

## Creative writing: learning to listen: the art of dialogue

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<b>Date</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> December, 2019	<b>Time</b>	10:00 – 16:45
<b>Venue</b>	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
<b>Tutor</b>	Menna van Praag	<b>Course code</b>	1920NDX209

**Director of Academic Centres** Dr Corinne Boz

**For further information on this course, please contact** Head of Academic Centre Administration  
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**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746 262

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### Tutor biography

Menna van Praag has lived in Cambridge all her life, except when she defected to Oxford to study Modern History at Balliol College. Her first novella - an autobiographical tale about a waitress who aspires to be a writer - *Men, Money & Chocolate* has been translated into 26 languages. Her magical realism novels are all set among the colleges, cafes and bookshops of Cambridge. All titles are published by Allison and Busby: *The House at the End of Hope Street* (2014), *The Dress Shop of Dreams* (2015), *The Witches of Cambridge* (2016), *The Lost Art of Letter Writing* (2017) & *The Patron Saint of Lost Souls* (2018). Menna is currently working on her upcoming fantasy trilogy, *The Sisters Grimm*. The first book in the series will be published in 2020 by Transworld (UK) & HarperVoyager (US). She tutors students in creative writing at writing retreats and teaches workshops at book festivals internationally, also working freelance for institutions such as Hay House publishers & the School of Drama & the Creative Arts. She has been a guest tutor on the Creative Writing Certificate at Madingley Hall since 2013.

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## Course programme

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09:30	Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/coffee
10:00 – 11:15	<b>Dialogue – the use of abbreviation, contraction and slang.</b>
11:15	Coffee
11:45 – 13:00	<b>Using listening to experience multiple perspectives.</b>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:15	<b>Striking the balance between the believable and the compelling.</b>
15:15	Tea
15:30 – 16:45	<b>Using Family Constellations techniques to create unique yet universal characters.</b>
16:45	Day-school ends

## **Course syllabus**

### **Aims:**

The course aims to equip students with:

- an understanding of the importance of realistic & character-specific dialogue
- the ability to write both realistic and compelling dialogue
- the skills to create consistently unique dialogue for the unique characters in their own writing.

### **Content:**

All creative writing courses naturally teach the art of writing, but many omit the art of listening. However, most writers, editors and tutors will say that dialogue is the most challenging part of the story-telling process and the moment where most aspiring writers fail. Professional writers spend years honing their ability to write good dialogue. Thus, it is learning to listen like a professional writer that will elevate your novel to the next level. Listening enables you to capturing the natural cadence and rhythm of speech, which is one of the harder literary techniques to master. Stilted dialogue will kill an otherwise excellent story. Listening is necessary to the creation of uniquely compelling and believable characters. It's what will enable you to create characters who aren't simply various versions of yourself.

In this day school we'll begin by discussing examples of excellent dialogue and discovering what makes such dialogues sound both realistic and compelling. We'll use practical exercises to put ourselves in other people's shoes and thus learn to write dialogue that sounds different depending on the character. As a result of the day school students will be able to differential good dialogue from bad and be able far more effectively to write dialogue to a professional standard.

### **Presentation of the course:**

The course will include lectures, guided group discussions, activities based around text extracts and writing exercises. Classes are relaxed but focused. The atmosphere is supportive and designed to build confidence and develop skills through a combination of reading, discussions and practical exercises.

### **As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

As a result of the course students should be able to:

- understand the importance of realistic and character-specific dialogue
- write realistic and compelling dialogue
- appropriate and deploy the skills to create consistently unique dialogue for the unique characters in their own writing.

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## Reading and resources list

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No preparatory reading is required. Extracts of texts will be provided in the class on the day. But, some knowledge of the following texts would enhance participants' experience of the course.

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Author	Title	Publisher and date
King, Stephen	<i>On Writing</i>	Hodder & Stoughton (2000)
Leonard, Elmore	<i>Ten Rules of Writing</i>	William Morrow (2007)

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## Additional information

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### Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:

<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

### Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on [ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk) or +44 (0)1223 746262.

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 17 May 2019