

## Let's Write!

### How to Critique Others' Writing

#### Receiving Constructive Criticism

Remember that someone else's opinion is just that, an opinion. Any suggestions you receive may be considered then used or ignored. For example, you might want to keep a part of your story which doesn't work for someone else because you like it or you know it to be essential to the plot.

However, if there are comments about spelling and grammar, it's probably worth checking. And if five people all claim not to have understood a sentence or concept, it'll need to be revisited.

Be wary of 'this would never happen' comments. As long as the events stack up in the context of plot, character and genre, anything can happen. However, you will need to make sure you tie up loose ends, address the smoking gun and that facts are correct eg your character should not be wearing a baseball cap in 15<sup>th</sup> century England unless they are a time traveller or you have done research to discover that in Lower Ditchling in 1485 the baseball cap was invented. If you mention an event that is going to happen later in the story, make sure you write it. Spreadsheets or a post-it or flashcard system can be useful for keeping track.

#### Giving Constructive Criticism

When critiquing work, you can be honest but remain tactful. Be sensitive to the writer who has trusted you enough to share their work. It is fine to be direct and concise, eg 'I did not understand this part.' 'Change the order of the clauses of the sentence for better understanding.'

Be kind; there is no need to tell someone this 'isn't your cup of tea' or that you don't like their writing style. Critique and comment as if you are a reader of the genre.

Mark sections you particularly enjoy and say why. Let the writer know the parts they are doing which are good. Writing and creative pursuits are a balancing act between communicating ideas, indulgence and crushing self-deprecation. It is helpful for fellow writers to boost their peers when they can.

#### Starting a Critique

The writer should ensure their work is formatted correctly. See formatting handout.

You can then print out the submitted piece and write suggestions and marks onto the manuscript or poem. Use a red pen and write clearly. You might use a tick to note sections or phrases you enjoy.