

A Thriving Writing Workshop in San Bernardino
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Over a year ago I began attending the San Bernardino Inlandia workshop located in the cozy Howard M. Rowe Branch community library. Facilitator, Allyson Jeffredo shared her vision of creating a workshop steeped in honest, non-threatening conversation. We were instructed to discuss the heart of the work which primed us to be receptive to constructive critique. Her mission of guiding us to our best writing selves was the perfect example of an effective workshop leader. When she moved, I was invited to be the facilitator and inherited a healthy workshop with friendly, patient, and creatively curious people.

Our workshopers range in age from mid 20's to 80's, from college students to retirees. The octogenarian from Germany and the dancer in her 20's who works with at-risk youth both have an admiration for each other's poetry and joie de vivre. The group is so friendly and welcoming; one evening a lady that goes to the Scrabble games hosted by the library, asked if she could join us; much to our surprise, one of the workshopers was her grandson's high school teacher. Former social worker, Charlotte LeVecque, teaches us about the love of horses with poems like

The Jump.

Walking my horse in the wash
I feel him tense underneath me
Arching his neck
 pricking his ears forward
He is staring at a log
 he wants to jump
I give him permission
 by standing in my stirrups
Leaning over his shoulders
 loosening the rein
Squeezing his sides with my legs
He takes off
 not a foot on the ground
My horse and I take wing

With a laser focus on nature, prolific haiku guru, Cynthia Charlwood Pringle transports us to a mini retreat.

ocean inhales, holds
its breath -- pauses -- releases
foamy crescent domes

The creative process, natural flow in fellowship, and mutual respect makes each meeting memorable.

Poet laureate of Knoxville Tennessee, Marilyn Kallet came to our workshop with the gift of a presentation. We prepared for her visit by reading from her works, *How Our Bodies Learned*, *The Love That Moves Me*, and her translation of *The Big Game* originally by Benjamin Peret. Kallet's poem

Fireflies

In the dry summer field at nightfall,
fireflies rise like sparks.
Imagine the presence of ghosts
flickering, the ghosts of young friends...

sparked the idea to create a renga, a group poem made of alternating stanzas of a tercet of 5-7-5 syllables followed by a couplet of 7 syllables per line, which she graciously accepted. Joy in Everyday Things was the theme for the evening, which included a library scavenger hunt for inspiration and performing impromptu lines, but most deeply moving was when Marilyn read from her work.

Our next meeting we will have guest presenter, Isabel Quintero, author of *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces*, who will show us how to express our authentic voice. I am excited to see how this will impact our writing. Having inherited such a wonderful workshop, my mission is to see each person continue to thrive.

Support for the Inlandia Workshop Series comes from Poets & Writers and the Inlandia Institute