

## **The Good, the Bad and the Funny** **A Christmas Writing Workshop**

It's that time of year again, when Holiday spirit rings out, children cry for outrageously priced toys, people are trampled at Walmart trying to purchase a flat screen TV for \$5.99, Uncle Lou gets sauced at the annual office party, and people wish for nothing more than peace on earth and the new iPhone. Yes, it's December -- let the chaos begin.

For years, the Christmas season has been written about and recorded for the pleasure of thousands of readers. You've probably read some of these stories and have a few of your own. How, though, do you capture these special, if not anxiety ridden moments? And for those of us who have a normal holiday experience, how do you make it extraordinary? Also, remember that you don't have to recall your own holiday experience, you can make one up and create a fantastic piece of fiction. You can also write a poem. If you haven't already guessed, we're going to cover all three genres tonight. Don't panic yet, and yes, I'm only going to give you fifteen minutes for each prompt. I don't expect you to write the next *Christmas Carol* or recreate *Paradise Lost*—so relax and have fun!

### **YOUR TASK TONIGHT**

1- Write a holiday memoir. Choose a prompt from the list below. Time: 15 Minutes

2- Write a holiday fiction story. Choose a prompt from the list below. Time: 15 Minutes

3- Write a holiday poem. Choose a prompt from the list below. Time: 15 Minutes

### **A FEW HELPFUL HINTS BEFORE YOU START**

- Establish a view point:
  - Will you be the narrator?
  - Are you going to create a piece of fiction about your own experience?
  - Are you going to have it from the perspective of your mother, father or another relative?
- Ask yourself how you want your story to open:
  - With dialogue;
  - A description of the scene which the story will take place;
  - Introducing your character;
  - With a child narrator;
  - With a reminiscence narrator;
  - In the middle of the action;
- Will you use dialogue?
- Don't forget to get visual—show your story, don't just tell it.
- Keep it simple. Don't try to cram too much into this brief exercise. That's what a revision is for later on at home.

## LIST OF PROMPTS

- Sometimes a single image prompts a memory. Have you ever seen an object, a Christmas ornament, a set of lights around this time of year, that made you recall a particular holiday? If so, describe that image and then continue to recall the story that it prompts.
- Finish this sentence: I realized there was no Santa...
- Finish this sentence: The worst Christmas was ...
- Finish this sentence: The best Christmas was ...
- Finish this sentence: I remember my favorite holiday gift...
- Describe an embarrassing holiday story. It may have been during your childhood when, for example, when you were made to dress up as a sheep for the school pageant and your mother had to glue hundreds of cotton balls to your white leotard.
- Describe your first Christmas away from your immediate family.
- Describe the sensation of unwrapping a Christmas present.
- The holidays are filled with smells; the smell of Turkey, ham, pie, Christmas trees, etc. How does a whiff of a familiar smell prompt your memory? Write about an instant when you smelled a familiar holiday smell and were transported back to a childhood Christmas.
- Write about a family tradition that is important to you.
- Write about a family tradition that you wish wasn't a tradition.
- Write about the struggles to find the perfect gift for a loved one.
- Write about struggling to find a gift for your boss.
- Recall a particularly memorable office party.
- Write about working late on Christmas Eve and if that was memorable or a hindrance to your plans.
- Describe the annual school Christmas pageant.
- Describe the inside of a church at Christmas.
- Describe the inside of a temple at Hanukkah.
- Recall your favorite holiday movie and how it still had significance to you.
- Recall your favorite holiday meal. Why is it your favorite?