

Thursday, January 20: Manuscript Discussion Group
GROUP A : WORDS

Members of this group will read each manuscript with strict attention to word choice and vocabulary. Aside from general attention to well-used words and an appropriate vocabulary, consider how the author's choice of words can affect the development of character. Attend to any differences in the vocabulary of the narrator compared to that of characters in dialogue.

To finish:

Throughout your discussion, you should mark manuscripts carefully.
Prepare a group statement that responds to the above concerns and any others that come up. You'll have as many minutes as there are people in your group.
Comment on each manuscript.

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GROUP B : IMAGERY

Members of this group will attend carefully to imagery developed in each manuscript. "Imagery" includes every mental picture the work generates and every appeal to the senses. How do the images establish the mood, environment, and aspects of character?

To finish:

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Comment on each manuscript.

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GROUP C : NARRATIVE & DIALOGUE

Members of this group will evaluate each manuscript's approach to narrative & dialogue. Whether first person or third omniscient, the narrative strategy should be examined for its relationship to the characters presented. What does the narrator contribute to character development? What would happen if the point of view were changed? Examine the dialogue? Are the characters distinct from one another; can you "hear" their voices? Is dialogue meaningful and well incorporated?

To finish:

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Comment on each manuscript.

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GROUP D : CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Members of this group should examine the manuscripts for character development techniques, as you did in your small groups yesterday. Notice particularly effective aspects of each manuscript and make speculations about what else the author might do.

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Comment on each manuscript.

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GROUP E : PERFORMERS

Members of this group will practice together reading excerpts from the manuscripts. Reading aloud is difficult and requires careful interpretation of the material. Like a piano soloist, you have a score to work from — the feeling and nuance of interpretation is yours to invest. Take your job seriously and rehearse your readings.

To finish:

Prepare readings from parts of each manuscript, a few minutes for each.

You will read these for the large group when we reconvene.

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GROUP F : DOUBTERS

Members of this group will look for trouble. Your job is to doubt the manuscripts, to see them as flawed. You should focus not on claiming that it is bad but on developing challenging and purposeful questions that are critical and constructive.

To finish:

Throughout your discussion, you should mark manuscripts carefully.

Prepare a group statement that responds to the above concerns and any others that come up. You'll have as many minutes as there are people in your group.

Comment on each manuscript.

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GROUP G : BELIEVERS

Members of this group read as believers in the text: that is, they think of it as near perfect and endlessly suggestive. Your job is to find what works and understand why it works (your job is not to generate empty praise). Extend your duties to imagine what else might go into the work were it to be developed further.

To finish:

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Comment on each manuscript.

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GROUP H : PROJECT SPECULATION

Members of this group will see each piece in the context of the looming final project. What does the character sketch provided suggest in terms of historical fictions? rich questions? a much longer story? a rich answer to historical accuracy? Does the character seem essential to the historical fiction it might play a role in?

To finish:

Throughout your discussion, you should mark manuscripts carefully.

Prepare a group statement that responds to the above concerns and any others that come up. You'll have as many minutes as there are people in your group.

Comment on each manuscript.