# Writer-in-Residence Program

**Ying Chang Compestine**

## Description of the Learning Opportunity

Throughout the week, Ying Compestine will give students in-depth and intensive training on how to improve their writing.  She will meet with each class five times and teach students the basics of writing, developing ideas, structure, character growth, editing, and critiquing.

The program happens over the course of one to two weeks and is best suited for students in the 3rd grade and above. Each day, Ying can teach up to three 50-55 minute sessions with three different groups. The groups can be mixed grades, but each group should stay together for the entirety of the program. Ideally, each group will be less than 25 students, so everyone will have a chance to share their writing. Ying can also speak with younger students in a small group format or assembly.

Ying is the award-winning author of 20 books. Her keen interest in cuisine has led her to weave food into all of her writing — from cookbooks, to novels, to picture books. Her most notable work, *Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party*, received over 33 national awards and has been selected as required reading in schools around the world. Several of her works are currently being optioned for film adaptations, television series, and videogames.

## Workshop Objectives

The objective is to inspire students to grow as readers and writers. Students in the chosen grades will work with Ying in the writing workshops to learn how to elevate the quality of their narrative writing.

## Project Outcomes

The goal is for all of the students to finish a story by the end of the week. On the last day, teachers will choose the three best stories from each class, and the students will present them to the whole grade.

## Preparation: Stories that Matter

Before meeting with Ying, students should read and discuss some of Ying's books.

Students should choose to work on small moments from their lives that they have already written about. Building on this work, the students will write about moments that matter to them (the birth of a younger sister, the time they were bullied on the bus until an older kid befriended them, the time when a friend convinced them stealing candy from a shop was a good idea, etc.) and elaborate on these moments to create a meaningful fictional vignette.

## Character Development

Students may already know about organizing a story with a problem, beginning, middle, and end, but what is often overlooked is how to develop a character. Ying will teach the students the techniques she uses to flesh out her characters, and they will work together on an idea for a story/character that the student feels passionate about writing. The character may be someone in their lives or even be based on themselves.

## Guiding Questions

- What can we learn from Ying's books that can help us write even better stories?
- How did Ying revise her story?
- What can we learn from her writing process?

## Program Overview

**Week 1:**

<u>Day One</u>: "The Basics of Writing" – Students will gain confidence as a writer and develop a clear sense of what their project is about; covering the writing process, basic story structure, and different types of plot arcs.

<u>Day Two</u>: "Character Development" – Students will create engaging three-dimensional characters, complex antagonists, and rich secondary casts.

<u>Day Three</u>: "Conflict, Stakes, Climax, and Ending" – Students will learn the different types of story conflicts, raising the stakes, crafting an unforgettable climax, and writing a surprising, yet satisfying ending.

<u>Day Four</u>: "Revision" – Students will learn Ying's editing tips on how she revises her award-winning books and addresses the most common writing problems.

<u>Day Five</u>: "Critiquing and Sharing" – Students will learn the eight essential rules for supportive critique groups and practice critiquing each other's works.

**Week 2:**

In-depth story polishing for a competition and publication, for writers who have a finished story or completed the week one program.

## What People Say About Ying's Visit

## Basics of Writing

Live like a writer

Attitude - Persistance - Discipline
Take feedback!

⊛ Ideas: Read like a writer / Read a lot!
1) Strong Hook - Draws you to text (Big/Dramatic!)
2) Engaging Plot lines
3) Powerful/Surprising endings (twists)

⊛ Draw from Personal Experience
Research - Read - look up Pictures
Study details (use 5 Senses)

⊛ Observe: People - Setting - Experience them!
Memorable Details! Show not tell

⊛ Think through Story + talk about it...
⊛ Purpose Achieved Formula/SWBST

## Story Structure

⊛ Build Idea (time line/period)
⊛ Blue Print
⊛ Foundation
⊛ Frame (Sketch out Story)
⊛ Plot line: What happened (Hook - Page turner - Cliffhangers) Ending
⊛ SWbST
⊛ Ending - tie all loose ends Surprise ending twist

Too Crowded? Clean up!
- Revise
- Edit

## Character Development

Is the Solid Foundation - Protagonist!

⊛ Type of Character (Traits → Spoiled - tough-ish)
⊛ Make CH interesting - 3 Dimensions
⊛ What you want your CH to be like?
CH growth - How does CH Change?
⊛ Make a list of traits
Supporting CH see Important

Antagonist 1 What are their traits? 2 What are the reasons?

⊛ Brings out Protagonist' Strength
obstacle/A difficult situation for CH that makes CH grow & change
⊛ Build a village around your CH

Use the LEAST of words to describe CH

The most special trait - why this trait?

## 3 Big Questions

1) What Surprised me?
2) What did the author think I already knew?
3) What challenged, changed or Confirmed what I already Knew?

## Resources

- [yingc.com](yingc.com)
- [Ying's Wikipedia page](Ying's Wikipedia page)
- [Photos](Photos) of Ying during her residency at CIS in HK, UAS in Dubai, and CAC in Egypt
- [Photos](Photos) and a [video](video) of her cooking the recipes from her books with students after reading their favorite stories.

## Reflections

- Was this workshop helpful?
- Are you more confident in your writing abilities?
- How can you continue to improve your writing?

# Sample Timetable

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| November 21, 2016 | November 22, 2016 | November 23, 2016 | November 24, 2016 | November 25, 2016 |
| **3A & 3D** 9:00 - 10:00 (3A - Rm 461) *Basics of Writing (Lecture 1)* | **3C** 9:00 - 10:00 (3C - Rm 463) *Character Development (Lecture 2)* | **3B** 9:15 - 10:15 (3B - Rm 452) *Plot, Stakes, Climax, Ending (Lecture 3)* | **3B** 9:15 - 10:15 (3B - Rm 452) *Plot, Stakes, Climax, Ending (Lecture 3)* | **3C** 9:00 - 10:00 (3C - Rm 463) *Revision (Lecture 4)* |
| Reading | | | | |
| **3B & 3C** 10:45 - 11:45 (3B - Rm 452) *Basics of Writing (Lecture 1)* | **3D** 10:45 - 11:45 (3D - Rm 454) *Character Development (Lecture 2)* | **3A** 10:45 - 11:45 (3A - Rm 461) *Plot, Stakes, Climax, Ending (Lecture 3)* | **3D** 10:45 - 11:45 (3D - Rm 454) *Revision (Lecture 4)* | **3D** 10:45 - 11:45 (3D - Rm 454) *Revision (Lecture 4)* |
| Lunch Time 12:00 - 1:00 | | | | |
| **3A** 2:00 - 3:00 (3A - Rm 461) *Character Development (Lecture 2)* | **3B** 1:15 - 2:15 (3B - Rm 452) *Character Development (Lecture 2)* | **3C** 1:30 - 2:30 (3C - Rm 463) *Plot, Stakes, Climax, Ending (Lecture 3)* | **3A** 2:15 - 3:00 (3A - Rm 461) *Revision (Lecture 4)* | **3A, 3B, 3C, 3D** 1:15 - 2:15 (Auditorium) *Critiquing and Sharing (Lecture 5)* |