

# **Writing Masterclass with Esther Freud**

**Marrakech, 23 – 28 February 2025**

**To enquire or book: [shopsilkroadslippers@gmail.com](mailto:shopsilkroadslippers@gmail.com)**

**‘Exhilarating... I found the energy and creativity unleashed by being part of a group — debating, working, playing and writing together — to be a revelation.’**

– Catherine Fairweather, *Financial Times*

For writers of every level, from beginners to bestsellers, **Silk Road Slippers Writing Masterclasses** offer a literary experience unlike any other. Participants have unparalleled access to some of the most celebrated figures in the literary world.

The setting is an inspiring location: amid the book-lined interiors, Moorish arches and palm-fringed pools of Jnane Tamsna, an exquisite fifteen acre private estate in the natural wonder of Marrakech’s Palmeraie. Over the course of five days, you will participate in sessions and experiences with a small group, led by legendary publisher Alexandra Pringle and her team of industry insiders.

Silk Road Slippers Masterclasses are designed to transform your writing practice, both by unlocking your creative potential and by developing the technical skills to develop your unique voice. We do this through a combination of hands-on exercises, immersive workshops, and participatory seminars.

You will receive rare access to insider knowledge of the publishing process from Alexandra Pringle, the former Editor-in-Chief of one of the world’s most distinguished publishing houses, alongside her exceptional team: author and columnist Nesrine Malik, author and screenwriter Alex von Tunzelmann, and editor and literary consultant Faiza S. Khan.

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# Midnight at the Oasis

In an oasis of calm just half an hour's drive from the bustling souks of Marrakech, learn the principles of storytelling and life writing in a book-lined library, focus on drafting and editing by one of the five pools, stroll the spectacular gardens designed by ethnobotanist Gary Martin, or enjoy a refreshing cup of Moroccan mint tea in the elegant contemporary North African interiors curated by hotelier Meryanne Loum-Martin.

Each day includes a scheduled morning and afternoon session with the Silk Road Slippers team, with a light lunch in between. Esther Freud joins us for two nights and leads an exclusive session, sharing her expertise, technique and experiences, as well as joining us socially for our Celebratory Dinner. This is a unique opportunity for you to learn from the absolute best in the business, up close and personal.

There is free time in the afternoons for writing practice. Or, if you prefer, you may use that time to relax and find inspiration. Jnane Tamsna offers private yoga sessions in the garden or on the roof, tennis, swimming, cycling, and spa treatments. The delights of Marrakech are a short drive away.

Our evenings include candlelit dinners prepared by the acclaimed Jnane Tamsna team – often using organic ingredients grown on the estate itself. At these dinners, you will have the opportunity to mingle and make creative connections with your fellow writers, and spend time with the Silk Road Slippers team and in the company of the Star Writer. Two evenings are kept free for you to explore Marrakech at night, or relax at your accommodation, as you choose.

At the end of the course, every participant will be offered a one-on-one feedback session with a member of the Silk Road Slippers team. This is your opportunity to receive feedback tailored specifically to the next steps of your writing journey from an industry professional.

Masterclasses are strictly limited to a maximum of 14 participants.



# Esther Freud



Esther Freud trained as an actress before writing her first novel, *Hideous Kinky*, which was made into a film starring Kate Winslet.

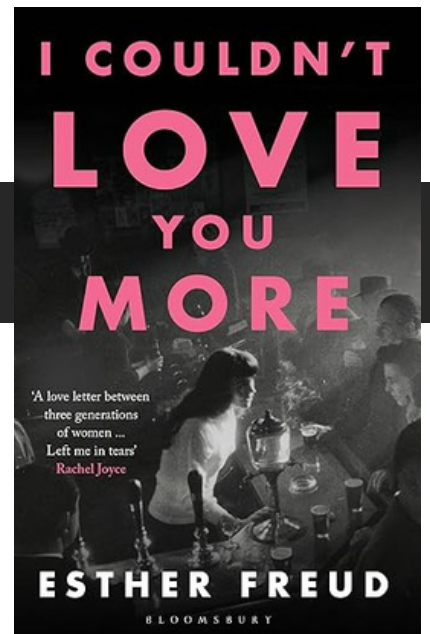
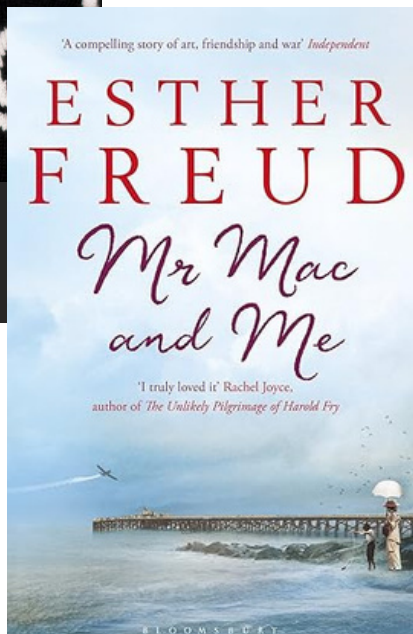
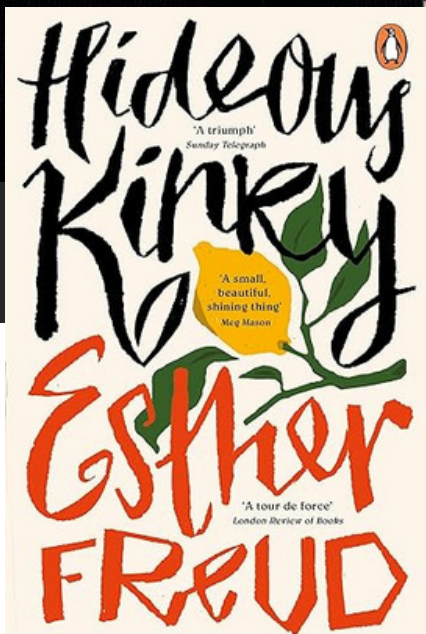
After publishing her second book, she was chosen as one of *Granta's* Best of Young British Novelists, and her books have been shortlisted for numerous awards.

Other titles include *The Sea House*, *Lucky Break* and *Mr Mac and Me*, and most recently, *I Couldn't Love You More*.

Her first full-length play, *Stitchers*, was produced in London in 2018, and in 2019 she became a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

In 2025 Esther's first children's book – *Enchanted Beach* – will be published, as well as her tenth novel: *My Sister and Other Lovers*.

Photo: Jillian Edelstein





# Schedule

Please note that this schedule is indicative and may be subject to change.

**Sunday** Participants arrive in Marrakech and settle into their accommodation.

8pm: **Welcome Dinner** at Jnane Tamsna

Meet the Silk Road Slippers team and your fellow participants – a chance to get to know the group in an informal atmosphere.

**Monday** 10am-1pm: **STORY AND STRUCTURE** with Silk Road Slippers  
Building a strong foundation for your narrative. How to structure your work and create a compelling plot.

1pm: **Lunch.**

2pm-4.15pm: **CHARACTER AND VOICE** with Silk Road Slippers  
Explore how memorable characters are created. The soul of your story is the voice: how to find and develop that.

4.15pm-6pm: **Creative practice**

Use this time for writing practice, nurture your imagination on the grounds of Jnane Tamsna, or take a short trip to the city.

**Dinner**

You are at leisure to make your own dinner arrangements, either taking quiet time at your accommodation or exploring Marrakech at night.

# Tuesday

10am-12.30pm: **A CRUCIAL ELEMENT with Esther Freud**

Esther describes her creative process and discusses her 35-year editorial relationship with Alexandra. Then, Esther leads a workshop on an aspect of writing which she will determine.

12.30pm: **Lunch.**

1.30pm-3.45pm: **FIRST DRAFT with Silk Road Slippers**

Whether it's your first book or tenth, conquer your fear of the blank page and build your editorial toolkit.

3.45pm-6pm: **Creative practice**

Use this time for writing practice or relaxation.

8pm: **Celebratory Dinner with Esther Freud**

A reading by Esther will be followed by a candlelit dinner at Jnane Tamsna with the whole team.

# Wednesday

10am-12.30pm: **SECOND DRAFT with Silk Road Slippers**

Using their work from the previous afternoon's session, participants are led through a redrafting process to sharpen and polish their work.

12.30pm: **Transport to the 11th century Medina for lunch**

On the rooftop of the Monde des Arts de la Parure.

3pm: **Free time in the Medina or transport back to Jnane Tamsna**

Transport back to the venue will be available for those who would like to spend time writing or relaxing. Or, for those who would like to explore the sights, sounds and smells of Marrakech, we will walk you into the souk and provide recommendations for shopping and sightseeing.



## Dinner

You are at leisure to make your own dinner arrangements, either taking quiet time at your accommodation or exploring Marrakech at night.

# Thursday

9am-9.45am: **Guided walk at Jnane Tamsna**

A tour through the organic gardens with ethnobotanist Gary Martin.

10am-3pm: **PERSONAL FEEDBACK SESSIONS**

Each participant will have an in-depth one-on-one session with a member of the Silk Road Slippers team. This is a unique opportunity to discuss your personal progress and future aspirations, and to get tailored advice on how to achieve them. Your session will include personalised advice on how to find an agent and publisher if required.

12.30pm: **Lunch.**

3.30pm-5pm: **FINAL SESSION** with Silk Road Slippers

A summary of what we've learned and how to go forward.

8pm: **Farewell Dinner** at Jnane Tamsna with the Silk Road Slippers team.

# Friday

Participants depart for the next step on their writing journey!





# The Silk Road Slippers Package

## Included

- All tuition and class materials
- Light lunches at Jnane Tamsna on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday
- Three-course lunch in the Medina at the Monde des Arts de la Parure museum on Wednesday
- Welcome Dinner, Celebratory Dinner and Farewell Dinner at Jnane Tamsna
- Optional Medina excursion and transport
- Soft drinks

## Price

- £3200 per person.
- £1000 deposit, payable on acceptance.
- Please note that this deposit is non-refundable (except under circumstances where Silk Road Slippers cannot run the course, as detailed in the FAQs below). We advise all participants to take out a comprehensive travel insurance policy to cover any eventuality that might prevent them from travelling.
- £2200 balancing payment, due by 1 January 2025.
- If you pay in full on booking before 1 December 2024: £3000 total, including deposit and balancing payment.

Participants book their own accommodation and transport. We encourage participants to stay at Jnane Tamsna, where Meryanne Loum-Martin is graciously offering special deals for Silk Road Slippers (see next page for details): this allows groups to develop a closer relationship. Limited spaces are available, so please book early to avoid disappointment.

However, if you prefer to arrange your own accommodation in Marrakech, that is no problem. Please note that you will also need to arrange daily transport to and from Jnane Tamsna to attend classes and meals.







# Jnane Tamsna Package

If you wish to book accommodation at Jnane Tamsna, please let us know. We will arrange for you to book a Silk Road Slippers deal directly with the hotel.

Accommodation at Jnane Tamsna	Price per person	Single supplement
Standard room, five nights, bed and breakfast	£735	£345
Superior room, five nights, bed and breakfast	£1180	£300

Meryanne Loum-Martin and Gary Martin have created a beautiful and intimate boutique hotel with just twenty-four rooms set amid luxuriant gardens.

If you wish, you may add a night at the beginning or end of your stay, to experience more of the riches Marrakech has to offer.

# Our hosts: Jnane Tamsna



**For your creative time around the Masterclasses, a wealth of activities is available at Jnane Tamsna, including:**

- Five swimming pools (two heated, one saltwater)
- Private yoga sessions
- Massage and spa treatments
- Tennis (coaching is available on request)
- Camel rides
- Bicycle rides
- Motorcycle sidecar tours

**In and around Marrakech:**

- Explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Marrakech Medina
- Botanical gardens at Le Jardin Secret or the Jardin Majorelle
- Historical sites include the Palacio de Bahia and Medersa Ben Youssef
- Shopping in the souks of Marrakech
- Exhibitions at the Maison de la Photographie
- Explore the desert by camel, the Ouzoud waterfalls by boat, or the Atlas Mountains by hot air balloon!

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What level are the Masterclasses? Do I need to be a published writer?**

The only requirement to join Silk Road Slippers Masterclasses is passion! Our Masterclasses are suitable for everyone, from aspiring writers who have yet to pick up a pen, to working writers who want to expand their skills into narrative and creative writing. Our goal is to create an informal and supportive atmosphere in which everyone can benefit from the best possible tuition and experience, whatever their own level of expertise.

## **Are the classes taught in English? Do I have to write in English?**

The classes are all taught in English. You may write in any language you choose, but please be aware that we will only be able to read or give feedback on writing in English.

## **Can I bring a friend or partner?**

Of course! Friends or partners who are not participating in the Masterclasses may join the three dinners for a fee – please contact us. Lunches are reserved for participants only.

## **What sort of food can I expect?**

Jnane Tamsna serves seasonal Mediterranean, light Moroccan and Oriental food. All ingredients at Jnane Tamsna are locally sourced and organic. All vegetables and herbs are home grown.

## **Do you cater for vegetarians and other dietary needs?**

We certainly cater for vegetarians and can adapt for most dietary needs. Please let us know any requirements when you book.

## **Can I record or film the sessions?**

We respectfully ask that you not record or film our sessions except with permission, to protect the privacy of our Star Writers and your fellow participants.

## **What equipment should I pack?**

You may bring a laptop if you would like to use it in your own writing practice, but it is not necessary. We provide notebooks and pens for the sessions.

## **What clothes should I pack?**

The weather in Marrakech in February is mostly dry, mild and pleasant, with a day high of 23°C/73°F and evening low of 11°C/51°F. We encourage everyone to relax and feel comfortable at the Masterclasses, so please dress as you wish. The three evening dinners and especially the Celebratory Dinner are an opportunity to dress up if you enjoy doing so – but there is no dress code. If you would like to swim, take a yoga session or participate in any activities, please pack what you need!

## **What if I need to cancel?**

We strongly advise all participants to take out a comprehensive travel insurance policy to cover any eventuality that might prevent them from travelling. To secure your booking, we need a deposit of £1000. This is non-refundable. The balance is payable by 1 January 2025. If the balance is not paid by that date, Silk Road Slippers reserves the right to cancel your booking and retain the deposit. Once the full balance has been paid, it is non-refundable.

## **What if the course is cancelled?**

In the event that Silk Road Slippers is unable to run the course, you will be offered an alternative course, or your deposit and balance will be refunded in full. Please note that Silk Road Slippers cannot guarantee the appearance of any particular Star Writer or team member at any Masterclass, as this is subject to a variety of factors including illness, injury, and events beyond Silk Road Slippers' control. If a member of the Silk Road Slippers team or Star Writer is unable to appear, we will endeavour to provide a substitute, and the course will continue. No refunds will be offered as a result of a Star Writer's unavailability to appear.

## **How do I book?**

Email us at [shopsilkroadslippers@gmail.com](mailto:shopsilkroadslippers@gmail.com) letting us know you'd like to join the Masterclass and including any questions you may have. We'll get back to you as soon as possible with availability.



## Alexandra Pringle

Alexandra joined Bloomsbury in 1999 and was Editor-in-Chief for 20 years. Her list of Nobel, Booker, Women's Prize-winning and bestselling authors includes Richard Ford, Esther Freud, Elizabeth Gilbert, Abdulrazak Gurnah, Khaled Hosseini, Jhumpa Lahiri, Madeline Miller, Ann Patchett, George Saunders, Kamila Shamsie, Ahdaf Soueif and Patti Smith. She is a Patron of Index on Censorship, a Trustee of the charity Reprieve, and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. She is writing a memoir of her Moroccan family, *Caravan*, to be published in the UK and US in 2027.

# Silk Road Slippers: The Team



## Faiza S. Khan

Faiza is former Consulting Editor at Bloomsbury UK. She has worked with critically acclaimed authors with a special interest in emerging voices from around the world. She currently works as a freelance editor in London. She leads writing and editing workshops for international cultural institutions including the National Museum of Sweden in Stockholm and the Academy of Art and Design in Basel.



## Nesrine Malik

Nesrine is a journalist, columnist and features writer at the *Guardian* newspaper. She is the winner of the *New York Review of Books* Robert B. Silvers Prize for Journalism, and has been longlisted for The Orwell Prize for Journalism, and The Orwell Prize for Exposing Britain's Social Evils. Her first book, *We Need New Stories* (2019 – UK, 2021 – US), was a *Paris Review* Pick of the Year, and a *Prospect Magazine* Book of the Year.

# Silk Road Slippers: The Team



## Alex von Tunzelmann

Alex is a historian, broadcaster and screenwriter. The most recent of her five books, *Fallen Idols: Twelve Statues that Made History*, was shortlisted for the Wolfson History Prize 2022. Her debut, *Indian Summer: The Secret History of the End of an Empire*, was an international bestseller. Her feature film debut, *Churchill* (2017), had an international theatrical release, and starred Brian Cox. She has also written episodes of *Medici* (Netflix), starring Richard Madden and Dustin Hoffman. She has just written two series of *History's Secret Heroes* for BBC Radio 4, narrated by Helena Bonham Carter.

# Testimonials

"Silk Road Slippers was a powerful, enlightening experience... the writing and creativity warmed my heart and filled me with inspiration. Equally important was the unparalleled access to some of the very best and most talented editors and writers in the world. What made everything magical, though, was the kindness and the support which every person in the workshop offered every single day. 10/10 I would do my Silk Road Slippers workshop 1000 more times!"

– *George, film director & editor*

"This masterclass was hands down the best investment I've made this year. A week in the beautiful surroundings of Jnane Tamsna surrounded by like-minded writers and thinkers, led by the Silk Road Slippers team inspired a new joy and confidence in my writing. This is a trip that will make you happy."

– *Isabelle, writer & former city trader*

"This is the best retreat or conference I have been to. The organisers are as kind as they are brilliant. I was able to meet a community of like-minded fellow writers and mentors. I am grateful. Anyone who can get a space is blessed. "

– *Mahnaz, barrister*

"Each instructor on this masterclass brought crucial insight and experience that taught each participant how to bring out their best writing. I've come home with tools to help me evaluate and edit my own work objectively. Best of all, I've found my love for writing again."

– *Ruqaya, author & Betty Trask Award winner*

"It was life-changing in a just-discovered-Nutella kind of way. But, of course, better. "

– *Hadia, lawyer*