

Write That Novel in 2022!

A writer's toolkit - with authors, Claire Fuller and Judith Heneghan

Have you always wanted to write a novel? Or have you started one but become stuck after the first few chapters? Or maybe you have a draft but don't know what to do next. This course of twenty weekly sessions in central Winchester will help you tackle all the elements that make up a novel, from characterisation, plot and structure, to writing setting and dialogue, handling revision and many more.

And if you hope to get your novel published, we'll also be looking at how to submit your work to literary agents and publishers.

Using examples of published fiction, group discussion, classroom writing exercises, homework, and critiquing of your work-in-progress, each week we'll look at one element of novel writing in depth. So, be prepared for a lively, engaging, and intimate course which will help you write that novel!

Week 1: Introduction to Write That Novel!

Both Judith and Claire* will welcome you to the course and let you know what to expect from the next twenty weeks. We'll be looking at what makes a novel, where ideas come from, ways of writing, and what being a writer might look like. Expect to do a short, fun writing exercise or two.

Week 2: Character

Characters matter. They take hold of our imaginations, live our emotions and drive our stories. In this session you'll be given prompts to explore a character of your own – a character with the potential to sustain a novel.

Week 3: Writing a Sense of Place

A sense of place or a setting can be a single cell, or an entire universe. We'll discuss how to find your novel's sense of place, ways of describing it and how it informs story, character, mood, and more.

Week 4: Thinking in scenes

Scenes are the building blocks of fiction, but what do they contain, how are they shaped, and where do you start and finish? In this session you'll place your character in a few speculative scenarios to see what happens next.

Week 5: Focus on dialogue

What happens when people talk in a novel? This week we'll be looking at what's really going on in any conversation on the page, how to write dialogue in character, and how speech in fiction feels completely real but actually isn't.

Week 6: Ways of telling - point of view, voice and tense

Point of view and tense are vital considerations for any novelist. In this session you'll look at how these choices influence a story, and why it helps to experiment before settling on your own narrative form and voice.

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Week 7: Desires and conflict

Stories are usually driven by something a character desires - whether it's an emotional, metaphorical or a physical desire - and that desire being blocked. We'll look how to work out what your character wants and how to keep it from them.

Week 8: Plotting

Once you know the key story events, in what order are you going to reveal them? This is plotting. Building on what you've explored in week 7, we'll look at different plot structures and also how to use devices such as flashbacks and jump cuts to keep the reader turning the pages.

Week 9: The art of showing

Nearly all novels use both 'showing' and 'telling' to move stories along. But what do we mean by these terms, and why and how does 'showing' enrich the reading experience? Using plenty of examples and discussion we'll look at when you might use one or the other.

Week 10: Subplot and secondary characters

Great novels almost always contain memorable secondary characters and compelling subplots. We'll discuss how to introduce secondary characters, how to weave in subplot and how to ensure that these elements enhance the central narrative, without taking over.

Week 11: Intrigue and suspense

Intrigue and suspense don't have to only mean surprising twists and reveals. In this week's session we'll look at how you can use them to keep your reader reading no matter what genre you're writing.

Week 12: The novelist's SOS

What do writers do when things go wrong? Doubt, loss of momentum, procrastination, plot holes, research cul-de-sacs, envy and even 'life' are all common pitfalls that can, if left unchecked, stop us achieving our writing goals. We'll look at how to use constraints and other techniques to keep ourselves going.

Week 13: Reaching the end

There's nothing worse than an unsatisfying ending in an excellent novel. But what makes a good ending? This week we'll be looking at different kinds of endings, when to stop writing, character arcs, denouements and epilogues.

Week 14: Back to the beginning

Once you have a first draft, it's time to re-consider those all-important first sentences, first paragraphs and first pages. The second draft is all about how your book will be read. What is likely to hook a reader, and make them read on?

Week 15: Shape, flow, pace

Novels usually move forward in paragraphs, scenes and chapters, but what do these mean for your work-in-progress and how can you use them for your novel's advantage? We'll be considering movement through a novel including pace, time, character arcs, change, pattern and the structural re-write.

Week 16: Language - the fancy stuff

Most writers use simile and metaphor to some degree to illuminate an image or a feeling or an idea, but when a simile tries too hard to get the reader's attention, it fails. So, what makes a good simile? We'll look at some examples and consider ways to find the words in the language and experience of our characters.

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Week 17: The editor's scalpel

Writing a novel is rewriting. Many novels are created in the editing, but what does that mean and how do you edit? This week we'll be looking at ways of editing, what needs to go and what should stay and how to decide, as well as how to respond to feedback.

Week 18: Your novel in five sentences

If you want your novel to find its readers, you'll need to be able to talk about it and describe it. What makes your novel distinctive? We'll consider how to distil its essence into five sentences by examining a range of blurbs and pitches. It may even transform how you see your novel.

Week 19: Finding an agent – your approach and cover letter

If you're hoping your novel will be published then you will most likely have to approach either literary agents, or publishers directly. This session will look at ways of finding an agent or publisher, your approach, and how to write a cover letter.

Week 20: Q&A and a celebration

In this final session both Judith and Claire* will answer any of your outstanding questions or concerns. We'll also have a celebration of everything you've achieved during the course, and you'll read out some of your work.

*Both Judith and Claire will attend week 1 and week 20. All the other weeks will be taught by one or other of your two tutors.