

A Young Writer's View of Conference

By Mallory Shelstad

Opportunities for teens to study fiction writing at the caliber of PPWC are rare and generally out of reach—either financially or logistically—so I am delighted that this conference is held locally as an annual event. There is no better way to learn the craft than by rubbing shoulders with people that share my passion. What a novelty to be around people who can actually talk about writing without their eyes glazing over!

I don't remember a time when I didn't want to write. I wrote stories before I knew how to form letters; jagged lines on papers, walls, and chubby legs. I decided that I wanted to make writing my career in second grade and have never wavered. Attending a writer's conference is a dream come true.

I attended the '08 Conference at the age of 14, and the knowledge I came away with was worth a year of study. This year's conference was no less inspiring. The best part about attending an adult-oriented conference is that the information has not been "dumbed down". Definitely not the formulaic school stuff passed off as Creative Writing 101—these workshops hone your craft and let your imagination fly with a flourish.

All the authors, whether attending or teaching a workshop, readily share their knowledge and experience. Many of them tell me how lucky I am to be starting my career at such a young age. I feel as though I was among peers. They respect my youth, and also understand my deep hunger for knowledge and experience in the writer's world.

Besides the immersion into the writing culture, PPWC offers an excellent opportunity to volunteer. Not only does volunteering help me to grow as a person, but also allows me to interact on a whole different level with the writers and authors that I so admire.

PPWC presents a variety of workshops on all forms of craft. I appreciate the diversity. My favorite this year was Linda Seger's "Creating a Transformational Arc for Your Characters." I couldn't write my notes fast enough!

Some of the most inspiring speeches were presented at dinner, combining two of my favorite things—writing and food. I found it difficult to go to bed after listening to them because my fingers were itching to dance on the keyboard. I enjoyed the simple truths that all the speakers shared. However, being a diary writer myself, I identified most with Jeffery Deaver's hilarious rendition of the writing life and enjoyed the chuckle at the end of a great day of writing workshops.

So what wasn't wonderful? All I can say is that I wish I could have had Hermione's time turner for the weekend, so I could attend more than one class at the same time! Choosing which classes to go to on Sunday was especially hard, as the bulk of the classes I was interested in were scheduled simultaneously. Ahh! Decisions, decisions!

Most importantly, I felt safe throughout the conference. It was easy to find my way around, and someone was always close by to ask for help. The reputation of the Pikes Peak Writers staff did not disappoint. Their efforts made me feel comfortable in the primarily adult setting. The Marriott is a phenomenal venue—and I didn't even get to go in the swimming pool, which is how all hotels should be gauged in my opinion!

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