

Start Writing Fiction

Course map

Start Writing Fiction is designed to help you to start and then continue writing. Your writing ability will develop as you progress through the course.

There are six main approaches within the course; you will learn to write:

- through writing – by trying it yourself
- through reading – novels and stories by established writers and also the work of your fellow learners
- by developing powers of observations and using a writer's notebook to generate ideas
- by learning how, when and why to edit and redraft your work
- by listening to the testimony of other writers and how they approach their work
- through discussion with your fellow writers – about draft work, editing and what you've read recently.

This is what you will be doing when:

Week 1: Starting to write fiction

- Start keeping a writer's notebook for life observations
- Write both fact and fiction, discussing the difference
- Read character sketches in novels
- Do a quiz on the readings from Orwell and Heller
- Listen to novelists on how they started
- Start writing yourself.

Week 2: The habit of writing

- Discover your own writing rituals
- Listen to novelists talking about their own rituals
- Read novel extracts for how characters appear
- Do a quiz about the readings from Atkinson and Greene

- Learn about heightening powers of observation
- Experiment with story beginnings and write a mini-story.

Week 3: Writing is editing

- Discover the importance of reflecting on your writing
- Explore how, where and when to make changes
- Consider what to bear in mind as you edit
- Review work from fellow writers
- Receive feedback from other writers
- Start writing another story.

Week 4: Building your story

- Listen to what novelists think about research
- Develop further a notebook habit for research and ideas
- Explore ways of turning events into plots
- Read writing that focuses on personal concerns
- Do a quiz about the reading from d'Aguiar's novel
- Investigate where ideas for stories come from.

Week 5: Creating convincing characters

- Read about four ways to create characters
- Do a quiz about Novakovich's methods of creating characters
- Discover the effect of 'conflict' on your writing
- Learn how to turn stereotypes into rounded characters
- Review work from fellow writers
- Receive feedback from other writers.

Week 6: Developing and portraying characters

- Listen to novelists on developing their characters
- Investigate ways of getting to know more about your characters
- Read a short story to see how characters are portrayed
- Learn four ways of portraying characters
- Experiment with one or more of these methods
- Start writing the first draft of your final short story.

Week 7: Reading as a writer

- Listen to novelists on how important reading is for them
- Note your responses to what you read
- Read a novel extract, investigating its technique
- Do a quiz about the reading from Toni Morrison's *Jazz*
- Review the first draft of your short story and redraft
- Learn of the benefits of reviewing other work.

Week 8: Your final story

- Review work from fellow writers
- Receive feedback from other writers
- Write a reflection on your story
- Edit and redraft your story
- Review the important tools that help you to progress as a writer
- Do a quiz about character and story and the approaches picked up on the course.