

## **Guidelines for Critique Sessions**

### **The Aim of a Critique**

The purpose of a critique session is to share encouragement, insight, and useful suggestions. The goal is to help all of us improve our understanding of the writing process—and to improve our finished work. Specifically, a critique session can help the writer “see” his or her work as a reader might and teach all involved to become more adept in the writing process. It is not the goal of a critique session to criticize or belittle another person or their work.

### **Suggestions for Critique Participants**

- Begin your comments with praise. Find something you like and remark upon that.
- Start your concerns with the word “I”. For example, “I was unclear what you meant in this particular sentence. Could you clarify it for me?”
- Ask questions rather than make statements. For example, “I wonder if this portion might be stronger if you used first person point-of-view?”
- Encourage the writer as you make suggestions. For example, “I was really drawn to your protagonist. I would love to know more about him/her.”
- Any comments you write on a manuscript will be taken very seriously, so be careful, thoughtful, and kind.
- Balance your remarks—be sure to share what you like as well as what bothers you.
- Feel free to line-edit, but make your marks clear.
- Telling an author what moved you or where you were confused is particularly helpful.

### **Some Possible Criteria for Evaluation**

- Plot: the scene moves the plot along. There is action and conflict in the scene.
- Setting: The setting is clearly established.
- Characters: Characters are well-developed through dialogue, action, or thoughts.
- Point of View: One point of view is used consistently throughout the story.
- Grammar/Usage/Mechanics: Correct grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are used.
- Content/Ideas: Scene is interesting and engaging, includes necessary relevant details, no holes or questions, well thought out.
- Organization: Story is clear and easy to follow, sequence of events makes sense, ideas flow freely from one paragraph to the next.
- Voice: Author and character have distinct, interesting voices.
- Dialogue: Dialogue moves the plot forward, develops the characters, and doesn’t bog down with the dull parts of conversation.
- Word Choice: Author uses vocabulary that is appropriate for the piece and interesting for the reader.
- Sentence fluency: Sentences are well-written, varied, and flow naturally.