

CREATIVE WRITING SYLLABUS & RUBRIC

SKILLS ▶	PREPARATION	WRITING	FINISHING
▼ LEVELS			
NEOPHYTE	You draw material mostly from your own life.	You enjoy the writing process without worrying about end results.	You don't feel the need to edit, revise, or redraft.
	You enjoy reading, though not critically or with purpose.	Your reading does inform and influence your writing but not in a considered way.	You are your only audience. You write for yourself.
	You have fun trying out dares, challenges and writing exercises.	You write fast and loose, letting the story develop of its own volition.	You ask friends, family or other writers for feedback, and start learning to weigh their responses dispassionately.
	You begin reading critical and theoretical literature.	You become more conscious of the levels of meaning involved in writing and storytelling.	You start to regard your work more critically and recognise the need to revise.
	You learn to summon inspiration at will.	You challenge yourself to write more in a shorter amount of time.	You find ways of tracking writing time and word count that work for you.
	You study reading and writing techniques.	You try techniques and exercises recommended by other writers.	You try revision and redrafting techniques you've read about.
	You compare yourself to other writers with a view to learning from them.	You write pastiches and fan fiction, and attempt to emulate the styles of your favourite writers.	You share your work and participate in fandoms.
	You make preparations before you begin a project.	You incorporate your preparation into your spontaneous writing.	You compare your manuscript to your initial vision or idea of the story.
	You research, rather than relying solely on what you already know.	You write in more details, and use your imagination to fill in the gaps.	You check for plot holes, errors and discrepancies when editing.
	You come alive to language, and the subtleties of the communication of meaning.	You try to communicate with greater precision, even in quotidian or work environments.	You spend more and more time rewriting to clarify meaning and style.
FOCUS: Cultivating a visceral and intellectual joy in writing, without which there really isn't any point being a writer.			
PASS CRITERIA: min. 100,000 words written, and at least 1 NaNoWriMo win.			
APPRENTICE	You create a writing routine and work with an accountability buddy.	You learn to work around, avoid or overcome distractions and get your writing done.	You learn to see projects through to completion and meet deadlines.
	You develop an online presence and connect with your readers one-on-one.	You write with an ever-clearer idea of your target readership.	You gain encouragement from your readers.
	You start keeping a writing journal to record your progress and reflect critically on your work.	You learn to quiet your doubts and fears and write.	You start a blog to share your journey and interact with your readers.
	You study the lives and work regimens of other writers and learn from them.	You try writing in different places, use different media, and write alone or with others.	You learn to better estimate the amount of time it takes to plan, write and edit a piece.
	You join a community and have conversations with other writers.	You note the lessons you're learning as you write and solve problems.	You reflect on the writing process, and share your insights with other readers and writers.
	You explore your imagination, and how stories are formed in your mind.	You take on the challenge of describing what you see in your imagination through words.	You publish your first piece (online, in print, or both) for free.
	You study storytelling (point of view, exposition, tension, foreshadowing, etc.).	You consider how different ways of telling a story can impact the reader in different ways.	You learn to judge the effectiveness of a story holistically.
	You consider the sorts of stories you want to tell.	You write short pieces in a variety of genres and forms, to test your skills.	You polish and share these stories with a select group of readers or friends, to assess their response.
	You set up a system for beta readers and editors.	You separate the writing process from the editing process.	You develop a workflow for tracking and incorporating feedback.
	You study structuring (plotting, outlining, argumentation, pacing, archetypal stories, etc.).	You try writing chronologically, out of order, on a per-scene or per-chapter basis to see what works best.	You consider which planning and writing techniques make the revision process easier and more efficient.
	You study character creation (backstory, characterisation, motivation, dialogue, etc.).	You discover your characters as you write them, and begin to treat them as real people.	You consider how your characters take on a life of their own and how you and your readers interact with them.
	You study style and grammar (sentence structure & length, punctuation, tone, word choice, imagery, etc.).	You experiment with following as well as with breaking the "rules", to develop your own voice.	You try both qualitative and quantitative ways of assessing your style and its consistency.
	You study worldbuilding (scene setting, atmosphere, cultures, etc.).	You enjoy spending time in your fictional worlds.	You engage in some role-playing to test the story, world and characters.
	You purposefully widen your reading material and seek out new influences and classics you've missed.	You develop an inner ear for rhythm and cadences, and listen for it while writing.	You read your work out loud, and revise it to flow better.
	You pick and choose your influences.	You use allusion to align yourself with other writers.	You use your influences to help you position your personal author "brand".
	You ensure that you've dealt with any legal implications of working as a freelance writer.	You write with a view to what's popular and marketable.	You experiment with making your work available in different formats and on different platforms.
	You make an in-depth study of self-publishing, traditional publishing and hybrid publishing.	You consider how the format of the final work will affect the reader's experience of reading it.	You experiment with different methods of publishing, packaging, and promotion, tracking your results.
	You study copywriting and marketing.	You write promotional copy (blurbs, taglines, sales emails) to accompany your work.	You track the results of your marketing campaigns.
	You develop a detailed workflow (and, if necessary, style sheet) for planning, writing, editing, and publishing.	You write with the intention of making the revision process quicker and simpler.	You use the "by-products" of your writing to generate revenue.
	You create a publishing schedule and promotion plan.	You write efficiently and effectively to keep to this schedule.	You track your earnings from your writing and make adjustments.
You work on expanding your personal experiences in order that they might inform your writing.	You use your writing to work through problems you encounter in life,	You use your unique experiences and approach to direct your branding and promotions.	
You submit work to a publisher/publication or are asked to write for them.	You write according to the publication criteria you've been given.	You weigh their responses and incorporate their teachings into your work.	
FOCUS: Testing the waters to see if writing might be something you want to pursue as a hobby, a side business, or as a full-time career; growing (and getting to know) your following/readership; writing with purpose, developing workflows, making it pay.			
PASS CRITERIA: min. 1 million words written, min. 100,000 words published, and some income from writing.			
JOURNEYMAN	You write every day and consider writing your job.	You write slowly and deliberately, weighing every word for sense and style.	You work on improving your ROI (return on investment).
	You develop detailed preparatory material which you run by your team before you begin writing.	You write with a view to publication.	You're earning enough from your writing to live on.
	You define your artistic direction and creative mission.	You consider how accurately your writing style reflects your creative vision and adjust accordingly.	You reassess your "branding" to ensure it's in line with your artistic direction.
	You become more adept at creating outlines.	You become more confident of your storytelling skills, and are able to follow your outline closer.	Your work requires less and less editing, and you're able to rely more on editors and proofreaders.
	You read through your old work and see the problems which you couldn't see before.	You become confident enough of your writing style that it feels natural.	You know your team (of agents, editors, proofreaders, fact-checkers etc.) better, and have productive dialogues with them.
	Based on your creative mission, you plan one or more "practice pieces" (longer and more challenging works that pave the way to your "masterpiece").	You purposefully apply your accumulated knowledge and experience to shaping your writing.	You discourse on your artistic vision and promote your practice pieces in a way that prepares readers for the works to come.
	You consider your role and responsibilities as a writer.	You write with the intention of inspiring your readers to think and (if necessary) to change their perspective.	Your sense of responsibility helps you promote your work more meaningfully.
	You organise travel time, possibly for speaking, networking or promotion purposes.	You document your travels and practice writing in new environments.	You find new opportunities for publishing, partnering and promotion.
	You attend or organise a writer's retreat or conference, or apply for a residency.	You write with the intention of benefiting the entire community.	You collaborate with other writers to create a finished work, and share any profits.
	You spend a lot of time contemplating the past and future of your work, and of literature as a whole.	You write a piece that is (in Margaret Boden's definition) "transformational".	You complete and publish your "masterpiece".
FOCUS: Defining your artistic direction, growing your writing career, writing more and more efficiently with a view to publication, earning a steady income.			
PASS CRITERIA: min. 2 million words written, masterpiece published, and steady (and sufficient) income from writing full-time.			
MASTER	You take time to enjoy the completion of your masterpiece, and reflect on the work you've accomplished.	You write in response to feedback on your masterpiece, and in order to supplement it.	You assess the reception of your masterpiece.
	You take on an apprentice.	You write for writers instead of for readers.	You formulate your views on literature and publish them.
	You seek new experiences to write about and consider what work yet remains to be done.	You write with the intention of benefiting the whole of humanity, past and present.	You come to terms with the daunting possibility that you may have taken on a task that you won't have time to finish...

ARS LONGA, VITA BREVIS