



Creative Writing & Stagecraft Workshops

with Steve Crone and Joe Murray

Creative Writing Workshop Report by Joe Murray

This was an introductory workshop for beginners at ten hours total. It was thought that ten weeks of one hour workshops would be more productive for the students than five weeks of two hours as this would allow us to incorporate more learning time through homework and setting the students tasks.

From Week One the group was introduced to the world of creative writing. The intention was to bring each of them to an understanding of the processes of writing poetry, short fiction and also writing for the stage—to give them a good grounding at the beginning of their writing careers. Thereby building confidence and self-worth. One student, Tanvir, had to return to Bangladesh, but asked to be given the weekly handouts and homework online. A WhatsApp for the students was set up.

The students were asked to do some “free-writing” and to write a short acrostic poem. They were then asked to work collaboratively to write a poem collectively. They were given homework to write a poem on any subject they liked. This was discussed in session the following week. They were taken on a woodland nature walk to teach them about using all over their senses and to develop an understanding of “place” and the importance of these things when developing story.

During the following weeks the students were shown, through the use of prosody, how a poem works. The idea here was to introduce them to the “rhythms” of speech and of poetry. They were introduced to different types of poetry and rhyming schemes. They were encouraged to write their own poems. Students were also shown how to write short fiction, This included types of character and character development, story structure, character backstory, the idea of the story arc and setting the scene. These elements would be carried through to writing for theatre and stage. Emphasis was put on editing your work.

During the writing for theatre part of the workshop we looked at scripts; how scripts for various media types are laid out differently. They were introduced to the idea and practice of collaborative “brainstorming” and guided to create a storyline for a short theatre performance script. This collaboration and script writing took up the latter part of the Workshop. The WhatsApp group was used by the students to continue their collaboration away from the workshop to develop their ideas. When they were finished this collaborative work, they were tasked to write their own different ending to their play as ultimately the workshop was about personal development and creating their “own writing voice”.

While a some of the participants decided they were not hugely interested in the drama aspect, we lost a couple along the way, I found it remarkable how well the other students worked together to create a theatre piece, albeit a short one. They all got on well and seemed to enjoy learning the processes of creative writing in its different forms. The tie in with the stagecraft workshops went very well. This showed how directors actors and stage managers work together by taking a script and developing it for stage. This process became even more enjoyable for them when they began to work with their own play script. I have tutored many creative writing workshops in the past but the idea of allying this one to the stagecraft workshop added a new element that I, and the students, found very enjoyable. I have always known these workshops to be great platforms for building personal confidence and self-esteem. I look forward to further developing this project in the future.