

## SCREENWRITER TO NOVELIST WITH MARK SARVAS



With over eight years of teaching novel writing, **Mark Sarvas** has worked with his share of screenwriters (he used to be one himself) and during three workshops he shared with our writers ways to avoid the most common errors that writers make as they move from the visual medium to the printed page.

### **Adverbs, Alliterations, and Other Avoidables**

Writing a novel is much more than taking an old script idea and rendering it in prose format. Mark provided a road map to help our writers from hitting all the classic pitfalls that come with this transition and a new awareness of these common mistakes with topics such as Slow it Down, Interiority, Character Complexity, and Understanding POV & Layers.

### **Mediocre Writers Write, Great Writers Read**

Just as you can't write a pilot if you're not watching TV, you cannot write novels if you aren't reading them. Reading to understand the guiding intelligence of the writer, to understand the significance of every single choice made – sometimes down to the placement of a comma – is the single most important skill any beginning novelist must master. In a great piece of writing, nothing is an accident. Mark provided the means to read like a writer (aka close reading) changing forever the way our writers read fiction.

### **The First Fifty**

Literary agents commonly will look at the first fifty pages of a manuscript to determine if they're interested – although it rarely takes the full fifty to know if a work has potential. Like films and TV, literary beginnings need to engage the attention of the reader, but that's where the similarities end. Where scripts hit the ground running, novels can take time to ramp up. (The most common note beginning novelists get is "Take your time.") Literary beginnings function to tell the reader what kind of story this will be; what are the questions at stake; who do we pay attention to; and what are the rules of this world? Mark shared a variety of beginnings, from great and classic fiction to recent million-dollar sales, and unpacked how they work, and how the best of them raise as many questions as they answer.

***Mark Sarvas** is a former screenwriter whose debut novel, "Harry Revised," was published in more than a dozen countries around the world. Mark's second novel, "Memento Park," will soon be published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. He has been teaching novel writing for over eight years.*