

your evening class

# CREATIVE WRITING



## workbook 01

getting started





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## In this lesson you will

- learn about this course
- consider what creative writing is
- formulate your own personal goals.

## About this course

This is a complete course that you can take in the comfort of your own home, or while sitting on train or plane travelling to and from work.

This course will be for you whether you

- are writing already or just thinking about it
- have settled on a particular field
- want to explore your creativity in a variety of ways.

It aims to

- be enjoyable and give you some fun
- stimulate you
- give you ideas and tools
- unlock and develop your creativity
- instil a sense of confidence.

## ■ How to use the workbook and CD

The course is designed to be as close to being in a classroom with a tutor as you can get. The 'lessons' are interactive and the materials are designed to give you things to

- read
- listen to
- think about
- do
- reflect on.

The workbook contains

- advice on writing
- examples
- practical exercises.

The CD contains a mixture of

- introduction, explanation and amplification of the exercises and the principles contained in them
- further advice on writing
- extracts from published work
- criticism, general points and discussion.

## Method

The workbook and CD are designed to interact so that you move from one to the other. The going back and forth between book and CD means the CD script and workbook are not to be treated as two separate things but as a whole.

## Structure

The complete course is 30 hours. It is divided into

- ten modules, each of three hours
- each module is further divided into three 'lessons', each of one hour.

Whilst we are not giving specific timings for all the individual exercises, some will be short and others longer, we suggest you take as long as you need with them. The lessons might well vary in length but in total each lesson including reading, thinking, writing and listening to the CD is designed to take 50–55 minutes. Roughly

- one third of your time listening to your tutor on the CD
- two thirds working through the exercises in the workbook.

The method and structure is the same for each lesson and will continue until the lesson is finished, after which you will move on to the next one.

## Advice

- Do not plough through the whole thing without stopping.
- Take regular breaks.
- Do it at your own pace and you will get the most benefit from it.

## Using the workbook and CD

You will be able to start all the exercises in your workbook and complete the shorter ones. However, you will need to finish the longer exercises in your own notebook.

It is essential at this point that you listen to the advice on the CD.



Play Track 1.1

## What is creative writing?

What do you understand by the term Creative Writing? Think about this and write your definition down here before you listen to the definition on the CD.

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Play Track 1.2

Why have you chosen to do this course?

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What do you want to get from it? Give three

a) immediate, short-term goals

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

and b) long-term goals.

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think this course will help you achieve these goals?

Take these thoughts, especially your goals, and write them here as a mission statement.

### ■ My mission statement

✎ Write

Has this helped you clarify your thoughts about the subject and what you hope to get out of your course? Keep this mission statement by you: it will help you stay on track with your work as you progress through the course.

 1.3 Play Track 1.3

*Now, cover up the rest of the page with your bookmark card and do not look at it until you have read through what is below.*

### ■ The three most important things to do as a writer

Before you turn the page, write down what you think are the three most important things you must do as a writer.

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

Now you have done that, you can look.

The three most important things you *must* do if you want to be a writer are

- 1 Read
- 2 Read
- 3 Read

*'If you want to be a writer, you just do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot. There's no short cut.'* Stephen King, *On Writing*, p. 164.



Play Track 1.4

## Reading is important. Why?

Think about this question and in the space provided, write down three reasons why you think reading is important for writers.

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

How do your reasons compare with the answers on the CD?



Play Track 1.5

If you don't read voraciously you run the risk, among other things, of

- writing poorly
- writing things others have already written
- creating dull, uninteresting characters, situations or stories.

**Reading...** *'offers you a constantly growing knowledge of what has been and what hasn't, what is trite and what is fresh, what works and what just lies there dying (or dead) on the page. The more you read, the less apt you are to make a fool of yourself with your pen or word processor.'* Stephen King, *On Writing*, p. 171.



Play Track 1.6

## ■ Exercise

What books and films can you remember reading or seeing in your life? Sit somewhere quietly with a paper and pen and let them come into your mind. Jot down as many as you can remember. Do this exercise for at least 20 minutes, though it will probably take longer. This is not for anyone else to read. It is for you to understand, so just write brief notes.

### ✎ Write

Look over your list and see what sense you can make of it.

- Is there any pattern?
- Are there any common themes?
- Does it reveal any particular interests or obsessions?

Now, adopt the same procedure and make a second list of the sorts of things you

- have written
- want to write
- or are writing.

### ✎ Write

Is there any correspondence between the two lists? Does anything surprise you? Is it as you expected or are there any glaring omissions?

For instance:

- If you are trying to write a crime novel have you read a lot of crime books? If not, you might want to remedy that.

- Do you want to write plays? If so, have you few or no memories of ever seeing anything in the theatre? Again, put that right.
- Is your reading not very adventurous? Then branch out. Try to read something you have never read before. If you have never read a Mills and Boon romance, start with one. See what you can learn from it.

What else do the two lists reveal about you and your reading and writing habits? Compare them and don't hurry over it; give it some thought. This will be useful information for you as a writer. Write down any observations you have.

### Write

In 2008, Waterstone's Books did a promotion for the Writer's Year in which Sebastian Faulks listed 40 books which had inspired him to literary success. It was called the Writer's Table and he listed the books that had shaped his career. Faulks wrote brief notes for each book on the list, explaining in 20 words or so why the books were important and why they mattered to him. They included classic novels like *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens and *The Rainbow* by D H Lawrence, as well as poetry in the form of T S Eliot's 'The Waste Land' and Philip Larkin's 'The Whitsun Weddings'. Faulks also had room for Ian Fleming's James Bond novel *Moonraker* as well as more contemporary novels. Look over the list of reading matter you have compiled in this workbook and list six of them that have already inspired you or that you think could in some way inspire you with your writing. Write brief notes on why you think each piece of writing could inspire you.

(Check out Sebastian Faulks' list at the Writer's Table, Waterstone's Books – <http://www.waterstones.com>)

 **Write**

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_

**Finally in this lesson – how do you read?**

This may seem an obvious question. We all know how to read, but how do you read as a writer? Write down five things you think it is important to look for when you are reading as a writer.

 **Write**

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_

You will have your own answers, but here are some suggestions –

First, do you like it? Whether you like the story or not; whether it grabs you is important. But if you don't like it you can still learn from it. Sometimes you can learn even more from the stories that don't work for you. But the key thing is to try to find out why they don't. If you read a story that leaves you cold, ask why that is.

Ask:

- What is missing? What could be left out?
- Is it the plot?
- Is it the characters?
- Is there a point to the story?

- Is it plausible?
- Is the language at fault? Too poor or too fancy? Does it show off too much?

## **In this lesson you have**

- learned about this course
- considered what creative writing is
- thought about the importance of reading
- considered how you read
- formulated your own personal goals
- written your own mission statement.