

Daily Shorts: A Virtual Creative Writing Camp 11–15 April



This camp is modelled on an iconic course at Yale University, “Daily Themes”. Generations of Yale undergraduates have honed their writing skills by committing to the discipline of sitting down to write each day for a semester—and it remains one of the most popular classes in the English department. We have adapted the principles of “Daily Themes” to design a camp that builds language skills and writing habits for high-school students.

Over the course of the week, we get into the nuts and bolts of expressive and effective communication. We break down the work of great writers to see the method behind their masterpieces, and teach our students to follow in these footsteps. We think deeply together about writing imaginatively, and in the process we develop all the elements of great writing: from metaphors and word choice to rhythm, sentence structure and scene-building.

In the 5-day camp:

Students will participate in:

- five 1-hour interactive Zoom seminars – Monday–Friday, 10:00–11:00am
- five optional daily Zoom ‘writing gatherings’ – Monday–Friday 3:00pm–4:00pm

Students will receive:

- written feedback on their daily writing tasks – returned Tuesday–Saturday
- a 30-minute personal feedback session via Zoom – choose a time after camp

Students will do by themselves:

- five daily writing tasks for submission (can be done any time in the day)

Students will attend 1 hour of Zoom class each day; outside class they will undertake daily writing, or attend an optional ‘writing gathering’. (Zoom seminars will be recorded, and can be reviewed by students who need to miss certain days.)

Daily Seminars introduce a topic in the art of writing. We will work together to analyze examples of great writing in English literature, practice polishing our sentences, and discuss exemplary writing samples. Example quotations are drawn from a wide range of famous works by major authors. Supplementary critical readings will also be examined.

Daily Writing Tasks are the core of the camp! We challenge students to develop the habit of producing a piece of writing every weekday. Each ‘daily short’ will be about 250–300 words. Students complete each task on the day, and email it to their tutors. The aim is not to be perfect, but to be consistent—and the improvements in writing skill and confidence are amazing! Students who wish to can optionally log on to the Zoom ‘writing gathering’ online for shared quiet writing time. By the end of the camp, students will have produced and received feedback on around 1,500 words of thoughtful writing.

The One-on-One Tutorial will take place at an agreed time after camp via Zoom. Students and their tutor discuss aspects of their writing in close detail, and reflect on the week’s writing. Daily written feedback commenting on the submitted pieces will also be returned to students.