

What is an Amherst Writers & Artists (AWA) Writing Group?

And How Can It Help Me?

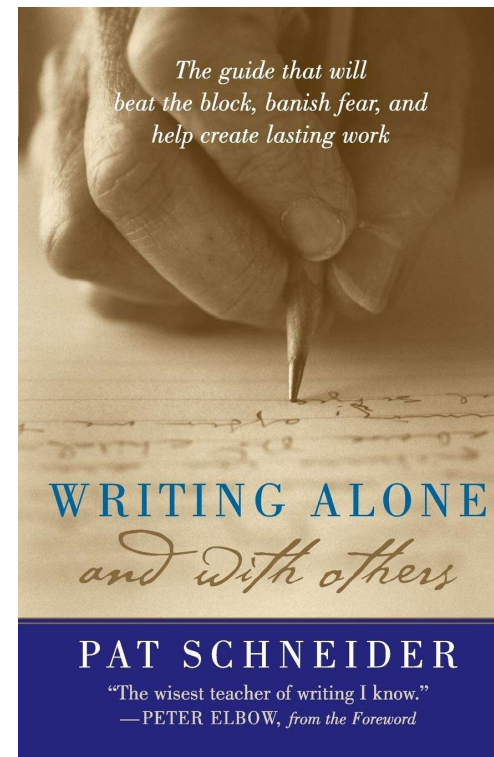
About Me

- I was certified by the AWA in 2017.
- To successfully complete the training, I needed to
 - submit writing samples,
 - get recommendations from established writers,
 - and participate in a 40-hour experiential seminar.



About Pat Schneider

- The AWA method was developed by the late poet, Pat Schneider.
- The basics of her teaching philosophy are outlined in *Writing Alone and with Others* (Oxford University Press, 2003).



What's Special About These Groups

- Safety and support are the most important goals of the facilitation.
- Five Essential Affirmations guide every group:
 1. Everyone has a strong, unique voice.
 2. Everyone is born with creative genius.
 3. Writing as an art form belongs to all people, regardless of economic class or educational level.
 4. The teaching of craft can be done without damage to a writer's original voice or artistic self-esteem.
 5. A writer is someone who writes.

Frequency of Meeting

- Workshops meet once a week
 - for two hours
 - for 6 weeks
- Currently two sessions are available –
 - Mondays 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. EST
 - Tuesdays 7 – 9 p.m. EST

Location

- On Zoom
- Links are emailed to participants
 - 24 hrs before the meeting
 - 1 hr before the meeting.

Purpose of the Workshops

- To learn the craft of writing
- To write in a way that can be healing
 - While not to be confused with therapy, the healing properties of writing have been studied by many, notably psychologist James W. Pennebaker, a pioneer of writing therapy. His research uncovered an important link between language and recovery from trauma.

Process

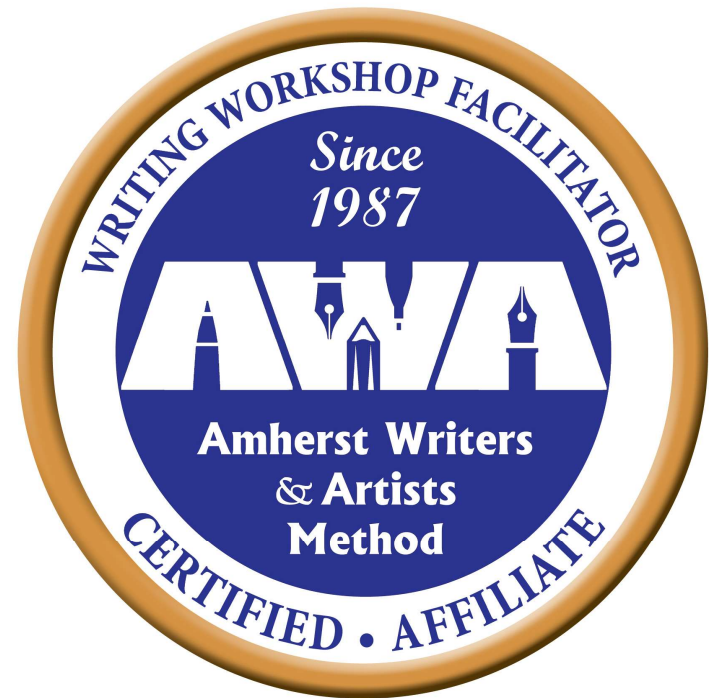
- Workshops are limited to 8 participants (not including the facilitator).
- The workshop series has two goals: to foster reading and writing and to offer a way of dealing with stress.
- Format:
 - The session begins with a short discussion of a poem or other short piece of writing.
 - A writing prompt is given, and participants all write for a few minutes (usually 15-20).
 - Then, if they choose, participants read their work aloud.
 - Other participants give feedback to the reader on what is strong and memorable.
 - There is no critique or criticism of fresh, raw writing.

The Five Essential Practices

- These practices establish a safe environment in which everyone is free to explore their writing and listen to each other respectfully.
 1. Everyone's writing, including the leader's, is treated with equal respect and value.
 2. Writing is kept confidential and treated as fiction.
 3. Writers can refrain from reading their work aloud.
 4. Responses to just-written work reflect what is strong and successful.
 5. Responses and exercises support the development of literary craft.

Cost

- Each 6-week series is \$60.
- For more information and to register go to <https://www.harmonycommllc.com/shop/>



Still Have Questions?

- Drop me an email at deborah@harmonycommllc.com
- Or go to the AWA website for more information about their philosophy. <https://amherstwriters.org>

