



Writing Workshop - An Introduction

Core themes:

- Adaptation
- Time + Memory
- Unreliable Narrator
- Place

Length: 1 hour 30 minutes

Brief Description

A creative writing workshop that explores place, memory, and unreliable narratives as used in The Testament of Gideon Mack. Throughout this session, participants will create personal and imaginative landscapes, as well as using literary devices from the novel/play; connecting personal memories to cultural events as Gideon does in his narrative. This workshop will be playful and imaginative in its integration of tech; creating ambitious writing exercises that cross continents and cultures, fusing personal experience with fiction. Through tasks of interpretation and adaptation, we intend to use this workshop to fully explore the threads between truth and belief.

Outcomes

By the end of the session we want every participant to have...

- Created a rich sense of place/setting through their writing
- Shared stories, ideas, and experiences with their peers
- Gained experience of blending imagination with research
- Written stories that are local and international in their scope
- Gained first-hand experience of interpretation and adaptation

Key words: Local, Global, Truth, Fiction, Travel, Interpretation, Landscape

Our ethos: we plan to make two incredibly solid workshops that are - above all - exciting for both participants and leaders. We are wanting to make a programme of exercises that have achievable outcomes, and create cool bits of art.

[Square brackets] are used to reference a connection with the text.

Possible exercises so far include

1. **Your Own Testament / Stream of Consciousness warm up** (not shared) - a simple way to warm up to the idea of writing, just being asked to write as little or much as you feel like on any topic, it's entirely personal. There will be a brief chat after about how it felt. **[Borrows from the structure of the novel, the very personal 'testament' of Gideon]**
2. **Zeitgeist** - An exercise that blends personal memory with wider cultural events, engaging participants in the recurring literary device used in the novel (option to integrate tech here with On-This-Date wikipedia searches). Writing about an event, trying to get specific about where that was, then getting the students to write about the big things that were happening at that time. **[Literary Device]**
3. **Better/Worse** - Imaginative storytelling, spoken aloud, interrupted by a horn / bell to "make it better / make it worse" *
4. **Exaggerated narratives / Written Telephone** - Write another very brief story, a paragraph long, a person who does three things. This story will be passed along and each time part of the story will be exaggerated to get bigger/cooler/more weird. **[Prologue - the rumours about the fate of Gideon]**
5. **Adapting local landscapes** - there will be at least two separate writing exercises involving adapting known local spaces and landmarks, maybe one that's personal and one that is well known (My house in Sterling vs Sterling Castle, for example). **[Place / Monimasket scene setting - it is likely we will introduce this type of exercise with direct descriptions from the novel, encouraging the students to write about the place as an outside observer writing a guidebook. Craigie / Winnyford connections]**
6. **What 3 Words** - Using a mix of What3Words and Google Maps students will be assigned a random place (based on three random words they each come up with based on their previous writing exercise). For example: "butter - stick - trumpet" gave me a field in Indonesia. The app takes these three random words and assigns a corresponding grid reference on the earth's surface. Students will have time to explore the environment, streets, climate, and attractions, performing some basic research. Students will then have time to adapt this landscape then share their stories. **[Gideon's dreams with the Devil, transported to far off places]**

7. **Pair Adaptation** - In pairs, share a story about a time you went somewhere memorable or interesting, really describe the place and what you were doing. For example: “when I was a kid I went to Tunisia and saw big blue doors and a market where they were selling knock-off designer belts.” When both have shared their stories the partner must adapt that story as if it were their own and maybe even write it as if they had experienced it.
[Prologue and epilogue. Interpreting and adapting events that have taken place]

8. **Dialogue in place / Building character in place** - now that the students are creating these rich places we can introduce voices into them, create conversations and characters who may live in this landscape. They exercise all the skills of a writer.

Also worth noting that for a few of these, especially ones that end up being big exercises of 10 or 15 minutes, we will encourage the students to name their work. Taking ownership of the idea may excite them enough to write more about these things after we've gone!

(*Game used in both workshops)