

Multiple Matching Exercise

You are going to read an extract from an article about writing in community. For questions 1 – 10, choose from the sections (A – E). The sections may be chosen more than once.

Which section...

1. refers to the writer's initial hesitation about exposing her work to others? _____
2. highlights the social and historical impact of a published book? _____
3. shows how shared responsibility deepened a personal bond? _____
4. describes the professional risks of presenting unfinished writing? _____
5. suggests that a collective environment helps assess whether a text achieves its intended effect? _____
6. comments on a writer's stylistic range across different genres? _____
7. explains that a supportive exchange of feedback helped strengthen confidence? _____
8. conveys how fears for family members influenced the themes of a writer's work? _____
9. portrays the founding member's motivation for starting the group? _____
10. underlines how the group's members quickly developed a strong sense of trust? _____

How Writing in Community Can Forge Friendships and Evoke Change

Extract adapted from an article written by Beverly Gologorsky and published online by Lit Hub on September 5th, 2015

A

Phillip Roth once said that only a fool would sit in a room for thirty years doubting himself.

Writers are indeed fools grateful for the gift of creativity despite the constant doubt. We commune mostly with the blank page, which is what I was doing thirteen years ago when my friend Jane Lazarre phoned to ask me to join a writer's group she was forming. Jane, an author of memoirs, novels and poetry had also contacted two other writers who were on board. Was I interested? At the time I was working on a novel in progress and no one yet had read any of it. Was I ready to share? I wasn't sure.

B

Jane and I had been friends for eons. We met in 1978 when our children were entering kindergarten in the same elementary school. I'd started a full time job that required me to be at work before school began, and Jane offered to take both her son and my daughter to school, her generosity legion.

It was also around the time her acclaimed memoir *The Mother Knot* was published, a sensitive, gorgeously written book that challenged the myths of motherhood and childbirth, and engendered many study groups, arriving as it did during the second wave of feminism.

In the years that followed our friendship grew. We mentored each other as writers: read, edited and discussed each other's work before it entered (or didn't) the world. As women we nurtured each other with all that that entails.

C

Her published work was fearless, honest, controversial, work that left readers thinking. Her poetry could be elegiac or salt of the earth, her fictional characters alive.

Jane, a white woman married to a Black man, was the mother of two Black sons. If one of her young sons were late getting home she'd worry aloud he could've been stopped by the police, unfortunately too possible.

In her book *The Whiteness of White* (published by Duke), she discusses this fear with the insight and passion of mother-love and a deep understanding of racial history. Much of her work dealt with racism; she taught about it, wrote about it, led a creative writing program at the New School educating white people about racism.

Given her past successes, why did she want a writer's group and why then, I wondered?

D

She was tired of listening only to herself is what she said. A group would offer something more than she might achieve working alone. She was confident that work in progress read by others could help us know if our words and the feelings we hope they portray are heard as intended. Is the piece evoking what the writer wants? Wasn't she afraid negative commentary might interfere with work? She wasn't, said slipping out of isolation for a few hours would be good, hearing other writer's problems could be helpful.

Jane was persuasive. Just try it, she said. I did.

E

We were a small group of published women writers whose everyday lives differed. We met one evening a month to discuss our work. Sounds tame. But placing unfinished or untested writing in front of the eyes of other experienced and respected writers actually takes courage. It also takes trust to believe, never mind accept, another writer's critique of one's own work. We're all such guardians of our words. However, the sincere, generous and intelligent opinions offered about each piece read bestowed confidence in their writers. Maybe it was luck, but our small cluster of women quickly cemented.