinking, visual and formal arrangement matters in poetry. Can you make sense of the stanza breaks and the order in which they are arranged? Would reordering lines or stanzas bring clarity and allow for greater interpretive pleasure? Do you find that the poem needs trimming or expansion of entire lines or stanzas? Identify these and explain why.

7. Other considerations?

Guide for Fiction: Reviewing drafts-in-progress in preparation for workshop.

Author _____ Title _____

Reviewer _____ Date _____

The goal of this workshop is to *describe* to the author the current state of the draft and to help them *imagine* a future for its expansion and refinement. The workshop works because of reciprocity. The more effort and time you invest in someone's draft, the more they will invest in yours.

Prep:

1. Read the entire draft. Prioritize comprehension by looking up unknown words, references etc.
2. Prepare the draft for review: add page numbers and paragraph numbers to make referencing the text easy.
2. The draft should be marked up and submitted to the author.
 - i. Read by annotating a) plot shifts b) character shifts c) scene shifts. This will help you refer to the text while workshopping.
 - ii. Read by annotating shifts in your comprehension and emotional response. Are there moments when these peak or subside? Are there moments when you don't understand what is going on or experience confusion?
3. Keep notes in response to the following questions. These notes should be submitted to the author so that they can keep track of your response to the draft. Avoid at all costs 'yes'/'no' answers and, instead, give examples of moments where the author is doing this well, or provide suggestions for how s/he might solve a problem in this area. Use page numbers and paragraph numbers to make your notes legible to the author.
4. Bring your notes and the marked-up draft to workshop and submit it to the author. I will examine your notes on occasion. Please remember that your participation in workshop is an assessed portion of your total grade.

Notes:**1. "The World" of the text and setting:**

Is the fictional world clearly defined? Is it convincing on a sensory level (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile etc.)? What do you need *more* or *less* of in terms of description? If this world is set in an alternative reality, can you believe/understand it? Is the ambience and mood clear? Do these fit with the main conflict of the story and its characters?

2. Conflict and Plot:

Is the central conflict evident to you? Are there sub-conflicts? *Can* you clearly mark the phases of exposition, inciting incident, rising and falling action, climax, and dénouement/resolution? What seems over-present? What is missing? Does causation make sense or are you asking "Why does *this* happen"? Does the plot work convincingly to resolve the conflict? Does the beginning/middle/end sequence make sense to you? Might the story be improved if the sequence of events were reorganized?

3. Narrative voice and point of view:

How would you describe the narrative point-of-view, attitude, and voice?

Does the narrator's work seem to support the plot and the remaining voices of the characters? Would the prose benefit from a shift in point of view? How does the point of view define your relationship to the text— do you feel immersed, removed, or like you are lost?

4. Characters:

How would you describe the personality and psychology of the protagonist? How do the side-characters seem to relate or support this protagonist? Consider voice, gesture, habit, appearance— is the author helping you visualize and form an emotional relationship with the characters? What might they change or expand on in order to do so? Are you convinced by the character's motivations? Do they seem consistent with his/her/their nature?

5. Dialogue and discourse:

Consider how language is being used here, both by the narrator and by the characters. Does the type of discourse suit the time period, setting, characters, and world of the story? Is the lexicon, vernacular, or speech pattern appropriate to the world/characters? How is dialogue used in relation to plot and character? Can it be moved or reorganized in other ways? Does the tone match up with the central plots here?

6. Other considerations: