

WRITE BY THE LAKE with JOYCE MAYNARD

March 13 - 22, 2020

## **WHO SHOULD ATTEND**

In the twenty five years or so that I've been a teacher of writing I've worked with writers of all levels—from M.F.A. candidates to those who tell me they haven't written a word since high school. I feel equally comfortable, and able to offer direction and guidance, to those at many stages in their development as writers.

If I were asked to name most important traits I look for in a writer applying to be part of the Lake Atitlan Memoir Workshop, here's what I'd tell you:

Talent is a wonderful thing. So is experience. But more important: You should possess a sense of adventure. An open mind. Enthusiasm, and flexibility (I'm not talking about yoga here.) One more thing: courage to look honestly at your story, even the hard parts. Those most of all. At the heart of it all: There's a story you want to share. I'd love to help you do that.

Those who have joined me at the lake in the past have ranged in age from 20 to 85, from all over the U.S. and Canada (and occasionally from other countries as well, including English speakers living in Guatemala). Some have books in the works or nearing completion. And a few have completed and sold books when they attend. Others have published work since they first joined us.

But please don't be intimidated if you're not at that stage in your writing life, or if you have no personal goal to publish your writing. Some of the most exciting work to emerge from participants in this workshop has come from those who had written nothing since high school. What everyone shares is the desire to share the stories that have shaped our lives. This makes for an extraordinarily lively and stimulating group.

For some, the workshop represents an opportunity to improve and develop existing work. Others will find themselves understanding, over the course of the week, what it is they want to write—a time to take in new ideas, direction and inspiration for work they'll embark on or continue after the workshop is over.

To me, both approaches to the workshop—using the week as a time to work, or a time to prepare for future work—seem equally worthwhile. In my own writing life, I know, the quality of the writing I produce bears a direct relationship to the time I spend not writing, but thinking and—consciously or not—allowing my story to take shape.

We'll spend some time talking about how to enter into that process, and move through it.

## ***OUR WEEK TOGETHER***

*Friday, March 13*

Arrive in Guatemala City Airport (GUA) by 4pm. (The airport is small, by the way. We'll talk you through every step of the process.)

Take a taxi or shuttle to beautiful town of Antigua, a half hour's ride from the airport. (We'll give you some specific instructions about this before you travel. My right-hand-woman, Peggy Cook, will give you advice on what to pack, what you need to bring (and what you don't need, like your hair dryer), how to change money, and much more.

We've booked rooms for the group in a lovely hotel –a beautiful Spanish colonial house. You'll meet up at six pm with our locally- based, English speaking facilitator/host, Rebecca Ginnever, who will bring the group to one of my favorite Antigua restaurants for a group welcome dinner

where you'll have a chance to meet the other members of our group. I can tell you right now, you'll probably make some lifelong friends.

*Saturday, March 14*

Next morning, after breakfast at the hotel, you'll have a few hours to explore the very beautiful, traveller-friendly and walkable town of Antigua. (And Rebecca, your Antigua host, will be there for you.)

Everyone meets back at the hotel by noon, with bags packed and ready, to board two minibuses that will bring everyone to the lake—a two and a half hour trip, with a stop for drinks and snacks. Once at the lake, you'll board a boat that will be waiting for the group to take everyone across the lake—a gorgeous ride, where volcanoes flank the shore—to the sweet, intimate little hotel where you'll be based for the week, Posada Schumann. Each writer will have been assigned a room. Your bags will be brought there, so you'll have a little time to settle in.

At five thirty, the group gathers at the dock for the two minute boat ride that will bring you to Joyce's house for our welcome dinner. The very excited and happy looking woman standing on the dock awaiting your arrival will be Joyce. Right behind her: members of our terrific local

kitchen crew, ready to pour you a margarita or a mojito, or a non-alcoholic drink, followed by your introduction to the extraordinary cooking of our longtime chef, Henry Lehr.

After dinner, we'll gather in Joyce's house for introductions of our great team (Chef Henry, and Lorraine, our yoga teacher, the kitchen crew, and Miguel and Mateo, my longtime helpers and gardeners) and a brief introductory talk about the week ahead. Under the stars, the boat will bring you back to your hotel. You'll want a good night's sleep because work begins in earnest the next morning.

*Sunday, March 15 – Friday, March 20*

On the first morning, Sunday, we'll begin a little differently, with introductions of everyone in the group and a talk from Joyce about the workshopping process. Then we take out our loose-leaf binders and get to work.

Workshop days always begin with a great breakfast and locally grown organic coffee at your hotel followed by optional yoga for those who choose, in Joyce's garden, overlooking the lake and the volcanoes. Morning workshops begin at the writing circle at at 9 am, with snacks and lunch provided in the garden. Activities wind down around 5:30, most days (though you're always welcome to head back to Posada Schumann earlier, or to

take a break for a swim, a sauna, or just time on your own. Every year we also enlist the services of a trained massage therapist who provides great Swedish or Thai massage in the massage room at Joyce's house.

Participants may choose to have dinner in a restaurant in town or pick up good, healthy and safe food in the many cafes and markets around the village. After dinner, we meet at a fire circle next to Posada Schumann for readings from everyone in the group. . You can bring other work, separate from what you submitted to workshop (and by all means, bring wine.) But you may also find you want to share something you've written over the course of our time together.

Wednesday is a free day, until the 4:30 pm craft talk. Options for that day include a hike , a trip to a local market and women's weaving collective, a special meal at Joyce's favorite local restaurant, El Artesano, or free writing time. Joyce will also be holding private conferences at her house during the early afternoon.

### *Saturday, March 21*

Private hour-long conferences with Joyce for those who choose. We ask for a \$100 donation, all proceeds going to Joyce's scholarship fund for a child in the village of San

Marcos. (Other private conference times will also be posted, over the course of the week.)

At 4 pm, we'll gather for a final gathering in the writing circle, and a wide-ranging conversation about issues in the writing process and the experience of our time together. Then comes...

Our last night, blowout party. Expect the most sensational meal yet from Chef Henry and his crew. For those who haven't swum yet, Joyce makes sure the sauna is fired up to get you heated up for a big, brave dive into the lake, under the stars, and a beautiful boat ride back to the hotel, after.

### *Sunday, March 22*

Departure day. Participants will leave with the group back to the Guatemala City airport via a boat and then a private shuttle. Every year, some writers in the group make the plan, in advance, to stay on in San Marcos put their newfound tools to use, writing. If you're able to do this, let us know at registration Rebecca will do her best to assist you in extending your hotel stay. (The sooner you let us know the better; hotels book up.)

## ***Travel Documents and Immunizations***

You will need a passport to enter Guatemala. If your passport is within three months of expiration, be sure to renew it before you leave, as you may encounter problems otherwise. We do recommend that you bring a photocopy of the first page of your passport and keep it separate from the passport itself. You absolutely do not need any shots to enter the country, although it is always wise to be up to date on tetanus, hepatitis and rabies vaccinations when traveling to less-developed countries.

## ***Air Travel to Guatemala***

We'll be taking care of your in-country transportation to the lake, and boats at the lake, and shuttles back to the airport. Workshop participants are solely responsible for booking their flights. Spirit and Taca airlines tend to be the cheapest. Direct flights to Guatemala City are available from Miami, Newark, Houston, Dallas, Atlanta, Charlotte, Los Angeles and Washington D.C. For those flying to Guatemala from other cities, a change of planes will be needed. Also note: Book your flights early! They get expensive the closer you get to your departure date. And sometimes they sell out.

## ***Booking Arrival and Departure Times***

Please make sure that your flight will arrive in Guatemala City no later than 4 p.m. on the 13th if you plan to make the group dinner (and we hope you do!). When booking your departing flight, do not book anything that will leave earlier than 1p.m. on the 22nd.

***Finally, the question everyone always asks (and so will your friends, when they hear you're coming to the workshop): ISN'T GUATEMALA DANGEROUS?***

As is true in most developing countries—as well as in our own “first world” country—there are some very dangerous places in Guatemala. We won't be taking you there.

In the twenty years I've hosted American travelers at Lake Atitlan—both at my workshops, and renting my house on Airbnb—my guests and students have never experienced trouble. We'll inform you fully about places you should not venture on your own. But we take great care to make sure that every writing student stays safe. And in twenty years, every single writing student ha

## ***A few words about your instructor and host:***

For thirty-nine years now, since age 18, I've worked as a full-time writer— of fiction, memoir, personal essays, newspaper columns, performance stories, and magazine journalism. I've published nine novels and five books of non-fiction, two children's books and hundreds of columns and essays. I love to write. And I love to help others experience the joy and, sometimes, the transformation that comes from telling your story in a way that allows someone else to understand your experience, and know you.

In addition to publishing my work, I've been a guest faculty member and guest lecturer at the graduate and undergraduate programs of Antioch, Bennington, Florida State, University of Tennessee, Northern Virginia Community College, among other programs. I teach regularly at the Sarah Lawrence Summer Writing Program and have been on the faculty of the Stone Coast low Residency M.F.A. program affiliated with the University of Southern Maine and St. Mary's Writing MFA program in Moraga, California.

I hold no degrees. My first and best teachers were my parents—both lovers of 13 languages, passionate readers

and writers, and extraordinary teachers whose voices I still hear (years after their deaths) whenever I work with other writers. I've also had the great good fortune to work with countless great editors in the world of newspapers, book and magazine publishing, radio and performance. While I may have possessed the tools to function as a publishing writer as early as my teens, I needed all of those years of writing and publishing and being edited, myself, to understand as I believe I do now, how to help other writers bring their own best work into being. EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OUR LAKE ATITLAN WORKSHOP

Getting started:

Every participant in the workshop should submit a manuscript in advance, no more than 2,500 words, of personal narrative, not fiction. Your submission may be a free-standing piece of work (the self-contained story of a significant experience in your life or personal essay) OR a chapter from a longer piece of work. If you are submitting a chapter or section from a longer work, please understand that the group has not read anything else from you, so it may be a good idea to include a few introductory sentences that help us understand the context for the writing we'll be thinking about.

Your manuscript should be typewritten in MS Word, double spaced, with your name on the top of each page, and each page numbered. In the past, in the interest of keeping their submission to under 2500 words, some writers have chosen to summarize a story. Try not to do this. If you need to cut an existing piece of writing to fit the length requirement, I'll learn a lot more about you as a writer if you send a portion of a the actual manuscript rather than a condensed version.

The deadline for sending your manuscript is February 15, 2020. **DO NOT STRESS ABOUT THIS MANUSCRIPT.** Don't worry that it's not good enough! The idea here is to give us a starting off point for talking about your writing. Much more important than the piece of writing you submit to the workshop is the work you'll create, after.

You'll be asked to send your manuscript to Peggy, who will create a password-protected dropbox containing the manuscript of each writer in the group. We ask that you print these up and put them in a loose-leaf binder to bring with you to Guatemala, and that you read each of your fellow writers' works before arriving. You do not need to write comments on the other manuscripts unless moved to do so. We also ask that you put an extra five or ten copies of your own work in your suitcase, for anyone who may not have a copy and want one.

Printing in Guatemala is not simple, so please come prepared. The night before each workshop day, we will announce whose manuscript will be workshopped in each session, at what hour. That way, you can be prepared by having read the work in question, and you can decide which sessions have most relevance to your own growth as a writer.

Every writer in the group will have two workshop sessions devoted to her work. The first is half an hour—just long enough to get you thinking. Later in the week, Joyce will return to a discussion of each writer's work for an hour-long session. Attendance at the workshop sessions of your fellow writers is not required, and we certainly don't expect you to attend every workshop. This is your week: pace yourself in the way that works best for you. You might want to attend just two sessions one day, and five the next.

We will devote one workshop session of roughly an hour to each writer's manuscript. Sometimes the work demands more time, and occasionally, less. You are likely to discover that the value of a workshopping experience is not always measured by the clock. But we can assure you, Joyce will consider each writer's work very closely, and in a way that should be deeply valuable not only to the author of that particular work but to all of those attending the session.

## Craft Talks

With the exception of our mostly-free day, Wednesday, the early part of every workshop day will be spent in the writing circle, talking about each writer's stories, one by one. But in the late afternoon, we'll break for a talk from Joyce on some specific aspect of the writing process.

Some specific areas we'll explore over the course of the week's craft talks include locating one's story, voice, language, dialogue, character, the editing process, the ethical issues of writing memoir, the discipline of the writing day, story arc, point of view, point of entry, endings. We'll also talk about the writing process, getting through writer's block, and maintaining inspiration.

As anyone who has attended one of my workshops can tell you, my personal focus, in teaching, is to make you a better writer, rather than devoting a great deal of time to marketing your work. But recognizing how valuable this kind of advice can be, to writers who are ready to send their work out into the world, I have invited a  
This year—back by popular demand-- we'll be joined by a highly experienced and gifted literary agent, Nicole Tourtelot, of Defiore Literary Agency in New York, to talk with the group about the marketplace and the path to

publication. Among the topics Nicole will address: online publication opportunities, writing a pitch letter and a book proposal, and the value of placing shorter work before going after a book contract. You'll come away with some invaluable tools.

Though I believe I will have a great deal to offer you, it won't just be the teaching that provides instruction. Part of the beauty of a writing workshop is the opportunity it provides to every participant to learn from each other. Often, writers at my workshops go home having found for themselves writer friends who continue to provide an eye for their work and a source of support and community for years to come.

### *A Word on Workshopping*

One common misconception about the workshop process is the notion that the time spent having one's own work examined and discussed is likely to be the most important part of the week for that writer. I've often found that it's often in the less emotionally-wrought experience of hearing another writer's work explored that writers learn the most. So many of the issues we talk about in connection to one particular manuscript are likely to resonate for so many others in the workshop, as well.

I've heard of workshops (and writers who teach in them) in which the instructor takes a very general, pat-on-the-head approach. I've also seen the opposite, and watched students emerge in tears from some session or other, with all aspiration to write another word extinguished.

My own style, and that of the guest faculty I invite to join me as teachers in my workshops, falls in neither category. I ask a lot of each writer I work with, and look to each to produce not simply entertaining or mildly enjoyable work, but something that goes deeper and stands as more authentic than anything he or she has produced before.

We'll be working hard on aspects of craft, of course. But in my teaching, we will also ask you to go somewhere that has less to do with technique than with personal courage: namely, to examine aspects of your story you may never have looked at before. In the case of memoir, this will involve not only your writing but, inevitably, your life. Fiction writers go just as deep, of course. They simply choose a different form for putting the story on the page.

I know well from the experience of writing my own memoirs, *At Home in the World* and *The Best of Us*, that this process is frequently uncomfortable, even painful. But

it is also the route to growth and power for a writer. The fact that writing memoir may also be cathartic is surely true, though I'll be looking for more than the catharsis of getting a difficult experience off your chest. I would not expect any reader to shell out \$25 on my catharsis, and we will hold you to that standard of good writing, not simply good healing.

Because I have done this kind of work in my own writing life, I am well aware of how hard it is. This is actually one of the reasons I love to locate this workshop where I do—at what is likely to be, for many of you, one of the most beautiful and other-worldly places you will ever see. (Please also keep in mind that this is a rustic location. No cable television on Lake Atitlan. No air conditioning. No room service. No concierge. And you may well encounter the occasional spider. Not the biting kind.)

But if you're going to be venturing into new and challenging territory in your writing, I believe there is no better place to do so than in a flower-filled garden on the shores of Lake Atitlan, with birds singing overhead and butterflies in the trees and great coffee and great swimming and healthy delicious snacks, with a terrific \$35 massage available any day of the week, platters of fresh fruits and avocados and great dinners by the fire at night, and most importantly, the company of a group of similarly

courageous individuals, making their own major discoveries as writers alongside you.

## **COST**

### **Costs, cancellations Policy and Who to Pay Tuition:**

The cost to attend is \$2800. This price includes:

\* A welcome dinner with the group in Antigua, private hotel room in Antigua, and typical Guatemala breakfast the next morning in the hotel's garden

\* Transportation from Antigua to Lake Atitlan, a private boat ride to San Marcos La Laguna (site of the workshop), and transportation back to the airport on the Sunday for departure 17. Boat rides to and from Joyce's house for special events throughout the week.

\*Opening night dinner and drinks. (It's a fantastic meal.)

- Optional daily yoga class every morning. Saunas, swimming, stand-up paddleboard and kayak for those who choose.

- One half hour long workshop session with Joyce (in the writing circle) dedicated to discussion of your manuscript
- A second hour-long workshop session with Joyce (in the writing circle) dedicated to further discussion of your writing

\* Workshop admission to as many sessions as you please (manuscript workshops, directed free-writes, craft talks, fire-side readings, special topics from Joyce and guest faculty members — as much as you can fit in from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m.)

\* Breakfasts and lunches along with coffee/tea, snacks, and desserts

\* Final night's party at Joyce's house with stone-oven pizza, margaritas and lots of readings, music and dancing

## NEW THIS YEAR: A SPECIAL DISCOUNT OFFER

Children in the village of San Marcos REALLY NEED SHOES. Over the twenty years we've been hosting workshops in San Marcos, I've made a point of asking the writers who come to stick any gently used sneakers in their luggage (particularly children's sizes, or adult sizes up to women's size 8) . We'll find homes for them!

This year, in the hope of increasing shoe donations, I'm offering \$100 off the price of the workshop for anyone who brings down 15 pairs of kids' shoes. (Just check your airline luggage allowances to avoid running up charges, if you bring a whole extra bag.)

Be sure to let Peggy know if you plan on bringing shoes.

## **CANCELLATION, PAYMENT SCHEDULE & WHO TO PAY**

All payments (including housing) due by Jan. 15, 2020. Payment is through PayPal. Once you are accepted, Peggy will send you the information on where to send payment.

\* 50% deposit of tuition + total housing amount due by Nov. 1, 2019.

\* **Total payment is due** and refundable, less a fee of \$550, by Jan. 15, 2020.

\* Payment is non-refundable from Jan. 16, 2020 onward. In emergencies, Joyce works with students to either give a rain-check for a future WBTL workshop or towards a different workshop.

## HOUSING

Housing costs vary from \$250 (shared) to \$800 (single), depending on your own choices, and are **in addition** to tuition. Once you have been accepted, we will work with you to book your room, but please keep in mind that all housing is first-come, first-served. Rooms are reserved when you send your deposit in, so please keep in mind that you will also need to send the housing amount in with that initial deposit, as well. Again, WE BOOK THE ROOMS for you in San Marcos la Laguna.

## FOOD

Our workshop team all agrees that it's important for anyone engaged in the hard work of writing to be treated to the most healthy and delicious meals we can provide. And though this week is about hard work, we also want it to feel like a great vacation, including terrific meals.

So that's what you can expect: Breakfasts (at the hotel) will include a selection from fresh fruit, great yogurt, granola, tortillas, home baked breads, and eggs, as well as fresh juice, tea, and great locally-grown coffee. Partway through the morning, we'll be serving a cool drink, more

coffee or tea, and a light snack (usually fruit), but Henry also has some great surprises up his sleeve.

Our goal for the week is to provide food that is deeply satisfying but also healthy. When you sign up for the workshop, we send you a questionnaire in which we'll ask you to let us know if you have any food allergies or special dietary issues we should know about. If so, we'll do our best to make sure to provide what you need.

Lunches will be served in my garden between workshop sessions by our incredible chef, Henry Lehr, who spends the rest of his year overseeing a large professional kitchen in NYC. For some, Henry has changed their worldview on food. (One student claimed he cured her digestion issues within 8 days because of his vegan-friendly options.) Henry prides himself in sourcing local produce, the freshest seafood and poultry, and creating meals that are not only delicious but beautiful. More than one student at the workshop has told us that the meals, alone, would be reason to attend Write By the Lake.

You'll have your choice of small, charming and reasonably priced restaurants in the village of San Marcos, where prices range from 4 - 15 USD each in over 12 restaurants, and feature tacos, soups, salad, pasta, sushi, and sandwiches from local owners hailing from

Israel, France, Japan, the States, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, Italy, and, of course, Guatemala.

At night on the last full day of the workshop (March 23rd), we'll gather at my house on the lake for wood-fired pizza appetizers and a great blowout dinner. I like to end the week with a dive into the lake under the stars. But if you'd rather sit by the fire and talk, that's fine too. If you play an instrument, this is the night to take it out. It's a safe bet some of us will be dancing before the night is over, too.

## **OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

These include a hike to nearby villages, a visit to a women's weaving cooperative, kayaking at my house, and shopping in area markets. You may want to sign up for a massage or healing treatment at one of several centers in the village.

And while I understand and support the idea of keeping your mind totally focused on your writing, those who are interested will have numerous opportunities to visit a local school, hear about social and environmental projects helping the community here, or learn more about Mayan culture. You'll also have an opportunity so

purchase locally-made weavings and textiles, coffee, and other crafts made by the men and women of the village.

I believe there is no better way to start a day at the lake than with a swim (watching the sun come up over the volcanoes while you do, which is why I favor breast stroke over crawl). I always invite any of the group who choose to join me for a daybreak swim, followed by pre-breakfast coffee on my patio

## **FINALLY...**

Over the months and weeks leading up to the workshop, I'll be sending updates about the workshop—with special instructions on What to Pack, more detailed thoughts about your workshop manuscript, and more. If you have questions about the workshop, concerning issues not discussed here, by all means email us at: [joycemaynardworkshop@gmail.com](mailto:joycemaynardworkshop@gmail.com)

I know I am speaking not only for myself but for my entire workshop team when I say how much I hope you are able to be part of this week. As much as I believe our students gain from our time together, so do I. (Three times now, after leaving one of my workshops, I've embarked on a new novel of my own, and found myself writing each time with new excitement and energy. I know it's the time I spend with writers like you that inspires me.) I hold that goal for each of our students in the Lake Atitlan workshop.

I look forward helping you achieve a new level of clarity, emotional power and authenticity in your writing, and to locate your own best voice.

Over the years, I'm proud to say, many of the women who have joined me at the lake (some of them three, four and even five times) have told me that this has been among the most meaningful experiences of their lives. If joining me on this adventure is something you've been thinking about for years, I hope this is the year you'll take the plunge. I'd love to see you getting off the boat and stepping on my dock next March.