

Certificate in Historical Fiction Writing

Awarded by West Dean. 1 year, part-time course

Tutors
Adrienne Chinn



Programme Specification

This Certificate in Historical Fiction Writing is awarded in recognition of the successful completion of all three weekend course units spread across each academic term, self-directed study and the completion of the first 5,000 words of a historical fiction novel.

The course seeks to bring together all the key components of good historical fiction writing into one continuing programme and to offer an insight into the writer's toolkit, necessary for developing skills and building your confidence.

Each weekend unit will be based in the inspirational environment of West Dean College's Sussex campus. The course is aimed at writers who wish to commit to an extended programme of study without having to make a significant time commitment, and who will benefit from a cohesive course that offers focus on the key elements of successful historical fiction writing over the course of an academic year.

Aims

- To introduce you to the key skills and knowledge that underpin successful historical fiction writing, including the organisational skills required for historical research, plotting and structuring, world building, character development and narrative technique
- To introduce you to constructive and focused critical reflection of your work
- To provide a stimulating and varied learning environment to enable you to develop your skills around voice, style, point of view, pacing and prose
- To offer a series of writing exercises, along with discussion, textual analysis and a review of the 'golden rules of historical fiction writing' to support you to develop your craft
- To support the development of drafting, editing and rewriting skills
- To develop the use of dialogue, crafting scenes, adding suspense and effective pacing
- To examine how much historical detail/background to include
- To offer insight into the traditions, theory and responsibilities of the historical fiction writer
- To enable you to make clear authorial and editorial choices about your developing work?



Final writing

On completion of the final unit, you will submit the first 5,000 words of a piece of historical fiction that you have developed on the programme.

Submission date for 5,000 words: 10 July 2026 (two months following the final unit).

Feedback from the programme tutor: the following month by 31 August 2026.

Course tutors

Adrienne Chinn has written five novels for Harper Collins, including the international bestseller, *The English Wife*, which reached #2 in Canada and was a USA Today bestseller. Since then, she has published the first three of the four-novel *Three Fry Sisters* series, set from 1913 through to 1945. Her next book, *The Queen's Necklace*, a timeslip historical suspense novel set partly in the Tudor era, will be published in October 2025, with the final book in the *Three Fry Sisters* series coming out in 2026.

Programme overview

This Certificate in Historical Fiction Writing course is designed for writers who want an extended and cohesive course on historical fiction writing. It offers a deeper and broader range of teaching, designed to enable you to take on a piece of longer fiction. At the end of the third unit, you will be asked to submit the first 5,000 words of a work in progress for marking and feedback by the tutor.

On successful completion, you will be offered an interview for the MA in Writing and Publishing, should you wish to apply in order to continue your studies and project. The MA is set up to facilitate the production of a completed novel.

Unit 1: Research, Structure & Plotting **14-16 November 2025**

The first unit will include:

- An introduction to historical fiction
- The rules of historical fiction
- Historical research
- Structure: Creating a solid foundation
- The five key elements of plotting



Unit 2: Characters & Place

20-22 February 2026

This second unit will include:

- Creating memorable characters
- Understanding and experimenting with point of view
- Crafting effective dialogue
- Understanding the environment
- World-building

Unit 3: Writing Your Book

8-10 May 2026

The third and final unit will include:

- Using suspense to create drama
- Pacing - keeping your reader engaged
- Scene structure
- Revising and refining - editing and rewriting

Completion

On successful completion, you will receive a Certificate of Completion and be offered an interview for the MA in Creative Writing and Publishing, should you wish to continue your studies and project. The MA is set up to facilitate the production of a completed novel.

Entry requirements

The following qualifications will be considered for entry to the course:

- A commitment to attending all three units
- Some experience of writing or attending a short writing programme
- An interest in and awareness of the historical fiction genre



For standard Terms and Conditions, please refer to our online Short Course information. Specific Terms and Conditions include a commitment to attend all three weekend course dates listed, as alternative course dates cannot be offered for any that you are unable to attend. Therefore, no refund can be made for the course fee for any weekend you are unable to attend.

Course fees

The course fees are payable in advance of study.

Course fee: £1,022 (non-residential, payable in one instalment covering all three units - payable by 3 October 2025 (or on booking if after this date).

Accommodation is available at an extra cost at our Sussex campus. Find out more about our accommodation options and costs on our website.