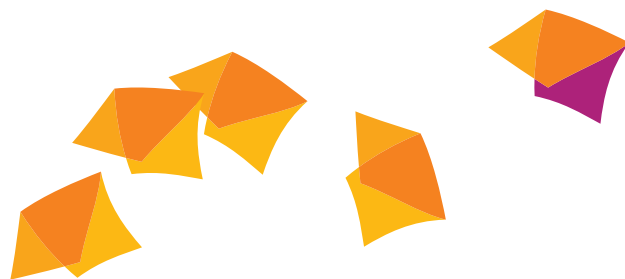


WRITING & SHARING YOUR STORIES

A Charlotte Lit *Beautiful Truth* Workshop



CHARLOTTE LIT

ABOUT CHARLOTTE LIT

Charlotte Center for Literary Arts, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 2015. Charlotte Lit's mission is to engage and educate readers and writers, building community through the literary arts.

We believe the literary arts are an essential component of a healthy arts culture. We support literary artists and the lit arts in all forms—poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, memoir, screenwriting, playwriting, songwriting. Our studios in the Midwood International and Cultural Center, 1817 Central Avenue, provide a physical center for the literary arts in Charlotte. We also take the lit arts out into the community—through our 4X4CLT poetry and art posters, author readings in a variety of public venues, and collaborations with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and other local arts organizations.

Visit us online at charlottelit.org, where you can sign up for our weekly newsletter, register for upcoming classes and events, read our weekly literary arts blog, and much more. And, connect with us on social media: @charlottelit on Instagram, and @cltlit on Facebook and Twitter.

ABOUT THE *BEAUTIFUL TRUTH* INITIATIVE

This workshop is part of Charlotte Lit's *Beautiful Truth* initiative, which seeks to create community and bridge cultural divides by helping community members write and share short stories about themselves and their lives in Charlotte. Workshops were held at Charlotte-area libraries and community centers in January 2019. Participants will be invited to submit their writings for a digital online magazine to be published by Charlotte Lit in mid-2019.

As part of this initiative, 200 people attended a reading and talk on February 1 with nationally acclaimed poet Terrance Hayes, and more than 50 people attended a writing workshop and community conversation led by Hayes on February 2. More information on the project is at charlottelit.org/beautifultruth.

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ACTIVITY 1: NAME

Questions for Reflection:

1. What do you know about your name? What does it mean? How did you come to have your name?
2. Jot down a memory associated with your name.

An Invitation to Write:

Freewrite for five minutes about your name (or wherever thoughts about your name might lead you). If you need a place to start, begin with: *My name means...* OR *I don't know what my name means.*

(Note: Freewriting is a way of helping to get thoughts down without letting the "rules" of writing get in the way. When you freewrite, write for a specific amount of time without stopping your pen or pencil, and without worrying about spelling, punctuation, or grammar.)

ACTIVITY 2: BORDERS & CATEGORIES

A Question for Discussion:

What are some different ways we officially, or unofficially, categorize people in society?

A Question for Reflection:

Think about a category from those that our group just brainstormed (or one you think of on your own) to which you feel you belong. When did you first realize you were in that particular category? Then recall a time you realized someone else (for example, a friend, sibling, or favorite teacher) belonged in a category different from yours. What thoughts and feelings arose from this awareness?

An Invitation to Write:

Freewrite about a time you first realized you were part of a specific category or a time you first realized someone else belonged to another category.

ACTIVITY 3: ORIGINS

Questions for Reflection:

1. Think about your birthplace. What connections do you have with it? If you moved away a long time ago, what do you recall about the place?
2. Jot down the places—cities, states, countries, anywhere—to which you feel some form of connection. Note the types of emotions you feel when you think about these places.

An Invitation to Write:

Reread “Where I’m From” and then write your own version.

ACTIVITY 4: STORIES OF HERE

Questions for Reflection:

1. How would you describe Charlotte?
2. Jot down three things you love about Charlotte? Also jot down are three things that frustrate you about Charlotte?

An Invitation to Write:

Step 1: Make a list of five familiar (to you) places or locations in Charlotte. These don’t have to be familiar to others or well-known. For instance, places that you know and are part of your life—where you get your hair cut, the park where you take your children to the playground, I-485 or I-77.

Step 2: Pick one of those places and recall a memory that you associate with it.

Step 3: Spend four minutes writing a scene of that memory. Begin your scene with the phrase, “I am.” Examples of a beginning “I am” phrase:

I am standing at Freedom Park, and I’m 12 years old. . .

I am driving my daughter to school. . .

I am eating an ice-cream cone at. . .

Step 4: Spend one minute reflecting on the scene you just wrote. Begin your writing with the phrase, “Looking back, I now see…” or “Looking back, I now understand…”

TAKE HOME ACTIVITIES

Take Home Activity 1:

Make a timeline of the years you've lived in the place you live now. Identify personal events you find significant on that timeline. Identify city, regional, national, or global events on that same timeline. (If you get stuck, do an online search to find these events.)

Take a personal event that happened around the same time as a societal event. Write a few sentences about the personal event. Write a few sentences about the societal event. Do this back and forth several times and see how your subconscious connects the two.

If you need a place to begin when writing, use the phrase, "I remember . . ."

Take Home Activity 2:

If you were to write a letter to Charlotte, what would you say? Write that letter now.