

# Saturday Writers Newsletter

Saturday  
Writers



Writers Encouraging Writers Since 2002

A Chapter of the Missouri Writers Guild

A Nonprofit Organization / Corporation

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## APRIL SPEAKER: SHANA YOUNGDAHL WORD CHOICE MAKES VOICE: TUNING INTO TONE, CHARACTER, AND SETTING

### WELCOME TO SATURDAY WRITERS

We're excited to be meeting in person on the last Saturday of each month at the Spencer Road Library, Room 112, first floor.

**Please note the difference in this month's location.**

Doors open at 10:45 a.m.

There will still be a Zoom option for members who continue to social distance, or can't attend.

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Shana Youngdahl is a poet, professor, and fiction writer. Shana loves helping people embrace the stories they need to tell.

Educated at Mills College, The University of Minnesota, and The University of Maine, Shana currently works as Assistant Professor in the MFA program at Lindenwood

University. The author of several poetry chapbooks and one volume of poems, her debut novel *As Many Nows As I Can Get*, was a Kirkus Best Book of 2019, a New York Public Library top-ten book of 2019 for teens, and a 2020 Rise Title from the American Library Association (Dial/Penguin Teen). Her

second novel *A Catalog of Burnt Objects* is expected in 2023 (Dial/Penguin)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

May Open Mic: May 18th via Zoom, 7-9 p.m. Zoom link to follow.

May 28: C. Hope Clark, How to Enter and Win Contests

June 25: Steve Wiegenstein, How to Write a Short Story vs. Novel

July 30: Nikki Jacobsmeyer

August 27: Maria O'Rourke

September 24: Claudia Shelton

## APRIL CONTEST INFORMATION

- **Theme:** Prairies - grasslands, farmland, bogs, etc.
- **Word Limit:** For prose, 2022-word limit. For Poetry, 50 lines or less.
- **Entry fee:** \$5 for members, \$7 for non-members
- The February, March & April Poetry Contest is also open .

Contests are open to members and non-members

For more information and the submission link, go to this website:

<http://saturdaywriters.org/contest-rules--guidelines.html>

## THE ART AND THE CRAFT OF WRITING



**“The word Craft is used to define Art, and the word Art is used to define Craft. Clearly the two are related, like the warp and weft of a fine cloth. One is not better than the other. Both are necessary and both are present in all writers.”**

This month I would like to talk about the Art of writing versus the Craft of writing. Author and writing mentor K.M. Weiland offers the following: “The Art of fiction is a wide-open sea of possibilities, in which the author is a wave-tossed ship along for the ride. The Craft of fiction puts the same ship under the expert guidance of a captain who knows how to decipher his chart of those seas and furl, trim, and jib his sails so his ship will carry him through the story on precisely the right course.”

This leads one to think of Art as something resembling disarray, and Craft more like organization. Art may be expressed when an author writes by the seat of their pants. Similarly, Craft may be expressed when time is taken to outline and plot the story. Clearly these definitions oversimplify the matter. The real world is rarely as clear cut as we want it to be. Truth is, there is a lot of overlap when we talk about the Art and Craft of writing.

To illustrate, my on-line dictionary/thesaurus provides this: Art is the quality, production, or expression of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance; synonyms include skill, creativity, and craft. Craft is a trade, or occupation requiring special skill; synonyms include skill, expertise, technique, and art.

As you can see, the

word Craft is used to define Art, and the word Art is used to define Craft. Clearly the two are related, like the warp and weft of a fine cloth. One is not better than the other. Both are necessary and both are present in all writers.

Art is the creative inner spirit we all possess. Everyone is born with a certain amount of creativity and artistic ability. Some people have a strong artistic spirit, and they express their feelings and emotions with relative ease. Artistic spirits tend to gravitate to occupations such as—painting, sculpture, literature, cinema, music, theater, and dance.

On the other hand, Craft is not inherently present in any of us. We are not naturally born with Craft—it must be learned. The Craft of writing is a skill that can be quantified, documented, and taught. This is evident by the large number of books, websites, and educational courses available on the subject of how-to-write. Now, before you get too excited, let me add that not everyone agrees on how to Craft a good story. It is a daunting task to sort through the countless tips and techniques of writing to find the nuggets that we can actually apply to our own works-in-progress. But I assure you, the effort is necessary and worth it.

My advice is to tap into your inner sense of the artistic and express yourself as openly and freely as you can, while at the same time, learn as

much as you can about the Craft of writing from as many different sources as you can find. Over time, and with a lot of practice, you will develop into the author you were meant to be.

Here is this month’s review of another how-to-write book—another book on the Craft of writing, *Writing In General and the Short Story in Particular* by Rust Hills does not live up to the promise of its title. The author has been a magazine editor and writing instructor for many years but it not a writer himself. The book is rather easy to read, but the advice is too generic and not all that helpful. The title indicates the focus will be on writing short stories, but I did not find that to be true. There are other books that would be a better use of your time. I give it two stars out of five.

Until next month, express your Art and learn your Craft, and of course, write, write, write, and keep writing.

Jeffrey Czuchna – 2022  
President

## WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA? BY DIANE HOW MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Children have vivid imaginations. Many don't need high-tech electronics and expensive toys in order to have fun. Give them a large refrigerator box and they can create just about anything.

I wondered if a childhood memory inspired Jeffrey Czuchna to write the winning SW prose entry for February. The Cardboard Time Machine captures the resourcefulness of two young boys who use an old laptop and cell phone to build a contraption to travel forward in time.

Their mother listens as her sons describe their experience with so much enthusiasm it piques her interest. When she asks if the machine can go back in time, the boys can't understand why she would want to go back in time. Later, as the boys sleep, she tests the possibility.

I asked from where the idea sprouted and Jeffrey

shared this: "I have fond memories of playing with my brother when we were young, so that's a part of the story. My mother was not always happy and had trouble with her marriage to my father, so that part is in the story too. I think writing always includes aspects of the authors experiences, including childhood. We draw on our past experiences to tell our stories. Whether we realize it or not all our stories are about our memories in some way."

As a frequent first-place winner of SW contests, I asked Jeffrey what he finds most challenging about writing? "I have trouble expressing emotions when I write. I am much better at simply telling a story, relating the facts of what happened, but that doesn't make for a very interesting story. I want my readers to feel what I am feeling when I write the story. I'm getting better at showing versus telling

and expressing emotions, but it is still a struggle."

Hearing your name announced during a SW meeting, seeing it listed in the SW Newsletter, and knowing your short story or poem will be published in an anthology are all exciting incentives for writers who submit entries to our contests. While Jeffrey appreciates the accolades that come with having his selection chosen by a judge, he strives for another reward. "I like it when someone tells me they enjoyed reading my story and they want to discuss it. Too many people tell me "I liked your story," and that's all they say. Well, what did you like about it? What do you think it meant? What emotions did you feel when you read it? I want to dig deep and have a discussion. I wish more people would take the time to think about what they are reading and what the author is trying to say.



Jeffrey closed out the interview with some encouraging words. "Don't get discouraged and give up. Keep writing, keep trying, put yourself out there and expose yourself. It can be scary, but the only way you're going to get better is to write and let the world see it. Be open to feedback, listen to people with more experience than you. Writing is a journey that can be very uncomfortable and even painful at times. It is an everlasting journey with no final destination. We never "arrive" at the end and find that we know everything there is to know about good writing. Do your best to enjoy the journey."

Congratulations, Jeffrey. I can't wait to see where your next tale takes us.

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: OUR MARCH SPEAKER KELLI ALLEN FINDING OUR WAY BACK TO MYTH

*Mythology unites people. Poetry is the language of unity. No matter how different we are we all have our mythologies, our heroes, our genesis stories and creation stories. Mythology is the one type of storytelling that is truly universal. Poetry is the language that crosses all cultural barriers.*

*Myth is present even when we don't name it.*

-- Kelli Allen

Award-winning poet, editor and dancer Kelli Allen joined Saturday Writers on March 26 to talk about poetry, mythology, and the hero's journey. She used examples to show us the variety of faces a myth can take and the ways we can be drawn in to experience these stories.

Humans are natural storytellers and no matter the differences in cultures, myths are universal. They are the stories that surround us. They contain a hero on a journey. They tell the story of our genesis, and they tell us where we will go when we leave this plane.

Poetry and prose are both used to tell myths, but they are very different vehicles. Prose focuses on the hero while in poetry we become both hero and their heart's desire.

Here are some important ideas about writing poetry:

- We are all points of view –
  - the hero
  - their beloved
  - the monster
  - their sorrow

- Poems need bookends –
  - begin and end with similar images
  - provide the reader with an entrance and an exit
  - leave the reader thinking
- References to myths draw in the wonder and details of the myth
- They gives the reader an idea of where the story begins and where it will end
- Specificity matters –
  - the clearer we are, the closer the reader can get to what we envision as we write
- Stanzas in poetry are complete thoughts

She gave us a writing exercise to practice writing our own myths:

Write a poem from first or second POV  
about a young trouble-making boy who enters a maze  
He can hear the monster he's dreamed about a thousand times, but never seen him  
Why is he here here?  
Will he meet the monster?  
Why is the monster there?  
Why does he fold paper boats and cry?

Kelli also left us with an exercise to practice at home:

Write a poem or flash fiction in which a monster lurks.

Place empathy and compassion on the monster

It is not an antagonist  
Why are we afraid of this

monster?

Why is the monster sad?

Why does he do what he does?

Kelli is interested to see how we handled this assignment and invited us to email them to her.

Thoughts from the Q&A.

There is a mind-body connection when we write by hand that puts us in closer touch with our emotions.

Reading is the best way to keep your vocabulary awake, syntax interesting and your diction your own.

Reading the writing of others makes you a better writer.

—Cheri Remington

\*\*A list of the poems Kelli shared with us was sent out to members along with the recording of the meeting.

### **February Contest Winners**

Theme: Mountains - volcanoes, glaciers, cliffs, etc.

First Place: Jeffrey Czuchna for *The Cardboard Time Machine*

Second Place: Susan Gore Zahra for *Charon Falls*

Third Place: Donna Mork Reed for *The Green Flash*

Congratulations to last month's winners! See page 1 for this month's theme and guidelines if you would like to see your name here.

## Attendance Policy

- Any member with a fully paid 2022 membership may attend the live meeting to be held at 11am on April 30th at the Spencer Road Library, room 112, which is on the first floor. Please take note of the change in room for this month. The works-in-progress group will also be meeting in a different room this month, room 209.
- A new membership is \$35, and a renewal is \$30. We encourage everyone to renew or join on the website before the meeting. However, we will accept payment at the door on the day of the meeting.
- Guests may attend the live meeting with a \$5 fee payable at the door.
- Members only will be emailed the Zoom link for the April meeting and have access to the meeting via Zoom on April 30th at 11am. All future Zoom meetings will be available to members only.
- Masks will be optional starting at the April meeting.
- **Only members will be sent the link to view the recorded meeting after April 30th**

## Anthology Updates

- Past anthologies are still available for sale at \$8 each. The children's anthology is \$5 for each copy. If you are interested in purchasing either, please contact Diane How at [diane.h@saturdaywriters.org](mailto:diane.h@saturdaywriters.org).
- Pre-Ordering is available **now** for the 2021 anthology, *The Shape of Writing*, with the option to pay via Paypal, by mail, or in person at the upcoming meeting. You can also pay to have the anthology sent to you if you are unable to pick it up. For more information and pre-ordering, visit the website here: <http://saturdaywriters.org/preorder-2021-anthology.html>

## Product Table

We're bringing back the product table this month! Please bring copies of your book to sell to this month's meeting. You are also invited to bring other writing –related magazines or books that you would like to pass along to other members.

## New Release

Congratulations to **Billie Holladay Skelley** on the release of her new children's book, *Tapeti: The Moon's Keeper!* It is now available at Amazon Books and in bookstores. It's a great way to introduce children to the legends surrounding the rabbit in the moon. Young readers can follow Tapeti as he learns about taking responsibility for his actions, the true value of achieving a goal, and that it's not how you look that matters, but what you do that counts.

