

Workshopping

“How can we help make this piece the best it can be?”

The goal of a workshop is to create a supportive community for writers. This involves considering a work in progress and offering specific ideas, feedback, and questions.

The Workshoppers:

We have a conversation about the piece.

Opening: Each comment on a strength of the piece that has stuck with you. This can be a specific point or detail.

What did we notice about this piece? What particularly rings true to you? What seems to be the heart of the piece? What is this piece about and what is it trying to do?

Elements to consider include:

- Character
- Plot
- Setting
- Dialogue
- Voice/perspective
- Imagery and detail
- Structure: how does it begin and end? How do events unfold?

What are the most interesting parts of this piece? What do you connect with most, and why?

What makes this piece compelling? What does it need to be more compelling? To have more at stake?

Does this piece have too much going on or too little? Be specific. What's vivid and what isn't?

What does this piece need to get to the next level of development? Should something be improved or changed? Are there times you feel disconnected from the story, or parts that do not ring true?

What can you see in this piece's future or expansion into a longer work?

Respond to author's specific questions.

The Writer:

- Listen and take notes!
- Ask questions and request suggestions about specific aspects of the work, anything you're particularly struggling with or wondering about.
- Can join in the discussion at the end to give us more background on the piece or thoughts for its future expansion.
- Don't feel you need to apply all editing suggestions that come from the workshop. These are just ideas for consideration.

When someone presents their work for feedback they put a high amount of **trust** in us as a group. That means we must respect them in two ways:

Honesty – Provide constructive feedback on your thoughts and feelings about the work, being as *specific* as possible. Consider both what is particularly strong and well done, and areas for improvement, editing or further development. Don't stop after "I like it" – go on to say *what* you liked or disliked, and *why*.

Kindness – The goal of a workshop is encouragement and inspiration. We are critiquing the work, not the writer. Criticism should be honest and constructive, with equal attention to the piece's strengths and weaknesses.