

Teen Writer's Group: What to Expect

On your designated reading night, writers will bring up to three pages of original manuscript in the following format: One unstapled printed copy with 1-inch margins, double spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font. As an example, this document is written in that format. It helps if you can email your work ahead of time. Save your document as a .PDF file and email it to lrussell@tullahomatn.gov along with your name in the subject line. We will make copies for each person in the group, or you may print and bring your own copies to save time.

One at a time, writers will read their work aloud to the group. Each writer will have 15 - 20 minutes, including reading their piece and critique time. This will allow the group to finish in a timely manner.

While the work is read, listen for “bumps”. These are spelling, punctuation, grammatical errors, or if something is missing, confusing, or you don’t understand. If you’re unsure if something is correct or not, add a question mark. (This signals the writer to double check these.) Write positive comments at places where you appreciate the writing. Add question marks to remind you to ask.

If you do not have a manuscript to submit occasionally, please continue to come to the meeting. Your input is valuable, and you learn by helping and listening to others. We also ask that you come on nights that you aren’t reading and still participate in the critique process.

Parents are invited and encouraged to attend all meetings, though we ask that parents allow their young writer to be independent of parental input for the meeting time.

Teen Writer's Group: Critique Questions

These are general guidelines, not official rules. Every question doesn't have to be asked every time on every paper. You can always write your own notes for the author to read later.

- What's the point-of-view?
- What kind of lead-in? (Statement, description, quote, question)
- Were you "hooked" at the beginning? What hooked you?
- Did the chapter "flow" well?
- Were there "bumps" (i.e. things that stop you, don't make sense, confusing)?
- Was the action believable?
- How could the transitions be stronger?
- Does the dialogue sound natural?
- Can you picture the character? Are description "tags" adequate?
- Are you using enough "concrete" words?
- Are you using the five senses to create more colorful paragraphs?
- Can the verbs be stronger? Can you change passive to active?
- Was the ending satisfying? Does it leave you hanging, wanting to read more?
 - Why or why not?
- What's missing, if anything?
- Are you building toward the takeaway?
- Any ideas to improve it?

Teen Writer's Group: How will the meetings go?

The meetings will last about two hours with two main parts:

1. First hour - Activity/Instructional. We will have a short writing exercise or instructional presentation each week to help make you a better writer, and a better reader. Learn quirks and things to look for in your own writing as well as others, and how to effectively critique them.
2. Second Hour – Reading and Critique. We anticipate 3-4 readers each week to present work for critique. Each writer will have 15-20 minutes to read their work aloud, and then we'll go around the room for critique and feedback. A sign-up will be available each week for the next meeting to read.

At each meeting, participants should have pen and a notebook for notes, writing prompts and any instructional needs. Water will be available at each meeting and you are encouraged to bring snacks for yourself or for the group as you like (not required). Please be prompt and ready to read when it is your turn, and please silence all electronic devices once we start.

For critiques, all remarks and criticism needs to be relevant and constructive. Offer alternative ideas, encouragement and support where you see the need. You can offer your take on the subject, or technical expertise if you have it. Remember, suggestions are just that, suggestions. It is ultimately up to the author to make any changes to their work.

Teen Writer's Group: Your Moderator

The moderator for these meetings will be author Lyle Russell, who is also a Tullahoma Parks and Recreation employee. Lyle has written over 100 internet articles on pop culture topics for www.thathashtagshow.com, and will be releasing his first novel in Spring of 2020, a historical-fiction work titled *Code Name:*



Augustine, along with a Star Wars fan fiction novel titled *Lifeboat*. Lyle is a founding member of the Lannom Library Writer's Group and regularly moderates their group. He was also a BSA Scoutmaster for eight years, working with teens and young adults to reach their fullest potential. To see some of his work, go to www.lylerussell.net.