Manuscript Feedback Guidelines

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1. ALL students are expected to read and comment on ALL submitted manuscripts. You are expected to invest the same amount of time and energy you would like invested in your manuscript.  
  
2. Record your reactions to the manuscript on the manuscript as you read it, i.e., "great opening", "do you mean for me to hate Tom, because I do", "this is a run-on sentence", "funny, I laughed out loud", "these spelling errors are distracting me from the story".  
  
3. Fill out a manuscript response sheet for each story. Be specific and concrete in your feedback.  
  
4. Don't forget to consider the writer's intention for the piece. As much as you can, try to make comments that will help the writer move closer to his/her intention.  
  
5. Write, or print, legibly in ink. Your comments are of no use if they cannot be read and understood by the writer.  
  
6. Search for strengths as well as weaknesses. Search for weaknesses as well as strengths.  
  
7. Be specific when identifying weaknesses. For instance, "I'm not sure if Joe is Ann's husband or father" is much better than "Unclear" or "Confusing".  
  
8. Go further than simply pointing out weaknesses, make suggestions, several if possible.  
  
9. Concentrate on-helping the story, and the writer move to the next " step".  
  
10. Pay attention to what YOU can learn from the strengths and weaknesses of this manuscript.  
  
Manuscript Response Sheet  
  
Manuscript: Writer:   
  
1. Does the opening sentence create tension, gain the readers trust and leave unanswered questions?   
  
  
  
2. Who is the protagonist?   
  
3. What is their objective?   
  
4. What is the central conflict of the story?   
  
5. Where and when does the story take place?   
  
6. What is the story's climax?   
  
7. What are this story's greatest strengths?  
  
a)   
  
b)   
  
c)   
  
8. What elements of this story could be improved?  
  
a)   
  
b)   
  
  
  
c)   
  
  
  
Workshop Guidelines  
  
1. Before their manuscript is discussed, the writers may say speak briefly (30 seconds max!) about what they would like to get out of the workshop experience, i.e., are they very insecure and need encouragement to continue? Are they dying for some hard criticism?  
  
2. The writer should not speak after this point. The writer will sit quietly and listen. THE WRITER WILL SIT QUIETLY AND LISTEN. And take notes if they want to.  
  
3. ALWAYS BEGIN WITH SOMETHING POSITIVE.  
  
4. Try to stay positive. Feedback on a manuscript's weaknesses can be given in a positive way, i.e., "This story was boring." can be better presented and received as "There are ways you could increase the tension in this story. For instance..."  
  
5. Try not to harp on the same weakness over and over. If two people  
  
have already pinpointed a particular character as flat, there is no need to revisit this weakness. Move on to other elements of the story.  
  
6. Workshop members should not ask questions of the writer, instead they should inform the writer "A question that I had was.. .".  
  
7. A few minutes before the time is up, the writers should be invited to ask any questions they may have. They may also choose to answer some of the questions brought up during the workshop.  
8. Marked manuscripts and manuscript response sheets should be returned to the writer at this time.