

## **Critiquing Guide for Critique Groups**

### **A. Overall, General Features**

1. Do the opening sentences and paragraph draw me in?
2. Do I obtain a quick and sufficient sense of the setting, scenario and point of view?
3. Does the piece offer sufficient tension, urgency, conflict, challenge, action or interest?
4. Does the story or piece contain the right amount of mood, emotion, decisional quandaries, and discernible implicit feelings and thoughts?
5. Is the development of the plot or topic engaging?
6. Does the piece flow at an effective pace?
7. Were there any confusing points or unclear transitions?
8. Were there the right amount and type of character interaction?
9. Do the characters and story itself, even in fantasy, have sufficient believability, relatability, or plausibility, consistent with the setting and circumstance?
10. Were the descriptive sensory detailing and allusions sufficient and varied to visualize and otherwise grasp the setting, scenes and characters?
11. Were there sufficient interconnected subplots that added depth and fullness?
12. Were there enough appealing and accessible metaphors and figures of speech?
12. Does the ratio of showing vs. telling work?
13. Was dialogue used adequately to convey enough for the story?
14. Did I like the author's writing style, voice, approach and language?
15. Did the piece offer something new and, if so, what?
16. Where and what did I want more of?
17. Where and what did I want less of and why?
18. Are the points or themes of the story effectively conveyed?
19. Do I like the way the ending was delivered?
20. Will the target audience like this piece?

## **B. Character Related**

1. Will the reader care enough about the characters or find them interesting enough to want to learn what will happen?
2. Will the reader understand and relate to the characters' personalities, motivations and challenges?
3. Are the characters described or conveyed sufficiently to picture them?
4. Are the personality, background and relevant backstory elements of main characters sufficiently disclosed or alluded to?
5. Are the characters distinguishable from each other in their role in the story?
6. Is the speaking and communicating of various characters distinguishable? Do they differ in their verbal content, style, tone, tempo, body language or mannerisms?
7. Will the reader be able to feel the emotions of the characters beyond the narrator's naming them?
8. Do any of the characters, especially the protagonist, transform in some way in the story?

## **C. Other Features**

1. Is there the right amount of narration with intermittent breaks and shifts in POV?
2. Is the point of view (POV) clear and consistent? Is a warranted shift in POV discernible, say, from the narrator to a character or from one character to another?
3. Is the story told mostly in the active vs. passive voice? Are there too many passive or intransitive verbs such as "be," "was," and "were"?
4. Are the words "felt," "knew," "know," "thought," "heard," "see," "saw," and "believe" used too often?
5. Are there places that would benefit from replacing adverbs or adjectives with a descriptive approach to a scene, behavior or in some other way? Might active strong verbs or other ways be used to replace any words ending in "ly", as well as "very," "just", "nearly," or "suddenly" and phrases "kind of," "sort of," and "almost." Might a use of dialogue better serve the purpose?
6. Are the past, present and other tenses used consistent with the scene or facet of the story?
7. Are there places that "said" could have been replaced with a synonym or with a dialogue structured grammatically or otherwise to make the identity of the speaker clear?
8. Are the word choices and other features of dialogue appropriate to the characters, setting of place and time, and not too stilted nor too obvious nor hackneyed?

9. Does the use or dose of dialect, slang or cursing add some flavor to the story and is not overdone, distracting or annoying?
10. Is there sufficient variety in types of sentences, especially not too many “and” compound ones?
11. Are there any needless repetitive use of words or phrases?
12. Did the grammatical features and the structure of paragraphs and sections facilitate the story?
13. Would there be value in having a sensitivity reviewer at some point? (To learn more about sensitivity reviewing, see so name section below.)

**D. *Theme***

1. If the writer intended to convey one or more themes or messages with the piece or story, is it discernible and meaningful to the reader? If not, what might facilitate its expression and takeaway?
2. Does the title offer a cue or angle for the theme or perspective that the writer wants the reader to procure?