

Living Words Creative Writing Workshop Exercise

"Rewriting The Past"

Introductions (5 minutes)

Have the workshop mediator introduce him- or herself, give information about the Living Words program, then introduce the guest writer.

Icebreakers (20 minutes)

The guest writer will put on the table a stack of old photos from various eras. These may come from the workshop facilitators, antique/thrift stores, or from the participants themselves, if possible. Each participant selects a photo from the stack. They can then discuss “clues” in the pictures, about the era in which it was taken, the people in it, and where it might have been taken (they may judge by clothing, the paper on which it is printed, an appliance in the photo, etc.). If possible, the photos could be projected onto a wall as the participants discuss them, using an opaque projector or a computer/projector setup with scans of the photos.

**Even if time does not allow the discussion of every photo, all participants are included in the discussion, and will benefit from it.*

Writer introduces the topic (3-4 minutes)

The guest writer should then introduce the writing topic by asking the participants to write a story about what is happening in the picture they selected. They should be as creative as possible, using clues from the photo, but speculating about what happened before and after the photo was taken.

Writing (10 minutes)

Have the writer go around the room, looking at each participant’s photo. He or she may ask questions about the photo, that perhaps the participant had not considered, in order to stimulate new ideas. The writing time should end as some participants begin to put down their pens, so that the first to finish do not get bored.

Sharing (15-20 minutes)

The guest writer should begin the sharing period by asking, “Who would like to share something they’ve written?” Feedback should be positive, and conversation between participants in response to a reading is encouraged.

Thanks/ Goodbye (1-2 minutes)

Have the mediator thank the participants and guest writer, and encourage the participants to return the next week.