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## Workshop Series Plan

### Introduction

For many writers and people who enjoy writing, writing a novel is the ultimate goal. In this vein, my workshop series will take learners through the steps of preparing for National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo). Writers around the world have participated in NaNoWriMo since 1999, which involves writing 50,000 words — about the length of a novel — in just 30 days. Libraries have been an integral part of NaNoWriMo since its beginnings, including hosting write-ins (where writers can come to work in a supportive environment) and creating library displays with writing tips and motivation. NaNoWriMo is a much different process than writing a novel in the traditional way, including in length of time taken to complete a manuscript draft, the high-volume word count output by individual writers, and the community that NaNoWriMo provides online and in-person. This workshop series intended for teens and adults will introduce learners to National Novel Writing Month and discuss the history, impact, and procedures of NaNoWriMo; learn how to write a novel in 30 days; and explore different strategies for writing and asking for help. While this programming will be centered around NaNoWriMo, participation in NaNoWriMo will not necessarily be the goal. Instead, I hope that learners take away valuable writing advice that could directly help them if they participated, but could also help with other longer writing projects. Because NaNoWriMo takes place from November 1-30 every year, this workshop series will take place across three weeks in October. As someone who has participated in NaNoWriMo several times and led library programming inspired by NaNoWriMo, I am excited to bring this series to life.

### Teaching Context

#### *Place*

This workshop will take place at Madison Public Library's Pinney Library.

#### *Population*

Madison is a large, urban city of 269,840 people located in south central Wisconsin. About three-quarters of Madison residents are white, 8.9% are Asian, 6.8% are Black, 0.3% are American Indian and Alaska Native, and 6.2% are two or more races (United States Census Bureau, 2022). The median age is 31.2 years, likely owing in part to being home to the University of Wisconsin–Madison, a large public university with around 50,000 students (University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2023). Most households have a computer (96.1%) and a broadband internet connection (89.7%) and 71.2% of people are in the workforce, while the city has a poverty rate of 16.6% (United States Census Bureau, 2022).

Madison Public Library has nine locations throughout the city that are open six or seven days a week depending on the library and time of year. In 2022, all libraries saw 1.1 million visitors and 64,176 program attendees. This does not include one-on-one assistance, as will be described in the *Community Partners* section below (Madison Public Library Foundation, 2022). According to the Madison Public Library event calendar, adult and senior programming (including “Educational/Writing Assistance” specifically) takes place throughout the day, while youth programming for ages 11-17 tends to take place after 3 p.m. on weekdays. Both age groups have programming throughout the day on weekends, particularly Saturdays (Madison Public Library, 2023).

Barriers to participation might include this workshop series taking place at just one library (my rationale for selecting Pinney Library is below, in *Existing Resources*). Pinney Library is located on the east side of Madison and while it has ample parking in a dedicated lot, it is accessible only via a single city bus route. However, it is closer to Monona than many other Madison Public Library locations, which could mean that residents of Monona or surrounding areas might be interested in this series. Another barrier to participation might be the idea that one may feel that one must identify as “a writer” or be ready to write a novel in 30 days in order to get anything out of this program. While the program will be NaNoWriMo-centered, as that is what I have experience with, I hope to impart general writing advice as well as NaNoWriMo-specific advice.

### ***Existing Resources***

I selected Pinney Library because there are already two established writing groups that meet here: First Monday, First Person (first Monday of each month, 6:30-8:30 p.m.) and Chapters Teen Writing Club (Thursdays, 6-8 p.m.). First Monday, First Person is a memoir writing class for adults and seniors led by a local writing coach where learners bring writing to share with a group and receive feedback. Meanwhile, Chapters Teen Writing Club is a more laid-back space targeted toward middle and high school students where anyone can come to write, share ideas, and meet new people under the guidance of a local author.

This particular community is already a writing community, so why add yet another writing program? NaNoWriMo is different from traditional writing in several ways — it confines writers to a 50,000-word project within a 30-day period; it challenges writers to write in a different way they might be used to; and it offers a break from writing for feedback, as in a workshop setting, since learners will instead learn to write for volume. NaNoWriMo is not for everyone, just as a traditional writing group like the ones that already exist may not appeal to everyone. This workshop series aims to provide both a structured, classroom-style setting for learning as well as the free-for-all writing setting that these groups offer, thereby inviting more people at various levels of comfort with their writing to participate. The workshop could be promoted across all Madison Public Library locations, with the option of reaching more people by holding this or similar series at other library locations depending on patron response.

Because Pinney Library has already both welcomed writers and demonstrated a commitment to their growth, fitting in within their existing infrastructure is likely the best way to ensure my workshop series complements, rather than attempts to replace, their established writing programming. Therefore, I would explore doing workshops in person on a Tuesday or Wednesday evening so that those who come to First Monday, First Person and Chapters Teen Writing Club do not have a conflict with these programs. However, I may have to do some further research to determine if Monday and Thursday were selected in order to avoid conflicts with different community events.

### ***Community Partners***

Madison Public Library has a partnership with the UW–Madison Writing Center in the form of Madison Writing Assistance (MWA). This program puts graduate student writing coaches into the libraries six days a week during the UW semester. I have a preexisting relationship with MWA through my practicum at Central Library’s marketing department, and what I appreciate most about this program is that it represents the Writing Center’s desire to spread a love of writing into the community rather than keeping the writing center environment to UW students only. However, I would also be interested in exploring a partnership with the Writing Center itself, since they see a more specific type of clientele in their day-to-

day work on campus. Since Madison Public Library does not work directly with the student side of the Writing Center, however, this might be a more difficult sell.

Ideally, a collaboration with MWA and the Writing Center would see both entities promote this workshop series both on its social media and among its writing coaches. For example, if a writing coach works with someone on a creative writing piece or if a student expresses interest in writing a novel “someday,” the writing coach might tell them about these workshops. I would also promote MWA and the Writing Center as part of my workshops, especially as a resource for future help.

### Learning Objectives

- **Workshop #1: NaNoWriMo - What Is It? Why Should I Do It?**  
By the end of this workshop, learners will be able to summarize the history, impact, and procedures of NaNoWriMo, including recalling 1-2 traditionally published books that began as NaNoWriMo projects.
- **Workshop #2: NaNoWriMo - How Do I Write a Novel, Anyway?**  
By the end of this workshop, learners will be able to describe an outline and the basic structure of a novel, distinguish between “planning” and “pantsing,” and other preparation techniques used prior to NaNoWriMo.
- **Workshop #3: NaNoWriMo - How to Write 50,000 Words (And Ask for Help)**  
By the end of this workshop, learners will be able to describe a writing sprint and what makes a suitable writing space and be able to identify resources to ask for help with any stage of the writing process.

### Workshop Lesson Plans

All three of my workshop lesson plans are in the below section titled “Workshop Outlines” (pages 5-12).

### Learning Principles

#### *Bloom's Taxonomy*

The variety of content in these workshops is based on Bloom's Taxonomy, a classification of acquiring and using knowledge (Shabatura, 2022). Learners are asked to engage with several levels of Bloom's Taxonomy throughout this workshop:

- **Remembering:** Learners will recall what they know about writing and National Novel Writing Month and describe their understanding of what a novel is.
- **Understanding/Applying/Analyzing:** After identifying a book that everyone in the group has read, learners will use their new knowledge of story structure to map out the story they are all familiar with in terms of the story structure graph provided by the instructor.
- **Evaluating:** Learners will evaluate different methods of planning (or not) for National Novel Writing Month.
- **Creating:** Learners will generate their own writing in the form of unstructured writing time at the end of each workshop, and crucially in two writing sprints in the third workshop.

#### *Prior Knowledge*

The idea of prior knowledge suggests that learners will better connect with new material if they can connect to it in some way, especially through material they have already learned (Ambrose et al., 2010). Throughout this workshop series, learners will participate in exercises to activate prior knowledge related

to the topics of writing broadly and National Novel Writing Month specifically. In separate workshops, learners are asked to describe what they already know about NaNoWriMo and what they know about the structure and contents of a novel. This knowledge is reinforced immediately as the instructor describes the basics of NaNoWriMo and how story structure works, respectively, before building upon it.

### ***Knowledge Organization***

Learners who attend these workshops may already be seasoned writers — some even novelists — who are interested in learning about writing in different ways, including within the “rules” of National Novel Writing Month. Therefore, the density of connections among what knowledge these learners already have will likely vary quite a bit — while some learners may have sparse, unconnected knowledge about writing, others may have a handle on what makes a story work and how their own writing fits into this knowledge. In other words, some learners may already be experts, while others may be novices (Ambrose et al., 2010). The aim of this workshop, then, is to build these connections for novices and further expand upon experts’ connections in a specific context that may be new to them.

### ***Communities of Practice***

In a community of practice, a group of passionate, like-minded individuals come together to interact with one another, thereby developing their knowledge (Kim, 2015). This workshop series aims to build a community of practice for writers. Each workshop begins with an introduction and icebreaker where learners can get to know each other and ends with unstructured writing time, where learners can write individually or discuss their writing together. Learners have several opportunities to work together to share their knowledge during the workshop itself, including identifying a book they have all read in order to diagram its story structure, interacting with the NaNoWriMo interface during a tour of the website, and creating a character and world in a short exercise. The public library’s role in fostering communities of practice is essential to this process, as it both offers a space for structured learning and a space for learners to come together after the workshop series is finished (Kim, 2015).

## Workshop Outlines

### Workshop #1: NaNoWriMo - What Is It? Why Should I Do It?

<b>Lesson Topic</b>	Who, what, and why of National Novel Writing Month
<b>Audience</b>	Adults and teens
<b>Learning Objective</b>	By the end of this workshop, learners will be able to summarize the history, impact, and procedures of NaNoWriMo, including recalling 1-2 traditionally published books that began as NaNoWriMo projects.
<b>Differentiation</b>	Instructor will use slide presentation and live demonstration on NaNoWriMo website; frequent participation opportunities from learners; unstructured writing time at the end.
<b>Resources Required</b>	Learners will not need any special equipment for this lesson unless they choose to participate in unstructured writing time at the end of the workshop, in which case a laptop or notebook and pen will be useful.
<b>Total estimated time</b>	1 hour (+1 hour unstructured writing time)

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Task Name</b>	<b>Teaching Activity</b>	<b>Learning Activity</b>	<b>Learning Checks</b>
5 min.	Welcome/ introductions	Each workshop begins with a round of introductions and a new icebreaker question		
20 min.	What is NaNoWriMo?	Ask learners what they know or have heard about National Novel Writing Month  Explain the basics of the history and structure of NaNoWriMo	Share what they know or have heard about National Novel Writing Month	Ask for initial reactions to the history and structure of NaNoWriMo
5 min.	What can you do with NaNoWriMo?	Outline a few popular novels that started as NaNoWriMo projects — <i>Water for Elephants</i> , <i>Fangirl</i> , <i>The Night Circus</i> (and others across different genres)	Watch slide presentation	Ask what learners notice about these books (different genres, many women authors, books seem longer than 50,000 words, etc.)

20 min.	How to participate in NaNoWriMo	<p>Introduction to the NaNoWriMo website and user interface (but you don't have to sign up for an account to participate — this is just one way)</p> <p>Tour of other NaNoWriMo features: forums, pep talks, buddy list</p> <p>Explain local meetups and virtual events</p>	Watch live demonstration and answer questions when prompted	<p>Ask learners to share what they notice about the website or if anything surprises them</p> <p>Ask learners how they have (or haven't) used these resources in their own previous writing projects</p>
10 min.	Debrief	<p>Share my personal experience with NaNoWriMo and how I've engaged with the features shared</p> <p>What do you still have questions about?</p>	Listening to presenter and asking/answering questions when prompted	Ask learners what they think of NaNoWriMo now that they've learned about it — share concerns, things that excite them, etc.
1 hour	Unstructured writing time	Optional activity — learners can use the space to write freely for one hour	Learners work on their own writing projects	

**Workshop #2: NaNoWriMo - How Do I Write a Novel, Anyway?**

<b>Lesson Topic</b>	National Novel Writing Month preparation and strategies
<b>Audience</b>	Adults and teens
<b>Learning Objective</b>	By the end of this workshop, learners will be able to describe an outline and the basic structure of a novel, distinguish between “planning” and “pantsing,” and other preparation techniques used prior to NaNoWriMo.
<b>Differentiation</b>	Instructor will use slide presentation and whiteboard (digital or physical); frequent participation opportunities from learners; unstructured writing time at the end.
<b>Resources Required</b>	Learners will not need any special equipment for this lesson unless they choose to participate in unstructured writing time at the end of the workshop, in which case a laptop or notebook and pen will be useful.
<b>Total estimated time</b>	1 hour (+1 hour unstructured writing time)

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Task Name</b>	<b>Teaching Activity</b>	<b>Learning Activity</b>	<b>Learning Checks</b>
5 min.	Welcome/ introductions	Each workshop begins with a round of introductions and a new icebreaker question		
20 min.	What is a novel?	Ask learners to share answers to “What is a novel?” based on their own personal reading (it’s a book, it has chapters, length, story structure, fiction, etc.)  Go over characteristics of a novel, highlighting learners’ contributions	Answer question: “What is a novel?”  Listen to presenter explain characteristics of a novel	Ask learners if these characteristics are things they look for when reading a novel (or if they just identify them after the fact)

	Story structure	<p>Explain line graph of story structure — exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, dénouement</p> <p>Asking learners to identify a novel they've all read</p>	Place parts of the novel everyone has read into the proper part on the graph	
20 min.	Characters and world-building	<p>Ask learners the who, what, and where of their writing</p> <p>Describe quick ways to get to know your characters and settings in the chaos of NaNoWriMo (basing on people, places, or experiences you know, putting characters you've already developed in a new setting, taking a setting you know well and placing people into it, etc.)</p> <p>Building a quick character sketch (less than five minutes) based on traits and scenarios provided by learners; explaining that sometimes in the midst of NaNoWriMo you need to add a character and flesh them out quickly</p>	<p>Listening to presenter and answering questions when prompted</p> <p>Helping create a character and world for them</p>	<p>Ask learners to describe who they write about, what they write about, and where their stories take place</p> <p>Providing vitals and backstory, possible plot structure (where could this character go in line graph from earlier?), environment for a character we create together</p>



10 min.	“Planning” vs. “pantsing”: Do you need to plan?	<p>We’ve done a lot of planning today — ask learners if they think they could write a 50,000-word novel without planning in advance</p> <p>Explain “planning” vs. “pantsing” (not planning/starting from nothing on Day 1) and other NaNoWriMo terminology to show the breadth of experiences people come into NaNoWriMo with</p>	Listening to presenter and answering questions when prompted	Ask learners to summarize, based on what we went over in the workshop, if they could see themselves “pantsing” during NaNoWriMo — why or why not?
5 min.	Debrief	Ask learners if they have any lingering questions	Asking questions when prompted	
1 hour	Unstructured writing time	Optional activity — learners can use the space to write freely for one hour	Learners work on their own writing projects	

**Workshop #3: NaNoWriMo - How to Write 50,000 Words (And Ask for Help)**

<b>Lesson Topic</b>	National Novel Writing Month in practice and asking for help
<b>Audience</b>	Adults and teens
<b>Learning Objective</b>	By the end of this workshop, learners will be able to describe a writing sprint and what makes a suitable writing space and be able to identify resources to ask for help with any stage of the writing process.
<b>Differentiation</b>	Instructor will use slide presentation and live demonstration on NaNoWriMo website; frequent participation opportunities from learners; structured writing time during workshop; unstructured writing time at the end.
<b>Resources Required</b>	Learners will need a laptop or notebook and pen to participate in writing activities, plus if they intend to participate in unstructured writing time at the end of the workshop.
<b>Total estimated time</b>	1 hour (+1 hour unstructured writing time)

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Task Name</b>	<b>Teaching Activity</b>	<b>Learning Activity</b>	<b>Learning Checks</b>
5 min.	Welcome/ introductions	Each workshop begins with a round of introductions and a new icebreaker question		
10 min.	Revisit past workshop content	Summarize content from previous workshops in case there are any new learners (and as a refresher for everyone as we move to write today)  What is NaNoWriMo? How can I participate? Story structure Characters and worldbuilding Planning vs. pantsing	Watch slide presentation, ask/answer questions when prompted	Share their recollection of what NaNoWriMo is, how people can participate, the basic structure of a novel, how to navigate character creation and worldbuilding

5 min.	Introduction to writing sprints	<p>Explain writing sprints — a set amount of time where the goal is to write as much as possible (even if it's "bad")</p> <p>Provide context: Sometimes the only time you'll have during the day to write is in short spurts like this</p>	Ask learners why writing sprints might be useful (in NaNoWriMo specifically, then otherwise)	Share thoughts on writing sprints, offer new ideas as to how they could use writing sprints
15 min.	Writing sprint	Facilitate writing sprint — 10 minutes of writing time to produce as many words as possible	Participate in writing sprint	
5 min.	Writing sprint debrief	Ask learners how the writing sprint went for them	Listen to presenter, answer question when prompted	Answers should be informed by their new experience
10 min.	Making a writing space and asking for help	<p>Ask learners where they like to write and what distractions exist in their space</p> <p>Share resources I've previously put together on "DIY Writing Retreats" — intentional writing space, distraction mitigation, and more</p> <p>Ask learners what they do when they get stuck (writers' block or otherwise) and where on the NaNoWriMo site they could ask for help</p>	Listen to presenter, answer questions when prompted	Learners identify where on the NaNoWriMo site they could ask for help (forums, resources section, etc.)

5 min.	Writing sprint (surprise!)	Facilitate writing sprint — 5 minutes of writing time to produce as many words as possible	Participate in writing sprint	
5 min.	Debrief	Ask learners if they have any final questions about anything from the workshop	Ask questions when prompted	
1 hour	Unstructured writing time	Optional activity — learners can use the space to write freely for one hour	Learners work on their own writing projects	

## References

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