

**Final Reflection on My 2022 Summer Enrichment Experience  
at Iowa Young Writers' Studio**

*By Sydney Davis*

The two weeks I have spent at the University of Iowa as part of the Iowa Young Writers' Studio (IYWS) have been a rewarding and invaluable experience. I have learned so much in the past two weeks and met many talented people.

Throughout the first and second weeks of the program, my class workshopped one or two pieces a day. We sat with our desks in a circle, and we went around describing the piece, explaining what worked and what we thought would help elevate it. At the end of the second week, we workshopped two pieces daily. Before this program, I had never been in a workshop environment or workshopped a piece. I also received critiques on my quiz poem that I had written earlier that week. It was titled "Semester 2 Final: Carbondale". I look forward to carrying the new knowledge of workshopping with me when I continue my writing.

Over the weekend, we were given writing prompts to help us develop a new short story. The prompt I received was asking an elder for a true story involving them and then converting it into a fictional/creative non-fiction piece. I interviewed my grandfather for the piece and wrote a story titled "300 Cents" about the 1958 Union County Fair in Southern Illinois. I especially enjoyed this project because it encouraged me to work with my grandfather, who also loves writing. On the last day of the program, we partnered up with another member of our workshop, and we individually read and talked about each other's pieces and gave critiques.

IYWS has allowed me to explore other art forms within the University of Iowa. On Saturday, we had “Dunk Tanks”, which are different day-long classes that involved non-writing art forms, including paper making, sewing, and musical production. I took the paper-making class in the factory building next to the dorm where I stayed. In the class, we learned how to make pop-up books and bind books. We also looked around at the printing presses and paper blenders where they blend the fiber with the other ingredients. I have never taken a class like that, and it was an excellent activity to explore.

On the final day, we gathered on the roof of a building in town and held a dinner/graduation where each workshop's instructors introduced the members and gave them certificates for completion of the course. Following that, we had a second open mic and talent show where program students performed songs or excerpts from their work. After the talent show, the program organized a farewell dance.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity that Garwin provided and the experience Iowa Young Writers' Studio has given young writers across the country. I will forever remember my time in Iowa City and hope to return someday.