Resources for Asian-American Writers

Compiled by

Oceanic Tongues:
Stanford’s Asian-American Writers Workshop
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General Writing Resources

Books on Teaching Creative Writing to Young People

*Wishes, Lies, and Dreams* by Kenneth Koch
*Jump Write In!* by Judith Tannenbaum and Valerie Bush, with WritersCorps

Books on Writing

*Bird by Bird* by Anne LaMott
*Writing Down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg

*Writer's Market*
The definitive directory that will tell you how and where to submit your work for publication. A new edition of *Writer's Market* is put out annually. They also have versions specialized by genre (e.g. *Poet's Market, Novel & Short Story Writer's Market*), and a Guide to Literary Agents.

Literary Magazines serving Asian American Writers

**In The Grove** (run by Korean adoptee poet Lee Herrick) [http://inthegrove.net]
**Catamaran** (focuses on South Asian American writing) [http://www.catamaranmagazine.com]
**DesiLit Magazine** [http://www.desilit.org/magazine]
**Kartika Review** [http://www.kartikareview.com]
**Bamboo Ridge** (focuses on Hawaiian writers) [http://www.bambooridge.com]
**Anagram** (a student lit mag. at Johns Hopkins University) [http://www.jhu.edu/~anagram]

Asian American Interest Magazines

**Hyphen** [http://www.hyphenmagazine.com]
**Giant Robot** [http://www.giantrobot.com]

Writing-Interest Periodicals

**Poets & Writers Magazine**
**The Writer's Chronicle** (put out by the AWP – The Association of Writers & Writing Programs)

Small Presses

**Kaya Press** [http://www.kaya.com]
**Kearney Street Workshop Press** [http://www.kearnystreet.org/programs/publications]
**Arkipelago Press** [http://www.arkipelagobooks.com/publishing]
Regional and National Organizations

Asian American Poetry and Writing

**Location:** Los Angeles, California  
**About:** Asian American Poetry and Writing is an LA-based arts project and online magazine that, according to its web site, is “dedicated to creating space – physical, cyber, artistic – for Asian American poetry and writing.” For LA locals, they offer classes, readings, and guest speakers. For the rest of us, they offer an online magazine that covers issues in the Asian American literary scene, as well as a web site that’s chock-full of resources for writers and publishers wishing to find out more information and network with one another.  
**Opportunities:** Check out their web site and blog for articles, interviews, book reviews, a list of helpful web resources (located at the bottom of the “About” page), and classified ads with notices about contests, conferences, and events. Or, consider submitting an article of your own to the magazine.  
**Web Site:** [http://www.aapw-la.org](http://www.aapw-la.org)

The Asian American Writers’ Workshop

**Location:** New York City, New York  
**About:** This is the original AAWW. They host readings, offer year-round workshops and seminars to community members, provide writing classes and internships for youth, and sponsor the annual Asian American Literary Awards.  
**Web Site:** [http://www.aaww.org](http://www.aaww.org)

The Kearny Street Workshop

**Location:** San Francisco, California  
**About:** Founded in 197, KSW is (according to their web site), “the oldest multidisciplinary Asian Pacific American arts organization in the country. Offering classes and workshops, salons and student presentations, as well as professionally curated and produced exhibitions, performances, readings and screenings, KSW makes artists out of community members and community members out of artists.” KSW has a history steeped in activism, and continues to draw upon that legacy today.  
**Opportunities:** Check out the annual APAture arts festival, KSW's small press, or the links and artist opportunities listed on the extensive “Resources” section of their web site.  
**Web Site:** [http://www.kearnystreet.org](http://www.kearnystreet.org)

Kundiman

**Location:** Charlottesville, Virginia  
**About:** The name Kundiman refers to a type of classical Filipino love song that is addressed to the singer's country. They offer a reading series and an annual summer retreat (see below). Their mission statement says it all: “Kundiman is dedicated to the creation, cultivation and promotion of Asian American poetry.”  
**Opportunities:** Their summer retreat offers the chance to take master classes from established writers in the Asian American arts community, and to carve out the space and time just to write and write and write. (Register online).  
**Web Site:** [http://kundiman.org](http://kundiman.org)
Further Education
(Applying to Master's of Fine Arts Programs)

*The MFA Handbook* by Tom Kealey

**The MFA Blog** [http://creative-writing-mfa-handbook.blogspot.com/]

The companion blog to Tom Kealey's book. Q&A (“Mailbag”), links to resources, updates on the application season, and tips on the process from bloggers who've already been through it.

**The Suburban Ecstasies** [http://sethabramson.blogspot.com/]

Poet Seth Abramson blogs about writing, but also (tantalizingly) posts running records of application response times for most of the major MFA programs in the US, and has created his own ranking system for the top 100 MFA programs in the US. His site is a hub for information about current writing programs (for the exceptionally ambitious, he also ranks the top 20 creative writing PhD programs). Everything on the site is meticulously up kept: well-organized and regularly updated.

**Creative Writing MFA (Database)** [http://creativewritingmfa.blogspot.com/]

A database of traditional MFA programs in the US, by state (a bit old, but still useful).

**Low Res MFA (Database)** [http://lowresmfa.blogspot.com/]

A database of low-residency MFA programs in the US, by state (companion site; see prev. entry).
Workshop

Protocol

- The writer being workshoped reads aloud from (or may choose to have someone else read aloud from) his or her work. During the workshop itself, the writer should not speak, unless asked to clarify something particularly important by the group.

- Group members express their first or “gut” reactions to the piece, and try to answer the questions: What is this piece about? What is the “subject”? The “object”?

- Individual group members discuss aspects of the piece that are working well (on both “micro” and “macro” levels).

- Individual group members discuss aspects of the piece that need work (on both “micro” and “macro” levels).

- The group comes up with and suggests next steps and/or concrete ideas for revision.

- After the group has finished discussing the piece, the writer puts forth any questions to the group that he or she may have about what was said.

Values

- Be civil! No arguing. Disagreeing strongly is okay, however.

- Give constructive, critical feedback: imagine that each piece is being presented as if it’s a vintage car that we want to refurbish; we’re all just interested in making it run in the best way it can (not giving it a thumbs up or thumbs down).

- Give advice stemming from your gut reactions first – how does the poem make you feel? What immediate responses does it evoke in you?

- In giving feedback, pay attention to all aspects of craft: small details of form and language as well as overall issues of structure and theme.

- Writer: be vulnerable in bringing in messy work or work that comes from a place of deep emotional vulnerability. Take a risk and put yourself out there. This is a safe, no-shame place!

- Don’t try to dictate how the writer ought to “fix” the poem; offer suggestions of different options for revision, comments about the direction that you think the piece is moving in and how it might best want to get there.

- The workshoppers should always try to reach a consensus of next steps for the writer.
Exercises

Warm-ups

Two lies and a truth [from Shimon Tanaka]: a variation on the icebreaker, “two truths and a lie.” Each member makes three statements, two of which are false, and one of which is true. The group then guesses which of the statements is true. This is a good way to get people thinking about issues of imagination and verisimilitude.

Portrait in Smells [from Kimiko Hahn, via Henry]: Think of a person who is close to you, and make a list of ten different smells that you associate with them – this is your poem. Afterwards, share your list aloud.

Recipe: Write a recipe for a favorite food. Include a few notes describing what it is, in what contexts it is eaten, its significance to you, and, most importantly, the process of making it. (If you can't remember, approximate or guess). Turn this into a poem, or use it as a freewrite session opener.

Prose

Heart Food: Take a food or dish whose recipe is personally important to you (if you've done the "Recipe," warm-up, encourage students to use the foods they documented then), and freewrite about your experiences. You may find it helpful to focus on just one memory of encounter with that food.

Drama

Disrupted ritual [from Cherrie Moraga, via Mia]: Collaboratively write a short dramatic scene that opens with a ritual that is in progress, and continues with the disruption of that ritual and the consequences of this action for the characters involved.

Conflict formula [from Cherrie Moraga, via Mia]: Collaboratively write a short dramatic scene in which two characters, each with strong motivations, but opposing desires, engage in conflict. The scene should proceed until the conflict's resolution; the character with the strongest motivation should win.

Poetry

Exquisite Corpse: This is a collaborative exercise that can take on many variations. In its most basic form, one person begins a poem, and according to an agreed-upon rule (either at the end of a line, after a set number of words, or after a period of time has passed), he or she passes it onto the next individual, who adds another section, so on and so forth. Variations can be done in which a person's lines are hidden from the next person, a formal structure (like number of syllables per line) is agreed upon for the final piece, or adding-on applies to punctuation as well as words.

Body Parts Freewrite [from Jessa]: Create a list of random body parts. Have each person choose one body part and freewrite about the sensations and functions that one associates with it for 5 minutes; then, have everyone write a poem that centers around and integrally incorporates their chosen body part into its content and form.

Creeds [from Henry]: Write a list poem in which each line begins with the line “I believe...”
Prompts

Poetry
- **3-D Object:** Pass around a box of three-dimensional objects (some mundane, some unusual). Everyone should choose the first object that interests them, and then write a poem on the object, covering every available surface and allowing its shape and textures to guide their form, language, and content.

- **Wish You Were Here:** Pass out art postcards or postcards whose fronts show unreal or hard-to-identify locations (the images may even show something not considered a “location” at all). Have everyone use the image on their postcard to generate an epistolary poem that fits into the space on the back.

- **Recipe Poems:** Write a poem that is a recipe for an abstract idea: a recipe for disaster; a recipe for romantic success, etc.

- **City Poems:** Write a "city poem," presenting the insider's tour of the coolest spots where you grew up.

- **Eavesdropping Found Poems:** Write a poem that's pieced together from conversations you've copied down throughout the day.

- **Newspaper Found Poems:** Use phrases clipped from the paper as the framework around which to construct a poem.

- **WCW Impersonations:** Write a poem that's a spoof of a William Carlos Williams poem (e.g. “This is Just to Say” or “The Red Wheelbarrow”).

Prose
- **Short-sentence fiction:** Write a complete story using only 3 words per sentence.

- **Character impersonation:** Write a dialogue-heavy scene with a friend, each of you impersonating your favorite literary character.

- **Mini-saga:** Write a mini-saga, which is a story that is told in exactly 50 words (no more, no less).

Notes: