

## What's Your Favourite Film?

### *Background*

It has been almost 25 years since I attended my first writing group. After a spell in hospital due to mental illness I had a fantastic community nurse who saw that I was writing a lot and arranged for me to go to a group at The Charlie Reid Centre in Glasgow.

I felt very apprehensive. I was terrified that my imagination would fail me, and I would feel foolish on sharing my miserable attempt at writing.

However, this did not happen. I was made to feel most welcome and safe in the group and was encouraged to believe that what I had to say was valuable. I attended that group for a year before moving onto another. Reflecting on that time in my life, I believe the writing groups were part of a support network that saved my life. The joy I felt on being able to express myself, in a way I hadn't known before, was immense.

Now as a group facilitator, I am conscious of how people may be feeling when attending their first workshop and foray into writing.

Recently I have been working with Thenu Housing Association as part of an 8-week course they provide for people who are feeling isolated and have mental health issues. Usually the participants have never written before and some have never heard of creative writing. I hear people say they are '*rubish at writing*' or that they will '*just listen to what other people have written*'. My main task at the outset is to put everyone at ease and explain that creative writing is literally about creating a piece of writing; that spelling and grammar is not important; that it is their piece of writing and that everyone is unique and it's great to hear what everyone has written when we're all coming from the same source or prompt.

## What's Your Favourite Film?

### *Exercise*

I find this exercise is a great way to get people started and for them to think about what qualities in life are important to them. Allow about two hours.

I ask people to choose one of their favourite films, and then to write about the general outline of the story;  
which characters they liked or disliked, and why;  
where they were when they first saw the film;  
what was happening in their lives at the time.

I usually give about 30 minutes for this and then go around the table asking people to share what they have written. People are delighted to talk about the films!

I then ask them to think about the themes of the film. Speaking about *The Shawshank Redemption*, one participant said, 'I don't know what I like about it, the film just speaks to me'. After we discussed the themes running through it (courage, redemption, loyalty, injustice) she remarked, 'I've never thought about it in that way'.

I ask them to pick two or three of the themes and to write their interpretation of them, then to choose one and to write an example of when they have witnessed it in others or themselves. I finish off by asking people to share what they have written and how they felt about the exercise.

Donna Campbell

February 2020

[https://www.lapidusscotland.co.uk/lapidus\\_tool/whats-your-favourite-film](https://www.lapidusscotland.co.uk/lapidus_tool/whats-your-favourite-film)