Feedback Instructions

*Please read the “Critique Groups” handout before you start reading the work of your fellow writers.*

Read the work through once without making any marks, keeping in mind the feedback the author requested.

When you’re ready to comment, click the “Review” tab at the top of the screen in Word. Highlight the word, sentence, or passage you want to comment on. Click the “New Comment” icon. Then you can type your comment off to the right side of the document. Proceed until you’ve written out all your specific feedback. (If you have any technical difficulties with this, please let me know.) Remember not to make general judgments, but to talk about how specific things in work affect *you*. What sentences did you find particularly impactful? What made you laugh? Where did you get confused?

In addition to this detailed feedback off to the left, please offer some big-picture comments about the work. Go to the beginning or end of the document and type out the main points you want to convey to the author. Be sure to respond to the feedback issues that the author requested. Remember that while you want to be honest, the primary purpose of all feedback is to support and encourage the author in realizing his or her vision.

As you write your feedback, try to use vocabulary associated with the tools we’ve been learning. Here’s a quick recap of things to look for. (Some may not be applicable to an author’s project—use the ones that are relevant):

* Musicality of the language—repetition, alliteration, assonance, rhyme.
* Freshness of language—as opposed to cliché or shopworn phrasing.
* The balance of abstract versus concrete words.
* The use of imagery that involves all five senses.
* The use of active, precise verbs, as opposed to passive, general verbs like be, have, go, do.
* How dramatic tension is created and sustained. What does the character want? Is there a conflict/crisis/resolution? Is there a complicating situation leading to resolution?
* Whether the actions in the story are key to arriving at the resolution. The goal is no unnecessary elements—no guns that don’t go off, as Chekhov said.
* Whether the main character is sympathetic, and if so, why.
* Whether the authorial voice is engaging and authentic.
* Whether the author has convinced you why the topic matters. Franklin calls this “urgency.” One of my old teachers called it “the so-what factor.”

Next week, we’ll take turns offering feedback to each author, following the guidelines in the “Critique Groups” handout.

Happy reading!