

How to Love Your Inner Poet—and Let Go of Commas

overview *Editing is work that should also include play. This session is for editors who want to create or reclaim balance between work and play, as well as between eyes and ears, in their editing practice. It's time to let go of commas.*

THE PREMISE Editing is not a personality-free, neutral zone. At our best, editors are engaged, intelligent, opinionated personalities who develop a keen ear for the music even as we keep one eye on the score.

If we pay attention exclusively to what the eye sees, we are doing only half the job. As every writer has a voice, every editor, too, should have an ear for the sound and sense of writing, as well as an eye for the marks on the page.

THE PROCESS The exercises in Love Your Inner Poet are designed to stretch those unused muscles that are directly attached to individual voice and creativity. This stretching results in a stronger personal and professional voice, as well as a clear and credible editing style. Just as important for editing, this attention to language helps us balance visual and aural impulses.

In this session we will play with familiar tools—commas, conjunctions, pronouns—to redress the imbalance between the eye and the ear. We will also play with those who play with language (from poets to copywriters), as a means to getting in touch with the poet inside every editor.

Creativity—the skillful, imaginative and inventive activities that produce written works of art

Ear—the organ of hearing and balance; the ability to distinguish sounds

Eye—the organ of sight and insight; a talent for appreciation and judgment

Poet—one who possesses the power of imagination or expression

Voice—distinct tone and style in person and on paper

THE PRESENTER Virginia Durksen has been a freelance writer and editor since 1988. Her projects range from technical reports to plain language policies to ad campaigns. More recently, Virginia has developed workshops in business writing and presentation skills. She continues her freelance practice as an “emergency” editor for clients who need quick turnaround on small projects. In her spare time, she is writing a book about business writing based on her workshop experiences. She is also a lightly published poet.

THE PARTICIPANTS This session is designed for beginning and experienced editors alike.

How to Love Your Inner Poet—and Let Go of Commas

objectives

ATTITUDE

Participants will:

- rediscover the pleasures of creative word play at work
- reconnect with their love of language

KNOWLEDGE

Participants will:

- extend their framework for editing
- identify new models for workplace editing

SKILLS

Participants will learn how to:

- develop a more fluent, confident editing style
- respond to a variety of writers
- discover fresh words and images for familiar content

techniques

TOOLS FOR CREATIVITY

- invitation to draw on experience, memory, point of view
- sense of urgency (timed writing)
- sense of permission (first draft writing)
- closing our eyes, opening our ears and tapping into what we already know
- metaphor (prose / poetry), verbs (narrative), pronouns (prose), conjunctions (prose / poetry), punctuation

TOOLS FOR VOICE

- self-reflection & reader response (awareness)
- pitch (high/low; active/passive; assertive/collaborative)
- purpose (audience focus; connection with the reader)

EXERCISES

- Salute to the Sun relaxation technique (5 minutes)
- Timed writing in response to prompts (20 minutes x 2)
- Reflection letters (one to facilitator, one to self) (5 minutes)

Salute to the Sun for Writers @ Work

STEP ONE: [PALMS TOGETHER AT CHEST]
WHAT IS MY FOCUS?

STEP TWO: [ARMS EXTENDED ABOVE HEAD]
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT?

STEP THREE: [ARMS EXTENDED OUTWARD FROM SHOULDERS]
WHO IS THE AUDIENCE? WHO WILL READ THIS?

STEP FOUR: [ARMS PULLED ACROSS CHEST TO TOUCH BACK OF SHOULDERS]
WHAT SUPPORT DO I NEED TO GET THIS JOB DONE? WHO ELSE SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

STEP FIVE: [ROLL SHOULDERS FORWARD]
WHAT ACTION DO I NEED TO TAKE TO GET THIS JOB DONE? WHAT STEPS DO I WANT OTHERS TO TAKE?

STEP SIX: [NECK EXTENSIONS HEAD LEVEL LOOKING FROM SIDE TO SIDE]
WHO ELSE IS AFFECTED BY THIS PROJECT? (ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN)

STEP SEVEN: [LEAN FORWARD IN CHAIR TO TOUCH TOES; GENTLE STRETCH AS YOU ROLL BACK UP]
BACKBONE STRETCH (QUIET BODY SCAN)

STEP EIGHT: [ROTATE TORSO AT WAIST TO LOOK BEHIND YOU ; HAND ON OPPOSITE THIGH]
WHAT ELSE IS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THIS PROJECT? (SCAN FROM THE GUT)

STEP NINE: [ROLL SHOULDERS BACKWARD]
WHAT ACTION CAN I LET GO OR ALLOW TO HAPPEN AROUND ME? (LIMITS/SCOPE)

STEP TEN: [ARMS PULLED ACROSS CHEST TO TOUCH BACK OF SHOULDERS]
WHAT IS THE BENEFIT TO ME AS A WRITER AND IN MY WORK? (VALUE FOR ME)

STEP ELEVEN: [ARMS EXTENDED OUTWARD FROM SHOULDERS]
HOW WILL THIS BENEFIT OTHERS? (VALUE FOR AUDIENCE)

STEP TWELVE: [ARMS EXTENDED ABOVE HEAD]
WHAT HIGHER VALUES DOES THIS SERVE? (VALUE FOR SOCIETY/ORGANIZATION)

FINAL STEP: [PALMS TOGETHER AT CHEST]
WHAT IS MY FOCUS? (NOW GET TO WORK...)

Dick & Jane: Look! [Remember when language was new]

Billy Collins, "First Reader," *Sailing Alone Around the Room*, Random House, 2002.

Jane Griffiths, "Because words are not things," *A Grip on Thin Air*, Bloodaxe Books, 2000.

Jane Kenyon, "Learning in the First Grade," *Otherwise*, Graywolf Press, 1996.

Sarah Klassen, "A reading list," *Simone Weil: Songs of Hunger and Love*, Wolsak and Wynn, 1999.

-----, "Childhood," *Simone Weil: Songs of Hunger and Love*, Wolsak and Wynn, 1999.

[illegible]

Unless: The Balancing Act [turning points]

Wendy Cope, "My Lover," *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis*, Faber & Faber, 1986.

Jane Kenyon, "Otherwise," *Otherwise*, Graywolf Press, 1996.

Carol Shields, “Here’s... Nearly... Once... Wherein... Nevertheless... So... Otherwise... Instead... Yet... In so far as... Whereof... Every... Hence... Next... Notwithstanding... Thereupon... Despite... Throughout... Following... Since... Unless... Any... Ever... Forthwith... As... Beginning With... Already... Hitherto... Not,” *Unless*, Random House, 2002.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook paper or a document template. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

[illegible]