

Dear Fellow Writers,

I've been writing for a long time. Many of you may have been, too. And yet, every single time I do it, it feels brand new to me to sit at the notebook or laptop and let those unlikely words flood or eke their way onto the page. We're always beginners at this—and that's our greatest advantage. We're open to the miracles and surprises and blessed ordinariness that presents itself to us when we enter that contract to create.

Wait. That sounds like I approach both conditions, the flood and the eke, with equal equanimity. Not so! When it's flowing, I'm happy. When it's eking, well, not so much. That's when I turn to those steadfast, reliable old pals—the elements of narrative craft—to jumpstart my imagination and get those words going again.

Setting, character, plot, image, diction, point of view (and others): altering these different lenses can change a story drastically. Obviously, examining and honing each element offers a crucial tool for revision. What may be less evident, though, is that these fundamental elements can offer a starting point for new work as well. In this class, we'll tap the energy they offer by way of focused writing prompts, relevant reading, shared creative work, and thoughtful discussion of craft. Seasoned as well as novice writers are likely to find, as I have, an inexhaustible supply of inspiration from a return to the essential elements of story.

This is a studio class focused on creative production, so expect to write copiously and expansively, using prompts as jumping-off points and experimenting with ways to access the dreamspace that's vital to creative work. It's not all jelly-roll, though. We'll use both the intuitive and the brass-tacks, intellectual sides of our brains to delve most deeply into the riches of narrative craft.

The advantage of this online, not-for-credit format is its flexibility. Regardless of your length of experience or level of expertise, this course has the potential to be as demanding as you want it to be—or as gently inviting. If you're ready to turn up the heat on your writing practice and generate serious new material, you can push yourself to respond to each daily prompt and follow up with the more promising starts, dive into the craft discussions, read the optional selections, share your work with the group, and offer useful feedback to the other writers' work. Conversely, if you're looking for a way to gradually re-invigorate your writing (or to embark on a new dream), you can select among activities and set a pace that feels right to you.

We write by ourselves, but the support and mutual enthusiasm of a dependable group with a common aim can encourage and inspire us. The only obligation you have, signing up for this class, is to exercise a conscious generosity toward the group. We're putting our tenderest selves out there in our work, and we need it to be received with care and consideration. With luck, you'll meet others whose work resonates with your own and who may be amenable—should you wish it—to creating independent critique partnerships or small groups that extend beyond the eight week class session.

My role, as I see it, is to set the tone, provide the thematic framework and organizational structure for the group, and hold the space for each of you to do your best work. I'll share my insights as a working writer via bi-weekly craft talks, and post relevant readings that demonstrate masterful command of narrative technique. Each weekday I'll offer a writing prompt related to that week's narrative element. I'll respond to your work, and coax and goad you to explore the paths that arise for you. *You* put in the time, energy, and courage to write, read, and respond. By the end of the session, I can fairly well guarantee that you'll have surprised yourself with the quality and quantity you've produced. There may even be a miracle or two in there.

Miracle or not, it'll be fun. I hope you'll join me. Feel free to email me directly with questions at summer@summerwoodwrites.com.

Best and warmest,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Summer Wood', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Summer Wood