

WRITEGIRL PLANET

CHARACTER & DIALOGUE WORKSHOP

Issue No. 2

Writing Tips

FROM WOMEN IN
HOLLYWOOD

Creating Character

CREATE YOUR
CHARACTER FROM THE
SHOES UP!

We All Dialogue

GO AHEAD AND TRY TO
STOP ME!

PLUS
FLASHBACK
TO
JOURNALISM

April 4, 2020



How to use this at home

1

Wash your hands (why not?!) Don't touch your face!

2

Grab your journal and a pen. (Or a junk mail envelope - any paper works!)

3

Browse these pages and find something that intrigues you.

4

Take a break for a mini dance party!

5

When you feel like you've accomplished something, draw a smiley face or five stars on your own work! (or just pat yourself on the back)

6

If you start to feel lonely, here's a picture of some encouraging WriteGirls!



MEET OUR SPECIAL GUESTS

Josann McGibbon

Screenwriter

Josann McGibbon and her writing partner Sara Parriott's credits include *Runaway Bride*, *The Starter Wife* (both the miniseries and the series, which they created), *Desperate Housewives*, and Disney Channel's *Descendants* Trilogy, which they wrote, executive produced, and won a Writers Guild Award for the first movie in the trilogy.

Check it out: Josann is currently writing two movies – an interactive romcom for Netflix, and an adaptation of a YA novel for Paramount.



Don't be paralyzed waiting to write brilliantly. Do your best even if it's bad and get down to the business of rewriting. That's where it all happens and it's great to see how far something can come from the first "vomit draft."



Krishna Smitha

Actress - Producer

Krishna Smitha is an actress-producer originally from Dallas, Texas. Now in Los Angeles, Krishna works at various theatres, including East West Players, Theatre of Note, and is a company member at The Road Theatre. She also works regularly in television, most notably recurring on Seasons 5 and 6 of *Silicon Valley*. Krishna loves writing, producing and creating things with other artists, whether it be theatre, film or short form.

Check it out: Check out the short form series *iLove* - www.iLoveTheSeries.com!



@Krishna_Smitha



@krishnasmitha

We don't always have to be so logical. Let go of control and let your characters surprise you. Humans are funny creatures, and we often do things that from the outside seem silly and illogical. These surprises may reveal a deeper aspect to the characters, their relationships and the world you are creating. And if you really really just don't like what pops out, you can always re-write!

Cooper Foster

Actress

Cooper Foster is an actress from the San Francisco Bay Area. She can be seen performing sketch comedy at The Pack Theater with her sketch team The Bae*Gency, or guesting in shows at UCB, The Second City, the Comedy Central Stage and basically every other comedy theater in LA.

Check it out: *Debate Date* on the FreeForm YouTube channel and the monthly The Bae*Gency sketch and variety comedy show at The Pack Theater.



@this_is_coop

***Always be authentic!
Write stories that YOU relate to.***



Ashleigh Hairston

Actress - Writer

When creating characters, don't be afraid to pull from your own personal experiences. From an actor's perspective, we're constantly searching for the truth. We want to play characters who feel real, with dialogue we can connect to, and we want to show honest emotions. So when writing, think of yourself as your own personal cheat sheet!



@shleighcrystal



@ashleighcrystal

Ashleigh Crystal Hairston is an actor, writer and improviser from Seattle, WA! She received a BA in Acting from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and now resides in Los Angeles where she performs regularly at The Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre. She has appeared in 13 national commercials and has traveled to Seattle, San Diego, San Francisco, Hawaii and Brisbane, Australia, to perform and teach improv. Ashleigh is the voice of “Bask” in Marvel’s *Black Panther’s Quest* (Disney XD) which was a 2x NAACP Image Award Nominee, and she also voices the wild-eyed kid scientist “Wren” in Cartoon Network’s hit show *Craig of the Creek*, where she is currently a Staff Writer. In 2018 Ashleigh appeared in the coveted CBS Diversity Sketch Comedy Showcase as a writer and performer and in 2019 she was one of 11 alumni to be invited back as a Staff Writer for the showcase. Her recent TV credits include *Single Parents* (ABC), *Astronomy Club* (Netflix) and *Modern Family* (ABC). She is currently recurring on *The Neighborhood* (CBS).

THE ART OF MONOLOGUES: CREATING CAPTIVATING CHARACTERS

Connect the dots! Choose one facial expression and one pair of shoes to work with.



Create your character from the shoes up! Think about what their shoes might say about their character and/or where they are going. Now think about their facial expression. What has your character experienced to make them look like this? Write a monologue that describes how the way you look on the outside compares to how you look on the inside.

Definition of a Monologue:

- A form of dramatic entertainment, comedic solo, or the like by a single speaker
- A prolonged talk or discourse by a single speaker, especially one dominating or monopolizing a conversation.
- Any composition, as a poem, in which a single person speaks alone.
- A part of a drama in which a single actor speaks alone; soliloquy.

WE ALL DIALOGUE: GO AHEAD AND TRY TO STOP ME!

Choose one (or more!) photo below. What are these characters saying to each other? How are they saying it? Experiment with writing in different pens for different characters.



Definition of Dialogue:

- Conversation between two or more persons.
- The conversation between characters in a novel, drama, etc.
- An exchange of ideas or opinions on a particular issue, especially a political or religious issue, with a view to reaching an amicable agreement or settlement.
- A literary work in the form of a conversation.

THRIVE-AT-HOME

Use these digital resources to explore the world from your room!

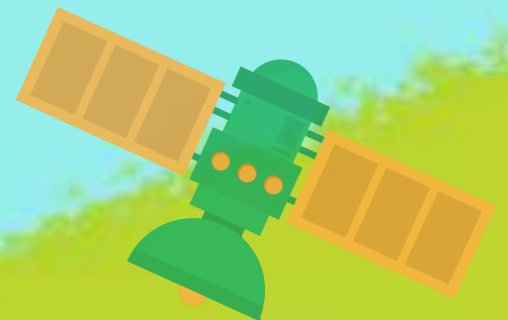
Google Arts and Culture

Google Arts and Culture has various interactive articles and features on any topic you can think of. Learn something new every day here: <https://artsandculture.google.com/>

Walk through the ruins of Pompeii or the Colosseum in Rome from your computer. Explore museums online including [The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum](#), [The Getty Museum](#), and [The Van Gogh Museum](#).

NASA Mission Operations

If you're curious about NASA, Take a 360-degree, virtual tour of the Hubble Space Telescope's home for mission operations, the Space Telescope Operations Control Center (STOCC) at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. Check out the [Mission Operations Tour!](#)





WRITEGIRL FLASHBACK

JOURNALISM WORKSHOP

SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2020



WRITEGIRL FLASHBACK

JOURNALISM WORKSHOP | 03.28.20

On Saturday, March 28th, 241 WriteGirl members joined us for our first live-streamed WriteGirl workshop. We broadcast into their homes for a workshop on Journalism!

Journalism is a broad genre that covers everything from movie reviews to investigative reporting on why we can't find any toilet paper!! Whether it's learning how to organize our closets or knowing when we can watch the next meteor shower or understanding a global crisis, we need journalists to break it down and help us understand it all!

WOMEN are especially needed in journalism. 63% of bylines are by men. And men overwhelmingly own and control media outlets. So let's get more women's voices represented! Because when we have more women writers in media, there are more stories about women and more focus on women's issues.

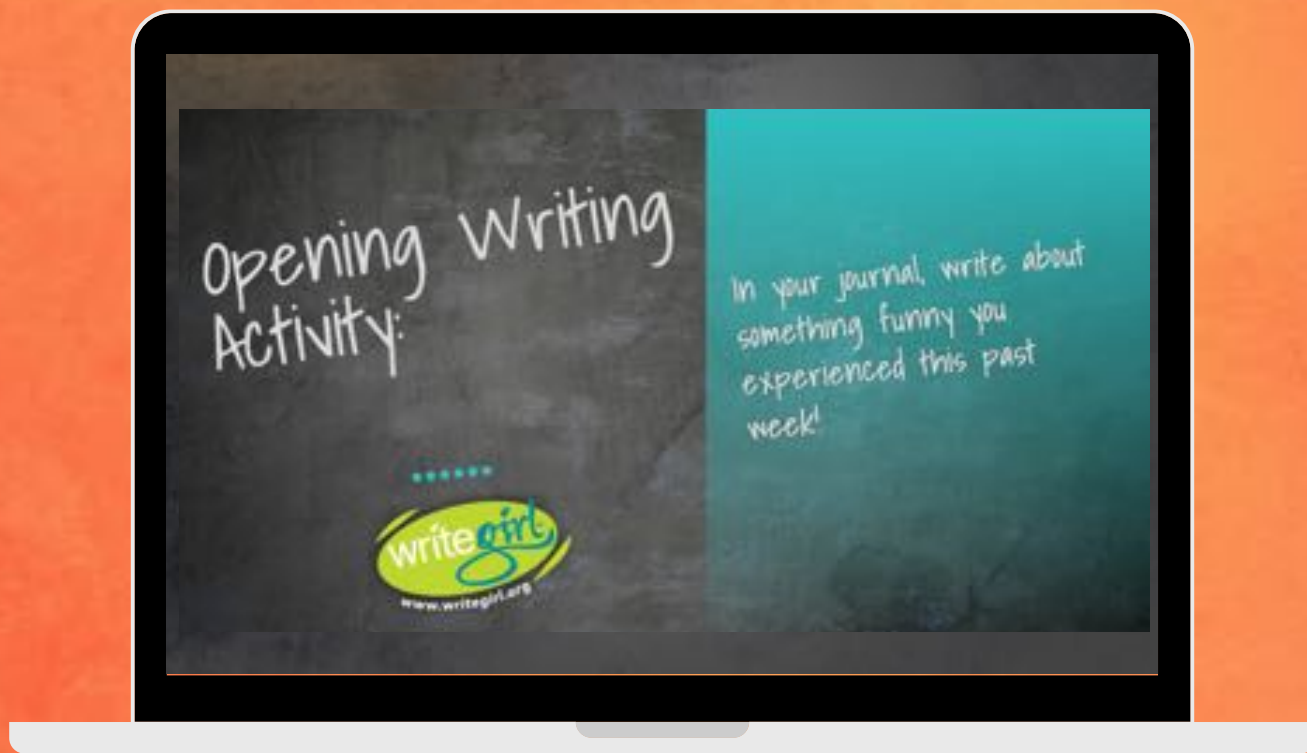
We hope to inspire a new generation of women to begin telling their own true stories. After all, that's essentially what Journalism is - **true stories that matter.**

OPENING WRITING ACTIVITY:

It's not news to anyone that laughter is the best medicine! And, just like every WriteGirl workshop that has ever been, we starting this digital workshop with a writing activity:

Write about something funny that had happened to you this past week.





WRITEGIRL SOAPBOX:

Soapbox is so nice, we did it TWICE. At the beginning and end of our workshop, our mentees & alums eagerly typed their names into the chat for a chance to get on the virtual soapbox and rant or rave about anything for 30 seconds. Six lucky teens got to take center-screen to tell us what was on their minds, which included:

How to spend a 'quarantine birthday,'
The difficulties of taking AP Tests online and
Adorable pets like Rainbow the Cat!

CAPTION THIS:

This image has got all the makings of a great journalism piece, but alas, we don't have a caption! We asked our writers what they thought this story might be about, and they went straight to their keyboards to create compelling captions that let us in on the story.



● Check out these compelling captions:

"Words bond each other."

- **Kate, mentee**

"Knowledge is a binding force."

- **Molly, mentee**

"Empowered women empower women!"

- **Nicki, mentor**

"Nurturers to innovators"

- **Patrice, alum**

"The vibrancy of learning."

- **Dana, mentee**

"Women together, rise together."

- **Aureeyahn, mentor**

"The PowerCircle of connection"

- **Wendy, mentor**

"All it takes is a sentence."

- **Grace, mentee**

THE QUESTIONING EXPERIMENT

To get to the bottom of a story, you have to ask a lot of questions! In order to get our writers thinking like journalists, we showed them this picture and asked who they would interview and what questions they would ask. Their answers made us wish we could really read these juicy interviews, and made us ask, "What's the Great Sheep Fraud Scandal of 2009?"



Who would you interview?

"A shepherd and his wife"

- **Alaine**

"The neighbor!"

- **Dana, mentee "**

The town's chamber of commerce!"

- **Rachel**

"People purchasing from them"

- **Jessica, Alum**

"Other people in their line of work/experts"

- **Maria, mentee**

What questions would you ask?

"Does working together make for a strong marriage?"

- **Wendy, mentor**

"Why do you have sheep? Are you protecting them or are you farming them for food?"

- **Tori, mentee**

"Why did you decide to get into the sheep business?"

- **Galylea, mentee**

"Tell me about the Great Sheep Fraud Scandal of 2009."

- **Sofia, mentee**

ANGLES AND OUTLETS:

When you think about “angles,” in writing for media outlets, you have to think about what your readers care about. WriteGirl teens and volunteers learned how to find their angle by creating captivating headlines for several different magazine outlets. The topic for their headlines? “Puppies.”

● Don't you wish you could read these adorable articles?

“The top 10 places in the world to cuddle with your pet”

- **Sofia, mentee**

“Is it possible to get your pup a personal plane ticket?”

- **Tori, mentee**

“How to get your dog to not pee in the old churches of Italy”

- **Zoe, mentee**

“Morning Cuddle on The Road: How to Feel Connected to your Pup from Far Away”

- **Sofia, alum**

“Does traveling impact your pup?”

- **Paola, mentee**

“Morning Warm Up: Cuddling with Your Pup”

- **Jessica, alum**

“How cuddling dogs can give you Abs!”

- **Zoe, mentee**

“The Champs & the Pups: The U.S. Olympic Team Shares their Favorite Fidos”

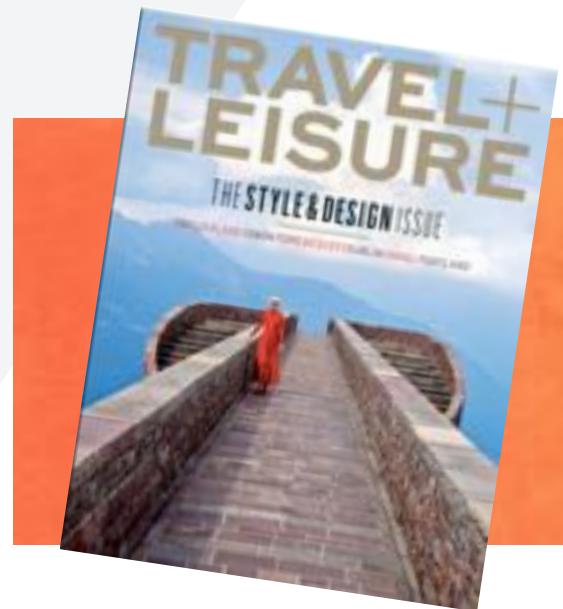
- **Darby, mentor**

“How cuddling with puppies in the morning boosts your energy levels”

- **Elle, mentee**

“10 athletes on why they love cuddling with their pups”

- **Eva, mentor**



ANGLES AND OUTLETS:

Continued...



"How a Dog's Bark Changed the Music World"

- **Kerri, mentor**

"How Dog Love Has Changed American Culture"

- **Delaney, mentee**

"TOP 10 KPUP ALBUMS"

- **Kaitlyn, mentee**

"Coachella? We introduce to you Dogchella"

- **Alaine**

"How to Rock Songwriting When Your Dog Wants To Go For A Walk"

- **Rachel, Alum**

"Pup OF the Year"

- **Galylea, mentee**

"The pup who changed the world"

- **Tracy, mentor**

"It's TIME for dogs to get the 20 under 20 award"

- **Zina, mentee**

"Most influential pups in history!"

- **Sag, mentee**

"Pups who have inspired the ones we admire today."

- **Ella, mentee**



SELF-CARE CHAT:

Self-care isn't all face masks and manicures! Self-care is anything you do to keep yourself happy and healthy. We took a break from breaking news to get the inside scoop on self-care from the WriteGirl staff. Each staff member took the virtual stage and shared some self-care tips they're employing during this unusual time. *Cue soft jazz music.*

● Here are a few to try:

"Crafting is a great way to take your mind off of things! Making something with my hands really makes me feel like I'm creating something. There's a ton you can do with just paper, and a lot of great tutorials online. I just did a stop motion class with just my phone, paper and some markers!"

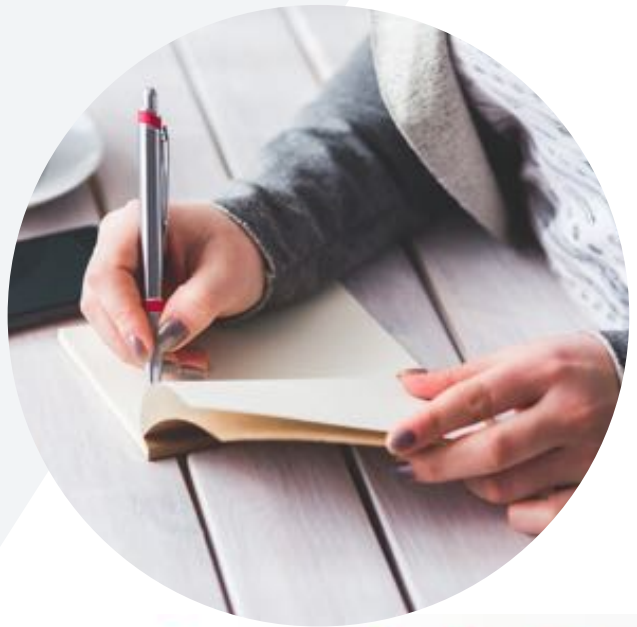
- **Megan, staff**

"Make a list of people you love and make sure to call one person from the list everyday!"

- **Andrea, staff**

"Keep a gratitude journal, where you write about things you're thankful for every morning."

- **Katie, staff**



THRIVE-AT-HOME:

The WriteGirl chat was ALIVE with stories from the frontlines of our teens' homes. They jumped at the chance to share how they're adapting to their new 'at-home' lifestyle. One word: sweatpants.

● Can you relate to any of these?

"Legit my mom just cut my bangs in the backyard."

- **Ella, mentee**

"I'm rereading Harry Potter!"

- **Zoe, mentee**

"I'm Skyping with my siblings"

- **Peggy"**

I swear once I get back to school I'm going to hug every single one of my friends"

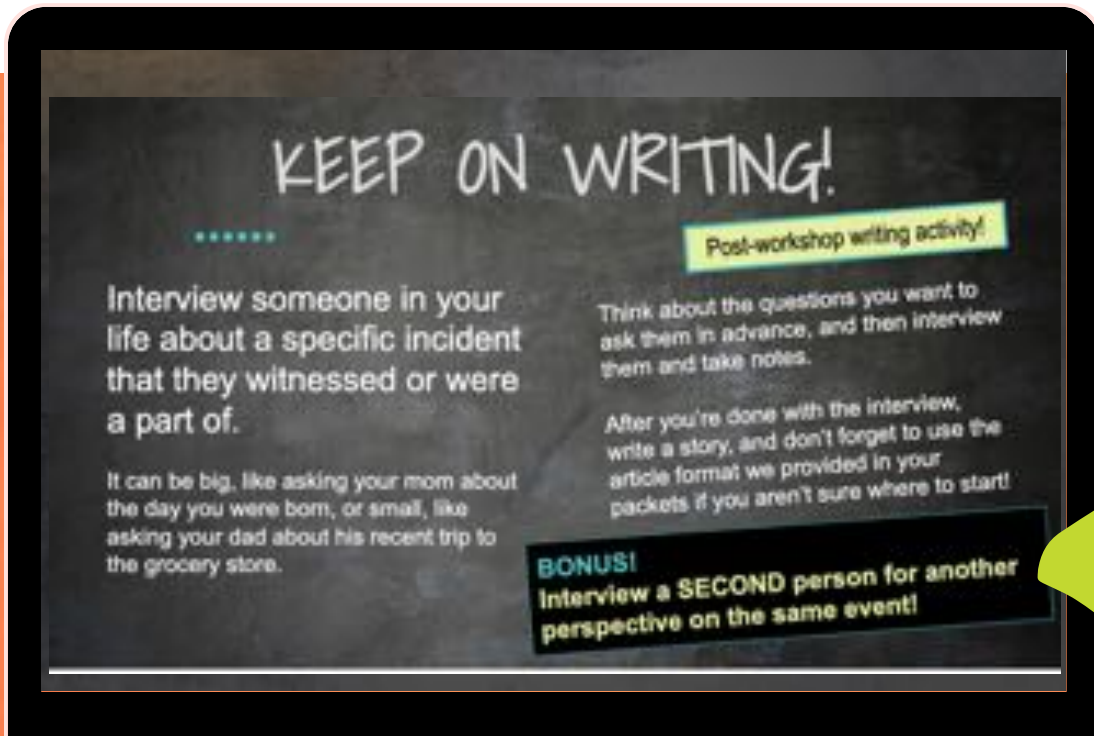
- **Jasmine**

"Had a dance party with my college friends over Zoom yesterday!! Highly recommend!!"

- **Grace, alum**

KEEP ON WRITING:

Can we call it homework if we do everything from home now? We gave our writers an important assignment: to interview someone in their life about an incident they witnessed. We can't wait to read these true stories THAT MATTER!



- **Interview someone in your life about a specific incident that they witnessed or were a part of.** It can be big, like asking your mom about the day you were born, or small, like asking your dad about this recent trip to the grocery store.
- **Think about the questions you want to ask them in advance,** and then interview them and take notes!
- **After you're done with the interview, write a story,** and don't forget to use the article format we provided in your packets if you aren't sure where to start!
- **BONUS!** Interview a second person for another perspective on the same event?
- **SEND** your writing to us at membership@writegirl.org

ADVICE ON INTERVIEWING FROM A MEDIA EXPERT

When it comes to journalism, there is always more to learn! Celebrity interviewer and WriteGirl Mentor, Deanna Barnert took time from her busy schedule to lay out some in-depth instruction on being an interview PRO. Read this before starting your next big story, then get interviewing. You got this! *Digital Elbow Bump*

Deanna Barnert

Entertainment Journalist/TV Critic at Bauer Media

The first step in prepping for an interview is research. Whether you have a day or a couple minutes, the more informed you are, the better your questions will be. Perhaps just as importantly, your subject will respond to the fact that you actually took the time. I can't tell you how many times I've had an interviewees gush that I've clearly done my research — which is crazy to me, because that's my job! But the point is, they noticed when you're faking it. And when you respect them, their time and a subject that is important to them, they are going to want to deliver.



And when you don't have any time, use that, honestly. There's absolutely nothing wrong with saying, "This story just came over my desk and I'm a little confused. To start off, can you lay out what's gone down here." Again, it shows that you care enough to get the story right. And that's what an interviewee wants.

My next tip is probably the one you've heard a thousand times...

Avoid yes or no questions, because that's what you'll get as an answer. If you ask, for example, "Do you approve of the new measure?" and the person says, no... what does that really get you? Nothing! Not only do you not have a quote, but they are not engaged in the conversation. Not only is it important to ask open questions, but...

It's just as important to formulate questions that don't lead your interviewee. And this is a tough one. When you're done prepping, go back and make sure you're not leading your witness, so to speak! People tend to repeat back to you – it's a natural instinct, but also a way to buy time as they're formulating their answer.

ADVICE ON INTERVIEWING FROM A MEDIA EXPERT

So going back to our example, if you asked, “What is your biggest concern over the new measure?” your interviewee is going to start off with the negative. Conversely, if you’re comfortable with your subject and ask, “What’s the coolest thing about the new measure?” not only are they starting with the positive, but they might actually say, “The coolest thing about it is...” So now they’re using slang that may not actually be natural to them.

An open and unbiased question like “What's your take on the new measure?” allows your subject to speak their truth. Whether they have a concern or they think it’s cool or they’re on the fence, they will use their own words to share that with you.

From there, you can allow their answers — and their energy! — to guide your follow-ups. “Why?” “Tell me more about this?” and “How do you feel about that?” are simple and important follow ups. You can always research the facts, but you can only get emotion from your subject. Emotional responses are the money quotes, so ask questions pertaining to how your subject and the people around them are reacting.

And if you actually need their concerns for the story you've been assigned, you can ask for those. But it should never be where you start and you should be sure to also ask for the strength of the measure. As a reporter, you want to get the whole story — not just one side of it, let alone just the side you were asked for.

My final note goes back to the issue of respect. You want to make your interviewee feel comfortable and open — and some warm, small talk at the top can help. Use the first few minutes to show gratitude for your subject’s time and willingness to talk, let them know how long you’re going to keep them and what you’re talking about and then start off with an easy question or two to get things rolling.

Be a professional! There's nothing wrong with recognizing someone’s talent, ability or knowledge.... but no fangirling or haterade allowed during an interview. Whether you're interviewing your celebrity crush, an evil murderer or your mother, you may just find you don’t agree with the person you're talking to. But it’s not your job to have an opinion. You are there to get the who, what, where and when and they are helping you get that. And as in life in general, a show of respect will get you everywhere.

THREADS FROM LAST WEEK

It wouldn't be a WriteGirl workshop without THREADS. This tradition is an opportunity for everyone to share something they liked, loved or learned during the workshop. We may not have had our trademark neon index cards, but our chat conversation was just as colorful!

We scrolled through six whole pages of threads in the chat to find these heart-warmers:

"I just did SOAPBOX for the first time!!"

- **Serena, mentee**

"This is my first session, and the community seems really positive! Can't wait to participate in more sessions!"

- **Abigail, mentee**

"I love how we are all connected even though we are in different parts of the world."

- **Paola, mentee**

"I loved how we got to explore different angles in journalism and I might be writing a story from the perspective of a sheep!"

- **Jessica, mentee**

"I loved hearing all the self-care advice! Definitely gonna try some of the activities that were recommended. It was also great getting to see/hear from y'all again, I missed you all!!!"

- **Machaela, mentee**

"I'm so thrilled we are going to do this weekly!!! Something to look forward to!"

- **Jordan, mentor**

"I love seeing everyone's beautiful faces and words and voices. I moved to Las Vegas a year and half ago and could not be a volunteer in person anymore. This is such a blessing in the middle of a crisis to be in this community again :)"

- **Chloe, mentor**

"I loved seeing how strong WriteGirl's infrastructure for providing fun, creative activities for this community is and I feel so lucky to be a part of it!"

- **Arielle, mentor**

WHAT'S NEXT?

WRITEGIRL CHARACTER & DIALOGUE ONLINE WORKSHOP

Are you a fan of TV? Movies? Plays? All three?!

Here's your chance to learn the secrets of writing scenes and monologues for the stage and screen! At this interactive online workshop, we will explore subtext, conflict, "the inciting incident," character development and much more!

We will be joined by special guest actors who will bring your writing to life!

Saturday, April 11th
11 AM - 12:30PM
via Zoom

ONLINE CLUBHOUSE JUST FOR YOU!

Visit the **WriteGirl Clubhouse** page, just for WriteGirls: RSVP to our upcoming workshops! Submit your writing for publication! Learn about scholarship opportunities! www.writegirl.org/writegirl-club-house

SPECIAL THANKS TO:



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
City of Los Angeles



WRITEGIRL STAFF

We're here
for you!



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