

Reading & Critique Group Guidelines

It's important to agree to some ground rules when reading and critiquing other people's stories and to establish a commitment to the group up front. ** Most important, agree to confidentially. You wouldn't want outsiders snickering at your love scenes behind your back.

READER

- Pick a scene (maximum 5 minute read). Send a short (300 word) synopsis of the novel you are going to be sharing. (Send to peggy@peggydulle.com five days before the meeting. She will collate them into a handout for the meeting.)
- Check your ego at the door. If you want your writing to improve, you have to learn to accept constructive criticism. It's nothing personal, and it doesn't mean you're a bad person, or a bad writer.
- Let the group know if you have a specific focus that they want to concentrate on. Maybe an area that bothers you the most. Share your weaknesses. If you have areas that you think need work, let the group know.
- Take the suggestions you find helpful, but don't feel bad if you don't. It's your writing; you don't have to make changes that make you uncomfortable.
- Thank your critique partners for their input. Participation takes time and effort; show your appreciation.

CRITIQUERS

- To keep one person from dominating. Every member's opinion should carry equal weight. We will limit each comment to a maximum of one and a half minutes (90 seconds).
- Deliver comments with tact and respect, so that the author will refrain from defending their work.
- Find something positive to say. Identifying the author's strengths is just as important as identifying his or her weaknesses.
- Volunteer your overall impression. Let the author know what you think of her work as a whole. If you're looking forward to seeing more, say so.
- Vague comments such as "That scene isn't working" don't do the author much good. It's more useful to give comments like "This scene might work better if you cut out some of the introspection. I get caught up with his thoughts that I lose track of the action."
- Suggestions :
 - Give your first-read reactions. Let the author know what you are feeling as you read his or her work. Do you feel sympathetic toward the heroine? Is the pacing too slow for your taste?
 - Characters - Were they interesting and believable? Did you have a favorite? Why was this character special to you? Did the author do a good job of creating the characters?
 - Was the author able to hold your interest throughout the entire reading? How did he or she manage to do this?
 - Which was your favorite part of the scene? Explain why you enjoyed it.
 - What changes, if any, would you have made in this scene?
- This kind of feedback allows the author to decide if your reactions are the ones they intended.