

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 creative journey. GSA is a valuable opportunity to grow as a writer, hone your craft, explore different art forms, and meet fellow creatives who share your interests. In short, GSA is an experience. It is our hope that this three-week program will be transformative for you and your art.

### **What To Expect**

Together, we'll work through various stages of the writing process from idea creation and drafting to revising and polishing, as well as publishing and performance. We'll refine our strengths and tackle obstacles while encouraging 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 experienced working writers.

You will also be able to participate in interdisciplinary activities (engaging in artforms other than your own). In addition, you will produce a body of work and assemble a chapbook. You'll even learn how to present your work to audiences in public readings.

### **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 feedback from other writers. We expect you to listen attentively to the many voices of your classmates, faculty, staff, and our guest artists—professional writers who will visit you. Above all, we hope that you believe in yourself, for you can solve all your creative obstacles. Even if you struggle to do that alone, we promise to support you along the way.

**Of course, we also expect you to be on time for each studio session and to arrive at GSA ready to start work immediately.** Our classes over the three-week period will be intensive and structured, therefore, your full attention is required as there is a lot to learn! We encourage you to take care of yourself before and during the program to ensure that your workload is manageable and you are able to optimize your experience at GSA. This means eating well and making sure you get enough rest. (We know it can be tempting, but please don't have too much ice cream!) If at any point during the program you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, please reach out to us so that we can support you.

We aim to create safe and welcoming classroom environments in which everyone feels comfortable to speak, write, and share. Therefore, we expect you to give each other the utmost respect. In other words, treat each other and each other's writing with the care and sensitivity you'd like to receive.

## **What To Explore In Your Reading Before You Arrive**

You're a Kentucky writer, so we want you to become familiar with the work of your fellow Kentucky writers! Review your local library's offerings, visit authors' websites, find anthologies and journals, and check out works by other writers from our commonwealth. We recommend the following resources as a starting point for your explorations:

- University of Kentucky's Library Guides for KY Authors
  - <https://libguides.uky.edu/kentuckyauthors/>
- Berea College's Library Guides for Affrilachian Poets
  - <https://libraryguides.berea.edu/c.php?g=816791>
- The Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame
  - <https://carnegiecenterlex.org/events/kentucky-writers-hall-of-fame/>

## **What To Bring To the Writing Program**

- **A laptop computer:** While iPads and tablets may work, we've encountered many technical problems. We'll collaborate on your laptops 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](mailto:gsainfo@kentuckyperformingarts.org). We're happy to help!
- **Pens, pencils, notebooks, and journals:** Even though we rely heavily on technology, we'll also write by hand. We ask that you bring writing tools with you. (Additional tools, such as a pocket dictionary or lucky pencil, can be handy but aren't required.)
- **One favorite book or collection of poetry:** We'll use these to introduce ourselves to the class during a show-and-tell exercise in our first week.
- **A Google account login and password:** Please create a free Google account if you do not already have one. This should be done before arrival as Google may require parent or guardian permission. While much of our work will be by hand, at least one session will teach Google Notebook, an AI editing tool. If your school has rules prohibiting the use of AI or you'd like to keep your writing separate from school, please set up a different account than you might use there. GSA does not require any particular technologies, but having an account can help you get more out of that learning session.
- **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.
- GSA is not planning to require face masks or coverings, but you are welcome to wear one anytime. 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.

We’re looking forward to a wonderful program together!

With all best wishes,

**Azia Armstead, Terena Elizabeth Bell, and Katelin Kelly**  
*Creative Writing Faculty, Session 2*