



## **WORKSHOP 6**

### **Writing About Conflict**

*"Conflict drives the story forward. (...) Without conflict, a story is nothing more than a long description."* (Langston-George, 2016, p. 23)

*"A story is a character who wants something and overcomes conflict to get it."* (Miller, 2009)

#### **Objectives:**

1. Read and discuss the story *"One of These Days"* by Gabriel García Márquez and reflect around point of view, dialogue, and understanding.
2. Develop a writing exercise to explore a type of conflict.
3. Share the pieces as a group.
4. Explore feelings, reactions, and ideas about the self after the activity.

#### **Materials:**

1. 4 audio recorders.
2. 1 video camera
3. Researcher's diary
4. Workshop guide
5. Flip chart paper
6. Notebook/Block per student
7. Pens and pencils per student
8. Markers for flipchart
9. Post-its
10. Bag with titles of short stories we have read.
11. Copies of short story (*One of These Days*, by Gabriel García Márquez, 1962)<sup>1</sup>.

**Notes:** This workshop will be done on Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> of May, between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Snacks will be provided in a short break after hour and a half of work.

#### **Workshop Guide:**

##### **Before the workshop:**

- a. Have an open space in the middle of the room, or work outside if permitted, for the warm up exercise.
- b. Have the camera recorder ready to go. And use an audio recorder for students to speak on it when they intervene.

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<sup>1</sup> You can find a pretty decent translation here:



**WORKSHOP 6**  
**Writing About Conflict**

- c. Room: Have their blocks, pencils/pens, post-its, and copies of the story. Have questions and ground rules done in the previous encounter on the walls where everyone can see it.

**Introduction (30 minutes):**

Warm-up – **Circle Story Telling** (I have done a similar exercise in clown workshops, however, I wouldn't know where to reference it to, I have also tweaked it): The objectives of this activity are to welcome the students, and to 'warm up' their creativity on a Sunday morning!

1. Either outside (weather permitting) or inside, we all stand in a circle.
2. The objective is to build a story altogether as a group. For this, we will go around in a circle taking turns, where every person will only say one word. The next person must add a new word that logically connects to the previous, and so on. There will be three different rounds like this:
  - a. A 'free' round, which means we will keep adding words to the story until it naturally gets to an end (if it doesn't, I will stop the exercise after three rounds).
  - b. On the second round a rule is added: the story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end in maximum two rounds (30 interventions – 30 words). Three trials will be done.
  - c. After the second round, I will ask the students to sit as a group and discuss a strategy to be able to build a better story yet. They cannot plan the story but rather strategies to be able to create it. After the discussion, we will do a final round to apply their strategies.
  - d. A short discussion will be held around the questions: *What things make up a story?*  
*What do you need to make a story? What elements are important for a story to work?*  
The highlights of the discussion will be annotated on the flipchart (Adapted from Gee, 2018).

**Reading (30 minutes):**

Together we will read "One of These Days" by Gabriel García Márquez.

1. **Before reading:** As we read please take mental note on the elements we have just discussed. At the end, you will discuss in your groups if you believe this story works or not, and why.
2. **During reading:** We will read the story together, out-loud.
3. **After reading:**
  - a. In groups of three or four, the students will discuss the story around the elements written in the flipchart.
  - b. We will have a common discussion on what was discussed in small groups.

**WORKSHOP 6**  
**Writing About Conflict**

- c. In groups of 4, each group will make an 'electrocardiogram' of the story. *If the story was the sound of a heartbeat, how would that image look like if it was connected to a machine?* Each group will receive flip chart paper, colors and markers.
- d. Each group will present their image to the rest and explain it. *What do the images have in common? How do they differ? Could we draw one together that makes sense for the 15 of us?*

**Conflict workshop:**

**1. Part 1: Discussing conflict (20 minutes)**

- a. The word conflict will be written on a flip chart paper. I will ask the students to say words, images and ideas that they immediately associate with the word.
- b. I will ask them to think of a book, novel, story, or movie they really like and ask a few volunteers to share what the story is about and what they believe the conflict in the story is.
- c. In small groups they will pick from a bag titles of the short stories we have read. Each group must come to an agreement about what they believe is the conflict and be able to share their discussion with the rest. I will write their ideas on flip chart paper for everyone to see.
- d. Once we have the conflicts written down, I will ask them to see if they can classify them, or group them in some way and explain their reasons for their grouping.

**2. Part 2: Explaining conflict (10 minutes)**

- a. Taking all the discussion we've had, this part of the workshop will be a short explanation about conflict in literature, rather than an activity. I will cover the following ideas:
  - i. Conflict is universal.
  - ii. Conflict drives a story/ the plot forward.
  - iii. Usually conflict can be classified in four types of conflict: with self, between characters, with nature, with society.
  - iv. Conflict usually has the power to transform a character. But we want that transformation to be honest and real.
  - v. There can be more than one type of conflict, or just more than one conflict in a story.

**Commented [CF1]:** Depending on time I can definitely cut some of this down (text in red).

**WORKSHOP 6**  
**Writing About Conflict**

- vi. When we write, or read a good story, we want to feel that authenticity. We want to connect with it: know about the character's motivations, dreams, feelings, experiences that will allow it to get through it. We want stories that keep us wondering if the ending will be a happy one or not, or if we know it will be a happy ending, then enjoy or suffer the journey to it.

- b. Ask them what elements in their favorite stories kept them reading.

**3. Part 3 – Writing (70 minutes)**

**a. Planning (Adapted from Gee, 2018): (40 minutes)**

- i. Individually, the students will choose a type of conflict you would like to write about (self, characters, nature, society...).
- ii. Before writing, I will time the students (3 minutes from items 1-4) and ask them to think about and brainstorm around:
  1. A character with a mood or emotion: age? Emotion? Reason for it? How they look like? Name?
  2. A place or setting.
  3. Time, weather.
  4. What is the conflict?
  5. Who/what else is involved?
  6. What is the journey of your character? Where does your character start, and where does it end (physically, emotionally)?
  7. What causes that change?
  8. Who will tell the story? (point of view - narrator)
  9. What elements of 'a good story' are you including?
- iii. We will write their ideas on flipchart paper, one paper per question. The students will be able to look at the selection of ideas to either write about their own, mix with others, or make up a completely new story from other ideas.

**b. Writing: (30 minutes)**

- c. **Story Circle: (Adapted from Goldberg, 2005, p. 156)** We will all sit down in a circle. We will review the rules we set at the beginning. I will ask the students to share their story. The group will listen in silence. Students will read what they have developed to the rest of the group. The group will listen to the stories silently.

**Commented [CF2]:**

**Commented [CF3R2]:** These questions I plan to hand them in to them individually so they can have them as support when writing the story.



**WORKSHOP 6**  
***Writing About Conflict***

**References:**

García Márquez, G. (1962) Un día de estos. In *Los funerales de la Mamá Grande*. Barcelona: Bruguera: pp. 19-23. Available online in <https://narrativabreve.com/2013/11/cuento-breve-garcia-marquez-un-dia-de-estos.html>. Consulted on 22 February 2018.

Gee, M. (2018) Copies given to Camila Fuentes Díaz: Writing Exercises: Exercise 3: 'Head, Body, and Legs', 9 February.

Goldberg, N. (2005) *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Colorado: Shambala.

Miller, D. (2009). *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years: What I Learned While Editing My Life*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson.