



**DEEP NARRATIVE DESIGN
WRITING WORKSHOP**
December 2020

Presented by Ian Long



WORKSHOP PROGRAM

GO DEEPLY INTO NARRATIVE DESIGN TO MAKE YOUR STORY STAND OUT

This exciting four-day workshop gives writers in all genres the tools they need to make their stories moving and memorable.

It's intended to inspire creativity and help writers bring the most attractive and interesting aspects of their stories into focus.

It will answer questions like:

- How can I be sure that my story communicates the ideas and emotions I intend, in the most effective ways possible?
- **Which elements should I choose to maximise my story's effectiveness?**
- How do I "hook" audiences with a strong and original dramatic question, and make sure that the answer to it is satisfying
- **How can I ensure that I'm creating a truly satisfying emotional journey which becomes richer as my story develops?**
- Does my story already contain elements that make it different and special that I haven't yet identified and developed?
- **Is my story making optimum use of anticipation, surprise and emotion?**

Every element of a story can be seen as a unit of information, and the workshop will show the many creative ways in which information can be revealed and withheld.

Using the concept of suspense as a departure point, it draws on cutting-edge TV techniques, forgotten methods from cinema history



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and ideas from prose fiction to stimulate your understanding of story design.

We'll see how narratives can be designed to evoke shock, suspense, anticipation, surprise, and powerful reversals of expectation: in a word, emotion.

We'll see how a conscious awareness of your story's overall design is key to clarifying many visual and character elements.

Fun exercises, group discussion and carefully-chosen clips will help you to generate ideas as you absorb the workshop's concepts and apply them to your own work.

SOME QUOTES FROM PREVIOUS STUDENTS

"Very to-the-point and detailed ... I would recommend the workshop to a wide range of writers who are working on diverse projects."

"I'm now thinking about my stories in new and different ways, and how I can apply what I've learnt."

"Very good for provoking new ways of thinking about your projects."

"It covered the topics extremely well, with lots of interesting and useful clips to emphasise key points."



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DAY ONE - SUSPENSE & BEYOND

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Introduce yourselves and your projects

WHAT IS THE WORKSHOP ABOUT?

Explaining how the workshop is intended to help your

THE ISABEL FISH

Handout: A short story called *The Isabel Fish* by Julie Orringer, to be sent out and read by students before the workshop

Discussion of *The Isabel Fish* and how it achieves its effects

EMOTION & ENGAGEMENT

CLIP: PSYCHO

Exercise: what is the most fundamental aspect of story-telling?

BASIC SUSPENSE

Handout: Hitchcock's suspense methods

CLIPS: MARNIE, THE PARALLAX VIEW

Exercise: create your own scenario utilising Hitchcock's suspense template

LONGER TERM SUSPENSE

CLIP: THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE

Exercise: applying the rules of suspense to a longer narrative

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VERY LONG-TERM SUSPENSE

CLIPS: BREAKING BAD, HOMELAND

Exercise: find a scenario in which suspense can animate a long-form narrative, such as a TV series

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH'S METHODS

Handout: breakdown of Patricia Highsmith's *Deep Water*

DAY TWO – ON TIME

INCREMENTAL FLASHBACK

CLIPS: CATCH-22

Exercise: using incremental flashback in your story; the dramatic situations it suits

PREVIEW FLASH FORWARD & “NARRATIVE SPECIAL EFFECTS”

CLIPS: BREAKING BAD

Exercise: Breaking used various “narrative special effects” in its cold opens. How would you apply this technique to a story? Can you think of new ones?

THE ABSENT MIDDLE

CLIP: BREAKING BAD

Some stories give us details (clues) and landscapes (contexts) but leave out the linking elements; what is the psychological effect of this?

FRAMING DEVICES

How do they change the nature of narratives? How could they apply to your story?

CHAPTERS AND FRAMES

CLIP: THE SHINING

Exercise: could a “frame” improve your story? Which would suit it?

THREATS, WARNINGS AND CHALLENGES

CLIP: WHEN HARRY MET SALLY, THE LIBERTINE, THE SHINING

Exercise: how to use statements, threats, warnings and challenges in a story

DAY THREE – PATTERNS

Thinking in terms of patterns is a basic aspect of constructing stories.

GENRE-BASED SUSPENSE

Exercise: genre is an important kind of pattern; thinking about it is crucial to constructing stories

THE UNFORGETTABLE SEQUENCE

CLIPS: TRUE DETECTIVE

Handout: The Treatment of True Detective

Exercise: Some stories work towards specific unforgettable moments or sequences; could this work in your story?

PATTERNS AND THE RULE OF THREE

CLIP: PAN'S LABYRINTH

Exercise: how this basic storytelling rule can apply to your stories

CHARACTER AS NARRATIVE DEVICE

CLIP: THE HEIRESS

Exercise: how our emotional response to characters informs our view of a story

MAKING RULES

Make a recipe for your series that will make it stand out.

CLIP: THE SIXTH SENSE

How could you make a "recipe" for a story that would guarantee

DAY FOUR – BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

THE COLD START & CRYPTIC IDENTITIES

CLIP: THE BOURNE IDENTITY, RUN ALL NIGHT

Exercise: think up a scenario where a character's identity is a central mystery. How can this inform a story?

THE DRAMATIC QUESTION

Designing the central question that engages your audience. How does this differ in film and TV?

FORESHADOWING AND MISDIRECTION

CLIPS: MRS MINIVER, ARRIVAL

Exercise: this powerful tool relates to the Dramatic Question, and ways of changing or subverting it; how can misdirection help your story?

BOOKENDING

Returning to an initial scene, statement or idea at the end of a film.

CLIPS: BRIEF ENCOUNTER, COLLATERAL

Exercise: how is bookending useful?

THE ENGLISH PATIENT

A film that combines various ideas that we've looked at

CLIPS: THE ENGLISH PATIENT

A broken Rule of Three, a Story within a Story, a "bomb under the seat".

Exercise: thinking about combining different methods in one story

STORIES WITHIN STORIES

CLIPS: LEGION, WHEN HARRY MET SALLY, THE FALL, THE SOPRANOS

Exercise: existing stories are often referred to or invoked in narratives; could a story within your story inform it and set up useful expectations?

BUILDING TO A SHOCK ENDING

CLIP: THE PUBLIC ENEMY

Exercise: thinking about endings, how to make them feel unexpected but right



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CONCLUSION

We'll end with a Question and Answer session enabling you to recap everything you've learnt in the workshop and to tie up any loose ends.