

HIDDEN MEANINGS: CREATIVE FICTION, NON-FICTION, AND FACTS

SESSION TWO—DISCUSSION

Below are the discussion questions for this session:

1. Let's face it, as writers, we are manipulators. We arrange our stories to try to evoke a particular response from our readers. We want them to feel sad at some times and happy at others. We want them hooked on our stories. How can we use the tools of belief (intuition vs. rational thought, truthiness, etc) to manipulate our readers into being more involved in our stories? Are there certain approaches that hook our readers and certain approaches that push them away or make our work less believable? How can we use the lessons from this week to become better writers?
2. Given the fact that we are manipulating our readers to experience or believe what we want them to believe, what moral obligations do we have as writers? Obviously writers of nonfiction are obligated to tell the truth, but what about those of us that are writing fiction? Does our moral obligation change when our mode of writing starts to look more like nonfiction, as *The War of the Worlds* broadcast did? And what about nonfiction writers that stray from the truth? How should we respond to their work?
3. We talked about how the control of information helps us build our stories. How do you see the release of information as a way of structuring a story? Are there techniques that you see as more or less useful for this? And, what books or stories have you read that release information extremely well?
4. The amount of information we include in a story varies depending on what we write. Some forms, such as newspaper writing, demand the basics up front, with details described later, while a fantasy novel might work best if the basic, world building type information is spaced out throughout the story. In the end, what is the right level of information for what you are writing, and how do you know when you've reached it? Is it good to play against genre expectations regarding the flow of information, or do those genre rules help us as writers?
5. The first half of the broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* is presented as an epistolary story, told through broadcasts and interviews instead of letters or journal entries. How much of an impact does the form of the story have on the how we use information, misinformation and disinformation? How much of an impact does story form have on the reader's experience? How can we use this in our stories to achieve maximum truthiness (when we want that)?