

The Scriptorium Webzine for Writers



Email Course

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Lesson One - The End is Not the End

Welcome to the Short Story Workshop for One! Over the course of these lessons you're going to learn how to sit down with one of your own stories, ferret out its faults, make sure it has a solid foundation, and polish it until it shines.

You've probably signed up for this course with a specific story in mind. It's one you love and you know has potential, but somehow you also know it's not working. Maybe you've just finished it or maybe it's done the submission boomerang a few times, but it has problems. You know it, and the editors who have rejected it know it (even if they aren't telling you what those problems are). You've done a little revising here, a little tinkering there, but it's still wrong and you don't know how to fix it.

Whatever stage your story has reached, whether it's a basic first draft or one you've spent some time tweaking, what it needs is an in-depth overhaul to make it the best that it can be. Good writers know that just because they've typed "The End," their work is not necessarily finished.

Workshopping

Many writers tout the benefits of workshopping a manuscript: letting other writers read it, critique it, suggest changes and improvements, and basically work with you to renovate and rebuild your story. Writer's groups meet in person and online to share the workshopping experience. And there's no doubt that most workshop participants come away from the experience, if not with a better manuscript, at least with a better idea of what they need to do to fix it.

But what if there aren't any writing groups in your area, and for reasons of your own, you don't want to workshop your writing online? Do you have any other choices?

Going it Alone

That's where this course comes in. Together we're going to work through one method of conducting a "workshop for one," and subject your manuscript to the same kind of in-depth scrutiny it would get from multiple readers. Since you're intimately acquainted with the story, it may be difficult for you to see its flaws, but it's not impossible. The key to successful self-workshopping lies in breaking the manuscript down and evaluating its constituent parts one at a time. We'll go through the process step by step.

There's no arguing the point that it's a challenge to do this with your own work, so the first two requirements for this workshop are **a willingness to make changes** and **the ability to look at your work with a critical eye**. If you don't have these two things, this method won't work for you. It's also going to take a number of days to do a thorough job, depending on the length of your story and the amount of reworking it needs. Recognize that this is a time investment; you can't do it in half an hour.

What You Will Need

There are countless workbooks and software programs you can buy to help you identify problems with manuscripts, but for our workshop we're going to assume the cost of this course as our only investment, except for our time and a bare minimum of supplies. You should have on hand:

- a dictionary
- a thesaurus
- a style guide (all of which are available for reference online, if you don't have them sitting on your bookshelf)
- some colored pens or pencils
- blank paper
- a quiet spot
- a printed copy of your completed story (this doesn't work in theory—you must have a story to work with, and you can't do this on-screen)
- any outside comments you might already have received on your story

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Want more?

Six full lessons are waiting to help you tackle the job of transforming that rough first draft into a sound, intriguing, professional story. With the help of guided questions and checklists, you'll learn to examine your story in a new way, focus on its weak points, and emerge with a stronger, cleaner, more sophisticated manuscript.

**This is only the beginning of Lesson One, and we're just getting started.
To discover the next steps for turning your first drafts into strong manuscripts,
[sign up today for The Short Story Workshop For One Email Course!](#)**

I do hope you'll join me,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherry".