

What to Expect During a Manuscript Critique or Portfolio Review

HAS THIS EVER HAPPENED TO YOU?

You are waiting to have your manuscript or artwork critiqued. As you sit down at the table, you realize your heart is moving into your throat, your palms are sweaty, and adrenaline is rushing through you. This is your body getting into defensive mode. But this page will provide you with everything you need to relax and get through your valuable critique. Remember, first and foremost, editors, agents, and authors are people, too!

WILL I KNOW WHEN MY SESSION IS SCHEDULED?

Yes. You will receive a SignUp Genius link to schedule your session a few weeks after conference registration.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Arrive at the conference on the afternoon of **Friday, September 30th** with enough time to:
 - Check in at the conference registration desk
 - Check in at the Critique/Portfolio Review desk
- Sessions are booked back to back—if you are late, your session will **STILL** end on time.
- Missed appointments can not be rescheduled.
- There is no refund for a missed critique.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

Relax. Seriously. You will live to write another day. 😊 The critique is not about YOU, it is about how your work impacted the individual providing the critique.

Be Quiet. A major part of improving at any artistic endeavor is the ability to take and understand criticism. It doesn't matter if you dance, sing, draw or write—there will be criticism.

Listen. Because you need to hear what the person on the other side of the table has to say. If you're defensive, you won't be listening; you'll be planning what you're going to say next.

WHAT IF IT'S NOT A GOOD CRITIQUE?

First, a good critique is one that gives you an honest and direct opinion about your telling of the story. You may not like what you hear, but we have brought in faculty that are experienced and educated to understand the craft of writing and the art of illustration.

Second, don't excuse or explain! As Newberry Winner **Linda Sue Park** states on her website "... the work must stand or fall on its own. When the piece eventually gets submitted and is read by an editor, the writer won't be there to say things like, 'Well, what I meant there is...' or 'That's supposed to refer back to...'"

HOW DO I KNOW I'M GETTING A GOOD CRITIQUE?

At SCBWI we've set the stage for the quality of your critique. Every professional who critiques your work will answer these questions:

- What are the positive aspects of this work?
- What elements require attention and improvement?

- How can you improve on character development?
- How can you improve on plot and structure?
- How can you improve on language and diction?
- How can you improve on voice?
- What are the aspects of marketability I see?
- Here's what I recommend as your next steps...

We request industry professionals answer these questions on our SCBWI Carolinas Critique Gold Form. Starting with the first question on the positive aspects of this work, through to questions on marketability, next steps, and additional comments, we want you to have an understanding of how an industry professional views your writing or illustration.

You may not agree, and that's okay; after all, it is your story. Just remember that the purpose of the critique is to give you a direct and honest opinion of your writing by an industry professional.

DO I GET A CHANCE TO ASK QUESTIONS?

Yes. As the industry professional comes prepared to discuss your writing, you should be prepared as well. Write down your questions about areas of concern in advance. For example, are you worried about voice or dialogue? Are your opening pages strong enough?

BE PROFESSIONAL—

- DO NOT ask an editor or agent to take your full manuscript or to look at it during the conference.
- You will receive submission information as part of your conference packet.

- When it's time to end your session, thank the industry professional.
- REMEMBER: another person is waiting and deserves their FULL session time, so please stop talking when the timer indicates that time is up. **It looks very unprofessional when a timer has to come to your table and ask you to leave.** (This happens often every year!)

REMEMBER, you've paid for INSIGHT into your story.

Relax, Be Quiet, and Listen.

Deciding how to use this information comes later.