

# Saturday Writers Newsletter

Saturday  
Writers



Writers Encouraging Writers Since 2002

A Chapter of the Missouri Writers Guild

A Nonprofit Organization / Corporation

www.saturdaywriters.org • info@saturdaywriters.org

Post Office Box 2093 • Saint Peters • Missouri • 63376

May 2022

- > **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 240.**
- > **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.**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE :

May Speaker	1
Book Signing	1
From the President's Desk	2
What's the Big Idea?	3
In Case You Missed It	4
May Contests	5
Upcoming Events	5
Critique Group Opportunity	5

## MAY SPEAKER: C. HOPE CLARK The Facts and Myths about Writing Contests

Writing contests can be wonderful catalysts in a writer's journey, but they carry a few stigmas. Some are warranted and others are not. Come learn what makes for a reliable writing contest, and what suggestions can improve your odds in these competitions.

C. Hope Clark is the founder of FundsforWriters.com, a 22-year newsletter and website for writers, selected by Writer's Digest for its 101 Best Websites for Writers for the past 21 years. The free weekly newsletter emphasizes

contests, grants, markets, and publishers/agents, with a long history of keeping a finger on the pulse of writing competitions. Hope is also an award-winning mystery author, with three series and 15 novels under her belt, her most famous being the Edisto Island Mysteries. Her most recent release comes out May 31, 2022 - Edisto Heat. She lives on the banks of Lake Murray in central South Carolina when she isn't walking the shore of Edisto Beach.



Find more information about C. Hope at her websites, [www.chopeclark.com](http://www.chopeclark.com) or [www.fundsforwriters.com](http://www.fundsforwriters.com)

## ANTHOLOGY SIGNING: THE SHAPE OF WRITING

It's what you've all been waiting for—the annual anthology signing, once again in person!

The signing of the 2021 anthology, themed The Shape of Writing, will take place at the Spencer Road Branch of the St. Charles City-County Library on Wednesday,

June 22 from 6-8 p.m.

The signing will be held in Room 240/243.

It is open to the general public, and in addition to the signing, there will be light refreshments, door prizes, other works by anthology authors available, discussions about works from the

anthology, and a Q & A session.

It will be a night filled with story and celebration.

To buy a copy of the anthology ahead of time, please click [here](#). You can pay via cash, check, or Paypal!

We hope to see you there!

# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



A few years ago, when I first started on my writing journey, I read a book entitled *Writing Fiction for Dummies*. I know what you're thinking: "A Dummies book? That's not very sophisticated. A serious writer would never resort to such a thing." I think you underestimate just how helpful the Dummies series of books can be. I own at least six of them on a variety of subjects, and I have found them to be great at introducing a novice to a new subject. Yes, they are simple and basic, but isn't that exactly what a beginner is looking for? They are great books when you first learn a subject as well as a useful reference for the more advanced student.

The authors, Randy Ingermanson and Peter Economy, say, "The art of writing fiction is built around five key tasks. You must construct a believable **setting**, fill it with interesting **characters**, create a strong **plot**, develop a meaningful **theme**, and do it all with **style**." They go on to discuss each pillar. Here is my summary.

Setting is more than just geographic location. It includes such things as people, plants, animals, food, and drink; politics, economic, religious, and social structures; and historical context. Some stories, like sci-fi and fantasy, require an elaborate and complex story world. Other stories take place in a time and place familiar to the reader and do not require much effort to construct.

Characters are the players on the stage of your story. Each character has a unique backstory and is driven by their own personal ambitions

and goals. You must have a character with a goal to have conflict. And we all know that conflict is at the heart of every story. There must be obstacles for your characters to overcome on their journey toward achieving their desired goals.

Plot is the series of actions your characters take to move the story forward. It's what happens. In a written story, unlike in real life, everything must happen for a reason. Every event must be important to at least one character, if it's not, then it shouldn't be in the story. In a novel the plot is normally defined within a three-act structure (see the book review at the end of this article). In a short story, there frequently is not enough words to allow such a structure, and many are written more like a single scene.

Theme is what the story means. It goes beyond the bare basics of the plot. A theme does not have to be intellectually deep, it may be as simple as "crime doesn't pay," or "love is good." A word of caution: if you build your story around a theme, it is very easy to come across as artificial and preachy. It is better to focus on writing a great story and trust that the theme will come through. If necessary, the theme can be strengthened during the editing process.

## THE FIVE PILLARS OF FICTION

Style is the way an author expresses him/herself. It is a blend of personality, voice, tone, intellect, humor, and more. Each author has a unique style. It is best to not try and imitate someone else's style, but instead develop your own style. Style is generally not something studied and learned, it naturally grows as an author gains experience.

I hope this quick overview of the five pillars of fiction will help you in your writing. Now, here is this month's review of another how-to-write book—*Structuring Your Novel*, by K.M. Weiland. She is a successful author and mentor through her website, blogs, and podcasts. This is an excellent book on defining and describing story structure (i.e. the three-act structure), scene structure, and even paragraph structure. As with everything K.M. Weiland does, each topic is easy to understand, with a clear step-by-step process. A must read for all writers wanting to improve their craft. I highly recommend anything from K.M. Weiland. Five stars out of five.

Until next month, study the five pillars of fiction, and of course, write, write, write, and keep writing.

—Jeffrey Czuchna – 2022 President

"The art of writing fiction is built around five key tasks. You must construct a believable **setting**, fill it with interesting **characters**, create a strong **plot**, develop a meaningful **theme**, and do it all with **style**."

## What's the Big Idea?

### SILVER THREADS

The quality of the entries for the SW Poet Laureate contest exceeded the judge's expectations and resulted in three first-place winners.

Cheri Remington wrote a joyful autobiographical poem titled *Silver and Light* based on a childhood memory which fit perfectly with the silver theme. "I was an angel in the Christmas pageant and my parents made wings from cardboard covered with aluminum foil. I remember running around the house in my costume. The memory comes along with an intense feeling of wonder and happiness."

When I read it, I envisioned a tiny ballerina dancing about with those silver wings. When asked if poetry comes easy to Cheri, she explained that it is a very long process for her. "The silver poem, I wrote other completely different poems for weeks trying to capture how seeing silver makes me feel. It wasn't until a few days before the contest closed that I came up with the poem I turned in. I'm a very slow writer. Sometimes writing just takes time."

Thanks for persevering and sharing such a treasured memory, Cheri. Now we can all enjoy it.

Not all poems grow roots from a pleasant memory. *A Lifetime*, written by Heather Hartmann, was dedicated to "all the mamas who have been changed by those souls who didn't get a chance to change the world." What a

poetic tribute! This heartfelt, painful poem brought me to tears.

"The core of this poem originated from my two cousins who lost their babies. One in the womb at nine months. And the other during childbirth. I'm very close to them and after a particular heart to heart this poem was sitting in my soul waiting to be written. I see so many women struggle with miscarriages and late pregnancy loss and the grief is often forced to be dealt with alone, so I think I just wanted to acknowledge and validate them."

Heather certainly did that with her uniquely structured poem. I asked how she decided on the visual appearance of the verse. "I love a poem not uniformed. I feel structure helps punch up the impact of certain words or phrases. But it's always a gut instinct on what feels right for my meaning."

She went on to offer some helpful advice to writers. "When I write from my heart it just seems to work! So, my word to inspiring poets don't overthink it!" Simply said. Profoundly important. Thanks, Heather.

Our third, first-place winner, Donna Mork Reed, wrote *Box of Silver Memories*. This poem, like

### —DIANE HOW

Cheri's, originated from a childhood memory. "The poem I wrote was inspired by my father who was a coin collector. When I was a kid, I wanted to be just like my parents so if he liked something, I liked it too." The nostalgic memory proved to be a delightful read worthy of recognition.

We've seen a number of winning entries from Donna and I wondered how she writes so many. Perhaps completing a month-long challenge to write a poem a day helped. "For me it is like photography. I'll take 20 pictures and hope one or two will turn out great. If I write a lot, hopefully a few of the poems turn out worthwhile." They certainly do and we're fortunate you share them with SW.

Not only does Donna write award-winning poems, her short story, *One Day at the Quarry*, also won first place in the SW March prose contest! A hot summer day, a group of teenagers, and a swimming hole. What could go wrong? You'll have to read it in order to find out.

I asked Donna if this was a true story. "I do find that I weave parts of me into the stories and poems. When the



girls in the quarry story were driving to the "swimming hole," I remembered riding in an old car with a friend of mine back in my high school years, down dirt roads and tasting the dust that blew in. I also had sunstroke once and I've gone swimming in water so cold my body started to ache and I couldn't last more than thirty seconds in that area of the spring...so I sort of combined those together to make this story plausible. Job well done, Donna.

Although our winners shared much more with me, I've tried to share some important points from their interviews to inspire others to keep writing. Your name could appear in our next column. Believe in yourself!

## In case you Missed it: April Speaker, Shana Youngdahl:

### Word Choice makes Voice: Tuning into Tone, Character, and Setting

Shana Youngdahl is a poet, professor, and fiction writer who currently works in the MFA program at Lindenwood University. She is the author of several poetry chapbooks, one volume of poems, and two novels, *As Many Nows As I Can Get* and *A Catalog of Burnt Objects* (expected in 2023.)

Shana said that words have the power to create tone, mood and setting. We must be tuned into word choices with as much care as poets. An example would be using the word *hissed* to describe a character's dialogue. If a character hisses dialogue, then they must have words that contain the letter S. If not, how can they *hiss*?

Tone, mood, and setting are built from the first draft, sewn like seeds that are fine-tuned with the poet's ear and developed with the storyteller's heart during revisions. We elevate those seeds, accentuate them, and make them feel true.

Shana gave us specific definitions, derived from work by Matthew Salesses, for each word in order to build a common understanding of each term.

**Tone:** an orientation toward the world

Tone is impacted by the speaker, narrator, characters, and their orientation to the world. They are influenced by the writer's experience and perspective which bring a sense of empathy and understanding.

**Setting:** an awareness of the world

If a setting is familiar, the writer must point out details the reader or character are familiar with. If the setting is unfamiliar, the writer sets up awareness of the world. What the writer and reader know, the character reveals as they navigate the world.

A character in a familiar space is different than a character in an altered or unfamiliar space.

Word choices and sentence length affect pace and setting.

**Mood:** fluctuations in tone that bridge character, setting and reader

Mood moderates the overall tone. Readers are interested in modulation. They need moments of levity in sadness. If a story is dark overall, it still must fluctuate.

Three practice exercises and lists of questions

were provided to help in developing character, tone and setting.

Practice, Part I

Write a character entering a place for the first time. What do they see? Work with a familiar character, or use yourself, or someone starting the first day on a new job, at a new school, or arriving for their international exchange program.

Practice, Part II

Have your character re-enter the place you wrote before, but now something has happened that has changed their relationship to the place. Focus on the differences they notice. What words would they use now that they wouldn't have before?

How were the tone, mood, and setting changed?

Practice, Part III

Pick one of the two scenes and rewrite the details to enhance the tone and mood. Using subtle alliteration or eliminating certain details, can you sharpen the focus? What about tension between exterior words and internal monologue? You could go back and rewrite to add foreshadowing.

**Thoughts on Revision**

Through revision, drill into word choice, sentence patterning, and sound quality – to gain overall tone and mood. Maggie Stiefvater said that it's in sentence level revisions that we can push something from joyous to dark.

What a character says and what they think can be different. They can begin uncomfortable, unable to express feelings, but 15 years later they can do so calmly and professionally.

An example of handling the passage of time is EB White's essay, *Once More to the Lake*. This is freely available online in pdf format.

What is missing can also be significant. For example, if color sense is not included, that could serve a purpose.

**Big Picture Questions for Your Project**

What is the overall story arc? the overall tone? How to balance tone and mood?

How does pacing impact tone and mood? Where to add levity or seriousness?

Who is the audience? How are their expectations of the character, setting and

tone met or subverted?

**Development Questions to Tap into Setting, Tone, Mood**

What is an important memory my character has in this setting, or a like setting?

What does my character imagine about this setting?

How did this setting change (or not) with the seasons? How did my character's relationship to the setting change with the seasons?

What is the span of time my character inhabits this setting?

Does the setting change? Is the landscape actually altered by something external during the course of my story? What impact does that have on my character?

If the setting doesn't change, how does that stasis impact my character?

—Cheri Remington

## MAY CONTESTS

**Theme:** Forest & Desert - rain forest, sand dunes, woods, etc.  
**Entry Fee:** \$5 for members, \$7 for non-members  
**Prose:** 2022-word limit  
**Poetry:** 50-line limit  
**Prose Deadline:** 5/28/22  
**Poetry Deadline:** 7/30/22

For contest rules and guidelines, click [here](#)  
 To submit, click [here](#)

### President’s Contest Part II—Members only!

**Theme:** Planets  
**Flash:** 500 words or less  
**Drabble:** Exactly 100 words (Minus the title)  
**Essay:** Non fiction 2022-word limit  
**Begins:** February 1st, 2022  
**Deadline:** May 28th, 2022 by Midnight  
**Cost:** FREE for members  
 For more details and to submit click here: [President's Contest](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**June Open Mic:** Thursday, June 16th at the Middendorf-Kreddell Branch Library, 6 to 8:30 p.m.

**June 22nd:** The Shape of Writing Anthology Signing

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

**July 30th:** Nikki Jacobsmeyer

**August 27th:** Maria O’Rourke: “Are you a plotter, or a pantsers? How a good editor can help.”

**September 24th:** Emily Hall Schroen: “Wherever Books are Sold: A Guide to Forming Lasting Partnerships with Independent Bookstores”

## YOU WROTE A BOOK. NOW WHAT?

<p>If you’ve written a novel and are looking to take your next steps, consider joining one of the many Saturday Writers critique groups.</p>	<p>They meet once or twice a month at convenient locations, some even on zoom! Some groups specialize in a certain genre, while others are</p>	<p>open to any genre. Currently, the Thursday night critique group has an opening for one or two new participants. They meet on Zoom on</p>	<p>the first and third Thursdays of the month from 7-8:30 or 9. They do not specialize in any genre, but are open to any genre. If you are interested in joining, please contact Bob Crandall via email at <a href="mailto:r2crandall@charter.net">r2crandall@charter.net</a>.</p>
--	--	---	--

### March Contest Winners

**Theme:** Bodies of Water - lake, rivers, oceans, reservoirs, etc.  
**First Place:** Donna Mork Reed for *One Day at the Quarry*  
**Second Place:** Wesley Ginther for *The Midnight Visitor*  
**Third Place:** Kenneth Lee for *Tobias Toad's Great Adventure*  
**Honorable Mention:** Cheri Remington for *Opportunities*

**Honorable Mention:** R. G. Weismiller for *The Hamilton Lake Incident*  
**Honorable Mention:** Larry Duerbeck for *Word Play*

### Poet Laureate Contest Winners

**Theme:** Silver  
**First Place:** Cheri Remington for *Silver and Light*  
**Second Place:** Donna Mork Reed for *Silver Memories*  
**Third Place:** Heather Hartmann for *A Lifetime*  
**Honorable Mention:** Carol Roberson for *Silver Years*