

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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JANUARY 2024

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Join us on the last Saturday of every month at the Kisker Road Library Branch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in rooms A & B.
- Doors open at 10:30 a.m.
- Creative Salon is from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. in the Quiet Room.
- Members are invited to participate via Zoom. The link will be sent out separately.

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January Speaker: Story Graphing, a Visual Representation of the Story

Kurt Vonnegut had a system for graphing story arcs, whether you believe him or not, let me show you a way to visualize all the parts of your story. When a story is disassembled, the various parts can be seen in new ways. "Seeing" each arc allows the best parts and the parts in need of work to stand out. In the tradition of great writers, let us graph the parts of your story.

Brad R. Cook is the author of fantasy, historical fiction,

non-fiction, and award-winning short stories.



He began as a playwright, dipped into the corporate writing world, and became co-publisher and acquisitions editor for Blank Slate Press. For over a decade he has served as

Historian of St. Louis Writers Guild, three and half years of which were as President. He learned to fence at thirteen and never set down his sword, but prefers to curl up with a centuries' old classic.

Brad can be reach on various social media sites under the user name @bradrcook.

www.bradrcook.com

New Year, New Location!

Spencer Road Library has been host to our meetings since we returned to in-person meetings a couple of years ago. Unfortunately, they are going to be doing construction beginning in January, so we will have to move to a different location

until the construction is completed. As of the writing of this newsletter, the construction is planned to last until July, and we will be able to return to Spencer Road. However, we all know that the best laid plans often go awry, and we'll let

everyone know as soon as possible when we move back to Spencer Road.

In the meantime, we will be at the Kisker Road Library, located at 1000 Kisker Road in St. Charles. We will be in Rooms A & B. We look forward to seeing you there!



From the President's Desk: The Importance of Spelling, Grammar, and Punctuation.



Jeffery Czuchna,
2024 President

“One of the easiest ways to be taken seriously is with a well written story. And all well written stories have proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.”

Here we are at the beginning of a new year. 2023 was a good year for Saturday Writers as we saw moderate growth in our membership numbers. I hope you found our speakers beneficial and personally grew as a writer.

Last year at this time I wrote about the importance of setting goals. I believe everyone always needs to have a plan for their future. I even encourage my grandchildren to set goals. Goals keep you moving forward and heading in the right direction. Always remember that goals can be, and should be, adjusted periodically. Now is a good time to examine the path you are on, and make any necessary course corrections.

What I really want to address in this article is not goals, but the importance of spelling, grammar, and punctuation in writing. We all want to be taken seriously as writers.

One of the fastest and easiest ways to lose the attention of an agent, or the interest of a contest judge, is to submit a piece filled with misspelled words and bad grammar. On the other hand, one of the easiest ways to be taken seriously is with a well written story. And all well written stories have proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

I get it. I understand why people struggle—the English language can be tricky. It seems like every rule has an exception, and every exception has an exception of its own. English can be difficult, but there are sources that can help.

First, and most obvious, is your word processor that you already use. Undoubtedly, it comes with a built-in spell checker, and probably some sort of grammar checker too. The most popular tools—Word, Google docs, and Scrivener—all have such features. Please pay attention to these suggestions. Look at every suggestion and understand why it has been flagged. Seriously consider making the suggested change. In most cases you will want

to take the program's advice. I have found that these tools are right more often than they are wrong. However, not every suggestion is right for your story. If you choose to ignore a suggested correction, be sure you have a good reason.

Spell checkers are great, but they don't catch everything. Occasionally, something will slip by. So, it is important to proofread your story with an eye toward spelling. One trick that I have found helpful is to read the story backwards. Start at the end and read each word until you get to the beginning. When you read forward, you read sentences and sometimes your brain fills in missing words or overlooks typos. By reading backwards, you are not reading sentences and you can focus on each individual word.

An external software tool may also help. Many exist, but the one I am most familiar with is Grammarly. When I finish a story, and have edited it at least a dozen times, and scrubbed it for all the spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors possible, I then run it through Grammarly. It always finds additional errors and makes suggestions. I don't always incorporate all the suggestions, but I do consider each one. Grammarly can be installed on your computer for free but if you want the good version, there is a small annual fee. I'm sure there are other grammar checkers out there that work just as well.

The best written source for good writing is *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White. It seems to be the most popular book on the subject. Almost every book I have read about how to write well will mention this book as an excellent resource. It is not a book you sit down and read for fun though. It is a reference

book you keep on your desk to use when needed.

Another method to catch errors in your story is to read it out loud. You can read it out loud to yourself, but better yet, have someone else read it to you. I guarantee you'll hear something you missed. Another option would be to record yourself reading out loud and play the recording back. Most smart phones have a recording option.

And finally, my favorite and maybe the best, is have someone proofread your story for you. That's one of the greatest advantages to joining a writing group. Another set of eyes can spot errors that you gloss over. As the author, it's easy to become too familiar with the story to see the errors. I encourage everyone to join a writing group, or at least have a trusted friend proofread for you. Be sure your friend will honestly point out your errors, and not be worried about hurting your feelings. I remember the first time I asked a family member to read my story. The feedback I got was "That's very nice, Jeff." Not a helpful critique. The best feedback I get is usually harsh and it hurts the ego. I try to remember that it is just one person's opinion and it is intended to make me a better writer.

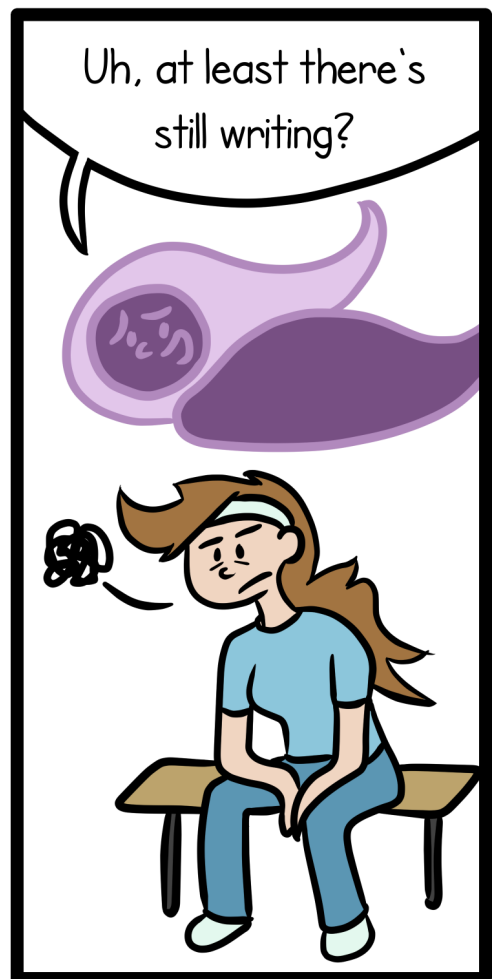
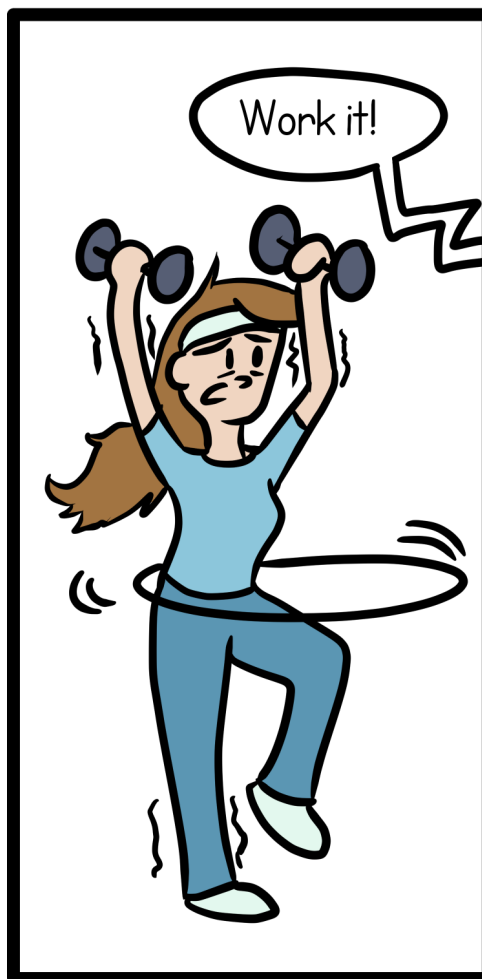
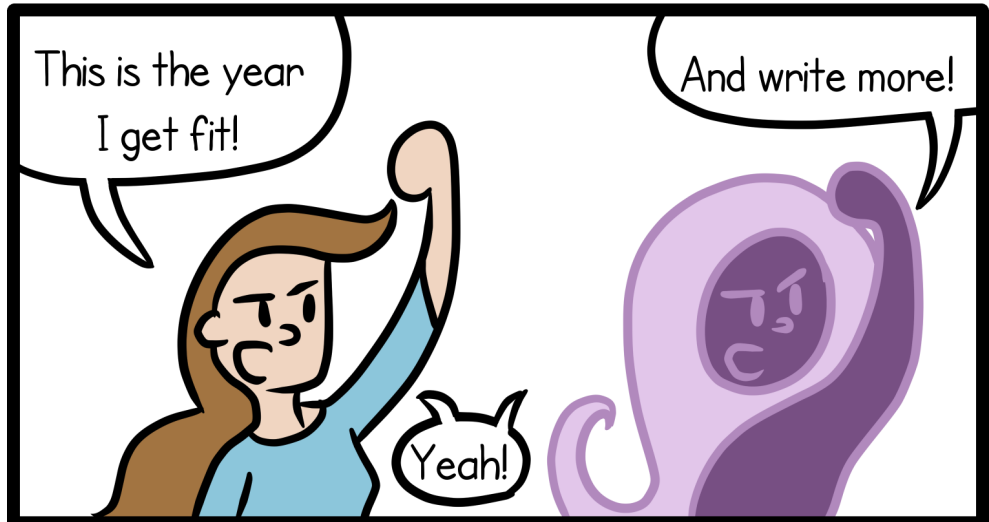
In conclusion, always remember it is your story and it should be written the way you want it to be written. Keeping in mind that you also want others to read it, and understand it, which means you must follow the rules of the English language. Most importantly you want to be taken seriously and be considered for contests and publication, so you must master spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Until next time, keep on writing.

Writer and Muse

Writer and Muse: Resolutions

by Emma Vogt



Art by Emma Vogt

If you would like to see past months' *Writer and Muse*, please visit Emma's page at <https://writerandmuse.com/>

January Contest

Pen and Paint I

Theme: Anything goes

Deadline: January 27th, 11:59 p.m.

Prose: 1,000 word limit

Poetry: 50 line limit

Cost: FREE to members only (If you're not a member yet, it's not too late to join!)

Check out the full rules and guidelines [here](#)

Upcoming Events

January Monthly Meeting: January 27, 11 a.m. Speaker Brad Cook, Story Graphing

February Open Mic: Date TBA, 6-8 p.m., Third Wheel Brewing

February Monthly Meeting: February 24, 11 a.m. Speaker Nathaniel Minton, Screenwriting

March Open Mic: March 11th, 6-8 p.m., Zoom

March Monthly Meeting: March 30th, 11 a.m., Speaker Estelle Erasmus, Finding Your Writer's Voice

Saturday Writers Needs YOU!

We always need writers for the newsletter to share a summary of what our monthly speakers had to say. If you are interested, please email newsletter@saturdaywriters.org. Reach out now to write about your favorite topic. Deadlines are

February 10

April 13,

June 15

August 17

November 16th.

March 16

May 11

July 13,

September 14

Volunteering for Saturday Writers only makes us better!

Officers and Volunteers

President: Jeffrey Czuchna
president@saturdaywriters.org

Vice President: Bob Weismiller
vicepresident@saturdaywriters.org

Secretary: Holly Elliott
secretary@saturdaywriters.org

Treasurer: Diane How
diane.h@saturdaywriters.org

Volunteers/Chair Positions

Directors: Tom Klein

Speaker/Workshop Chair: Jeffrey Czuchna

Contest Chair: Heather Hartmann

Newsletter Editor: Beatrice Underwood-Sweet

Website Chair: Mark Vago

Membership Chair: Diane How

Membership Assistant: Denise Wilson

Anthology Chair: Brad Watson

Social Media Chair: Holly Elliott

Publicity Chair: Holly Elliott

Holiday Party Chair: Bob Weismiller

Poet Laureate: Robert Sebacher

Youth Outreach Chair: Jessica Gulmire

Marketing Coop: Carol Baker

Writing/Critique Groups

Members Online Critique: Susan Moreland

Tuesday Round-Table: Tammy Lough

Wednesday Novel Group: Brad Watson

Wednesday WIP Cafe: Jim Ladendecker

Thursday Novel Group: Bob Crandall

Children's/YA Critique: Emma Howard

Pre-Meeting Saturday WIP Cafe & Creative Writing Salon: Robert Sebacher

Write-In Chair: Terry Moreland