

Module 6 Workshop: Dialogue with Depth and Subtext

What this is

This is a guided workshop based on Module 6: Dialogue & Voice.

Many writers struggle with dialogue that feels flat or on-the-nose. Great dialogue is crafted, layered, and charged with subtext.

Today you will learn how to write dialogue that reveals character, tension, and hidden stakes without spelling everything out.

What you will walk away with

- Understanding dialogue as compressed conflict
- Tools to create distinctive character voices
- Techniques to embed subtext and emotion beneath the surface
- A short dialogue draft where conflict simmers without being named

The promise (and the honest limitation)

In 90 minutes, you will not master every nuance of dialogue.

You will do something more useful. You will start hearing the music beneath the words.

The full Creative Story Mastery program deepens this with voice differentiation, layered subtext, and transformative dialogue.

Workshop structure

1) Welcome: Dialogue is conflict in compressed form

Write this at the top of your page: *Dialogue is conflict in compressed form.*

Reflect:

- Think of a memorable conversation in a story. What made it compelling?

2) Voice practice: crafting distinct voices

Write 3 short dialogues (3-4 lines each) between different characters.

Focus on:

- Tone
- Rhythm
- Vocabulary

Notice how each voice feels unique.

3) Subtext exploration: what is avoided

Write a 300-500 word dialogue scene where the characters avoid naming the real conflict.

Example: Two people argue about a chair, but really about who owns the home.

Underline:

- Lines where characters dodge the truth
- Lines where truth leaks out

4) Dialogue analysis: learn from the masters

Read a short dialogue excerpt (provided or your own).

Identify:

- How subtext creates tension
- How voice reveals character

5) Mini-exercise: rewriting for subtext

Take a blunt or on-the-nose dialogue scene you wrote.

Rewrite it to add layers of subtext and emotion beneath the surface.

6) Reflection and sharing

Answer:

- How did adding subtext change the scene?
- What new tensions or character traits emerged?

7) Close: the taste, and the next step

You have started to hear what dialogue can do beyond words.

Your 24-hour task: Write a 500-word dialogue scene where conflict simmers beneath polite conversation.

If you want more (and you probably do): This is a surface taste of Module 6.

The full Creative Story Mastery program takes you deeper into:

- crafting voices that sing
- layering subtext and emotion
- writing transformative conversations like Krishna and Arjuna

You don't just write what characters say. You write what they don't say.

Materials

- Timer
- One worksheet or a single Google Doc

Accessibility options

- Use bullet points for dialogue beats
- Read dialogue aloud to hear rhythm
- Record voice notes to capture tone