

Short Story Clinic – NEWC 24 April 2021

Schedule:

10am – 11am	Lecture Part 1
11.10am – 12.10pm	Lecture Part 2
12.10pm – 1.30pm	Lunch break
1.30pm – 3.30pm	Critique Clinic Part 1 (half an hour per story)
3.40pm - 5.40pm	Critique Clinic Part 2 (half an hour per story)

Structure:

The first two hours will be a lecture on the craft of writing, editing tips, finding markets, submitting stories, and how to behave like a writer and build a career.

We'll break for lunch then come back for the critiquing clinic, which will be run like a Clarion Bootcamp critique group. All members of the class must read all the submissions and comment on them in a respectful and constructive fashion. Each student will have a half an hour to receive the class critique and ask questions. Please don't leave the class when your critique is finished – you'll learn as much from working with the other students' work and hearing their crits.

When it's your turn to have your work critiqued, you don't get to speak! You can make notes for discussion at the end, but you must simply listen as your classmates give their feedback. At the end you can reply and ask questions.

How to Receive a Critique:

1. Calmly!
2. Don't be defensive – the critique isn't aimed at you as writer.
3. The critique is aimed at improving the story and hopefully making it publishable.
4. If your first instinct is to try to explain something in the story that you think the reader has missed, then first of all consider if perhaps what's in your head hasn't made it onto the page.
5. You don't have to change your story, but don't just dismiss suggestions out of hand – you might be able to use them or adapt them in some way.
6. Think of the critique not only as a chance to improve your story, but also an opportunity to indulge in some story development or "plot noodling".

How to Deliver a Critique:

1. Comments are to be respectful and polite at all times.
2. All comments are directed at improving the work and not criticising the author.
3. Set aside any genre-bias – that is, if you don't like a particular genre, that doesn't mean the writing is bad. The point of the exercise is to figure out what works in the story or what does not.
4. What to look for when you're critiquing a story:
 - a. Are the characters convincing? Do you believe in them?
 - b. Are the characters consistent in word and deed? Is their motivation clear to the reader, i.e. does the reader understand why the character (all of the characters) are doing what they're doing?
 - c. Does the setting work? Does the secondary world/the world of the story remain intact all the way through? Or are there anachronisms or contradictions that throw the reader out of the story? Are the when and the where of the story clear? Do you know where the characters are?
 - d. Are the descriptions effective or are they over-written – or even under-written?
 - e. Do the voice and point of view remain consistent and believable throughout the whole story?
 - f. Does the plot proceed logically from beginning to ending?
 - g. Does the structure work? Are there three clear acts?
 - h. Does the writer give the reader everything they need to understand the story, or do they digress to possibly interesting but irrelevant information? Can that info (if it's interesting) be integrated into the story to make it relevant?
 - i. Does dialogue move the story along, speak to character, set the mood, and give the reader the information s/he needs?
 - j. Is there a discernible theme and do all elements contribute to this theme? Are there too many themes all competing for attention? Which ones might be cut out for the good of the story?