

Authorial frigidity, which is a fancy phrase from John Gardner for an author not caring about his or her characters. It's your story—you can write whatever you want! But if awful things happen to your characters, make sure it's done for some larger, artistic purpose. If you don't care about your characters, why should your readers?

Beware of: Twisted endings, or any temptation to withhold important information from your readers. While it's an easy way to surprise your audience, more lasting pleasure comes when a reader experiences the journey alongside the story's characters.

**Fiction writers** Proofread and punctuate properly! If you feel uncertain about how something should be punctuated, such as dialogue, look it up: "How do I write dialogue?" he asked. "Dude," she said, "pick up a novel and look."

For a writing workshop to be successful, writers and readers must both take their jobs seriously.

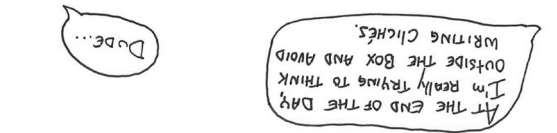
### Readers

Approach each draft with empathy and attention. Take notes on the draft about moments that excite you, or questions you have while reading.

### Writers

Turn in a draft that you've invested time and care in. No draft is perfect—that's why it's being workshopped! But it's important, to respect your readers and yourself as a writer, to turn in work that is clean on a sentence level, with well-considered ideas.

Drafts should always be **double-spaced** (so readers can write notes) and in **serif fonts** like Times New Roman, Georgia, and Garamond (to help reduce reader eye-strain).



Cliches. If everyone's already using a certain description or saying, why should you? Try to find new ways to say things, even if they seem strange at first.

Beware of: Unnecessary words. Poems should only use the few to cut the ones that aren't fatty carrying their weight. ~~Very strongest and most effective words, so feel~~

Don't forget your images! Sensory images create the world that your reader dwells in. Appeal to each of the five senses to make that world vivid, memorable, and emotive.

Most all published creative writing you read is actually the product of the combined work of a variety of different people.

Often, the author of a novel, poem, or essay owes a lot of thanks to a community of editors, readers, copyeditors, and other writers for their opinions, suggestions, and advice.

The creative writing workshop is the backbone of that community.

### “A Story”

by the Author  
her readers and teachers,  
editors and classmates,  
her husband, friends,  
mother and father, siblings, odd uncles,  
the woman at the bus stop, her creepy neighbors,  
the ghost of her great aunt Eliza, and twenty-three cups of coffee. Oh, and her dog, Rufus, too.

Share the air: Keep your comments concise. It's a good idea to wait until at least two others speak before you contribute something else.

Be specific! Comments, either positive or negative, don't mean much if they're broad or vague. Talk about moments, lines, words, and images. Discuss what's working, what you enjoyed, how it made you feel—this is invaluable and deeply encouraging for writers.

Were you confused by parts? Framing your thoughts in the form of questions helps to avoid seeming overly prescriptive in your suggestions.

Have a strong understanding of the work. Read it at least twice before class, and make sure your notes on the draft are legible.

### Some Workshop Etiquette

When workshopping others:

# Tips for the Creative Writing Workshop



Respect in a workshop is important—but a great workshop can often be a playful one. These are stories. These are poems. This is fun stuff.

—And finally—  
Relax!

Take criticisms seriously, but lightly. Your readers are sharing their thoughts in order to make it the best it can be. Recognize it is the work that is being critiqued, not its author.

Take notes. There's no way to remember everything discussed, and taking notes is a sign you take others' opinions seriously.

Listen. Let the work defend itself, not you.

When being workshopped:

### SOME ADDITIONAL READING:

*The Elements of Style*—Strunk & White

### POETRY

*Structure and Surprise*—Michael Thurne

*The Book of Forms*—Lewis Putnam Turco

### FICTION

*The Art of Fiction*—John Gardner

*Self-Editing for Fiction Writers*—King and Browne

### NONFICTION

*The Situation and the Story*—Vivian Gornick

*To Show and to Tell*—Phillip Lopate

by Adam Gnuse

Additional copies of this zine can be found at

[adamgnuse.com](http://adamgnuse.com)