



The Stinging Fly

TSF Summer School 2025

In-person Workshops at the Irish Writers Centre: June 30th to July 4th 2025

Fiction: Mia Gallagher | **Non-Fiction:** Roisin Kiberd | **Poetry:** Moya Cannon | **Entry Level Fiction:** Olivia Fitsimons & Sheila Armstrong

Online Workshops via Zoom: July 7th to July 11th 2025

Fiction: Rob Doyle, Michael Magee, Ross Raisin, Mary O'Donoghue and Cathy Sweeney

Non-Fiction: Arnold Thomas Fanning | **Poetry:** Martina Evans | **Entry Level Fiction:** Danielle McLaughlin | Maame Blue

Open for applications: Thursday March 13th to Thursday April 3rd 2025

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The principal aim of the summer school programme is to allow people to develop their writing practice through intensive engagement with groups of similarly motivated individuals. Participating writers put forward two pieces of work-in-progress to be read and discussed within each workshop group.

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Two online information clinics will be held on zoom for anyone interested in applying for the summer school. The first information clinic will be aimed toward writers looking to submit to the entry-level fiction workshops, the second information clinic will cater to writers looking to submit to any other workshop. These clinics will be recorded and made available online before the submission deadline. To register for either session please see the information below.

2025 Summer School Info Clinic - Entry-Level Fiction

Thursday March 20th at 11am - [Register Here](#)

2025 Summer School Info Clinic - General Info Session

Thursday March 20th at 12pm - [Register Here](#)

Mia Gallagher (Fiction | In-person)

Hello Writers

I'm very much looking forward to reading your submissions. I enjoy working with fiction writers from a range of genres, ages, genders, ethnicities, and neurodiversities. This workshop in particular is suited to writers who :-

- feel they are at a relatively developed stage of their practice
- are struggling with a block or set of habits or some other issue - related to either a specific piece or their practice or both - that they would like to move through
- have an understanding of writing as process, involving rewriting, research, musing, stasis and breakthrough
- have experience of working through critique and feedback
- are willing to push into doubt and fear in order to dig deeper into their craft, practice and intention.

I use a pared-down version of the [Liz Lerman Critical Response Process](#) as a structure for the workshop sessions. This process delays opinions, suggestions and fixes as long as possible, and prioritises the author's ownership of the work. It is rigorous, generous, respectful – and intense! By the end of the week I hope participants would have more questions than answers, and some sense of what they want to focus on over the following year.

My moderation style is hands-on and active. I request feedback from all participants and I jump in when it feels like the conversation can go deeper. I also offer my own feedback.

Roisin Kiberd (Creative Non-Fiction | In-person)

This is a course for writers of non-fiction in all its forms; personal and critical, traditional and unconventional, essays, memoir, criticism, autofiction or something entirely different.

Sessions will take a workshop format, with writers receiving and sharing feedback on two essays each. With this in mind, please send work that you have read over and edited at least once, that is suitable for group discussion, and that you'd like to publish, at some point in the future.

Workshops are a neutral, constructive and encouraging environment, with a focus on producing polished work and evolving your original voice as a writer.

Moya Cannon (Poetry | In-person)

This workshop is aimed at those who have already been writing poetry for some time and who need a soundboard for their work. In a supportive environment, the focus will be on the participants' own poems and how they might be strengthened, respecting each individual voice. Workshops will involve review and editing of students work in an atmosphere of constructive criticism and support. This will involve discussion of the craft and of exploring how to cast about for the external images and rhythms which correspond to and make sense of our inner lives – what the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado described as 'stitching the inner and the outer world together'.

Each participant is asked to bring two poems to workshop. Participants will also be asked to read and give thought to each others' poems before the workshop. There will be a brief opening section each day, involving reading of selected texts, to stimulate thought and to discover what techniques various writers have employed to engage the imagination, affections and thoughts of the reader.

And since writers play with words in the same way that musicians play with notes, with a bit of luck, the workshop should also be fun!

Sheila Armstrong & Olivia Fitzsimmons (Entry Level Fiction | In-person)

This workshop, aimed at writers who are just starting out on their writing journeys, will cover different aspects of craft, storytelling and style. Sessions will be split between two workshop leaders, giving participants alternate and sometimes opposing approaches that will help inform their own practice. Each day will cover a different topic - plot and setting, character and dialogue, structure and style, drafting and editing - providing broad tools that each writer can adapt to their own individual needs. Sessions will begin with writing exercises to generate ideas, followed by a discussion of the day's topics, and participants will be encouraged to read texts in advance and share their work in a supportive environment. Each writer will leave with new creative work, a more confident understanding of their own writing process, and practical steps for the next stage of their writing journey.

Mary O'Donoghue (Fiction | Online)

What can we possibly accomplish in a one-week fiction-writing course? Well, a lot that's probably already in play for your fiction and your practice, but for which you require this week of dedicated time and the intensive collective attention of what A.L. Kennedy has said of any good workshop: "a chance for a bunch of interested parties to explore something together in stimulating ways and then go home all the better for it." As responsive readers, we will discover one another's voices and narrative intrigues. We will read as writers and editors, too. Participants will discuss and develop one another's work on the daily, as well as meet the work of fiction writers whom the workshop leader finds encouraging. (For encouraging, read lodestars.) From practical considerations of form (narration, characterization, storyline, detail and more) comes moral form (the larger reverberations of a fiction, found by readers through time). Late in the week we will discuss preparing work for a place in the world: publication, whereby that moral form you've achieved is met by a wider audience.

Rob Doyle (Fiction | Online)

In a friendly, encouraging workshop environment, participants will spend a week living, breathing, reading, talking and thinking about fiction. Each participant will have the opportunity to present two pieces of work, which will be critically discussed by me and the other participants with the goal of turning each piece into the strongest, tightest, most polished version of itself it can be. We'll have time and space to reflect on the art of writing fiction from the level of structure right down to the granular detail of what makes sentences shine bright on the page, and there'll be opportunities too for broader discussions of the world of publishing and the writing life, in which I will share my own experiences. Participants will come away from the course with a developed sense of how to edit their work and a deeper understanding of what makes fiction come alive.

Ross Raisin (Fiction | Online)

This is a course for writers who want to take their fiction to the next level. These sessions will have as their basis a feedback forum – developing the skill of reading like a writer to give valuable feedback to other writers' work; developing the parallel skill of receiving the feedback of others to feed into your own process – in a relaxed, supportive environment.

Alongside this workshopping element, each session will also focus on a concomitant exploration and discussion of craft: we will be looking at relevant, specific aspects of narrative technique, through a range of extracts of contemporary fiction. Together – through individual commentary and guidance on craft – the aim of this course is for each writer to gain confidence, momentum, and a set of new skills (and writing peers) for the future.

Cathy Sweeney (Fiction | Online)

The fiction workshop is primarily practical. The aim is for each participant to enhance their skills in editing their own work. To this end, two stories or novel extracts are submitted in advance to be closely read by everyone. These are then reviewed and discussed in detail in the workshop. Along the way, I will also draw extensively on the following short stories to demonstrate various approaches to fiction writing.

Against Time by Antonio Tabucchi

The Bad Sex Weekend by Anne Enright

The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze by William Saroyan

A Temporary Matter by Jhumpa Lahiri

A Drive by Robert Walser

Michael Magee (Fiction | Online)

As part of this workshop participants will read and give feedback on each other's work, with a particular focus on understanding what each piece of work is trying to do, how it succeeds, how it misses the mark, and what can be done to improve it, both at a sentence level, but also at a broader, more structural level. The hope is for participants to almost become editors, through reading and analysing each other's work, and acquiring an editorial eye, which can then be applied to their own work. The focus of each workshop will therefore depend on the work that is presented for each class. Rather than specific seminars, conversations about form, perspective, tense, narratorial distance etc will likely inform and emerge from discussions about work submitted to each class. Participants will draw on an extensive archive of reading materials to help inform discussions throughout the week, and that will hopefully, in the long term, help participants think more intently and intellectually about what they are trying to do as writers of fiction.

Arnold Thomas Fanning (Creative Non-Fiction | Online)

Creative Non- Fiction as a form that consists of prose that is factual, but draws its strength from the imaginative powers in terms of writing, form, and its compelling use of language. It places the narrator at the centre of the text, and while it is creative with language, narrative, and characterisation it is never creative with fact or incident; in this it distinguishes itself from fiction.

In this workshop participants will work with various forms of Creative Non-Fiction including the Personal Essay, Travel Writing, Life Writing, Memoir, Food Writing, and Nature Writing, amongst others, sharing and critiquing work in a helpful, supportive, and structured way. There will also be presentation/ discussion on themes, and in-session writing.

Martina Evans (Poetry | Online)

This poetry course is for poets who're interested in expanding their range and trying new avenues while also paying close attention to the editing process. Over the course of the week, workshop participants will be encouraged to identify their "hot spots" and extend their individual labyrinths through personal maps, exercises and discussion. A booklet will be included so they can continue their own journey after the course finishes. While expansion and experimentation is encouraged, editing will be given equal importance. A maximum of six pages of poetry should be submitted at least a week in advance.

Danielle McLaughlin (Entry Level Fiction | Online)

Over the course of five workshops, participants will, by examining extracts from a number of great short stories, consider aspects of writing craft, and will also undertake writing exercises designed to generate new stories.

Before the course commences participants will be provided with links to a selection of short stories which they will be expected to read in advance. During our workshops, we will consider ways of interrogating the everyday for stories, as well as looking at various approaches to generating story ideas.

Each day's session will begin with a talk on an aspect of writing craft with reference to some of the stories we've read in advance. Participants will then have a go at generating a new piece of writing, perhaps an opening paragraph or the scaffolding of a story, using a prompt which will be provided. This writing exercise will take place during the workshop, with participants on mute and cameras off.

We will all then re-group to chat about how we got on with the prompt, what it generated, what participants learned from the process. There will be time for a couple of volunteers each day to share what they came up with, if they wish. Nobody will have to share work if they don't want to. There won't be time for everybody to share their work every day, but over the course of the week everybody will get at least one turn.

Maame Blue (Entry Level Fiction | Online)

During this week-long workshop, award-winning author Maame Blue will teach you how to write about complicated relationships whilst looking at point of view, character backgrounds, settings and realistic dialogue. Through close readings of contemporary fiction, discussion and writing exercises, these workshops are designed to elevate your fiction, add layers to your characters and deepen your creative writing skills.