

Dear Creative Writing Students,

Congratulations—you're coming to GSA this summer!

We couldn't be more excited for you at this point in your life. GSA is an important time. It's a chance to grow as a writer, learn more about your craft, explore other artforms, and meet fellow creatives who share your interests. In short, GSA is an experience. These will be three transformative weeks for you.

What To Expect

We will work on all aspects of writing, from idea creation and drafting to revising and polishing, as well as publishing and performance. We'll refine our strengths and tackle obstacles while pushing each other to experiment with new subjects and forms. We'll achieve this through lectures, small group workshops, individual conferences, daily writing exercises, manuscript critique sessions, and visits from real working writers.

You will also be able to participate in interdisciplinary activities (engaging and/or combining artforms with creative writing). In addition, you will produce a body of work and assemble a chapbook. You'll even be learning how to present your work to audiences.

What We Expect From You

The two most important things we expect from you are **curiosity** and **optimism**. We want you to be interested in working on your writing and learning as much as possible. We want you to be willing to revise, try new things, and consider comments from other writers. We expect you to listen attentively to the many voices of your classmates, faculty, staff, and our guest artists. Above all, we know you have talents and abilities that no one else has. We promise to guide you in becoming the best creative you can be.

Of course, we also expect you to be on time, prepared, and ready to give your full attention. We are open to facilitating whatever you need to make that possible. You can bring anything that will help you stay attentive, creative, and inspired (such as assistive audio tools, fidgets, etc.), but please be respectful of faculty's guidelines during class to help everyone stay on task.

Our classes are robust and challenging, and there's a lot we want you to learn! We expect you to take care of yourself before and during the program and get as much out of the GSA experience as possible. This means eating well and making sure you get enough rest.

We also expect you to give each other the utmost respect. Treat each other with the care and sensitivity you'd want for yourself. We are all creatives on this journey, and we're learning and growing at our own pace.

What To Explore In Your Reading Before You Arrive

Your faculty is composed of creatives from Kentucky and Texas. We will share works with you from various genres, backgrounds, traditions, and disciplines. We encourage you to reread some of your favorite poems, stories, essays, and comics. If you want to familiarize yourself with some of the faculty's works, feel free to visit our websites:

Jasminne Mendez: <https://www.jasminnemendez.com/>

Reyes Ramirez: <https://www.reyesvramirez.com/>

Dorian Hairston: <https://dghpoet.com/>

Other authors to consider familiarizing yourself with include:

Lupe Mendez, Jennifer Maritza McCauley, bell hooks, Rigoberto Gonzalez, Natasha Tretheway, Karen Russell, Sandra Cisneros, Toni Morrison, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Tomás Rivera, Harry Gamboa, Jr., Jesmyn Ward, Zora Neale Hurston, Tommy Orange, Herman Melville, William Faulkner, Roberto Bolaño, Deesha Philyaw, Ray Bradbury, Octavia Butler, Esmeralda Santiago, Jaquira Diaz, Rita Dove, Nikki Giovanni, Amiri Baraka, Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, Frank X Walker, Nikky Finney, Crystal Wilkinson, George Ella Lyon, Julian Randall.

What To Bring To the Writing Program

- o **A laptop computer:** While iPads and tablets may work, we've encountered many technical problems. We'll collaborate on your devices and share digital files to limit our use of paper.
 - NOTE – If you need assistance obtaining a laptop for GSA (or any other supplies listed below), please immediately email your request to gsainfo@kentuckyperformingarts.org. We're happy to help!
- o **Any preferred pens, pencils, or journals you like to work with:** Even though we will provide these things, we know some creatives have their preferences. We will rely heavily on technology, but we'll also write by hand. (Additional tools, such as a pocket dictionary, can be handy but aren't required.)
- o **One favorite story or poem:** We'll use these to introduce ourselves to the class during a show-and-tell exercise in our first week.
- o **One favorite song, image (like a photo or painting), and movie scene:** We can build a class playlist, share movies, and pictures to deconstruct! We all have our influences and can learn from each other.
- o **One small object that has meaning to you and/or carries memories or an interesting story:** Try not to bring a family heirloom or anything that is of too much value to avoid losing it.

Could be a childhood toy, an inexpensive piece of jewelry, a clothing item, a stuffed animal, a souvenir, etc. We will use this for a writing prompt and in class exercises.

o **Some spending money:** Though GSA covers housing, meals, room, and board, you might want to bring cash for GSA merchandise on campus or souvenirs during field trips.

o You are welcome to wear face coverings at your discretion. If you prefer to wear masks while at the program, please pack enough to last all three weeks.

We've also included a brief message from our counselors-in-residence:

"GSA is an experience like no other with opportunities to make memories and be part of an arts community to cherish for a lifetime. In preparation for your time with us, please keep in mind a few important points for both your physical and mental health.

- Even though your brain might go into "summer mode" after wrapping up the school year, please know that the 3 weeks of GSA aren't like a typical summer camp. Every day you will work and play hard and, along the way, be challenged and inspired!
- Because our days are full of activity, be sure to try your best to prioritize rest, healthy eating, and opportunities to recharge when you can. Quite honestly, we recommend making these priorities right now in preparation, so it's a smoother adjustment.
- The GSA staff, faculty, and counselors are available to help if you ever feel out of balance while on campus. We're your go-to people to help you find the best fit in our unique community and to help with any adjustments that are needed. Don't wait to reach out because we're there to help from Day 1!
- As it applies to you, don't forget to bring any prescribed medication (we can help with reminders but do not administer) and know that we can help with coordination of telehealth therapy sessions (with your already established provider) while at GSA as long as it's not overly disruptive to your studio schedule."

With all best wishes,

The Creative Writing Faculty, Session 1

Jasminne Mendez
Reyes Ramirez
Dorian Hairston