

**Title: Virtual Writers' Workshop**

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### **The Challenge**

Storytelling is a universal way for humans to communicate. Since the dawn of humanity, cavemen would gather around the campfire and tell stories about their hunting trips. Storytelling has been embedded in the history and culture of every nation on earth, from Homer's *Odyssey* in the West to *Arabian Nights* in the East. In this time of rising nationalistic and xenophobic voices, it becomes most essential that humans who are being divided by political agendas can find common roots within an activity that's embedded in their evolution as a species.

### **Project Overview**

This virtual workshop brings together writers from the East and West to collaboratively produce a work of fiction with a theme of their choosing. The workshop teaches a group of aspiring writers creative writing and storytelling skills via Google Hangout and group chat in Slack. Participants receive handouts and educational resources before the virtual meetings describing what it takes to create a great story and a worksheet with step-by-step guidelines for designing the story - universe, character, and plot - together. The workshop proceeds in three sessions in which the writers: brainstorm and ideate on themes of the story, fill out the outline, write the story, then discuss the story and make final iterative changes. At the end of the process, the entire group will have produced a single short story that will be shared online on the Gabr Foundation website, as well as Medium and other outlets. The stories will be available in Arabic and English.

### **The Goals**

To bring writers from Eastern and Western cultures together through a collaborative process to produce a work of fiction, in a way that makes writing a more creative, fun, and productive process. The vehicle for collaboration will be the neutral medium of storytelling, which will help break down barriers and misperceptions through the vein of a completed joint project.

### **Population Served**

The project will invite Gabr Fellows from all years to participate in the project. Through a targeted social media campaign, the project will reach out to other prospective writers who have expressed interest in similar initiatives and have a passion for writing.

### **Project Milestones**

Phase 1: Identifying the creative writers

Identify all the writers both from Egypt and the United States who will participate in the Virtual Writer's Workshop.

#### Phase 2: Onboarding and Storytelling Ideation

Bring all selected participants together for the first time to discuss expectations. Initiate the live collaborative ideations through the worksheet to design the story, including the fictional universe, the story plot, and characters. Each of the writers will develop a character questionnaire to more fully develop their backgrounds.

#### Phase 3: Writing and Analysis of Draft

Each of the participants will be writing within their specific character's worldview, created from the aforementioned character questionnaire. Each author's work will be weaved within the broader narrative of a three-act plot jointly designed by all participants.

#### Phase 4: Editing and Content Production

The three short pieces will be designed over the course of two weeks. Once all writing is submitted, there will be time allotted for feedback, editing, and the design of the book cover. Once all elements are approved, the story will be sent for publication.

#### **Expected Outcomes**

- Bring writers from the Egypt and the United States to hone their skills in collaborative fiction writing, storytelling, and critical thinking to design a compelling short story.
- Publish a novella jointly created by a cohort of authors that can serve as conversation starter within both American and Egyptian societies.

#### **Furthering the Foundation's Mission**

The workshop furthers the Foundation's mission by engaging inspiring writers in a collaborative project to produce literature that will allow them to explore themselves and their partners in a truthful and revealing way. By being open and honest with their partners in a creative space, they can bridge divides through the power of storytelling and lay the foundation for ongoing conversation and dialogue.