

Undergraduate Peer Writing Tutor Application Packet

AY 2021-22

Application Deadline: Wednesday, January 27th, 2021 at 12:00pm CST

Position Description:

The Writing Program is accepting applications from second- and third-year students in the College, for the position of Peer Writing Tutor.

In individual tutorial meetings like those offered by College Core Writing Tutors, Peer Writing Tutors provide writing support to undergraduate students enrolled in Common Core courses. Peer Writing Tutors are not copyeditors or proofreaders; instead, they help writers improve their skills in analyzing and revising academic writing.

Peer Writing Tutors will work one, two or three 4-hour shifts (as they choose), for example, Sundays and Wednesdays 6:00-10:00pm.

Training:

Successful applicants will be awarded a seat in our quarter-long, credit-bearing training course: a dedicated Peer Writing Tutor section of ENGL 13000: Academic and Professional Writing (Little Red Schoolhouse) in Spring 2021. Successful completion of the training course is required in order to begin working in Autumn 2021.

Supervision:

In the first quarter of work, Peer Writing Tutors will be supervised by a Writing Program Assistant Director and mentored by an advanced graduate student Writing Tutor. At the end of their first quarter, each Peer Writing Tutor will create and submit a teaching portfolio that includes student evaluations and a personal statement in which they reflect on their pedagogical practices.

Compensation:

Peer Writing Tutors are compensated at \$15.00 per (\$600-\$1,800 per quarter).

Term of Appointment:

Peer Writing Tutors train in Spring 2021, begin working in Autumn 2021, and upon satisfactory performance, they can continue working in Winter 2022 and beyond.

Application Components and Procedure

The Peer Writing Tutor Application has two components.

- A. Submit at least one letter of recommendation from a University of Chicago faculty member, instructor, or writing intern.**

The letter of recommendation should be from someone who is familiar with your writing at UChicago and how you communicate in the classroom. Please ask your letter writer to send their recommendation via email to writing-program@uchicago.edu by the application deadline (Jan. 27th, 2021).

- B. Prepare the six materials below. Then, submit them on the Writing Program website by the application deadline. All six materials must be submitted at the same time.**

1. Unofficial copy of transcript

2. Personal statement

In 1 page (single-spaced), please let us know about your writing and revision experiences, your approach to writing, and/or anything else you think relevant.

3. Personal statement cover sheet (included in this packet)

4. Writing sample

4-7 page paper (double-spaced) from one of your courses at UChicago. You are welcome to submit a portion of a longer paper.
Do not put your name on the writing sample.

5. Writing sample cover sheet

Included in this packet. Do not put your name on the cover sheet

6. Comment on sample student paper

A sample student paper is included in this packet. Copy the sample student paper into a separate Word file, comment upon it (further directions are found in the sample paper), and submit it with the rest of your application on our website. Do not put your name on this document. If Microsoft Word automatically inserts your name anywhere on the file, rest assured that we will take care to anonymize it.

When these six items are assembled, submit them here:
<https://writing-program.uchicago.edu/jobs/pwtapplication/>

Forms for Application Materials

Cover Sheet One: Personal Statement Cover Sheet

Please create a copy of this cover sheet as a separate Word file and submit it with your other application materials.

Your first name:	Your last name:	Your email:

Recommender's name and email:

Personal Statement

In 1 page (single-spaced), let us know about your writing and revision experiences, your approach to writing, and/or anything else you think relevant. You may paste your statement below or include it in a separate document.

Cover Sheet Two: Cover Sheet for Writing Sample

Office Use Only: Application number _____

Please paste this cover sheet to the beginning of your writing sample. To allow us to judge this portion of your application anonymously, **please do not include your name on this cover sheet or the writing sample itself.**

1. Is your submission (part of) a:
__ paper for coursework __ thesis __ journal article __ conference paper
__ other: _____

2. Please provide a brief synopsis of the piece you have submitted: what is your overall argument, and/or what are the main points that you're trying to communicate to your readers?

3. Is this an excerpt of a larger project? If so, how does it fit into the larger project?

4. Who are your intended readers? What disciplines are you writing for, and what might your imagined audiences care about? [For example: perhaps you're writing for a Sociology audience, but also for a more interdisciplinary audience of scholars interested in urban studies.]

5. What about the piece are you most happy with?

7. Few writers believe their writing is perfect. You may feel that a central concept eluded description, or that a key paragraph escaped all bounds of rational structure, or that a sensitive issue might not have been framed in the best possible way. In a paragraph or less, please tell us what about this piece gave you the most difficulty as a writer.

Sample Student Paper for Commenting

To submit your comments, you'll need to copy this sample student paper into a separate Word file and submit it with the rest of your application on our web site. Please make sure all of your comments are included. Do not put your name on this document.

Put yourself in this situation: You told this student (“Jamie”) that you would read and comment on their paper and e-mail it back to them. As you respond, limit yourself to 60 minutes.

We ask that you offer feedback that stands on its own (as opposed to deferring your remarks to a hypothetical meeting by saying “let’s talk about this”). Don’t feel that you need to demonstrate to us everything you know about writing; likewise, this is not a copyediting test. We’re more interested in what you would do to support this student’s growth as a writer. Respond as fully as you wish, but remember, you have only 60 minutes.

“The Laughing Girl” and the Evolution of Desire and Innocence

“The Laughing Girl” in Pu Songling’s *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* chronicles the development of a young man’s relationship with a strange girl who cannot stop laughing. The young man, Wang, is sick with love after just observing this girl walk through the street. Weeks later he ventures into the hillside and stops to admire a lush garden. Soon after he sits down, a beautiful voice emanates from within. To Wang’s delight, the voice belongs to girl he saw in the street, Yingning. Pu Songling describes this scene in which Wang first recognizes Yingning with vivid imagery related to lushness and fertility that creates a sense of desire and longing. This imagery is applied to Yingning, characterizing her as innocent and fragile. This initial characterization of Wang as yearning and Yingning as a fragile object of that desire sets the precedent for the couple’s interactions throughout their entire relationship.

Pu Songling begins by describing the setting in which Wang first recognizes the girl. Because the couple’s interaction takes place in a garden, this description is inherently grounded in nature. This setting is precisely described in the first sentence of the passage, which stands out for its long redundant structure. It begins with a list of prepositional phrases such as “[b]efore one of the cottages” and “situated toward the northern end of the hamlet” that give insight into the setting’s physical location while withholding any description of the place itself. Pu Songling’s use of precise directional words such as “northern” creates a contrast between

the setting's unambiguous location and its undisclosed characteristics. These clauses create a sense of longing because they introduce the setting while failing to depict it, leaving a desire for more information.

The fourth clause of the first sentence resolves this conflict by introducing the garden as a fertile, plentiful setting. It contains "a stand of weeping willows" and an orchard "flourishing" with "peach and apricot". The repeated soft "w" followed by a vowel sound in the alliterative phrase "weeping willow" creates a calm mood. This calmness is evident in the fact that "delicate fronds of bamboo" exist peacefully in the garden. By describing the bamboo as delicate, Pu Songling suggests the garden is a calm place, conducive to growing fragile life. Moreover, the semantics of the phrase "weeping willow" evoke an image of luxuriant greenness, while lush diction such as "flourishing" connotes a sense of ripeness and plenty. These connotations are applied to the peach and apricot and generate the image of bursting fruit, which characterizes the fruits as symbols of fertility. Thus, the setting in which Wang first recognizes Yingming is inextricably sexual; however, all Wang can do is yearn as he does not reside "inside the cottage garden's walls".

Despite his desire, Wang deliberately isolates himself from the garden and instead chooses to sit on a "smooth boulder" to admire the "private garden" without entering. The tactile description "smooth" implies a sense of undisturbed stillness and suggests Wang will be comfortable while he sits to admire the isolated orchard and all its contents. In effect, this image contributes to the scene's calm mood. Meanwhile, the notion of a private garden generates a sense of intimacy. The garden is a private, isolated place; however, Wang clearly does not feel welcome, so he is excluded from this intimacy. It is only after Pu Songling creates this calm, intimate mood within the orchard that he presents the auditory imagery of "a girl's voice from within."

The voice is Yingning's, and Pu Songling moves on to characterize this girl by referring to images already mentioned when describing the garden, suggesting Yingning is intrinsically a part of the intimate, private place Wang is observing. Her voice is described as "delicate", "tender", and "vibrant with feeling". The word delicate refers back to the "delicate fronds of bamboo" in the orchard. This description suggests the garden is a place conducive to growing

delicate life and implies Yingning, herself is a fragile creature that grew out of the garden. Moreover, the fact that Pu Songling chose to describe Yingning's voice with gentle diction such as "delicate" and "tender" suggests he is characterizing her as fragile and innocent, like the greenery in the garden. The vibrancy in her voice conveys a sense of energy and youth, characteristic of a bird song, like the one heard before she appeared. By attributing so many of the garden's description to Yingning and positioning her in the intimate private garden, Pu Songling extends Wang's feeling of desire to Yingning herself.

As she moves to leave the garden, however, she holds "a sprig of apricot-blossom in her hand." The fact that Yingning holds these symbols of ripeness and fertility as she approaches Wang indicates a loss of the innocence she possesses as a part of the garden. As she leaves the sanctuary that nurtures fragility and innocence, she attains symbols of sexual maturity. Simultaneously, she approaches the person who is teeming with desire, suggesting the beginning of a relationship.

This entire description of Yingning and the garden is presented using passive voice. Pu Songling specifically writes that the orchard "could be seen" from Wang's position outside the garden. This use of the passive voice in presenting the garden creates a detached tone with which the narrator describes the setting. The fact that this passage is written in the third person also contributes to the detached tone; however, the imagery clearly comes from Wang's point of view. Thus, the use of the passive voice implies Wang is not an active part of the garden he is observing. In fact, Wang does not even act in the scene until the third sentence when he "sat down for a moment's rest on a smooth boulder outside the house". Even in the transition from passive to active voice Wang remains a passive observer. This scenario implies a sense of longing because Wang is physically and emotionally separated from a list of things that are described positively. Pu Songling's description of the garden connotes life, intimacy, and fertility, all things Wang seeks in pursuing Yingning. Moreover, Yingning is described as meronym of the garden, so everything he lacks by being isolated from the garden, he cannot attain in Yingning. Wang is clearly an outsider in this scenario because he does not penetrate the intimate private garden.

This scene is central to the story as a whole because it sets the precedent for Wang and Yingning's relationship. This relationship grows out of Wang's desire for Yingning because of her innocence and fragility, stereotypical characteristics of femininity exemplified by her characteristic laughing and her love of flowers. Even her maid's name is "Petal". Yingning maintains this character for the majority of her relationship with Wang. For example, when Wang suggests his desire to sleep with Yingning, she naively repeats this to her mother, to Wang's embarrassment. Later in their relationship, after the two have married, Yingning accidentally seduces a neighbor, resulting in an embarrassing court case. Her innocence causes legal troubles and embarrasses her family so much that Yingning decides to stop laughing forever, a shocking character change that contradicts every description of Yingning Pu Songling has presented thus far.

Yingning's strange identity explains this drastic character change. Although she maintains stereotypically feminine characteristics for most of the story, she is the daughter of a fox-spirit. In other stories such as "Biting a Ghost" and "The Painted Skin", otherworldly beings such as foxes are portrayed as malicious and gruesome. Even Sang Xiao in "Lotus Fragrance" admits fox spirits "cast spells on men, they make them fall ill, even die" (215). With these preconceptions in mind, it is only very timidly that a weeping Yingning finally reveals to her husband her true identity. While all previous description has portrayed Yingning as innocent and fragile, it eventually becomes clear her true identity connotes none of those qualities; however Songling withholds this information until the end of the story. Thus, Yingning's sudden transition away from her originally, girlish personality is shocking. The only indication of this secret is the image of Yingning leaving the garden with the peach and apricot blossom, suggesting a loss of innocence. While Yingning maintains her innocence and fragility for most of her and Wang's relationship, this image foreshadows the moment when she must reveal her true identity. With this new knowledge, Yingning's incessant laughter can be viewed as a response to the connotations of being a fox-spirit's daughter, and when it proves to be disadvantageous to her and her family's reputation, she must reveal her true self.

Thus, the scene in which Wang and Yingning first recognize each other is central to the couple's relationship because it introduces this tension between constraint and disinhibition. In

the case of the garden scene, description is withheld to create a sense of longing, and when the garden and Yingning are finally portrayed as lush and fertile, Wang is prevented from interacting with what he desires. Similarly, throughout the whole story, Yingning must exercise constraint to maintain her girlish personality and keep her identity a secret until she has no choice but to reveal her true self. In effect, the feelings of desire and longing that arise from this tension in the garden scene prove to be thematically central to the entire story.

Contacts and Further Information

Your writing sample and feedback on the sample student paper will be scored by two Writing Program staff who will know you only by your assigned number.

If any portion of our application is not accessible for you, please let us know.

Questions? Contact us:

writing-program@uchicago.edu

Deputy Director, Kathy Cochran
Senior Associate Director, Tracy Weiner
Associate Director, Linda Smith-Brecheisen
Assistant Director, Ashley Lyons
Assistant Director, Carissa Abrego
Assistant Director, Crystal Holmes
Program Coordinator, Ryan Oliveira