

List of writing exercises in the Queer Fiction workshop for Leeds Lgbt+ Lit Fest

We're going to begin with a short writing exercise to get our creative muscles all stretched out. I want you to pick a colour. The task for the next 5 minutes is to write a description of that colour but you are not allowed to name it, or any variation of it. So for example, if I was writing about the colour 'purple' my description would not be allowed to contain the word 'purple', 'indigo' 'lilac' etc.

Instead I want you to focus on exploring the colour creatively. If purple had a scent, a sound, a taste, what would that be? If purple was an element of nature, what would it look like? Would it be a sunset, a galaxy, an ocean? Or would it be an object? Or a person or animal?

We will be freewriting in this exercise, which is where you write constantly for the time given. If you are struggling, or feel stuck, simply write 'I am writing' until you get a new idea.

Main exercise: part 1 5 minutes

So hopefully your creative muscles are feeling nice and warmed up now! For the next exercise, we are going to focus on an aspect of our identity. This could be how we define our gender, our sexuality, it could be a role we play in someone's life such as partner, sibling or friend, it could be something very simple such as your favourite meal or the colour of your hair. It just has to be something that is linked to you, and feels like a part of your identity. So for now, just make a short list of the different aspects of your identity.

Part 2: 10 minutes

And now I want you to choose 4-5 of the following questions and answer them! You can also make up your own questions if that fits you better, these are here for guidance!

Try to be as specific as possible in your answers. For example, if you decide that the animal that best represents you is a crab, what size is the crab? What colour? Is it a hermit crab for example, with a shell? Where does it live? A rockpool, a stream, a coral reef? If you decide that fire is an element that represents you, what does the flame look like? Is it a bunsen burner, or a bonfire?

Try to answer as honestly as possible! If you feel today that you are a potato, then write that down even if you would rather be a chilli pepper!

There is a text based document with the questions included in the resource pack that is linked in the video description for those who need it!

If I was a type of weather, I would be.....

If I was an animal, I would be

If I were an element (fire, earth, air, or water) I would be

If I were a plant, I would be

If I was a building, I would be

If I was a book, I would be...

If I was a sound/song, I would be....

If I was a colour I would be....

If I was a vegetable I would be...

I have given 10 minutes on the clock here, but of course feel free to pause or fast forward the video if you find you need more or less time than this!

Part 3: 12 minutes

We are now going to combine everything we have done in the workshop so far. So first choose an aspect, or aspects of your identity that you would like to explore from the list you wrote earlier.

Using the answers to the questions as inspiration, creatively explore this aspect of your identity and how you relate to it using the same kind of techniques we used in the warm-up exercise. So writing your identity by exploring it through more abstract or outside ideas and then including some of the emotion wrapped up in your relationship to this identity if you like. For example, if you chose a storm as your weather pattern how does this reflect your relationship with this aspect of your identity?

You can pick and choose as much as you like from your lists. You may find that one particular image really sticks with you and you would like to explore that for the whole exercise which is brilliant! Or you may want to explore a couple of different things, which is also fine! You might even find yourself writing about something completely different, and that's okay too!

Second exercise:

Part one-

now I want you to think of a game or instructions that you roughly know the rules to. This could be a game you used to play in the playground, it could be one you made up, it could be a board game. If you don't want to focus on a game I would suggest something else that you know fairly well, such as your favourite recipe. We are going to spend 5 minutes just writing out the rules from our own memory, and include the more specific parts of memory in there. So if you write about scarecrow tag or monopoly you could include the time you tripped and hurt your knee, or the time your brother threw the play money all over the room in a huff. What we want is instructions that reflect your experience of playing it.

Part two

We are going to focus on ourselves and our identities in the second part of this exercise. We will have 15 minutes to write about ourselves as though we were giving instructions or explaining the rules to our identity. You can choose just one aspect of your identity if you like, or write about yourself more generally. You can take inspiration from the writing you just did or go in a completely new direction. If you find yourself straying away from the structure of writing yourself as a game, that's okay, just try to begin the piece in that way. And again, try to include memories within this and make it personal to you and your experiences. So for example if I started writing myself as a recipe list of ingredients it might look like this:

- 1 heap of brightly patterned dungarees, sparkles and colours
- 4 teaspoons of fiery loyalty for added spice
- 3 cups of the softness of your heart when she meets your eyes the day you meet
- 1 ego, softly beaten