

Synopsis - Novel and Short Story Writing

Module 1 – Welcome to The Writers Bureau

Your first and most important steps to becoming a published writer – how to build on your natural talent – how to enjoy your course – how to approach your studies – working with your tutor – completing your assignments.

Module 2 – Making a Writer Out of You

Deciding where and when to write – how to start your writing – writer's block and how to overcome it – the tools you must work with – keeping a cuttings file – how to organise yourself – the writer's approach to life – developing your imagination – the benefits of reading widely – how to develop your powers of observation – what the trained writer looks for – personal qualities every writer needs: perseverance, determination, self-organisation, resilience, confidence – how to use rejections to improve your writing – using your specialist knowledge – the door to quick success – finding more writing ideas – what editors are looking for.

Module 3 – Developing Your Writing Style

Getting the basics right – 11 rules to develop a good style and avoid common mistakes – constructing clear sentences and paragraphs – using active and passive tenses – link words and sign posts – how to say exactly what you mean – dangers to avoid: verbosity, circumlocution, clichés, repetition etc – dealing with slang and obscenities – how to use adjectives, similes and metaphors – comparing different styles.

Module 4 – Essential Legal Aspects

Copyright, plagiarism and how to avoid it – why your good name is important – the dangers of libel and how to avoid them – contracts, what to look for and how to safeguard your position – the Minimum Terms Agreement – literary agents and how to obtain one – royalties – Public Lending Right – vanity publishing and its snags – self publishing – tax and VAT – using a pen name or pseudonym.

Module 5 – Writing a Novel – Preparation

Everyone has a novel in them – what type of novel to tackle – the advantages of writing for a specific genre – action story or reflective story? – the right mental attitude – technical preparation – market research – length – creating a project file – getting into good writing habits – don't get discouraged – finding story ideas – making sure your idea is strong enough – research – the basic ingredients – conflict – jeopardy – action – tension – your novel's theme – choosing the right viewpoint: first person or third person.

Module 6 – Plotting

Plan your novel – the synopsis – writing to a formula – drawing up the story-line – adding texture – flashbacks – foreshadowing – subplots – coincidence – drawing up a 'treatment' – the three act drama – the beginning – get your story moving swiftly – the middle – develop your theme – the ending – the final show-down – tying up loose ends.

Module 7 – Characterisation and Dialogue

Creating vivid characters – make them larger than life – the believability factor – bringing your characters to life – names – mannerisms – motivations – building composite characters – contrast your characters – introducing your characters – the advantages of keeping the 'cast' small – avoiding stereotypes – creating a memorable main character – the sympathetic enemy – dialogue – making it plausible and interesting – the functions of dialogue: pushing on the plot, increasing excitement, characterisation – pace – creating emotional change – direct or indirect speech? – dialogue tags – slang and swear words – dialect – presentation.

Module 8 – Setting and Atmosphere, Revising and Selling Your Novel

Finding a suitable setting – building the right mood – using the weather to good effect – drawing on all five senses – choosing the best viewpoint – revising your first draft – seeking feedback from others – your own checklist to use – selling your novel – make full use of your

synopsis – manuscript presentation – the covering letter – sending your work to publishers – getting an agent – the end!

Module 9 – Writing Specialist Fiction

Recent changes to the market – Romance – Historical: realistic stories or 'bodice rippers'? – Detective Stories – Thrillers: fact or fiction? – War – Humour: misadventure, satire, sci-fi/fantasy, parody – Children's fiction – Science fiction: the differences between traditional sci-fi and fantasy – Male Interest – Women's Interest – Horror – Westerns – Erotica – market research is vital.

Module 10 – Writing the Short Story

Why short story writing is not an easy option – using your critical faculties when reading – learning to be self-critical – the markets for short stories: literary magazines, small press magazines, competitions, the mass market, the Internet – ideas for plots – types of short story: women's magazine stories, twist-enders, true life stories, horror stories, science fiction, children's stories – making sure there's conflict in your plot – making your style fit the publication you are targeting – choosing the right viewpoint to use – openings that hook your reader – the story's 'body' – satisfying endings – using dialogue to aid characterisation, to give information and to move the story forward – making your characters believable – making the reader empathise with your main characters – physical descriptions – titles – taboos – selling your work – the covering letter – coping with rejection – success!

Looking ahead – good luck for the future

Getting The Most From Interviews

Iain Pattison

Iain has interviewed thousands of people, from all walks of life. Here he gives you excellent advice on how to develop your interview technique and takes you step-by-step from setting up the interview to the final written piece.

Punctuation And Spelling

Diana Nadin

This is a guide and reference for those who have ever had doubts about their ability to spell and punctuate correctly. This is an excellent little reference book to help you.

The Internet – Making It Work For You

Nicola Taylor

Nicola provides a quick guide to writing for online publishers, finding markets and contacting them. She then looks at using the Internet for both research and to publicise yourself.

8 Corrected Assignments