

Setting Up A Writers' Critique Circle (II)

Society of Singapore Writers First Friday Writers' Corner
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Introduction to the Material and Method for Tonight

Rather than lecturing, we will be doing some hands-on reviewing tonight in small writing circles of 4-5 people each. After we do each round, we will get together to reflect on the experience.

We will be providing sample "flash fiction" material to review. The material is real (from an online writing forum), but anonymous, so you won't be as traumatized by the inevitable negative comments as you would be if it was your own writing.

Our overall goal is to become comfortable with reviewing in a writers' circle, with receiving the kind of feedback a writers' circle generates.

Part 1 – An Introduction to the Art and Craft of Criticism

In your groups, introduce yourselves, and share your experiences about critical comments you have received on your work. Which experiences helped you? Which hindered you?

Appoint yourselves a Scribe, who will summarize your experiences and share it with the main group.

The members of our group:

Our experiences:

Helpful

Hindering

Plenary Discussion

Part 2 – Establishing Guidelines for your Writers’ Circle

Handout: “Writer’s Critique Group–Guidelines” by Patricia Harrelson

In your groups again, review and discuss the handout. If you were setting up a WCC (what Patricia calls a “Writer’s Critique Group”), what guidelines would you like? (*Scribe: take note of the differing opinions within your group, as you might end up in different WCC’s with different guidelines.*) Refer back to your answers for Question 1, and identify how you would promote the kinds of experiences that helped you most, and avoid the kinds of experiences that hindered you most.

Our Agreed Guidelines:

Other Opinions:

Plenary Discussion:

Part 3 – Reviewing a Sample Work

Handouts: *A sample short fiction item provided by the Facilitator*

Chose one member to play “writer”; the remaining members will play “reviewers”. Spend a few moments reviewing the provided piece, and then see if you can provide helpful feedback to the “writer”. After all reviewers have each had a say, reflect on what it felt like to give and to receive the criticism.

Sample Work Review:

Positive Experiences

Negative Experiences

Plenary Discussion:

Part 4 (if time permits) – A Repeat of Part 3 with a different “writer” and work

If time permits, we will repeat Part 3, this time selecting a different member to play the author and reviewing a different work. Try to adjust your criticism according to the reflections from Part 3.

Plenary Discussion:

Resources

Here are some online resources you can use if you want to think further on how to critique other writers' works:

[Critiquing others' work by Francine DeGrood Taylor](#)

[Hardcore Critique Advice by Amy Sterling Casil](#)

[How to Critique Fiction by Victory Crayne](#)