

# Write

**Stories. Everywhere.**

Summer Classes 2020

# Everyone has a story.

## WE WANT YOURS.

Gotham Writers Workshop is a creative home in New York City and Online where writers develop their craft and come together in the spirit of discovery and fellowship. We've been teaching creative writing to students since 1993.

We believe that everyone has a story to tell. Indeed, many stories. Keep your eyes and mind open and you will find them everywhere. And we can help you tell your stories better.

Whether you're a new writer looking to explore, or an experienced writer looking to strengthen your skills, our classes will help you reach your goals—through clear instruction on elements of craft, critique in a safe environment, and a structured process that keeps your work on track. We also teach Business Writing, with the same verve and expertise we bring to our creative writing courses.

We strive to give each student the best possible learning experience. Class size is strictly limited so you never get lost in a crowd. And our instructors are consistently excellent—working writers who are as skilled at teaching as they are at writing.

We are invested in helping students find the writing class that is most appropriate for their particular needs. Explore our website, and feel free to discuss options via email or phone.

Thousands of people have been enriched by the Gotham experience. It's why we've been around for over twenty-five years.

## COVID-19 NOTE:

**COVID-19 NOTE:** As of this printing, we don't know when it will be safe to hold classes in NYC. Until that time, we have plenty of classes Online and through Zoom videoconference. Check our website for the most current information.

# Ways to Learn



## In-person classes in NYC.

PENDING SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS



## Online classes.

NOT TAKING PLACE IN REAL TIME



## Zoom classes.

ZOOM CLASSES, IN REAL TIME  
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCING

Summer Classes begin throughout June, July, and August.  
Registration fee for all classes: \$25 paid once per term.

### 10-Week Workshops

These classes use a combination of lectures, exercises, and workshopping (critiquing of student projects). In New York City, they meet for three hours per week; online, each session begins at the same time each week, and unfolds gradually all week long. Available in Level I, II, III.

\$435 — NYC  
\$409 — Online, Zoom

### Intensives

These are fast and fun crash courses. The NYC version takes place in one seven-hour day. The Zoom version takes place in two three-hour sessions. The Online version takes place over three weeks.

\$150

### 6-Week Classes

These classes let students explore a variety of forms and concepts in a low-pressure manner, through a combination of lectures and exercises. In New York City, they meet for three hours per week (two hours for Business Writing); online, each session begins at the same time each week, and unfolds gradually all week long. (Timing and price is different for Business Writing.) All Level I.

\$325 — NYC  
\$309 — Online, Zoom

### Just Write

A simple but so-essential new class. Do you find it hard to get yourself in a chair to write for a good stretch of time? If so, you're not alone. That's the beauty of Just Write. You gather with a group of writers once a week for three hours (for six weeks) and you...just write. You work on a project of your choosing, which can be any type of writing—novel, script, memoir, stand-up routine, etc. A teacher is present, offering brief features: words of wisdom, discussion, and intentions for the coming week.

\$185 — NYC

### Selling Seminars

These courses emphasize the business side of writing. The Online version takes place over four weeks. The NYC version takes place as a One-day Intensive.

\$175

# Courses



## Fiction

Whether delving inside the truth of our everyday lives or letting us escape into an entertaining page-turner, fiction takes us through the "looking-glass" into a world that's a curious mixture of real and made-up.

FICTION/NOVEL  
CHILDREN'S BOOKS  
SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY  
MYSTERY  
ROMANCE  
COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS  
READING FICTION



## Nonfiction

Whether it's an experience found in your kitchen or halfway around the world, whether it's an idea you can't forget or a conversation with a fascinating person, sometimes the most intriguing stories are true.

CREATIVE NONFICTION 101  
MEMOIR  
ESSAY & OPINION  
PERSONAL ESSAY  
ARTICLE  
TRAVEL WRITING  
FOOD WRITING



## Scriptwriting

We all like to be entertained, whether it's watching a performance live on stage or flickering on a screen. Here's where you learn to write the material that holds those audiences in thrall.

WRITING SCRIPTS 101  
SCREENWRITING  
TV WRITING  
PLAYWRITING  
DOCUMENTARY FILM  
SCRIPTS IN FOCUS  
VIDEO GAME WRITING  
WEB SERIES



## Comedy, Poetry & Song

Send words soaring in the lyricism of poetry or song. Or get people high on laughter through stand-up comedy or humorous prose.

POETRY  
SONGWRITING  
HUMOR WRITING  
STAND-UP COMEDY



## Essentials

Creative Writing 101 is an ideal starting point for writers, to test the waters or wash off the rust. The other courses here focus on crucial aspects of the writing craft, useful for all types of writing.

CREATIVE WRITING 101  
CHARACTER  
DIALOGUE  
GRAMMAR!  
THE WRITER'S MIND  
THE EDITOR'S EYE  
SOCIAL MEDIA  
PEN ON FIRE  
JUST WRITE



## Professional Development

These courses sharpen your skills in the workplace, or help you build a platform as a writer, or guide you through the tricky task of publishing your work. We also offer Corporate Classes.

BUSINESS WRITING  
BLOG BASICS  
BLOG WRITING  
HOW TO GET PUBLISHED  
NONFICTION BOOK PROPOSAL  
HIT SEND: PUBLISHING SHORT NONFICTION



## Teen Classes

Pressure-free, creativity-stretching, not-like-school courses for writers ages 13-17. Useful for expanding your talent or gaining skills bound to help with essays and schoolwork.

UNBOUND: CREATIVE WRITING  
TRUE STORY: CREATIVE NONFICTION  
ACTION: TEEN SCRIPT WRITING



## One-on-One

It's wonderful to learn in a group setting, but sometimes one-on-one is the right match. You may want a private class, or "doctoring" on a specific project, or a professional mentor to guide you, or one of our specialty arrangements.

DOCTORING—BOOK/STORY/SCRIPT MENTORSHIPS  
PRIVATE SESSIONS AND CLASSES  
PRIVATE GRAMMAR SESSIONS  
COVER LETTER COACHING  
COLLEGE ESSAY COACHING  
MFA APPLICATION ASSISTANCE  
BLOG LAUNCH  
BLOG BOOST  
PODCAST LAUNCH  
PROOFREADING

# Write Now

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**The most challenging part of writing is often just getting started—daring yourself into the wide-openness of the blank page. We invite you to do just that.**

To help out, we present several “story starters” and some tantalizing blank space to write upon.

## READY, SET, WRITE

Use this writing prompt as inspiration: *lucky*

Now write a story that springs from this prompt in some way. It can be true or made up. Prose, script, poem, whatever you like. The trick is not to think about it, but just dive in and start writing. Let the prompt lead you wherever it wants to. Often this “no thinking” approach to writing is the best way to tap your creativity. (This will give you a taste of what we do every Friday night at our Write-Ins.)

## IT'S A VISUAL

Begin a story inspired by this photograph.



Photo by Warren Wong

## FIND A FIRST LINE

On the following page, you'll see advice on writing first lines. Write down 5-10 first lines, without having any idea what the story is about. Just come up with lines. It may help to look around you. For example, your eye falls on a pen and you write: *The pen would not stop no matter how hard I tried.* Then pick one of those lines and start writing the story that goes with it.

# Gotham Faculty

## EFFECTIVE OPENINGS

Faculty Insight  
BY JACOB APPEL

The sentence you are currently reading has the potential to brand itself indelibly upon our cultural consciousness and to alter the course of Western Civilization.

Okay, maybe that's an exaggeration. But what author doesn't dream that his opening line will achieve the iconic recognition of *Call me Ishmael* or the staying power of *In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth...*? In writing, as in dating and business, initial reactions matter. You don't get a second chance, as mouthwash commercials often remind us, to make a first impression.

Unfortunately, unlike marketing pitches or pickup lines, opening sentences frequently receive short shrift in writing workshops. While aspiring literati are drilled on the subtleties of characterization and plot, few if any instructors offer entire lessons on crafting a first line, or even an introductory paragraph—although many agents and editors, if they are not impressed after a sentence or two, will read no further.

I started devoting an entire three-hour session of my writing class to the subject of opening lines when I realized that the last formal instruction I ever had on the subject came from my third grade teacher, the inspiring Miss Spillman, who insisted that all short stories begin with "a hook." Over years of writing, I have come to believe that the fate of most literary endeavors is sealed within the initial paragraph—and the seeds of that triumph or defeat are usually sown by the end of the first sentence. The key to a compelling story lies in launching it in the right direction.

The first cardinal rule of opening lines, in my opinion, is that they should possess most of the individual craft elements that make up the story as a whole. An opening line should have a distinctive voice, a point-of-view, a rudimentary plot and some hint of characterization. By the end of the first paragraph—unless there is a particular reason to withhold this information—we should also know the setting and conflict.

This need not lead to elaborate or complex openings. Simplicity will suffice. For example, the opening sentence of Flannery O'Connor's short story, "A Good Man is Hard to Find," tells the reader:

*The grandmother did not want to go to Florida.*

Already, we have a distinctive voice—somewhat distant, possibly ironic—which refers to "the" grandmother with a definite article. We have a basic plot: conflict over a journey. And we have a sense of characterization: a stubborn or determined elderly woman. Although we do not know the precise setting, we can certainly rule out Plato's Athens and Italy under the Borgias and countless others. All of that in six words.

Yet what matters most is that we have direction—that O'Connor's opening is not static. Immediately, we face a series of potential questions: Why didn't the grandmother want to go to Florida? Where else, if anywhere, did she wish to go? Who did want to go to Florida? A successful opening line raises multiple questions, but not an infinite number. In other words, it carries momentum.

I like to conceive of the opening as a pebble launched down a mountainside: The stone may jolt back and forth within a limited path, building up force, but the trajectory of its initial release largely determines its subsequent route.

That's the second cardinal rule of openings: Never forget that the entire

course of a story or novel, like an avalanche, is largely defined within its first seconds.

Here are five other ideas to help you craft perfect opening lines:

1. Don't start too early.

Many aspiring writers begin their narrative before the action actually starts, such as when a character wakes up to what will eventually be a challenging or dramatic day. However, unless you're rewriting *Sleeping Beauty*, waking up itself is rarely challenging or dramatic. Often, such an opening reflects the writer himself building momentum as he figures out his narrative, rather than the story developing momentum of its own. Far better to start at the first moment of large-scale conflict. If the protagonist's early morning rituals are essential to the story line, or merely just entertaining, they can always be included as flashbacks—or later in the story, when he wakes up for a second time.

2. Small hooks catch more fish than big ones.

In grade school, many aspiring writers are taught that the more unusual or extreme their opening line, the more likely they are to "hook" the reader. This is indeed true. What we are not told in grade school is that such large hooks also have the power to disappoint readers easily, when the subsequent narrative doesn't live up to them. If, as a writer, you begin at the most dramatic or tense moment in your story, you have no where to go but downhill. Similarly, if your hook is extremely strange or misleading, you may have trouble living up to its odd expectations. As a fishing buddy of mine explains, the trick is to use the smallest hook possible to make a catch—and then to pull like crazy in the opposite direction.

3. Open at a distance and close in.

In modern cinema, films commonly begin with the camera focused

close-up on an object and then draw back panoramically, often to revelatory effect, such as when what appears to be a nude form is actually revealed to be a piece of fruit. This technique rarely works in prose. Most readers prefer to be "grounded" in the panorama or context and then to focus in—a technique distinctive of nineteenth century classics such as *Middlemarch*.

4. Readers don't read backwards.

One of the easiest pitfalls in starting a story is to begin with an opening line that is confusing upon first reading, but that makes perfect sense once the reader learns additional information later in the story. The problem is that few readers, if confused, will ever make it that far. This is not to say that you can't include information in your opening that acquires additional meaning once the reader learns more. That technique is often a highly-rewarding tool. However, the opening should make sense on two levels—both with and without any knowledge the reader will acquire later.

5. Start with a minor mystery.

While confusing the reader is a definite no-no, presenting them with a puzzle can be highly effective—particularly if the narrator is also puzzled. This has the instant effect of making both reader and narrator partners-in-crime. Such a puzzle can even encompass an entire novel, as when David Copperfield asks,

*Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.*

Jacob Appel is the author of numerous works of fiction, and the subject of the documentary *Jacob*.

SEE MORE FACULTY ARTICLES AND PROFILES ON OUR WEBSITE.

# Student Voices

*At fifty-five, I've published my first book...by taking it a step at a time with Gotham by my side.*

—William Dameron, writer

*It was an absolute thrill and quite inspirational.*

—Elise Brancheau, opera singer

*A great self-journey that just happens to be taken with strangers who become friends and confidants.*

—Jeffrey Strockbine, architect

*I'm not exaggerating when I say it's changed me in a fundamental way, and I'm delighted.*

—Elizabeth Braden, production editor

*I learned more in this class than all of the writing classes I took in college.*

—Catherine Custard, riding instructor



JOSELIN LINDER

Faculty Profile  
BY MELISSA BLUMBERG

"When you're supposed to be doing something in life, things kind of feel like smooth sailing," says Gotham Memoir teacher Joselin Linder about writing her memoir *The Family Gene*.

Before this sure-handed book writing experience, Joselin's path to finding her writer-legs was anything but typical or smooth. For one, her dad was dying of an ultra-rare genetic disease when she was in college. This disease would ultimately become the anchor of her memoir. But before any of that, Joselin was in the fog. She was supposed to be in college discovering herself, but instead discovered she was a carrier of the same disease her father had and would likely start showing symptoms. "It put me on a different path than I might have gone down," she says.

As her undergraduate years at Tufts wound down, she simply chose a major based on the number of credits she had, confessing, "I remember thinking, I'll read poetry because it's short." Joselin graduated and quickly escaped to Europe. Writing about her loss wasn't on her mind. "I just knew so little," she says. "I think part of it was that I was being self-protective. I was just going to live my life and pretend that this weird thing didn't happen." After breezing through Hungary, Poland, Paris, London, Sweden, and the Amalfi Coast of Italy, Joselin ended up living in Prague for two years and then briefly Barcelona, followed by San Francisco.

When Joselin landed in New York, her writing life began. She was working an uninspiring job in the independent film industry when she signed up for a Fiction Writing workshop at Gotham Writers. She was hooked, now claiming, "Gotham is 100 percent the reason I'm a writer."

Joselin's first book deal happened in an only-in-New-York way. She was at a party talking to an agent about boys and how she had given up regular dating and was solely seeing guys who happened to be her roommates. "I was like 'oh you live here?' We should date." The agent was laughing and wheels in her head were turning. The agent just happened to be talking to a publisher who was looking for someone to write a book called *The Good Girls Guide to Living in Sin*. Joselin went to her day job the next day and instead of working, wrote the proposal. "I think my superpower isn't even necessarily being a really great writer," Joselin says. "It's that I'm very quick."

Joselin got the gig, soon becoming a published author. And when a friend of hers was looking for someone to help write a book about a new idea in business called gamification, he came to Joselin. She wrote one book with him on this topic, and then another. "For a little while, I was the 99th most influential person in gamification in the country," says Joselin with her contagious laugh. "I was like, yep, here I am."

But there was still her own story to tell. Writing a memoir was not something Joselin had considered until a friend (a Gotham classmate) asked about how her father died. Joselin explained that the gene she carried only existed within fourteen members of her family. "You should probably look into this," her friend said. "For yourself, but also because it's fascinating and people will want to know."

Joselin looked deeper. She sold the book on proposal and wrote the whole of it in a span of just a few months. "I had a tremendous amount of backwind," she says. And now, after being on the shelves for two years, the book is gaining a second wind. An hour-episode of a CNN show called *Something's Killing Me* aired a few weeks ago, featuring the book, and there's also a Doctor Oz episode on the way.

As Joselin can attest, sometimes you must move through choppy seas before the sailing turns smooth.

# Community

## WRITE-INS

Do you wish there was a place you could go for writing inspiration and practice? Where you could hang out with other writers? Without needing to make a long-term commitment or spend a lot of money? With food and drink involved?

*Gotham Write-Ins are that place.*

### HERE'S WHAT HAPPENS:

The teacher gives an interesting writing prompt. Everyone writes for a while. Then, those who want to read aloud their work. You take a break and socialize over refreshments. Then you go through the process one more time. Then you socialize a little more. It's two hours of writer's heaven. You can sign up in advance or just drop in.

### FRIDAY EVENINGS IN MANHATTAN

6:30–8:30 pm

\$20 per session

*See our website for details.*

## COVID-19 NOTE

Until we resume Write-Ins in NYC, we are offering free Write-Ins on Zoom every Friday afternoon and evening. Check our website for details.

## FREE EVENTS

We do free classes and other fun things around New York City—at bookstores, bars, Bryant Park, etc. It's our way of showcasing what we do and getting to know you. See our website for upcoming events.

## SUMMER CONTEST

# Silver Lining

They say every cloud has a silver lining—something valuable found amid something gloomy. The phrase likely stems from these lines in John Milton's 1634 poem "Comus":

*Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud  
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?*

The pandemic of COVID-19 has certainly been a sable cloud overhanging our planet. But have you found a silver lining among the quarantines and fear and masks? Tell us about your silver lining, in 19 words or fewer. If you write the piece that glimmers most for us, you will receive a free Gotham class of your choosing.

Some examples from the Gotham staff:

Dumplings from scratch. Sourdough, kraut, French-fries, blinis, chiffonade. I've transformed into my own greasy spoon, my own Per Se.  
*Melissa Blumberg*

Can I manage a never-ending multitask of job, toddler, household chores, and self-care without exploding? Yes, more or less.  
*Alex Steele*

I watched his sister help him take his first steps the exact moment I'm usually walking into the office.  
*Justin Street*

Please! Close my gym! Anything, ANYTHING to keep our frontliners safe. I'll be over here, mastering a three-minute plank.  
*Dana Miller*

My only hope of balancing a healthy stay-at-home lifestyle with business-as-usual nacho consumption is a newfound miracle—cashew cheddar.  
*Josh Sippie*

For competition rules and online entry form,

— visit —

[GOTHAMWRITERS.COM/SILVER](https://GOTHAMWRITERS.COM/SILVER)

# #GWstories everywhere

**Stories are, truly, everywhere—every place you look, everyone you meet, everything you experience. Every day is filled with hundreds of potential stories awaiting your imagination and craft.**

Each month we invite you to post a story on Twitter at #GWstories everywhere. Your stories (which can be true or made up) will be inspired by what you see, know, or do, and they should relate in some way to these monthly themes:

**JUNE**

prayer

**JULY**

in the attic

**AUGUST**

daring move

At the end of each month, we will pick our favorite and reward that person with a free Gotham writing class.

Your story must be no longer than 25 words, with a max of 280 characters, including spaces and the hashtag #GWstories everywhere.

**Everyone has a story. Especially you.**

gothamwriters.com  
212-974-8377

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