IWOSC OC Satellite Meeting Notes February 4, 2015

Independent Writers of Southern California (IWOSC) [www.iwosc.org](http://www.iwosc.org)

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CRITIQUE

Discussion Qs:

1. What is proper critique etiquette?
2. What critique format works best for you?
3. What makes a helpful critique?

Why critique? Or, I’m not a good critter!

1. Critiquing helps improve your own writing. As you identify what’s right or wrong with others’ writing, you will more clearly see what’s right or wrong with your own.
2. The only way to get feedback is to give it.
3. A bad (insensitive) critique has caused many a writer to give up. As we are all a part of the writing community, it’s important to help and encourage one another.

Critter Etiquette:

1. Remember that subject matter and writing style are subjective. You don’t have to regularly read that genre or even like the piece to give it a fair critique.
2. Separate the writing from the writer. A critique is not a commentary on the person.
3. Identify what is right as well as what is wrong with the piece.
4. Remember that writers have feelings. Be tactful.
5. Don’t ever say, “I would write it like this.” You can offer suggestions, but you are not the writer. It’s important to leave the writer’s voice intact.

Crittee Etiquette:

1. Know that every piece of writing can be improved, and every piece of writing ever written—even the classics—has (or will have, given enough time) one-star reviews on Amazon.
2. Guide the critter. If you have specific issues with your piece, let the critter know ahead of time.
3. Listen carefully to (or read) all the feedback without commenting. Take notes.
4. Be open to making changes with your piece, but learn to listen to your gut. You don’t have to change something just because someone else thinks you should.
5. If it’s a group discussion, wait until everyone has commented before speaking. And then, only explain or ask questions. Do not tell the critters why they are wrong.

Critique Process:

1. Read through the piece once to get your general impressions. Take notes. Did you like it? Is something niggling at you about it?
2. Read through again with a critical eye. “Critical” is not just a negative term — it means you are using your critical thinking skills, reading deeper into why something works or not.
3. If you like something, highlight it, or star it. Then think about why you like it. The why is the most important part.
4. If something doesn’t work for you, note it. Again, identify why it doesn’t work.
5. Pay particular attention to the areas that the writer has identified as troublesome or questionable. Use the Critique Template to guide you on the rest.
6. Write all your comments down in a coherent form for the writer. If you’re planning on sharing your thoughts in a group discussion, know that a lot of what is said might get missed by the writer—as they hear comments, they will often internalize them and begin thinking about them, missing some of the discussion. But if you have a written critique to the give the writer, they can reflect on your comments properly later.