

Workshop suggestions for *Writing with Pleasure*

Writing with Pleasure provides faculty and student writers with a refreshing antidote to the “shut up and write” school of academic productivity, which squashes out creativity, color, and joy in the name of scholarly seriousness. Through cutting-edge research, inspiring examples, and playful prose, international writing expert Helen Sword show academic writers from across the disciplines that productivity and pleasure are bedfellows, not enemies.

Dr. Sword offers an array of online workshops, courses, retreats, and community events via her website at www.helensword.com. Below are some suggestions for using *Writing with Pleasure* in a campus-based academic writing program, course, or workshop.

1. Pleasure Prompts

Writing with Pleasure contains a sequence of 18 short reflective writing exercises called “Pleasure Prompts,” each of which precedes or follows a key section or chapter of the book. The entire sequence is well suited for a semester-long faculty writing group, graduate research seminar, or undergraduate writing course.

Individual or paired Pleasure Prompts can also be used to anchor individual writing workshops or discussions. Popular pairings include:

- **Butterflies and Cocoons** and **Sea of Islands** (Pleasure Prompts #4 and #14): On society, solitude, and work-life balance. (Chapters 1 and 10)
- **Bodies of Writing** and **Analog Anchors** (Pleasure Prompts #5 and #10): On the physical and material pleasures of writing. (Chapters 2 and 6)
- **Climbing the C-Curve** and **Tradewinds and Doldrums** (Pleasure Prompts #7 and #12): On the challenges and joys of the creative process. (Chapters 4 and 8)
- **Penguin Time** and **Compass Points** (Pleasure Prompt #8 and #13): On passion, play, praise, and personal identity. (Chapters 5 and 9)

2. The SPACE of Writing

Writing with Pleasure is structured around the acronym SPACE, which encourages writers to develop a writing practice that is socially balanced, physically engaging, aesthetically nourishing, creatively challenging, and emotionally fulfilling.

The following Pleasure Prompts have been designed to work together as a sequence, prompting writers first to excavate their own past pleasure in writing, then to evaluate the

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emotions that they currently associate with academic writing, and finally to develop a “SPACE map” and action plan for bringing more pleasure into their writing life.

- **A Time in Your Life** (Pleasure Prompt #2): Write about a time in your life when writing gave you pleasure. (10 minutes; pp 18-19)
- **Pleasure Prompt #3 (“Pastimes and Peeves”)**: Using the SPACE rubric, compare a favorite pastime or hobby with an aspect of your academic writing that does *not* give you pleasure. (10 minutes; pp 23-24).
- **Pleasure Prompt #9 (“Mapping the WriteSPACE”)**: Use the SPACE rubric and five differently colored pencils or markers to draw and label the social, physical, aesthetic, creative, and emotional components of your ideal WriteSPACE (10 minutes; pp 128-29)

You can find a 20-minute online video tutorial called “Mapping the WriteSPACE” in the online SPACE Gallery (<https://www.helensword.com/spacegallery>), along with a curated collection of SPACE maps produced by academic writers from around the world. (Click on “Your Gallery” for the tutorial).

3. Metaphors for Writing

The concluding chapter of *Writing with Pleasure*, “Making SPACE,” prompts readers to develop a personal metaphor for writing that they can use to guide and empower them through times of frustration and challenge. Each of the following Pleasure Prompts works well on its own, or they can be undertaken as a three-part sequence:

- **Pleasure Prompt #15 (“Lifelines, Leylines, Desire Lines”)**
- **Pleasure Prompt #16 (“Touchstones”)**
- **Pleasure Prompt #17 (“Chiaroscuro”)**

See “Making SPACE,” pp. 229-47.

4. Diving for Treasure

Writing with Pleasure contains forty illustrations produced by prize-winning graphic memoirist Selina Tusitala Marsh in collaboration with Helen Sword. Many of these drawings include some text: a poem, an anecdote, a conversation. All are intended to be evocative, not prescriptive.

The following exercise can be used as a playful icebreaker for any writing workshop:

1. Photocopy each of the thirty illustrations titled “The Pleasures of . . .” (listed on pp ix-x).
2. Fold up the pages and invite each workshop participant to draw one from a hat.

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3. Working in pairs or groups, ask the participants to compare their illustrations, then to report back to the larger group. What writing-related pleasures does each drawing address? What stories are told or emotions evoked that could not have been communicated in the same way via standard academic prose?