I MET Peter Matthiessen in 1986, when I signed up for his undergraduate fiction workshop at Yale. Although by then he had already won two National Book Awards—he won a third in 2008, making him the only writer to win for both fiction and nonfiction—I didn't know who he was. I was twenty-one. I wanted to be a writer, and I had a long way to go. Because Yale offered few creative writing courses, there was sharp competition to get into this one. I yearned so badly to take the class—to be a writer—that I wrote him a letter on my IBM Selectric typewriter, during the final year I used it.

"Dear Mr. Matthiessen..."

I won a place in his workshop and, with the egotism of the college student, I didn't make the time to read his books before the start of classes. I had never met a truly great fiction writer before and had vaguely assumed they were all dead. Someone told me that he was a Zen priest, which also made him the first live Buddhist practitioner I'd ever met. Now, when I teach writing workshops myself, I have a keen sense of who's bothered to read my work before signing up with me and who hasn't, and I feel a wry compassion for those who come in cold turkey.

The workshop was held one day a week for three hours, and Matthiessen commuted from Long Island to teach it. Twelve of us, some still in our teens, sat around a long table in a room made dim by leaded Gothic windows, like some convening body of the Inquisition. On the first day of class, Matthiessen was already seated at the head of the table when we entered the room. He seemed to me ancient, a figure carved of stone. I now know that he was in his late fifties and had already published at least fifteen books, including At Play in the Fields of the Lord (Random House, 1965), The Snow Leopard (Viking Press, 1978), and Far Tortuga (Random House, 1975). He was tall and gaunt, wore a plaid shirt, and looked in that academic setting as if he'd just come in from working in the fields, or from a long hike. He sat very straight and examined us with sharp blue eyes as we assembled. He had an air of separateness from—and quiet attention to—everything around him, qualities I'd rarely observed in anyone, least of all in our professors, who tended to enjoy the limelight. He radiated restlessness as well as serenity, and instead of looking stern or serious—the natural lines of a weathered, solitary face—he often smiled. His smile was amused, almost sardonic. I had the sense that he found himself entertained by his own foibles as well as ours.

Matthiessen asked us to introduce ourselves one by one, and to say something about our interests; we all reported obediently that we wanted to be writers—with the exception of one young man, who intended to...
Sometimes I feel that Peter Matthiessen is the most underappreciated of recent American writers. I am biased, because he was my uncle and my godfather, but I think he should be mentioned in the same breath as Saul Bellow, William Styron, Philip Roth. The 20th-century version of the cultivated 19th-century adventurer, he brought back elegant accounts of the wild parts of every continent, including Antarctica. He is the only author to have won the National Book Award in both nonfiction (The Snow Leopard in 1980) and fiction (Shadow Country, 2008). His novel At Play in the Fields of the Lord was Module 2 1 Past simple and Remembering and forgetting Listening and speaking: ?.... ? Memory continuous meetings, A childhood rr.clapping. - - page 16 Pronunciation: Past simple -ed Song: Remember the Da_1’s c -· : endings old Schoolyard 2 used to Reading: Ten ways to im, your memory. Task: Decide how to spend lottery Real life: Ways of saying numbers Study tip: English outside the 1t? oney classroom (1) : Using the Internet paration: listening Pronunciation spot: The sounds /bl and /vi -· - k : speaking, he Task: Tell a ghost story Writing: A narrative Study tip: Making the most of graded ::, eparation: speaking readers ·-!!Sk : speaking and listening Pronunciation spot: Pronouncing 'h’. Your teacher will give the :::h paragraphs to other students to Transport? Childcare? read. E. Youth Allowance may be available to full-time students. Reimbursement of travel costs may also be available in some cases. Postgraduate research funds are offered for full-time study towards Masters by Research or PhD degrees. These are competitive and the closing date for applications is 31 October in the year prior to the one for which the funds are sought. F. Your student card, obtained on completion of enrollment, is proof that you are enrolled. Please take special care of it and carry it with you when you are at the University. You may be asked to show it to staff at any time. This car I remember the first batch of seniors I said goodbye to. I was a brand new teacher and had just spent the last nine months, an hour and a half a day, talking, reading, and writing with them in a creative writing class. Then came that final class period. They shuffled in laughing and excited about the ceremony and parties to come. I found from my own years teaching seniors and in my discussions with twelfth-grade teachers: There is no activity or gesture too small when it comes to saying goodbye to graduating students. From those experiences, here are five suggestions for you to consider for sending off seniors: #1. Give Individual Notes or Cards. Write an individual note to each student acknowledging or celebrating something specific and unique about her or him. Articles ». September/October 2016 ». A Student Remembers: Saying Good-Bye to Peter Matthiessen. A Student Remembers: Saying Good-Bye to Peter Matthiessen. by. Elizabeth Kostova. Novelist Elizabeth Kostova pays tribute to her longtime writing mentor, the late National Book Award–winning author Peter Matthiessen. Tags: writing practices | tributes | teaching.