

WRITING TO REMEMBER: PURPLES

Weds. 1:30-3:30 pm

Moderator: Finnegan Alford-Cooper

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What skills do I hope people will learn/develop in the Purples? What will participants take away?

Participants will develop their skills in both writing their memories, and reviewing/critiquing others' writings. With practice writers learn to express themselves more clearly and work on the craft of writing.

We all know that memories are tricky and sometimes seem to shift over time. In our seminar we will work on preserving memories by writing them down—for oneself, for family and/or friends, for archives, etc. We will examine the trickiness of memory—what exactly do we remember and can we verify these memories with other data/info.

Sometimes, participants work through some memories that may be troublesome or less than happy. We might be trying to come to terms with a life event and by writing it down we can better explore our feelings, our reactions, what we think actually happened, and how we can give meaning to those experiences.

We can also relive good times through the recording of those memories—travel memories, our favorite books, what films have changed our lives, and so on.

We can leave a record of our lives for others to read now and later.

We will learn how to critique and assess other people's writing—how to be a good reader. Readers will carefully assess the writing and be ready with comments before the class session. Readers will be organized and succinct in their comments so we have time for everyone to speak.

Readers will attempt to understand the potential of the piece by considering what is on the page, rather than the author's intention. The goal is to accept the piece on its own terms, and ask questions about something if it is unclear or not explained enough.

Readers can point out what works and what doesn't work—what is unclear or not explained enough.

Readers do not prescribe (i.e., you must do this) or proscribe (i.e., you mustn't do this). It is not the readers' place to tell the writer what to do or not do. Readers offer suggestions, helpful feedback to the writers.

More detail on what we plan to do in our seminar:

Each writer will write two pieces during the semester one short piece (under 2000 words)

one long piece (under 4000 words).

Each week two or three writers present their work to the group. All writing is emailed to group members at least 24 hours before the seminar meets so we can have time to thoughtfully read and react to the writing.

Every week each writer will read their work (or portions of that work) for no more than 25 minutes. That will leave enough time for everyone in the group to give their feedback to each writer.

Writers may focus on their own lives, their parents or siblings, their children or grandchildren, friends, educational or work experiences, life lessons learned – topics are wide open.

After the writer reads their work, each participant will take about 3-4 minutes to comment on that writing-offer feedback as to what works, what it does well, what doesn't work, ideas to improve the piece.

The writer will not respond until all the listeners have commented, then the writer will have 3-4 minutes to respond to the feedback they've received.