

Writing Workshop, January 17, 2015
Palm Springs Writers Guild
Instructor Duff Brenna

1. The workshop begins with an introduction to the **reasons for writing**. Why do it at all? Writing is lots of hard work. The rewards are generally small, etc.
2. Following a discussion about the reasons for writing, the instructor will read very brief openings from a short number of stories. We will discuss whether or not **the beginning sentences and/or paragraphs** are successful. If not – why not? If yes – why yes? The students will have copies of the sentences/paragraphs to read and study.
3. From the analysis of successful and unsuccessful first sentences and/or paragraphs, we will move to various **scenes** from one or two stories, discussing their appeal—**images, dialogue, conflict** and the **directness** of the writer's style. The students will have copies of each scene the instructor reads.
4. At this point we will want to discuss a **complete story**, which the students will have on hand. After our critique, the students will be asked to **write a paragraph imitating the style** of the story's writer. This is a very difficult exercise. Many students won't be able to do it well. Others will surprise us. But whatever happens, the writing itself will loosen us up for what follows.
5. While we continue to discuss the rudiments of stories, the students will be making notes that will help them **write their own short story (two pages max)**. Some of these efforts may turn into longer short stories later. It happens a lot.
6. Using the students' efforts, a **lecture** will follow **analyzing** what techniques create good and believable **characters**. Next, we talk about what is needed to create an interesting **plot**.
7. After the instructor hands out sample sentences that have short story possibilities, the students will turn their attention to **creating paragraphs from the sample sentences**. Later, they will **read what they've written**. The rest of us will listen and comment.
8. The final exercise deals with **point of view**. The instructor will talk about the various points of view and read samples of each.
9. At this point in the workshop, the students will be asked to **rewrite** their own short stories **using an alternate point of view**. If time allows, we will read the revisions aloud.
10. A quick explanation is given concerning **recommended story collections**. Each student will have the list of titles in hand. **Questions and answers follow**.