

Background for tonight's WRITEPODS organizing meeting (21 February 2021)

page 1: SHORT version of the plan for our one-hour meeting

20 min: Everyone introduces themselves (but avoids describing their work in progress). Any initial questions?

15 min: Review what this WRITEPOD involves; we are committing to

- Act with respect for other participants
- Agree to keep our works confidential within this group; no early reviews or copying without permission
- **Offer access to a work in progress that we want reactions to** (might involve extra work to package content, offer password that has to be changed later, etc)
- “Encounter” and record *reactions* to up to five other participants’ work (see suggestions for useful *reactions* below)
- **Attend 2 more working meetings** (90 min – two hours) where the reactions can be presented / discussed
- Wrap up with a final “what did we learn / how can we improve the WRITEPOD process for next time” meeting
- Optional: participate in a session at ELO 2021 where we report on all this and celebrate and answer questions from conference attendees

25 min: Next steps:

- Everyone asks all the questions they have and decides whether they want to go ahead. (OK to withdraw now; withdrawing later would mean we would keenly miss your contribution.)
- **Choose firm dates** for the two working sessions, based on availability and “how long will it take to package our work for others to react to?”

There are special challenges in getting actionable feedback on an interactive digital work. WRITEPODs are one idea of how to obtain this. Notes below are by Jules; Lyle and Deena likely have different thoughts / more to add.

Different from a demo.

We all know how to “show” our work to people and point out what we’d like them to notice. This project attempts to capture what happens when a reader/user/player is *alone* with our work.

Hard for all parties.

Focused time is precious, so spending 30 minutes on each of five other works is a great gift and commitment. Creators will get the most out of this by “taking it all in” until it’s time for them to ask any questions they have. We yearn to explain; there will be time for that once the fresh impressions have been captured.

To get the most useful reactions, please avoid mention of:

- Your theme; let’s see what the reactors think it is!
- Difficulties you are having with tools or content (often something you’d enjoy discussing with a sympathetic colleague, but here, wait until the end)
- Apologies for the work not being in final form; we are all together in this!
- Your goals (“I am confronting the way my own early work was ignorant about colonialism;” if you say that *now*, the reactor will assess how well you are doing it rather than encountering the work in a realistic way)
- (We can all think of more things *not to mention*, that would get in the way.)

Packaging a work for a thirty-minute review

Each of us will be spending 30 minutes with the work, and that time includes note-taking in some form. (I have found this is enough time for a fresh reaction and valuable additional feedback for the creator.) There are at least two ways to get the most out of this time (and we might discover more through this process):

Option A: just give access to the work as it exists now, and “see how far they get”

Option B: package up the section of the work that you’re most concerned about, perhaps by creating a stand alone chunk

In either case you can:

- Make a secret early version in a web-accessible location, and give us a password (that you can change later)
- If the work can stand alone, provide a zip file for download (with specifics of which systems it runs on, Windows/Android, Mac/iOS)
- If the work is local only, you could make a video walk-through without narration (sound only what’s coming from the work)

Some of us can offer temporary hosting for these download files; if you need that let us know!

Most important guideline about the reactions: do not say, “If this were my work I would,” or, “You should do this...” Instead, describe how the work struck you and let the creator decide what to do with your feedback!

Please record your reactions either in written notes, or via a screen capture with you talking. Plan to share these with the creator. In our meeting we’ll start each work’s session with 10 minutes of everyone sharing their primary reaction, after which there will be another 20 minutes of discussion where the creator can and will ask questions.

A useful reaction shares what you are experiencing and is specific. Examples:

[it becomes clear that the person did not find the “menus” you put in]

“As I continued playing, I found I became more afraid / joyful / etc”

“For awhile I thought characters X and Y were the same person, until ... [explain]”

Thank you for reading this long version!

Some of this content draws on *Writing Without Teachers* by Peter Elbow (tips for creators running a leaderless feedback group) and my own work “Usability Techniques for Creators Of Eliterature” from 2000 (<https://theworld.com/~jchat/u/index.htm>).

Deena and Lyle will be moderating, and I’m a good person to contact if you have questions about process details: +1971-227-3050 / 21stcenturyfun@gmail.com.