

I could tell them only that I had no more idea of how I had become a writer than I had had, at their age, of how I would become a writer. I could tell them only about the fall of 1954, when I was nineteen and a junior at Berkeley and one of perhaps a dozen students admitted to the late Mark Schorer's English 106A, a kind of 'fiction workshop' that met for discussion three hours a week and required that each student produce, over the course of the semester, at least five short stories. No auditors were allowed. Voices were kept low. English 106A was widely regarded in the fall of 1954 as a kind of sacramental experience, an initiation into the grave world of real writers, and I remember each meeting of this class as an occasion of acute excitement and dread.

Joan Didion, *After Henry: Essays*,  
Open Road Media, 2017