

mslexia
novel school

8-12 July 2024



**WOMEN'S
WRITING
WEEKS**

A week for creating and shaping your novel

Jan Carson
Claire Hynes
Jane Rogers
Margaret Wilkinson

'The tutors were all highly experienced and somehow managed to be rigorous, encouraging and kind all at the same time'

SPECIAL GUEST: Literary agent Sophie Lambert

Mslexia Novel School is an online course for writers embarking on a new novel, or rethinking an existing draft.

This will be a whole week to make real progress with your book – with expert tuition from renowned tutors, a professional writing coach to keep you on track, an on-call counsellor to provide emotional support, and a lively group of fellow writers to cheer you on. All this and more, in the comfort of your own home.

Course fee: £485

Course structure

Craft tuition

Four leading writer-tutors will each focus on a single aspect of the novel-writing craft, creating a varied week of high-quality workshops.

Our four core craft tutors are:

- ▶ *Jan Carson* on creating compelling characters that will leap off the page
 - ▶ *Claire Hynes* on dialogue and voice to bring your characters alive
 - ▶ *Jane Rogers* on structuring and plotting to keep the reader hooked
 - ▶ *Margaret Wilkinson* on identifying and developing your unique authorial style
- More details about our craft tutors and their workshops are overleaf.

- ▶ Our special Friday guest, literary agent *Sophie Lambert*, will answer questions about submitting a novel for publication

Small-group teaching

We know individual attention is all-important, so our workshop groups will be limited to around 12 people – which means your tutors will have time to get to know you and your writing. There will be only four groups on the course, so book early to secure your place!

Praise for our previous course

'I've done a creative writing MA, and this certainly topped that in the quality of the teaching.'

'I signed up to break the block on my novel and I've absolutely achieved that goal – and I've come away with an online writing group too.'

'It was like falling back in love with writing.'

'I loved the deep focus on separate themes each day, and the camaraderie of the group.'

'This week has restored a lot of my lost confidence over years of writing.'

'Having a counsellor with her experience on hand was just wonderful.'

A writing community

The core teaching takes place in small groups from 10am-4pm, but all four groups will come together for the coaching workshops and social aspects of each day – to form a community of fiction-obsessed writers who will become your friends for life. And there will be a special 'keeping in touch' session on the final day for cementing those contacts.

Motivation and support

Because this is Mslexia, we know how important it is to nurture the whole writer. That's why, in addition to our core Memoir School teaching, we're also including motivation and goal-setting workshops led by experienced writing coach Bec Evans, drop-in surgeries with counsellor Hilary Jenkins for anyone who's feeling a bit lost, all held together by our MC Rosie Garland – novelist, poet and performer *extraordinaire* – who will introduce you to fellow writers on the course. More details about our motivation and support tutors and their workshops are overleaf.

Our four craft tutors have each designed a bespoke day of workshops, based on their many years' experience of teaching creative writing at the highest level. From Monday to Thursday each group will spend a day with one tutor, divided into manageable tuition sessions, with breaks for refreshment and private writing.

At the end of each day, from 17:00-18:00, is Happy Hour – when all workshop groups will come together for expert-led sessions designed to help you prioritise your creativity and maintain the momentum of the course into the future.

Friday will be a day to consolidate everything you've learnt, network with other writers, set goals for the coming months, quiz your tutors in a lively Q&A session – and gain valuable insights about the memoir market from a specialist literary agent.

Our course counsellor will be available for a private chat by phone or on Zoom during the longer refreshment breaks (12:30-13:30 and 16:00-17:00). Contact Kay in our admin team if you want to book a slot (0191 204 8860 or kay@mslexia.co.uk). For more information, contact postbag@mslexia.co.uk..

Course timetable

MONDAY - THURSDAY

09:00 **MONDAY ONLY!** Welcome starts earlier, at 09:00, followed by 'Meet your group'

09:30 Welcome and writing warm-ups

10:00 Group tuition*

11:30 Caffeine/snack break

12:00 Group tuition*

13:00 Meal break

14:00 Group tuition*

16:00 Caffeine/snack break

16:30 Whole school social time

17:00 Happy Hour talks and workshops

FRIDAY

09:30 Group contacts

10:00 Goal setting

11:30 Caffeine/snack break

12:00 Meet the agent

13:00 Meal break

14:00 Panel Q&A with all tutors

*Tutors will alternate tuition, writing exercises and feedback differently according to their individual approaches to their particular topic for the day.

Course tutors



Jan Carson

How do you create complex and believable protagonists your reader will fall in love with? How do you develop two-dimensional characters from central casting into three-dimensional people that will leap off the page? Jan Carson's day of workshops will explore the development of convincing and memorable fictional characters. She will look at the many ways in which people express their feelings and personalities: in what they say and don't say, in their inner thoughts and outer actions, in their gestures and body language.

Jan Carson is a novelist and short story writer who is also a very experienced workshop leader. Her critically acclaimed debut novel *Malcolm Orange Disappears* (2014) was followed by a short-story collection, *Children's Children* (2016), and two flash fiction anthologies. Her individual short stories are widely published and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and 4. Her second novel *The Fire Starters* (2019) won the EU Prize for Literature and her third *The Raptures* (2022) was shortlisted for the Irish Book Awards and the Kerry Group Novel of the Year.



Claire Hynes

Claire's day of workshops will look at how to write dialogue and monologues that convey personality and emotion. How does a beautician speak differently from a butcher? What about a jazz trumpeter and a nun? And how can you tell, just by the phrasing they use, when someone is nervous or angry, being honest or hiding something? Claire will explain what to put in to your fictional conversations and what to leave out; how to layer in vocabulary, dialect and subtext; and lead you through writing exercises that will make your characters leap off the page.

Claire Hynes teaches creative writing at UEA, that renowned centre of creative writing excellence. She is an award-winning writer of fiction, creative nonfiction and theatre monologues, whose work has been widely published and performed, including by the BBC, Contact Theatre Manchester, *Wasafiri* and *Lighthouse*. Prior to teaching at UEA, she worked as a BBC documentary filmmaker. The excellence of her work in that role has been recognised in both a CRE Race in the Media Award and a Royal Television Society award.



Jane Rogers

Jane will lead a day of workshops on pace, page-turning and plot. Pace is the magical ingredient in every good novel. It's what keeps you up reading into the wee small hours. Jane will lead an analysis of the key ingredients of good pace; suspense, variety, and structure, with exercises to help you identify and explore these elements in your own work. We will look at how to avoid slow starts, saggy middles, abrupt endings, and boring bits. There will be exercises in pruning, cutting, and cutting again, key to turning your novel into a page-turner.

Jane Rogers has published ten novels, a collection of stories, TV and radio drama. Her novels range from historical (*Mr Wroe's Virgins*, which she adapted into an award-winning BBC2 serial) through contemporary (*Island*, about a young woman who sets out to murder her mother) to science fiction (*The Testament of Jessie Lamb*, ManBooker longlisted, winner of the Arthur C Clarke Award). She is Professor Emerita of Writing at Sheffield Hallam, and has taught writing to a wide variety of students. A new collection of stories, *Fire-Ready*, is out this year..



Margaret Wilkinson

Margaret will lead a day of workshops on voice and point of view. What is a writing voice? Do you have one? Where is it? Your prose writing voice is your unique style, the rhythm, the syntax you favour, how visual or speech-led your writing is, how descriptive or pared down, how intimate or distant, lyrical or transparent. Margaret will help you find, clarify, nurture, intensify or change your voice on the page. She'll guide you through a series of exercises and handouts you can use over and over again to access, adapt or sharpen your style.

Margaret Wilkinson is a prose, stage and radio writer. Her fiction has been widely published, her plays have toured the UK, and her radio plays have been broadcast on BBC Radio 4. She recently retired from her role as Senior Lecturer on the MA in Creative Writing at Newcastle University, where she taught fiction and script at undergraduate and postgraduate level. An inspirational teacher, Margaret is a regular contributor to *Mslexia* and is author of our Mslexia Minis ebooks *Writing for Radio* and *Writing Short Stories*. Her critically acclaimed new novel *Lublin* is out now.

Course tutors



Sophie Lambert

Sophie is a leading literary agent who on the judging panel of the Mslexia Novel Competition 2023. As an agent she works very closely editorially with authors and loves the process of helping guide a book from the kernel of an idea through to publication. Sophie will be available in the final day of the course to answer questions about the current market for debut fiction, and how best to prepare your manuscript for submission.

Sophie Lambert worked as a bookseller before becoming an agent, first with Janklow & Nesbit, then Tibor Jones & Associates, before joining C&W in 2013. She is now Managing Director, and was shortlisted for Agent of the Year in 2019. Writers she represents include Sunday Times Bestselling authors and well as winners and shortlistees for the Booker, Baillie Gifford, Ondaatje, Wainwright, Goldsmiths and Dylan Thomas Prizes. She represents adult fiction and narrative nonfiction.



Bec Evans

Bec will lead Happy Hour sessions on overcoming obstacles to writing – such as procrastination, poor time management and lack of confidence – and on building resilience and a long-term writing practice. Bec will also be leading a goal-setting workshop on Friday that will help you develop a realistic plan to navigate your memoir-writing journey, including visualising success, dealing with setbacks, and setting up accountability structures.

Bec Evans is an author, coach and consultant who helps writers keep writing. From her first job in a bookshop, to a career in publishing, several years managing a writers' retreat centre for Arvon, and now as co-founder of the writers' coaching organisation Prolifiko, she's obsessed with creative persistence. Bec works with individuals, writing groups, publishers, universities and content creators. She is co-author of *Mslexia's Diary & Planner 2022*, and her book about literary persistence, *Written*, is out now.



Rosie Garland

Rosie will be your MC and guide during the course. She will get your creative juices flowing each day with freewriting exercises, introduce our whole-group sessions, and lead workshops on the importance of self-care in a writer's life – and on ways of outwitting the internal critic that often sabotages our creativity and motivation. Rosie will also introduce our guest literary agent, lead the Q&A session with our craft tutors and networking with your fellow writers.

Rosie Garland writes long and short fiction and poetry, sings with post-punk band The March Violets, and performs as her alter ego Rosie Lugosi. Her writing is published internationally and her latest poetry collection *What Girls do the Dark* (Nine Arches Press) was shortlisted for the Polari Prize 2021. Her most recent novel *The Night Brother* was described by the *Times* as 'a delight... with shades of Angela Carter'. Val McDermid has named her one of the most compelling LGBT+ writers in the UK today.



Hilary Jenkins

Hilary is an experienced counsellor and writing-for-wellbeing workshop leader, who has also taught creative writing as a craft at undergraduate and postgraduate level for many years. Hilary has helped steer many writers through the sometimes choppy emotional seas of the creative process and will be available for a private chat by phone or on Zoom during the longer refreshment breaks on the course.

Hilary Jenkins has degrees in English Literature and Children's Literature. She then taught in India, China and Saudi Arabia, and worked as an adviser for the British Council. Following an MA in Creative Writing and Personal Development, she taught Creative Writing at Sussex University, Open University and Open College of the Arts and was until recently Senior Lecturer at Teesside University.