

Virtual novel-writing workshops with Alison May



From 28th July 2020 I'll be offering a series of small group virtual workshops via Zoom on all elements of novel-writing, the writing life and the business of publishing. These sessions will be strictly limited to a maximum of 12 people per session, so book early to avoid disappointment.

All sessions are 90 minutes and each workshop stands alone, so you can sign up for just one or for all sixteen or any number in between.

Building the World 11am Tues 28th July 2020

Every story happens somewhere – whether it's deep space, pre-historic Persia or modern Britain, your reader needs to believe in your world. This workshop is all about how to create a tangible sense of place and time on the page.

Creating Character 9.30am Sat 1st Aug 2020

Character is everything. Characters drive plot. Characters emotionally engage your readers. Characters make or break novels. Let's talk about how to create really memorable ones.

Structuring Your Plot 11.30am Sat 1st Aug 2020

Inciting incidents, darkest moments, midpoints, climaxes and resolutions – what are they and how can you use them to make your novel exciting to read? Whether you plan your plots in advance or impose structure later in the process, this session will give you the tools you need.

The Dreaded Synopsis 11am Tues 4th Aug 2020

Many writers agree that synopsis-writing is just The Worst, but I secretly quite like it, and I'm determined to share the love. A great synopsis can help you understand your own story as well as sell your novel to an editor/agent.

Show, Don't Tell 4pm Thurs 13th Aug 2020

Or should that be Show, and Tell? Show, Don't Tell is every creative writing tutor's favourite phrase. In this session we'll break down what it actually means, how to do it, and even when it might be better to ignore this particular piece of writing wisdom.

Writing with Emotion 6pm Thurs 13th Aug 2020

The best stories are those that move readers, whether that's to joy or to sadness, but putting emotion on the page can be hard. It can feel weird while you're writing and the risk of drifting into cliché is strong. This session is all about how to create gut-punch emotion in your writing.

Planning for Pantsers & Pantsing for Planners 11am Tues 1st Sept 2020

It's said that writers fall into two camps – the planners who plot out their novel in advance and the pantsers who write by the seat of their pants with no route map to follow. So what happens if a pantsers gets stuck or a planner wanders off plan? This session will be full of tools to help you free your creativity but also keep things on track!

Finding Your Voice 6pm Thurs 3rd Sept 2020

What is an author's 'voice'? And how do you find yours? This session is all about getting to the heart of who you are as an author and finding confidence in your own authorial voice.



The Fear & the Joy 11am Tues 8th Sept 2020

Writing is a solitary and an emotional business. Most of us start because we love to write, but that can easily be lost under the anxiety about whether our manuscript will ever be good enough, the fear of rejection, the fear of failure and the utter awfulness of how much you hate your own book. In this workshop we'll embrace the fear and try to fall back in love with our own writing.

Starting to Edit 4pm Thurs 10th Sept 2020

So you've finished your first draft. You've had a celebratory glass of something cheerful/eaten some cake/been for a long bracing walk (whatever works for you), but what next? How do you get your messy first draft in order? I'm a firm believer that editing is fun. By the end of this session you might be to, and if not you should at least feel a bit more confident about how to get started.

The Most Common First Draft Problems 6pm Thurs 10th Sept 2020

I've read A LOT of unpublished manuscripts in my career, and a lot of the same issues come up time and time again. In this session we'll run through the most common – from saggy middles to horrific info-dumps - and talk about how to fix them.

Perfecting Your Pitch 11am Tues 15th Sept 2020

At some point all writers find themselves out amongst other people having to talk about their own book. How do you get that down into one pithy sentence that will engage agents, editors and readers alike? We'll work out how to answer 'What's your book about?' clearly and excitingly with not a hesitation, deviation or repetition in sight.

Theme 11am Tues 22nd Sept 2020

What is theme and how can it help you focus your story, your characterisation, your setting, and even your synopsis and query letter? Understanding the themes you gravitate towards can help you focus your current novel and develop future ideas.

The Business of Writing 9.30am Sat 26th Sept 2020

Publishing is a business, and if you want to sell novels you need to learn how that business works. In this session – focussing on traditional publishing - we'll talk about rights, contracts, money and pitfalls for unwary authors.

Agent-Hunting 11.30am Sat 26th Sept 2020

How to find the right agent for you, how to put together a fantastic submission pack, what to say in your query letter and what to ask if you're offered representation. Everything you need to know about looking for an agent.

Finishing Your Novel 6pm Thurs 1st Oct 2020

Sometimes the hardest part of writing a novel is knowing when to stop. There's always something else you could just tweak or improve, but eventually you have to walk away. This session is all about deciding when to stop and move onto a shiny new idea, whilst making sure your current novel is as good as it can be before you do.

All workshops are 90 minutes long and will be conducted online via Zoom. You will need access to a PC, phone or tablet with microphone and camera. Each workshop is £15, or 6 workshops booked together for £80, or 10 booked together for £130, or all 16 for £200. To book any of these sessions go to:

<https://alison-may.co.uk/for-writers/virtual-courses-and-retreats/>

