

STUDY GUIDE

# WRITING A NOVEL

SHORT COURSE





# HOW TO WORK THROUGH THIS COURSE

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Over the following pages, you will move through a logical, self-paced learning experience that can enlighten and educate you on Writing a Novel.

It is important from the outset to understand that learning about something is not the same as just reading about it. Learning implies a permanent change in what you know and can do.

Anyone can read a book and understand it; but for most people the detail of what you read is largely forgotten.

Reading something once only puts information into short-term memory. It is soon lost if you don't 'work' on it. Studying the same information takes longer, but by thinking about it and processing it you can transfer that information to long-term memory. This way, you will enhance your ability to recall and apply that information for years to come. If you take your time to work through the 13 lessons that follow, you will learn.

## Read, Reflect, Research, Revise

Throughout the following pages, you will find not only things to read about, but also things to do:

1. Throughout each lesson, there are suggestions of things to do under the headings "Learn More". These are all sorts of ideas about things you can do in order to explore the subject further.
2. At the end of each lesson, there is an interactive self assessment test (assignment), for you to undertake. When you click on this, your computer needs to be online. You will be taken to our cloud-based online school. The answers you choose will be evaluated immediately, and your results can be seen on completion of each test. You can return and repeat tests if you wish.

Undertaking these tasks will involve reflection, research and revision of the topics you read about. By repeatedly encountering each topic in different ways, your perspective on each subject will broaden, and the commitment of information to longer term memory will strengthen.

You don't need to undertake all of the suggested tasks if you don't want to; but we strongly recommend that you do some in each lesson, and that you take all of the self-assessment tests.

The more time you spend doing these things, the stronger your learning will be.

## Completing the Course

After completing all 13 lessons you will be presented with a final assessment which can also be undertaken online.

Do not attempt to do this until you have worked through all 13 lessons, and feel like you have learnt the subject well.

Upon finishing this final assessment you will immediately see your final results, and you can save a pdf copy of those results as a "Certificate of Completion".

## Welcome Audio

Click the button below to listen to the welcome audio for this course. This feature is supported by most computers and some mobile devices.



# THE CONTENTS OF THE COURSE

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<b>LESSON 1 WHAT IS A NOVEL?</b>	<b>6</b>
The Origins of Storytelling	6
Presentation of Novels Today	7
What Constitutes a Novel?	7
Genres	8
Audience and the Novel	11
What is Creative Writing?	13
Creative genres	13
Lesson 1 additional reading	13
Writing for Children	14
Review what you have been learning	15
<b>LESSON 2 STRUCTURE AND STYLE</b>	<b>16</b>
Narrative or Story Structure	16
Other Devices Used in Story Writing	18
Style in Writing	22
Basic Rules of Style	22
Improve Your Writing	28
Collaborative Writing	28
Lesson 2 additional reading	28
<b>LESSON 3 DEVELOPING A POINT OF VIEW</b>	<b>31</b>
Introduction	31
Do Children like to read about Fantasy?	39
Lesson 3 additional reading	39
<b>LESSON 4 DEVELOPING THE MAIN PLOT</b>	<b>42</b>
The Plot	42
What is a Plot-Driven Novel?	42
Developing the Plot	43

Theme.....	46
Timelines.....	47
Lesson 4 additional reading.....	47
<b>LESSON 5 WRITING A SYNOPSIS.....</b>	<b>51</b>
A Matter of Words.....	51
Writing a Synopsis.....	51
Motivating a child to read.....	54
Lesson 5 additional reading.....	54
<b>LESSON 6 DEVELOPING SUBPLOTS.....</b>	<b>58</b>
Deciding on Subplots.....	58
Types of Dramatic Stories.....	63
Lesson 6 additional reading.....	63
<b>LESSON 7 CHARACTERS: HOW TO DEVELOP CHARACTERS.....</b>	<b>66</b>
The Importance of Characters.....	66
Character Development.....	70
Lesson 7 additional reading.....	70
<b>LESSON 8 DIALOGUE AND CHARACTERS.....</b>	<b>73</b>
Dialect.....	73
Voice.....	77
Character Language.....	77
Lesson 8 additional reading.....	77
<b>LESSON 9 MAINTAINING THE READER'S INTEREST – DEVELOPING PACE.....</b>	<b>80</b>
Use of Pace.....	80
Creating the Pace.....	81
Engaging Readers.....	85
Lesson 9 additional reading.....	85
<b>LESSON 10 REVISING YOUR NOVEL – THE IMPORTANCE OF EDITING AND REVISION.....</b>	<b>88</b>
How to Revise and Edit.....	88
Improve your Editing Skills.....	92

Lesson 10 additional reading.....	92
<b>LESSON 11 DEALING WITH WRITER’S BLOCK/MAINTAINING YOUR CREATIVITY.....</b>	<b>94</b>
Writer’s Block.....	94
Not Writing a Novel: Tips to Get Started AND Finish that Novel.....	96
Avoiding Distractions to Your Writing.....	99
Don’t have time to write a novel?.....	99
Lesson 11 additional reading.....	99
<b>LESSON 12 MANUSCRIPT FORMAT AND LAYOUT.....</b>	<b>102</b>
Preparation.....	102
The importance of the manuscript to getting published.....	104
Bloggers – Do you want to make money on your blog?.....	104
Lesson 12 additional reading.....	104
<b>LESSON 13 MARKETING YOUR NOVEL.....</b>	<b>107</b>
Marketing Options.....	107
Marketing Your Book.....	110
Marketing Elements.....	113
Projecting for the Future.....	117
Publishing: Electronic and Paper-based Works.....	119
Lesson 13 additional reading.....	119
Getting Published.....	120
Final Assessment.....	123

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# LESSON 1 WHAT IS A NOVEL?

*All novels are stories, but not all stories are novels. Humans have been telling stories since the dawn of time but the advent of the novel (as we know it) came much later in our development and is quite new when compared to the history of story-telling.*

## THE ORIGINS OF STORYTELLING

Before stories were written down people just talked to each other about what had happened around them. They were relating or retelling descriptions of events. Since an event doesn't have to have a resolution this type of 'story-telling' is classed as an anecdote.



There were also people that were 'storytellers'. Their role in life was to tell stories and this dates back to the time when people still dwelt in caves. The stories people told may have been about actual events, but they also included mythology and religion or ways to make sense of the complexities of nature and the world around them.

Not all storytelling was oral. Some stories were told through pictures and drawings. For example, Egyptian hieroglyphics (the earliest Egyptian mythology was recorded before 4000BCE), drawings on clay tablets, or the cave paintings of our ancestors. Stories were also told through dance, music or singing. Later, in countries such as England (during the 18th century) news was often relayed by town criers; town criers made public pronouncements in the streets.

Written collected histories of people and the world around them, although short, were some of the first writings. Then there were plays and dramatic arts and poetry. For a long time, poetry was the longest form of story. One of first was Homer's Greek epics (*The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* written 800-700 BCE). There was also *Beowulf*, a 3000 line poem of the battle between the hero Beowulf and his nemesis, the monster known as Grendel, which dates somewhere between the 8th and the 11th centuries and is written in Old English. There are many other early examples of early poetic writings.

The (longer) prosaic short stories or novellas appeared in what we now consider Italy, around the 14th century. All this writing came before what is regarded as the modern novel in the West. Perhaps the first known recorded

### Suggested Tasks: ▼

*Throughout this course you will be provided with suggested tasks and reading to aid with your understanding. These will appear in the right hand column. Remember: these tasks are optional. The more you complete, the more you will learn, but in order to complete the course in 20 hours you will need to manage your time well. We suggest you spend about 10 minutes on each task you attempt, and no more than 20 minutes.*



novel dates back to 11<sup>th</sup> century Japan. Called *The Tale of Genji*, it was written by Lady Murasaki Shibu.

Aside from Lady Murasaki's efforts, however, the novel as we know it appeared quite late. Indeed, novels are the 'newest' form of storytelling but a lot of the techniques we use in writing them have their roots in earlier stories in the sense that every kind of story influences the next. Narrative arc for example, a way of mapping the story in a novel, was originally based on plays.

The skills you learn in developing your novel can be applied to any kind of story. What you learn from watching a movie, reading a poem, reading other novels and listening to people telling stories, can all be applied to writing novels. Remember that as you read through this course.

### **Presentation formats of novels:**

*Printed paper*

*Electronic/kindle, etc.*

*eBooks*

*CD audio*

*Braille*

## **PRESENTATION OF NOVELS TODAY**

In the past, a novel was a book printed on paper and bound within a cover. Nowadays a novel may still be printed, but it may also be electronic – some novels are only available in electronic format e.g. to be read on

a 'Kindle' or other electronic book reader, or presented as eBooks and read on computers, tablets and other electronic devices.

## **WHAT CONSTITUTES A NOVEL?**

Most novels are fiction. How they are fiction can vary. Some are very experimental and include images which are essential to the story, like Brian Selznick's children's novel, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. Some newer novels are hypertext works, which link back and forth within themselves in digital formats, to create a new kind of story. Some novels, however, fit into what's now called 'creative non-fiction' – novels which create a story around facts and research. It's hard to define what makes a non-fiction book a creative non-fiction novel, though, and it's something critics, reviewers, and literary theorists are still arguing over. There is, however, one type of creative non-fiction novel that most people do agree should be classed as a novel, and this is novels which fall within the genre of 'true crime'.

Finally, there are novels which are fictionalised accounts. These are usually fictional biographies where the author researches the period and the person, and writes a story about how things may have happened. You can often identify these texts from their jacket copy, which may include descriptions like 'inspired by true events'. These novels can give the reader insight into a particular piece of history, but it's important to remember that they are not actually history. Examples of these include

## **LEARN MORE >>>**

### **Suggested Tasks**

Spend ten minutes maximum looking at books online in the genre that you are interested in writing. What options are available in terms of printed, kindle, electronic, ebooks and so on. It always pays to look at your potential competition and what they are offering.

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Presumably you are doing this course to write a novel, but make a short list of different areas of storytelling that you are interested in.