

*mslexia*  
**novel school**

10-14 July 2023



**WOMEN'S  
WRITING  
WEEKS**

A week for creating and shaping your novel

**Claire Hynes**  
**Lesley Glaister**  
**Jane Rogers**  
**Margaret Wilkinson**

*'My novel feels like it actually exists now, and is not just a collection of random ideas'*

*Mslexia Novel School is an online course for writers embarking on a new novel, or rethinking an existing draft.*

*This will be a whole week to make real progress with your book – with expert tuition from renowned tutors, a professional writing coach to keep you on track, an on-call counsellor to provide emotional support, and a lively group of fellow writers to cheer you on. All this and more, in the comfort of your own home.*

*Course fee: £485*

## Course structure

### Craft tuition

Four leading writer-tutors will each focus on a single aspect of the novel-writing craft, creating a varied week of high-quality workshops.

Our four core craft tutors are:

- ▶ *Claire Hynes* on dialogue and voice to bring your characters alive
  - ▶ *Lesley Glaister* on beginnings that will hook your reader (and your agent)
  - ▶ *Jane Rogers* on atmosphere and scene-setting to add a fresh dimension
  - ▶ *Margaret Wilkinson* on how to make your characters propel your plot – and vice versa
- More details about our craft tutors and their workshops are overleaf.

### Small-group teaching

We know individual attention is all-important, so our workshop groups will be limited to around 12 people – which means your tutors will have time to get to know you and your writing. There will be only four groups on the course, so book early to secure your place!

### A writing community

The core teaching takes place from 10am-4pm, but groups will come together for the coaching workshops and social aspects of each day – to form a community of fiction-obsessed writers who will become your friends for life.

### Motivation and support

Because this is Mslexia, we know how important it is to nurture the whole writer. That's why, in addition to our core Novel School teaching, we're also including motivation and goal-setting workshops led by experienced writing coach Bec Evans, drop-in surgeries with counsellor Hilary Jenkins for anyone who's feeling a bit lost, all held together by our MC Rosie Garland – novelist, poet and performer *extraordinaire* – who will introduce you to fellow writers on the course.

More details about our motivation and support tutors and their workshops are overleaf.

### Praise for our previous novel course

*'A totally immersive hug, and a taste of what it feels like to accept myself as a writer'*

*'Now I know how to move forward with a book I've been struggling with for 14 years'*

*'I've connected with so many brilliant and inspiring writers in ways that we will take forward beyond the course'*

*'I feel as if I have been guided out of the undergrowth'*

(anonymous comments from our Virtual Visitors' Book)

Our four craft tutors have each designed a bespoke day of workshops, based on their many years of experience teaching creative writing at the very highest level. From Monday to Thursday you and your group of 10-14 writers will spend a day with each tutor, divided up into manageable tuition and feedback sessions, with breaks for refreshment and private writing.

At the end of each day, from 17:00-18:00, is Happy Hour – when all workshop groups will come together for expert-led sessions designed to help you prioritise your creativity and

maintain the momentum of the course for the future. Friday will be a day to consolidate everything you've learnt, network with other writers – and quiz your tutors in a lively Q&A session.

Our course counsellor will be available for a private chat by phone or on Zoom during the longer refreshment breaks (12:30-13:30 and 16:00-17:00). Contact Kay in our admin team if you want to book a slot (0191 204 8860 or kay@mslexia.co.uk).

For more information, contact postbag@mslexia.co.uk.

## Course timetable

### MONDAY - THURSDAY

09:00 **MONDAY ONLY!** Welcome starts earlier, at 09:00, followed by 'Meet your group'

09:30 Welcome and writing warm-ups

10:00 Group tuition\*

11:30 Caffeine/snack break

12:00 Group tuition\*

13:00 Meal break

14:00 Group tuition\*

16:00 Caffeine/snack break

16:30 Whole school social time

17:00 Happy Hour talks and workshops

### FRIDAY

09:30 The internal critic

10:30 Group contacts

11:00 Caffeine/snack break

11:30 Goal setting

13:00 Meal break

14:00 Panel Q&A with all tutors

\*Tutors will interleave tuition, writing exercises and feedback differently according to their individual approaches to their particular topic for the day.

## Course tutors



### Claire Hynes

Claire's day of workshops will look at how to write dialogue and monologues that convey personality and emotion. How does a beautician speak differently from a butcher? What about a jazz trumpeter and a nun? And how can you tell, just by the phrasing they use, when someone is nervous or angry, being honest or hiding something? Claire will explain what to put in to your fictional conversations and what to leave out; how to layer in vocabulary, dialect and subtext; and lead you through writing exercises that will make your characters leap off the page.

Claire Hynes teaches creative writing at UEA, that renowned centre of creative writing excellence. She is an award-winning writer of fiction, creative non-fiction and theatre monologues, whose work has been widely published and performed, including by the BBC, Contact Theatre Manchester, *Wasafiri* and *Lighthouse*. Prior to teaching at UEA, she worked as a BBC documentary filmmaker and as news editor for *The Voice*, for which she won the George Viner Memorial Award for journalism, a CRE Race in the Media Award and an RTS award.



### Lesley Glaister

Lesley's day of workshops will look at how you approach the task of writing a novel. Are you a planner or a plunger, and how does that affect what you need to know (and do) before you get started? She'll go on to focus on the first few paragraphs of your book, and how to ensure they catapult readers into your fictional world. What makes a good opening line? How do you set the tone for the novel and intrigue your reader from the very first page? She'll examine strategies other authors use, and experiment with different approaches and effects.

Lesley Glaister has written 16 critically-acclaimed novels, many short stories, one stage play and numerous radio plays. Her first novel *Honour Thy Father* won the Somerset Maugham Award and a Betty Trask Award. *Now You See Me* was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for fiction, and *Easy Peasy* was shortlisted for the Guardian Fiction Prize. Her most recent novel is *Blasted Things*. She mentors novelists and teaches Creative Writing in a variety of settings, including most recently as a Senior Lecturer at the University of St Andrews.



### Jane Rogers

Jane's workshops will look at how atmosphere, mood and scene-setting can add new dimensions to your fiction, using exercises to explore how to make your settings more effective and dynamic. Evoking the places where your novel unfolds is a key skill: a country lane on a starry night; a sweaty rush-hour train; a teenager's bedroom by the light of a flickering screen. Setting is not just a backdrop; it can play a vital role in your story: challenging your characters; reflecting their moods, creating an atmosphere that transports the reader into their world.

Jane Rogers has published ten novels, a collection of stories, TV and radio drama. Her novels range from historical (*Mr Wroe's Virgins*, which she adapted into an award-winning BBC2 serial) through contemporary (*Island*, about a young woman who sets out to murder her mother) to science fiction (*The Testament of Jessie Lamb*, Man Booker longlisted, winner of the Arthur C Clarke Award). She is Professor Emerita of Writing at Sheffield Hallam, and has taught writing to a wide variety of students. A new collection of stories, *Fire-Ready*, is out this year.



### Margaret Wilkinson

Margaret's day of workshops are designed to help you create and/or sharpen your plot by examining the role of your protagonist. As the protagonist tries to solve their problems, the structure of your novel will almost magically appear. She'll help you develop active protagonists, or animate those you already have, creating traits that will build a believable character whose journey through your novel will create plot. Along the way, we'll explore the difference between story, plot, event, structure and pace, adapting classic plot design to your protagonist's journey.

Margaret Wilkinson is a prose, stage and radio writer. Her short stories have been widely published, her plays have toured around the UK, and her radio plays have been broadcast on BBC Radio 4. She recently retired from her role as Senior Lecturer on the MA in Creative Writing at Newcastle University, where she taught fiction and script at undergraduate and postgraduate level and still curates their Spring School. An inspirational teacher, Margaret is a regular contributor to *Mslexia* and is author of our *Mslexia* Minis ebooks *Writing for Radio* and *Writing Short Stories*.

## Course tutors



### Bec Evans

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Bec will lead Happy Hour sessions on overcoming obstacles to writing – such as procrastination, poor time management and lack of confidence – and on building resilience and a long-term writing practice. Bec will also be leading the goal-setting workshops on Friday that will help you develop a realistic plan to navigate your novel-writing journey, including visualising success, dealing with setbacks, and setting up accountability structures.

Bec Evans is an author, coach and consultant who helps writers keep writing. From her first job in a bookshop, to a career in publishing, several years managing a writers' retreat centre for Arvon, and now as co-founder of the writers' coaching organisation Prolifko, she's obsessed with creative persistence. Bec works with individuals, writing groups, publishers, universities and content creators. She is co-author of *Mslexia's Diary & Planner 2022*, and her book about literary persistence, *Written*, is out now.



### Rosie Garland

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Rosie will be your MC and guide during the course. She will get your creative juices flowing each day with freewriting exercises, introduce our whole-group sessions, and lead workshops on the importance of self-care in a writer's life – and on ways of outwitting the internal critic that often sabotages our creativity and motivation. Rosie will also lead the Q&A session with our craft tutors and networking with your fellow writers.

Rosie Garland writes long and short fiction and poetry, sings with post-punk band The March Violets, and performs as her alter ego Rosie Lugosi. Her writing is published internationally and her latest poetry collection *What Girls do the Dark* (Nine Arches Press) was shortlisted for the Polari Prize 2021. Her most recent novel *The Night Brother* was described by the *Times* as 'a delight...with shades of Angela Carter'. Val McDermid has named her one of the most compelling LGBT+ writers in the UK today.



### Hilary Jenkins

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Hilary is an experienced counsellor and writing-for-wellbeing workshop leader, who has also taught creative writing as a craft at undergraduate and postgraduate level for many years. Hilary has helped steer many writers through the sometimes choppy emotional seas of the creative process and will be available for a private chat by phone or on Zoom during the longer refreshment breaks on the course.

Hilary Jenkins has degrees in English Literature and Children's Literature. She then taught in India, China and Saudi Arabia, and worked as an adviser for the British Council. Following an MA in Creative Writing and Personal Development, she taught Creative Writing at Sussex University, Open University and Open College of the Arts and was until recently Senior Lecturer at Teesside University.