

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.

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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)

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.

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

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

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Gloria Sawai, *A Song for Nettie Johnson*, Coteau Books, 2003.

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