



Writing Your family History
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Session 4- Critique & Workshopping

Things About Revision I Wish I Had Known

- There are no great writers, only great rewriters. The thing that will make your story great is editing, critiquing, rewriting. Sometimes several times.
- Think of revision as re-envisioning your work. You may need to rewrite from a different POV, or start at a different point in the story, or focus on a different emotion/character/conflict.
- You're allowed to change your mind. Often in the middle of writing down a story, we realize that what is really interesting is a side journey connected to that story, and that's ok.
- Every story is its own thing, has its own process, and takes different things out of you to write. Do your best to let the story be what it needs to be. Don't try to control it too much.
- You can always choose to not publish something later. Go ahead and write the inflammatory thing to see how it looks on the page.

Accepting Critique

- Other people have distance from your story and their perspective is really helpful. HOWEVER, you are the authority on your story. You get to make the final call.
- Thank everyone for their point of view, but don't take every piece of advice. Most writers take about 1/3 of the advice given to them.
- If the advice someone gives you about your piece feels wrong, or like they didn't "get" it, don't be angry with them for giving dumb advice- look at your piece and think through ways you can be more clear with your language or intent.
- Not all writing is for everyone. If someone didn't like it, or it didn't resonate with them, that's ok. That doesn't say anything about your personality, ability, or work ethic.
- Never argue with someone about their critique or interpretation of your piece. When your readers read, you won't get to stand over their shoulder explaining what you meant to say.
- Be true to yourself and your story. If a suggestion feels off, don't incorporate it. Only take the advice that you recognize as most likely to help you achieve your writing goals.

The Critique Process

- The writer explains one concern about their piece, or asks for ideas/help regarding some problem with it. (Optional)
- The writer passes out copies to everyone in the group and reads their piece out loud to their group.
- The writer agrees to stop speaking.
- The group will:
 - Address the specific concerns, if applicable, that the writer shared at the beginning
 - Mention what they loved about the piece
 - Discuss whether the point of view character(s) were sympathetic and fleshed out. If not, offer suggestions.
 - Discuss what they would have liked to see, or see more of, in the piece
 - Refrain from writing on the story or doing a line-by-line edit.
- The Writer says Thank You.
- Someone else in the group takes a turn in the hot seat.