

As I logged into the creative writing class online, my heart pounded. Was it nerves? Excitement? I couldn't tell. This was my first time joining anything like this, and I felt like an outsider.

The introductions began, and as I listened to the others share their experiences, my insecurities grew. They spoke of workshops, published pieces, and long hours spent honing their craft. I, on the other hand, had zero experience. Nothing. Not even a scribbled notebook of forgotten ideas.

Then, Sir Anthony spoke. His voice was calm but filled with passion as he recounted his journey: a childhood love for stories, his struggles with doubt, and the breakthrough moment when he realized creativity wasn't about experience but curiosity.

Something in me stirred. His words ignited a spark in my mind, a longing to create, to learn, to write.

By the time the class ended, I no longer felt like an outsider. I wasn't just attending a class anymore, I was stepping into a world of possibility. Sir Anthony's story made me believe I could belong here, too.

Nadreen Khudur
Creative Professional



INTRO: CREATIVE WRITING
SHORT STORY CHALLENGE

"Can I really do this? Can I really be one of them?"

She looked at the shelves of books in front of her. A pair of girls waved at her from the top row, holding hands and smiling bright. By her hips, the ones with sharp teeth fanned open as if aching to gnaw at the frayed edges of her shirt. At her feet, an attractive woman drawn with a handsome man's tie wrapped around her hand said, "read me. Spread me open."

She awakened her phone, its screen revealing the draft of an email she's read a hundred times over. There was the possibility that it would be left unread. It could be stuck in someone's inbox forever, lonely and cold.

"It's better than being left in the drafts," she thought.

Before she lost her nerve, she sent her first manuscript to whatever member of a publishing team sat on the other side of the digital space.

"I can," she whispered to herself, as she plucked another book off the shelf. Someday, she hoped her own work would beckon someone to take it home.

One last check of her email app showed a new entry in the Sent folder. She smiled. "Someday starts today."

Naomi Legaspi
Creative Professional



INTRO: CREATIVE WRITING
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It started with a push - a push to pursue my passion, a push to start all over, a push to put myself out there. A workshop about creative writing...I don't know why, but my nerves were shot. It also didn't help that I was late. They were introducing themselves when I joined. They talked about their experiences, their projects...it was intimidating yet also inspiring. I felt in awe to be surrounded by these people. Everything that was shared felt like a promise that this could happen for me, too. It wasn't just about the basics of writing. We were reminded to also think of a bigger picture for ourselves and our works. It was incredible to learn how to cater to the niche that was meant for you.

Julienne Cornejo
Aspiring Author



INTRO: CREATIVE WRITING
SHORT STORY CHALLENGE

My eyes feel heavy because of an intense morning training and I'm so close to ghosting the writing workshop. But I powered through. My first win of the day. I join the meeting, half worried that I may lose focus because I badly need a nap. But for my second win of the day, I manage to stay alert and awake. Today I re-learn the basics of story telling and creative writing in general. It is an important reminder because that way the story-telling will be more engaging.

Okay, so the basics are done and now it's time to move forward to something that feels foreign to me: publishing and marketing. It does feel intimidating for me, but if I want to make a name for myself, then I cannot disregard this part of the process. And while the session was short, I think it's an enough boost for me to restart. This reassurance is my third win of the day.

Daphne Alina
Aspiring Author



INTRO: CREATIVE WRITING
SHORT STORY CHALLENGE

Chad's heart pounded as he cautiously opened his laptop. He'd envisioned a room of seasoned writers, their faces etched with the wisdom of countless published works. Instead, he found himself surrounded by a group of hopefuls, each one as uncertain as he was. A flicker of relief ignited within him, a shared vulnerability bridging the gap between them.

Anthony Shieh glanced across the room, where a dozen writers gathered for his talk. Among them were Oms, Mabel, Tristan, Dane, Nadreen, Daphne, AM, John Paul, Julianne, and Chadi. Each carried their own dreams, challenges, and a spark of inspiration waiting to ignite.

Each carried their own aspirations. Oms, known for her fearless creativity, was already scribbling down a poem about courage. Chadiness, the perfectionist, had his notes neatly color-coded while Tristan sketched dragons in the margins of his manuscript. Julianne, ever the skeptic, kept teasing him but eagerly joined in when it was time to share.



Richard "Chad" H. Arellano
Educator



INTRO: CREATIVE WRITING
SHORT STORY CHALLENGE

Nadreen, a quiet observer, listened intently, absorbing every bit of wisdom Anthony shared, making sure nothing was missed. AM raised his hand to ask about overcoming the fear of unfinished drafts, and

For Nadreen:

Score: 87/100 - a very beautiful written piece!



Strengths:

- The narrative effectively conveys the feeling of being an outsider, capturing the vulnerability of a first-time writer attending a creative class.
- The transition from insecurity to inspiration is well-crafted, especially with the mention of Sir Anthony's words sparking the desire to create.
- The emotional arc is clear, and the writing style feels relatable and authentic.

For Naomi:

Score: 90/100 - Winner - Great work & a well created story Naomi!

Strengths:

- The use of vivid imagery (books with sharp teeth) creates a strong visual and emotional impact.
- The inner conflict Naomi experiences is relatable and universally felt by aspiring writers, particularly the fear of rejection and the hope of success.
- The poem's final line is powerful, encapsulating a moment of determination and hope.



INTRO: CREATIVE WRITING
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For Julienne:

Score: 88/100 - This is just incredible, Julienne!



Strengths:

- The story is engaging and captures the nervousness and awe of being surrounded by more experienced writers.
- The reflection on the bigger picture and finding one's niche is insightful, and the connection between the basics of writing and personal growth is well-made.
- The writing is clear and conveys a positive and motivating message.

For Chad:

Score: 86/100 - Truly a good piece, Chadiness!

Strengths:

- The opening sets a vulnerable and relatable scene, highlighting the fear of being out of place in a group of seasoned writers.
- The story conveys a sense of camaraderie and shared vulnerability, which is comforting for anyone who has ever felt like an outsider in a new setting.
- The simplicity of the narrative is effective, drawing the reader into Chad's emotional state.



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SHORT STORY CHALLENGE

For Daphne:

Score: 85/100 - Loved this Daphne!



Strengths:

- The inner conflict of being exhausted and almost ghosting the workshop is very relatable and makes the writing workshop feel grounded and realistic.
- The "three wins" concept is a clever way of structuring the narrative, showing progress and small victories.
- The growth from revisiting basic storytelling techniques to tackling publishing and marketing is a good progression.

The **criteria** I used to evaluate the submissions were based on the following key factors:

- **Clarity and Structure:** How clear and organized the story is.
- **Emotional Engagement:** How well the story connects emotionally, especially with themes of self-doubt and growth.
- **Character Development:** How the characters evolve and reflect personal growth.
- **Originality:** Use of unique ideas, metaphors, and creativity.
- **Pacing and Insight:** Whether the story progresses well and provides reflective takeaways.

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