

Dear Writers:

Picture it: After a long day of work, you're in line at the grocery store and juggling the makings of dinner—a boxed frozen pizza, a bag of mixed greens, and a cucumber—while awaiting your turn with the cashier. Abruptly, and without so much as a glance in your direction, a wiry man clutching a jar of pickles sidles in front of you. It's blatant—*he's cutting in line*. So, what are you going to do about it?

The possibilities are many, and among them is my husband's likely response: Tap the guy on the shoulder and tell him to get to the back of the line--or else. My late mother-in-law would have been subtler. She would have turned to the person behind her and complained loudly about the rudeness of "some people." Lots of us would suffer in silence; others would be too engrossed in their phones to notice the intrusion. Someone out there—likely someone in Texas--would draw a gun, and at least one frazzled young mother would burst into tears.

Think about it: Unless you have real insight into your fictional characters, you don't know how they will react in even the most mundane of circumstances, and without that knowledge, you can't create a character with verisimilitude, someone who convinces readers that he or she is a walking, living, breathing human being *with volition*.

The goal of this class is to offer you eight weeks of exercises, tools, and techniques to take the half-formed characters lurking in the depths of your imagination and push them into the light, where they can take root and flourish in a story of yours (and their) making. In the first four weeks, we will complete character exercises drawn from method-acting theory and personality tests like the Meyers-Briggs profile. In the final four weeks, we will experiment with plotting tools: scenarios, story maps, and journaling.

This class is suitable for writers interested in longer forms—novels, memoirs, screenplays, and stage plays. It matters not whether you've been toiling for years on a project or are just getting started. What's important is your attitude. You'll need to stay open to shifts in your understanding about the project you've embarked upon. It may change in ways you don't expect. Step aside and let it happen.

Sure, you'll be more temperamentally suited to some assignments than others, but try not to judge the outcome in advance. Come along for the ride, and see where it takes you.

Because this class is generative, we will not be critiquing or "workshopping" material. However, we will be sharing from the work we generate, and I will provide weekly feedback and guidance to each of you.

Sincerely yours—



Sharon Oard Warner