

Our last day!!

I hope that you all have found the packs inspiring in some way and that you have greater confidence in your own writing and telling your own stories. Writing and telling stories is not an innate skill, it's not something only a few are blessed with – it's a skill that you practice like any other and improve as you go along. In committing to the 4 workshops you have begun that practice and I hope that you keep it going.

The theme for this project was positive mental health and using a creative practice to inspire mindfulness. I hope these exercises have helped in some way to guide you to that. Looking after your own headspace, actively looking for ways to improve your mood and tuning into the things that bring joy and calm are not only ways to improve your own mental health, but will affect how you interact with the world around you.

There is no great secret to writing but I thought that the last week would be a good week to look at advice from other writers. I'm always intrigued by how other writers do it, and you might find some of this advice useful! My own personal advice is to remain curious – be curious about other people, other cultures, other points of view. A writer's job is to explore the world and you can't do that if you only ever listen to yourself and your own opinions. I am especially mindful at the moment to read writers whose skin is not the same colour as mine, or who don't come from the same culture as mine, as a way to broaden my mind and understand the world from a different perspective.

Some advice from some of the greats *google them if the names are not familiar!

1. **William Faulkner** – read to write.

'Read, read, read everything – trash, classics, good and bad and see how they do it. Read! You'll absorb it. Then write. If it's good, you'll find out. If it's not, throw it out the window'

2. **Ernest Hemmingway** – stop while the going is good.

'Always stop while you're going well and don't worry about it until you start to write the next day'

3. **John Steinbeck** – take it a page at a time.

'Abandon the idea that you are ever going to finish, and write just one page for each day'

4. **Miranda July** – don't worry about the bad drafts

'The first draft is the hardest part'

5. **Zadie Smith** – get offline

'Work on a computer that is disconnected from the internet' (my personal favourite!)

THE WARM UPS

- Describe your perfect day in detail from when you get up to when you go to bed. What do you do? What do you eat? Who do you spend it with? (Then for extra bonus points see can you have that perfect day before the end of the year!)
- Set a timer for 2 minutes and make a list of as many things that are the colour blue as you can.
- Write a list of your favourite characters – from books, movies, TV shows, comics, whatever you like. Keep it as reference for the type of characters that appeal to you – the characters you love could inspire your own stories.

THE JOY OF LISTS

I love a list. I have notebooks full of them. I use them as To Do lists, Remember To lists, Books to Read lists, the list (lol) goes on*. Hopefully these lists will help you warm up for todays longer exercise!

- Write a list of 10 things that you're grateful for, be as specific as you can. It doesn't have to be over the top. The thing I'm most grateful for at the moment is a very large, oversized hoodie that is the comfiest thing I own. (This is a GREAT practice to try every day, studies show the happiest and longest living people practice gratitude every day)
- Write a list of your favourite songs
- Create a list of things you would like to achieve/ do before you are 20

*I NEVER cross everything off my list – but that's okay, the point is that the intention was there and it helps calm my overactive mind!

The lost art of letter writing

I love writing letters, and especially love receiving them – but it's something that happens less and less these days especially when everyone and their granny has an email address. I'm reviving it here for the purpose of our creative practice! These letters are not meant to be sent, keep them private if you need to, or better yet, tear them up once you've written them and gotten it off your chest!

- Write a letter to your younger self – what advice would you give yourself?
- Write a letter to someone who hurt or upset you before – tell them how you feel, why you were upset and if there is anything that could be done to make it better.
- Write a letter to someone who you love – whether they know it or not. Tell them why you love them or how you knew that you did. Could be your mam, your dog or your favourite singer. (Or a romantic interest!)

THE PROMPT



Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte

[Georges Seurat](#)

This is a very famous painting that many of you might recognise, but for us as writers what is most interesting are the characters and the conversations or relationships that we can imagine happening. Have a look and choose some characters who might be having a conversation. What are they saying, what does their appearance tell you about them and how they might be feeling? Write a scene or story from those ideas.

And Finally, ...

I wanted to share with you a quote that I saw on Twitter the other day from author Kevin Barry, who is one of my favourite authors, editors and an all-round good guy.

Literary talent is not rare. There's loads of it around. Lots of people can write great sentences and come up with great characters and great stories. What's more unusual is to have that married to the pragmatic streak that keeps you going into the room every day, when you're not in the mood to do it. The thing that makes you show up when you'd rather do anything else, really. Those two combined are quite rare. I definitely had to teach myself the discipline, y'know. In my twenties, I knew I could write very good sentences and stuff. But I didn't have the discipline, and I definitely I had to bate that into myself.

It reminded me of those of you that have been logging on this week and hope that it inspires you to keep going.

Keep writing, and keep going into the room!

Eimear