
Weekend Courses 2023-24

If these halls could talk: an introduction to writing historical fiction

Start date: 26 April 2024 **End date:** 28 April 2024

Venue: Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor: Dr Yvonne Battle-Felton **Course Code:** 2324NRX032

Tutor biography

Dr Yvonne Battle-Felton is an author, academic, host, creative producer, and writer. She won the Northern Writers Award in fiction in 2017. *Remembered*, her debut novel, was longlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction (2019) and shortlisted for the Jhalak Prize (2020). Yvonne has six children's titles in Penguin Random House's Ladybird series. Yvonne is Senior Commissioning Editor at John Murray where she publishes literary fiction. Inspired by Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*, *Curdle Creek*, Yvonne's second novel, will be published in November 2024 (Dialogue Books). Yvonne has an MA in writing (dual concentration fiction/creative non-fiction) from Johns Hopkins University and a Creative Writing PhD from Lancaster University where she has taught Creative Writing. As a researcher, she is interested in storytelling, the power of stories to build, develop, and heal communities, silences in narrative, stories as advocacy, and representation. She is a novelist, short story writer, and essayist. She has taught creative writing at University of Cumbria, Liverpool John Moores, and most recently at Sheffield Hallam University where she was Principal Lecturer in Creative Writing and the Business and Enterprise Lead for Humanities.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	The story of you: intros and writing exercises to get acquainted
22:00	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Stories from Madingley Hall: Madingley Hall's stories
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Character interviews: developing character
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free time
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	A time and a place: developing setting
18:00 – 18:30	Free time
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Research: digging for truths
21:30	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Let's write: writing time
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Workshop: informal workshop with peer feedback. An opportunity to share your writing, read/hear one another's, motivate each other to stay curious and keep writing.
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

The course will allow you to:

- aspire to a curiosity-led, historical fiction inspired by Madingley Hall
- develop complex characters that you want to know more about
- use the space, history, and stories of Madingley Hall to begin writing historical fiction
- develop the confidence to share new writing within a supportive group through workshopping

Summary of content:

The course sets out to help you get started researching and writing historical fiction. We will use the history and setting of Madingley Hall, pictures, newspaper articles, and curiosity. Through a series of research and writing exercises you will create characters, setting, and potential questions to develop the narrative. The course also includes writing time and a workshop with peer feedback to help you continue to develop the piece after the course. We will discuss balancing research and writing in historical fiction, research resources, and how to stay curious and avoid writer's block.

Presentation of the course:

The course will involve a range of practical exercises, research, class discussion, and workshop.

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

- complete the course having gained more confidence writing historical fiction
- gain tools to develop characters, settings, and historically influenced stories
- leave the course with a desire to continue writing historical fiction

Reading and resources list

There are no compulsory readings for this course. However, you may find the below recommended reading list of interest to supplement your course.

Morrison, Toni, *Beloved*, any edition

An interview where Toni Morrison talks about the article that inspired *Beloved* and about the book: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jxN3oTSD34>

Barker, Pat, *The Silence of the Girls*, any edition

Shafak, Elif, *The Island of Missing Trees*, any edition

Note: Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) students 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 ICE course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

(Information correct as of 15 May 2023)