



2023 Writers Conference

Thursday, November 2 – Saturday, November 4

Thursday, November 2

6:30 – 7:30 p.m. - Carmack Community Room 

From Barrio Boy to World Champion with Joaquin Zihuatanejo

In our kickoff event, Zihuatanejo will take us on a poetic journey from barrio boy to teacher to poet to World Champion and eventually poet laureate. With equal parts storytelling, poems and Q&A, Dallas' inaugural poet laureate will share how he found poetry as a child.

Friday, November 3

9:30 – 10:30 a.m. - Carmack Community Room

Developmental Editing: What, Why, When with Dawn Downey and Jessica Conoley

Learn how collaboration with an editor will make your writing say what you intend. Eavesdrop on the editing experience from both the writer's and editor's points of view. Jessica Conoley and Dawn Downey will walk you through a case study from the early draft of a personal essay through big picture edits to final manuscript.

9:30 – 10:30 a.m. - Conference Room 20 

Train the Trainer: Poetry Classroom Takeovers

In this interactive workshop poet, Joaquín Zihuatanejo will take workshop attendees through the process of what it is to be a traveling touring poet who often makes part of his living by facilitating classroom takeovers. We will define classroom takeovers and speak to the ways in which they help teachers connect poetry to their students. Workshop attendees will be challenged to write about and share what they feel is/was the most engaging poetry workshop they have ever attended. A Q and A concerning classroom takeovers will conclude this workshop.

9:30 – 10:30 a.m. - Logan Conference Room

Writing Your Award-winning Children's Book with Ronda Miller

Writing a children's book can be an enlightening experience, and one for which most writers are very qualified. Surely most people have read hundreds, if not thousands, of children's books to little loved ones. Most could absolutely write one. Participants will be encouraged to think back to their own childhood, to the childhood of their children, to examine the components within their favorite children's books. What made the book stand out? Was it a triggered emotion? One (or more) senses that were engaged? A peaked curiosity about the subject or ending? Falling in love with (or hating) a specific character? The art within the book or something else? The goal is for participants to leave not only with an understanding of the components to layer a great children's book, but also with several ideas so they can soon begin writing great children's books of their own.



In-person, YouTube LIVE
and OnDemand

(Friday continued)

9:30 – 11:30 a.m. (Drop in)

Elevator Pitch Critiques with Gregg Winsor - Sometimes you only have a few moments in front of a editor, publisher, or a reader to grab their attention and to make your work memorable and understandable. We will discuss techniques on how to whittle down your pitches for maximum effectiveness.

Artist Statement Critiques with Bryan Voell - Bring your artist statement or author bio for some one-on-one feedback with JCL's Local Arts Librarian.

Reading Your Work Aloud Critique with Lisa Allen - Reading your work in front of others can be challenging and intimidating. Remove obstacles by reading your work to just one person while that person records you, so you can review together. You'll walk away with better awareness of your reading style and tips you can use to improve future readings.

10 a.m. – Noon - Conference Room 2

Writing Monsters with Laura Moore

Whether you want your readers to love them or fear them, the best monsters are believable. Using creative biographies, interactive interviews and shrewd descriptions, participants will learn to create interesting, complicated monsters who'll steal readers' hearts...or chill their souls.

10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. - Conference Room 4

Memory Feast: A Food & Poetry Workshop with Traci Brimhall

Both poems and food are a feast for the senses. They also both connect us with our memories. This workshop will look at several poems that center around food. Our discussions and activities will help give us the ingredients to write one of our own poems that engages with food and memory.

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. - Conference Room 1

Kansas Words with Dennis Etzel Jr.

In a non-judgmental, inclusive, open space, Dennis Etzel Jr. (he/they) facilitates a workshop on different forms of writing, showing examples from poets and writers on how they engage Kansans, while keeping in mind how all voices need to be heard and recognized. Traditional and experimental forms of writing and practices are included.

11 a.m. – Noon - Carmack Community Room

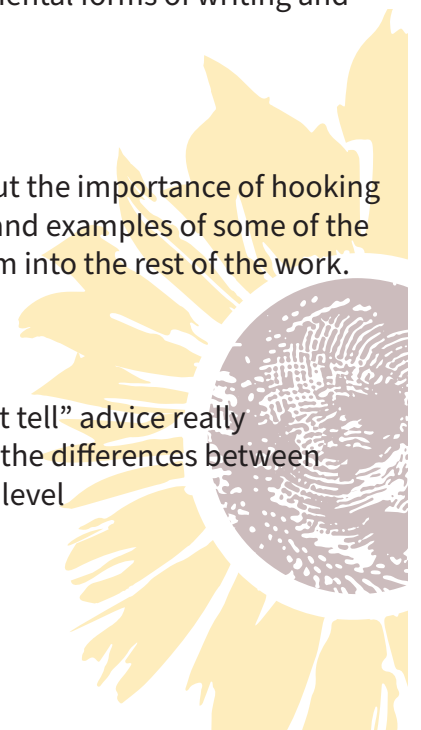
Grand Openings with Mary-Lane Kamberg

Start your articles, stories, and poems on the right foot. We hear so much about the importance of hooking the reader, but little about how to do that. This workshop gives practical tips and examples of some of the most effective types of opening leads to grab editors and agents and drag them into the rest of the work.

11 a.m. – Noon - Conference Room 20 

When to Show vs. Tell with Amber Logan

Local author Amber Logan will demystify what the often repeated “show, don't tell” advice really means—and when telling is actually preferable. The presentation will focus on the differences between showing vs. telling on the macro level (narration vs. dramatization) and micro level (sentence structure and word choice).



(Friday continued)

11 a.m. – Noon - Logan Conference Room

Travel Writing with Ryan Bernsten

Focusing on “50 States of Mind” as a basis, participants will learn about the hero’s journey and Joseph Campbell’s theories of mythology on storytelling structure. They will take away skills on how to structure a compelling travel narrative, incorporating the hero’s journey into their writing. The session would involve reading examples of travel writing that use the hero’s journey, free writing exercises, and finally sharing their writing with the group. Anyone interested in travel writing, storytelling, or mythology should attend.

11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. - Conference Room 13

Generative Poetry Workshop: Stop Making Sense with Juaquin Zihuatanejo

In this generative interactive poetry writing workshop we will challenge workshop attendees to get out of the way of the poem and allow it to simply happen. We will remind workshop attendees that yes, the crafting and revision of a poem can be a challenging and daunting task at times. But at other times it can simply be fun and exhilarating, especially when you strive to reverse the stereotypes of poetry by crafting and performing it in ways that are equally odd and brilliant. Come prepared to write, revise, craft, and perform.

Noon – 2 p.m. (Drop in)

Metaphor Dice with Anna Madrigal - Want or need a quick writing prompt? Would you like to explore a new or unexpected idea with the quick roll of dice? Come one, come all for metaphor dice!

Magic Typewriter Surprise with Rye Boothe - Receive an impromptu poem that is part verse and part spiritual reading. Leave feeling connected, uplifted, held in a caring gaze and walk away with a one-of-a-kind piece of art in the process.

Self-Discovery Collage with Joseph Keehn - Create a collage that expresses your innermost thoughts and feelings. Guided by their intuition and imagination, participants will gather visuals and arrange them into an artful self-expression based on a prompt. Bring your creativity and we will provide the materials and prompt to get you started.

Author Photos with Kelly Sime - You never know when your work will be accepted for publication. Don’t scramble to find a suitable author photo. Have one taken so you’ll be ready to hit the big time.

1 – 3 p.m. - Conference Room 2

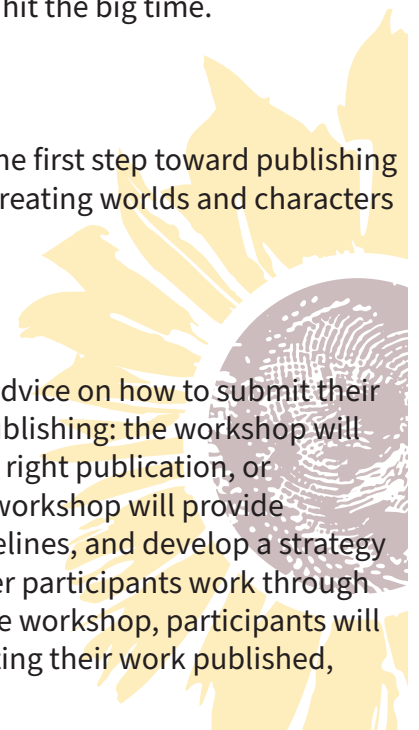
From Fanfiction to Fantastic Originals with Laura Moore

Creating fanfiction is a great first lesson in the craft of writing! It can become the first step toward publishing a debut novel too. This workshop will show participants how to transition to creating worlds and characters that are completely their own.

1:15 – 3:15 p.m. - Conference Room 4

Submitting Your Work for Publication with Ryan Bernsten

This workshop is designed to provide aspiring writers with practical tips and advice on how to submit their work for publication. Participants should bring a work they are considering publishing: the workshop will cover essential topics such as preparing your work for submission, finding the right publication, or considering methods of self-publishing. Through interactive discussions, the workshop will provide guidance on how to research potential publications, analyze submission guidelines, and develop a strategy for submitting work to multiple publications. We will briefly be looking at other participants work through the eyes of a publisher and providing encouraging next steps. By the end of the workshop, participants will have gained the knowledge and confidence to take the first steps towards getting their work published, including in JCL’s writing contests and the JoCoWrites blog.



(Friday continued)

1:30 – 2:30 p.m. - Carmack Community Room

Why (and How) to Read Books on Craft with Dr. Amber A. Logan and Amy Leigh Harden

Join local authors Dr. Amber A. Logan and Amy Leigh Harden for a discussion on the importance of reading craft books during all stages of an author's writing career. The presentation will focus on ways writers can put their new-found wisdom to good use and will highlight specific craft titles.

1:30 – 2:30 p.m. - Conference Room 20 

Romancing History with Elle Jackson

Step into the enthralling world of historical fiction with Harlequin's first Black historical romance author, Elle Jackson. In this captivating lecture, you will embark on a creative journey that takes you through the art of writing historical fiction, with a special emphasis on weaving romance into the tapestry of the past. This lecture is designed to equip you with the essential skills and insights needed to create compelling narratives set against the backdrop of history.

1:30 – 2:30 p.m. - Logan Conference Room

From Page to Stage with Allison McIntosh

Explore the process of writing an opera libretto, working with a composer to set words to music, and bringing those words to life on stage. We will look at different approaches to assembling text for the stage and explore the development of McIntosh's opera, *The Murderess*.

1:30 – 3:30 p.m. - Conference Room 1

Goals but Different: Building a Writing Practice with Self-compassion with Jerri Miller

Writers tend to have a loud inner critic, which can get louder when we don't meet our writing goals. Research shows that self-compassion is way more motivating than self-criticism. In this workshop, we'll explore different ways to create writing goals and how to work toward them with self-compassion. You'll have tools and resources to build your writing practice when you leave.

1:45 – 3:15 p.m. - Conference Room 13

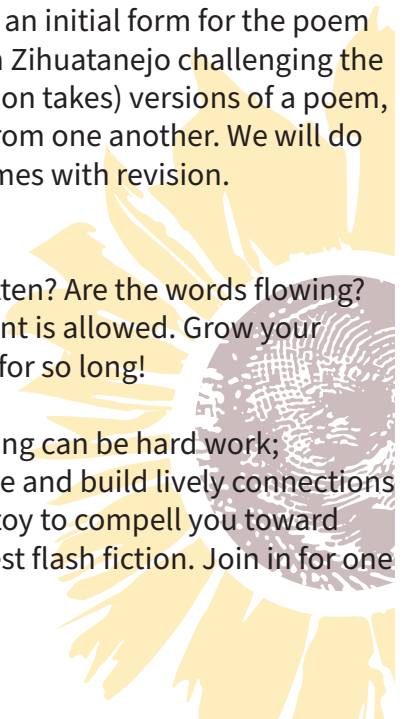
Poetry Revision: 23 < 23 with Joaquin Zihuatanejo

In this interactive poetry writing workshop, we will brainstorm, develop, and work 23 new poetic themes that we can transform (with time and craft) into 23 new poems. We will explore an initial form for the poem we generate in workshop. Then we will have revision challenges led by Joaquín Zihuatanejo challenging the poets to create perhaps two or three (depending on how much time each revision takes) versions of a poem, that stem from the same starting point but look and feel completely different from one another. We will do all of this to highlight the power, precision, and (somewhat) perfection that comes with revision.

2:15 – 4 p.m. (Drop in)

Open Critique with Matt Crist - What are you working on or what have you written? Are the words flowing? Are you stuck? Come bounce ideas around in a casual setting where no judgment is allowed. Grow your ideas and maybe even get past that writer's block that's been weighing on you for so long!

6 Word Stories, Action Frog, and Character Playlists with Cassidy Coles - Writing can be hard work; remember when it felt like fun? Take a moment to reconnect to your playful side and build lively connections to your characters, storyline, and self through a series of pencil sports. Build a toy to compell you toward your vision, craft a musical playlist for a character, or try your hand at the sparest flash fiction. Join in for one game or all three to put a little joy back into your writing practice.



(Friday continued)

2:15 – 4 p.m. (Drop in) continued

Gather at the Table with Phil Denver - Engage with other conference-goers in an informal chat. We'll talk hope. We'll talk dreams. We'll bust down barriers and uplift each other on our writing journeys.

3 – 4 p.m. - Carmack Community Room

How to Continue Writing: Developing Projects, Prompts, and Rituals in the Midst of Everyday Life with Dennis Etzel

In a non-judgmental, inclusive, open space, Dennis Etzel Jr (he/they) elaborates on how creating projects, prompts, and rituals for generative writing can help with self care--to continue writing wherever one is in the midst of everyday life. Discussions place an emphasis on trauma-informed poetic practices, experimental writing, and healing for the self and community.

3 – 4 p.m. - Conference Room 20



The Difference Between Rock and Bone: Poetry and Revision with Traci Brimhall

Writing can be mysterious, but often the process of revision is even more so. During this talk Traci Brimhall will show revisions of poems that model three core techniques for revisions and discuss when each is most helpful to use. She will also review numerous small tweaks that can improve poems.

3 – 4 p.m. - Logan Conference Room

Talking to Crickets with Ronda Miller

This presentation is directed to those who have received a terminal illness diagnosis and/or have been a caregiver to a loved one with an end stage illness. The presentation will concentrate on how just as we think we may have killed a cricket, only to later find it is alive, well, and chirping, we, as humans, live until we die. Participants will have the opportunity to give voice to important life legacies, as well as losses and diagnoses they have received or experienced. There will be discussion about the slice of life (vignette) style of writing, and how it can be utilized to record a loved one's life to carry memories of that person forward.

Saturday, November 4

9:30 – 10:30 a.m. - Carmack Community Room

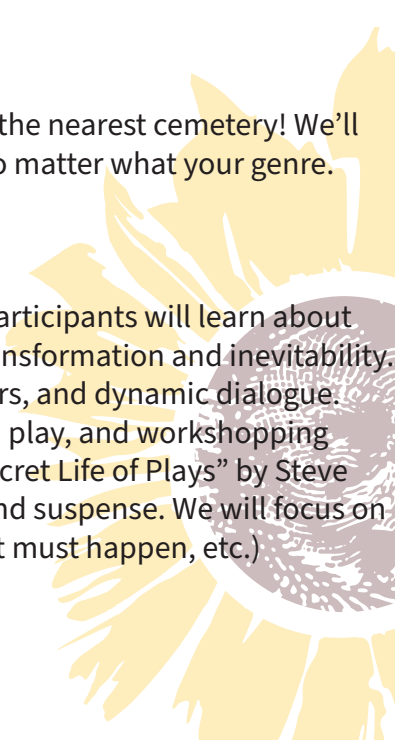
Cemeteries: They're Not Just for Ghost Stories with Laura Moore

Looking for character names, story ideas, or a peaceful place to write? Head to the nearest cemetery! We'll explore the many ways graveyards can feed a writer's muse any time of year, no matter what your genre.

9:30 – 10:30 a.m. - Logan Conference Room

Playwriting with Ryan Bernsten

Playwriting is one of the most collaborative, rewarding storytelling methods. Participants will learn about the structure of plays and how to use it to craft engaging stories focusing on transformation and inevitability. They will take away the ability to create compelling plots, memorable characters, and dynamic dialogue. The session will use examples of "well-made plays," outlining the structure of a play, and workshoping to find solutions to writing challenges. We will also read a section from "The Secret Life of Plays" by Steve Waters, specifically about the inevitability of a plot and how it impacts dread and suspense. We will focus on finding what feels inexorable in the participants' plots. (It cannot happen, but it must happen, etc.)



(Saturday continued)

9:30 – 10:30 a.m. - Conference Room 20 

Creating Words with Music with Allison McIntosh

Writing music and writing words are very different crafts, but they are both shaped through acts of creativity. In this session, we will explore how composers generate ideas and apply those techniques to writing with words. You will be introduced to some experimental composition styles, and there will be time for some writing inspired by these musical sources.

9:30 – 11:30 a.m. (Drop in)

6 Word Stories, Action Frog, and Character Playlists with Kate McNair - Writing can be hard work; remember when it felt like fun? Take a moment to reconnect to your playful side and build lively connections to your characters, storyline, and self through a series of pencil sports. Build a toy to compell you toward your vision, craft a musical playlist for a character, or try your hand at the sparest flash fiction. Join in for one game or all three to put a little joy back into your writing practice.

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10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. - Conference Room 4

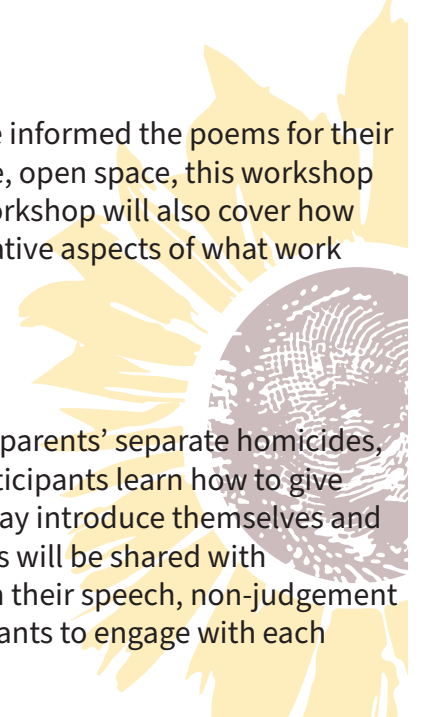
Where We Work with Dennis Etzel Jr.

Dennis Etzel Jr's (he/they) first job was at McDonald's, in which the experience informed the poems for their 2017 Kansas Notables Book Fast-Food Sonnets. In a non-judgmental, inclusive, open space, this workshop examines how poetry can speak out for workers equity and belonging. The workshop will also cover how poetry can speak for any experiences of work, balancing the positive and negative aspects of what work means—including unpaid labor.

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. - Conference Room 1

How to Rewrite Your Trauma Without Too Much Drama with Ronda Miller

In this workshop, Ronda Miller will share personal trauma writings (about her parents' separate homicides, her experiences in foster care, being kidnapped and heroin usage) to help participants learn how to give themselves permission to go deeper with their own trauma sharing. People may introduce themselves and share as many of their trauma topics as they wish or as time allows. Guidelines will be shared with participants at the beginning of the presentation to encourage freedom within their speech, non-judgement of self and others, and confidentiality. Miller will allow ample time for participants to engage with each other, ask questions, write, and then share their writings.



(Saturday continued)

10:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. - Conference Room 2

From History to Heartache: Crafting Historical Romance with Real Events with Elle Jackson

Using interactive exercises and writing prompts, we'll delve into the intricate world of historical romance writing and discover the power of infusing narratives with real events. We'll discuss the importance of historical accuracy and its impact on reader engagement, look at examples from renowned historical romance novels, and we'll learn how to conduct meticulous research to ensure that your novel's settings, events, and characters align seamlessly with the historical context. By the end of the workshop, you will have a deeper understanding of how to craft a compelling historical romance novel that authentically captures the essence of a specific era that transport readers to the past, evoking powerful emotions through your romantic plotlines.

11 a.m. – Noon - Carmack Community Room

No One Can Whistle a Symphony: Author and Artist Collaborations with Traci Brimhall and Kelly Yarbrough, Moderated by TBD

One of the great myths of art is that it is a solitary act. Artists are often inspired by other artists, in conversations with artistic traditions, or at times directly collaborating with other artists and writers. Author Traci Brimhall and artist Kelly Yarbrough will discuss their collaboration process in creating this year's poetry walk, "Memory Palace." The discussion will be moderated with time at the end for Q&A.

11 a.m. – Noon - Logan Conference Room

What's So Funny? with Mary-Lane Kamberg

Put your sense of humor on paper. This workshop includes practical advice for using humor in poetry, following the narrative form for humorous essays. Mary-Lane Kamberg will show you how to use writing techniques to get your readers (and editors) laughing. Her humorous articles and poems have appeared in The Christian Science Monitor, Kansas City Star, Kansas City Parent, The Olathe Daily News and other publications.

11 a.m. – Noon - Conference Room 20



What Comes After the First Draft with Amber Logan and Amy Leigh Harden

Join local authors Dr. Amber A. Logan and Amy Leigh Harden as they walk attendees through a step-by-step process for polishing a first draft without getting overwhelmed--from big picture fixes like plot structure and character development to line level editing like word choice and formatting.

Noon – 12:45 p.m. - Strang Park

Guided Poetry Walk with Traci Brimhall and Kelly Yarbrough

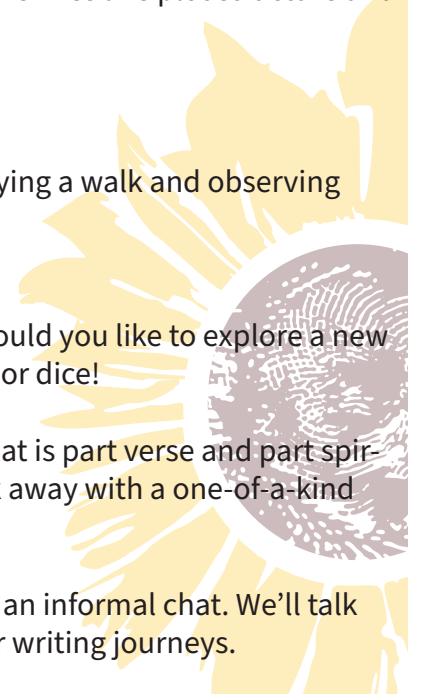
Continue the conversation with Traci Brimhall and Kelly Yarbrough while enjoying a walk and observing their work.

Noon – 2 p.m. (Drop in)

Metaphor Dice with Anna Madrigal - Want or need a quick writing prompt? Would you like to explore a new or unexpected idea with the quick roll of dice? Come one, come all for metaphor dice!

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(Saturday continued)

Noon – 2 p.m. (Drop in) continued

Author Photos with Kelly Sime - You never know when your work will be accepted for publication. Don't scramble to find a suitable author photo. Have one taken so you'll be ready to hit the big time.

1 – 2:30 p.m. - Conference Room 13

Poetry Revision: 23 < 23 with Joaquin Zihuatanejo

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1:15 – 3:15 p.m. - Conference Room 4

The Magic of Journaling for Writers with Jerri Miller

In this two-hour workshop, we'll journal together to find our writing magic, using our pens to cast spells over the page. OK, maybe there won't be magic exactly, but sometimes it can feel like that when a perfect idea (or a perfect start) comes to us while journaling. We'll talk about ways to overcome barriers to journaling, how to use journaling as one of our writing tools, and, of course, do a lot of journaling, so bring a notebook and your favorite writing utensil! Have the Last

1:30 - 2:30 p.m. - Carmack Community Room

Have the Last Word: Write Your Own Obituary with Darlene Jerome

Margaret Atwood said, "In the end, we'll all become stories." An obituary is simply a summary of your life story. Who would be better to write it than the person that lived it? How do you want to be remembered? Give readers a window into your life: family, career, hobbies, passions, etc. We will explore published obituaries and the elements that should make up an obituary. Select a picture that people will remember you by. Decide how and where you want the obituary published. During a highly emotional time, your family will thank you for sparing them the burden of writing this important document.

1:30 – 2:30 p.m. - Logan Conference Room

A Ten-Minute Outline with Amy Leigh Harden

In this hands-on workshop led by local author Amy Leigh Harden, participants will work with a vague story idea and learn a fast and fun process for expanding the idea into a short, but workable, outline. Part brainstorming and part story structure, this is an interactive class so bring story ideas.

1:30 – 2:30 p.m. - Conference Room 20



Writing Atmospheric Stories with Elle Jackson

Join us for an enchanting workshop on the art of crafting atmospheric stories presented by Elle Jackson, one of Harlequin's own romance writers. In this immersive workshop, you'll discover the secrets behind creating settings that not only serve as a backdrop but also become characters in their own right, setting the stage for unforgettable love stories.

1:30 – 3:30 p.m. - Conference Room 1

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(Saturday continued)

1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. - Conference Room 2

The Fine Art of Critique with Laura Moore

Joining a critique group can vastly improve your writing, but the idea of voluntarily asking people to point out the problems in your manuscript can be daunting. In this workshop participants will learn what to expect from critique, how to give and take constructive criticism, and how to find or start your dream group.

2:15 – 4 p.m. (Drop in)

Self-Discovery Collage with Angel Tucker - Create a collage that expresses your innermost thoughts and feelings. Guided by their intuition and imagination, participants will gather visuals and arrange them into an artful self-expression based on a prompt. Bring your creativity and we will provide the materials and prompt to get you started.

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Elevator Pitch Critiques with Eden Pierce - Sometimes you only have a few moments in front of an editor, publisher, or a reader to grab their attention and to make your work memorable and understandable. We will discuss techniques on how to whittle down your pitches for maximum effectiveness.

3 – 4 p.m. - Carmack Community Room

Poetry Slam with Joaquin Zihuatanejo

We will be holding a poetry slam hosted by World Poetry Slam champion, Joaquín Zihuatanejo. Poets will gather and perform their original poem. Judges will judge the poets on their writing/performance/overall creativity. This is what happens when a poetry reading meets a game show! We will have prizes for first, second, and third place, and someone will walk away named the Johnson County Library Writers Conference Poetry Slam Champion.

3 – 4 p.m. - Conference Room 20



Persuasion Through Narrative Essay with Ryan Bernsten

Participants will learn how to change minds and persuade others through the art of storytelling. They will take away the ability to craft compelling narratives that shift perspectives and influence others. Participants would need to bring a notebook, pen, and a willingness to challenge their own beliefs. Each participant will leave with a short personal essay or op-ed to submit and learn places to look to do so. People who are in politics, business, or writing that involves persuasion through writing may enjoy this class.

3 – 4 p.m. - Logan Conference Room

Plotting Stories in Verse with Claudia Recinos

This workshop will provide an overview of the differences between a verse novel and a conventional novel, and how these differences affect plot structure and storytelling.

