The Fundamentals of Writing Fiction

Good fiction is more than just the tale itself: It engages and entertains the reader through different elements: Language, imagery, character development and conflict or tension. And it evokes some sort of emotional response. Most of these can be present in the shortest story. (One famous example is Ernest Hemingway's story in six words: "For sale: baby shoes, never used.")

In this workshop, we'll look at how to use these elements to create a short story, but the principles we'll talk about apply to fiction of any length, from short-shorts (often called "flash fiction") to novels, and to creative non-fiction: telling a true story using fictional devices.

PREPARATION

Here are two suggestions to help you prepare for the workshop. First, read Raymond Carver's short story *A Small Good Thing*. It's in his collection *Cathedral* (and in several anthologies as well, and online at: http://wings.buffalo.edu/AandL/english/courses/eng201d/asmallgoodthing.html). Second, write a short story yourself -- it doesn't have to be long (one handwritten or typed page is fine) and it doesn't have to be polished, but having something *you've* written to look at as we go through the steps will help you apply what we talk about, and it will help you formulate questions that are specific to what you want to work on. A suggestion is to write a story about someone or something you know: an incident from your own past -- a special trip or a holiday celebration, for example -- or an event you observed such as a child's birthday party or a wedding. It doesn't need to be a true story, but you'll probably find it's easier to write something that's based on a real event. (If you type your story, use double-spacing; it will be easier to make notes on the page.)

WHAT TO BRING

You'll need pencils and/or pens, a notebook or legal-type pad, and two copies of your story. (The second one is for the workshop leader. You can put your name on it or leave it off, as you prefer.) You can also bring a laptop if you like.

HOW WE'LL WORK

We'll start at 10:00 by briefly introducing ourselves and telling a little about our writing goals and history. If you've had work published, it's fine to mention that. We'll work straight through until 1:00, taking a short break or two.

You'll surely have questions. In order to use the time most effectively, please write them down (rather than stop the class to ask them) as they occur to you; we'll stop periodically to discuss them.

WHAT ELSE

It's fine to bring a hot or cold beverage with you into the workshop. Please, though, no food or snacks except during breaks.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP LEADER

Evan Guilford-Blake has had short stories, plays, poetry, creative non-fiction, journalism and children's work published in magazines, on-line and in book form. He's won awards for his fiction (including the 2006 Porter Fleming competition), plays and children's work. He is a member of Georgia Writer's Registry and was selected for Southern Artistry in 2008.

Registration form (please print)

Name: _____

E-mail address: _____

Phone: _____

Types of writing you've done or are interested in:

Short fiction _____ Long Fiction _____ Creative Non-fiction _____ Plays _____

Poetry _____ Memoir _____ Journalism _____ Other (Please specify) _____

What are your favorite things to write? (Please number 1, 2, 3 etc, 1 being your favorite)

Short fiction _____ Long Fiction _____ Creative Non-fiction _____ Plays _____

Poetry _____ Memoir _____ Journalism _____ Other (Please specify) _____

Have you had work published? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, where? _____

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What do you hope to take away from the workshop?

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Comments:

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