

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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July 2023

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Join us on the last Saturday of every month at the Spencer Road Library Branch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in room L.

- ◆ Doors open at 10:30 a.m.
- ◆ Creative Salon is from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. in room O. (no longer in P)
- ◆ Members are invited to participate via Zoom. The link will be sent out separately.

July 2023 Speaker: Kizzi Roberts

Do you have a polished manuscript that you and your critique partners love, but it hasn't found a home with a traditional publisher? You can bring your book to market using Amazon KDP, IngramSpark, and Draft2Digital. We'll cover all the steps between having a finished manuscript and making your book available online and to bookstores everywhere.

Kizzi Roberts co-owns Elemental Ink Publishing LLC which operates out of the beautiful Ozarks in Southern Missouri. Through the Learning Spark



Educational Publishing imprint, she has published two picture books and the first book in a chapter book series. She has also written two non-fiction books for the educational market and was a past recipient of the KSMO SCBWI Claire Vanderpool Work of Promise award. Kizzi enjoys gardening and sewing when she isn't writing or

chasing her toddler around.

Kizzi can be reached at kizzysue@gmail.com



I am getting close to completing my first novel length writing project. I am almost to the point that I can send my manuscript to some Beta Readers. So, I have been doing research on Beta Readers. Here is some of what I have learned so far.

A Beta Reader is someone who reads an early draft of your story and offers feedback on what is working and what is not. Wait! That sounds suspiciously like a Critique Partner. What's the difference? Honestly, there is a lot of similarity between a Beta Reader and a Critique Partner (CP). Let's also include Alpha Reader and editor in this discussion too. Let me explain.

An Alpha Reader is someone who reads a very early rough draft of a manuscript and offers general feedback on such things as story structure, plot, pacing, and character arcs. A Beta Reader provides similar feedback. However, they are reading a more developed manuscript; one that has gone through a few author revisions already. A Beta Reader may also provide a more detailed review including grammar, word choice, and spelling. The definition of a CP varies widely. My definition is someone that you work with regularly, not just on one particular project. A CP may never see the entire project in its

From the President's Desk: Beta Readers

entirety, but instead reviews individual chapters or sections at each group meeting. A CP usually provides any and all types of comments ranging from general opinions to single word typos. Finally, there are multiple types of editors—developmental, copy, line, and proofreader to name a few. Editors do everything that Alpha Readers, Beta Readers, and Critique Partners do, but they come later in the process and therefore, work with a more polished, closer-to-final version and are usually paid for their services.

For the rest of this article, I will use the term Beta Reader but, in most cases, everything said also applies to Alpha Readers, Critique Partners and to a lesser extent editors.

Do I really need Beta Readers? The short answer is yes. Everyone needs to have their work reviewed by an independent set of eyes. As authors we are simply too close to our own work to see many of the flaws. I can edit the same paragraph a dozen times until it is pure perfection. Then ask someone else reads it, and they'll point out that the meaning is unclear, find four grammatical errors, and two misspelled words. Even the best writers have others review their work.

What should I look for in a good Beta Reader? First, I want someone that is willing to take the time to read my manuscript. This can be a significant time commitment for something as long as a novel. Second, I want someone who is an experienced reader in my genre. Not just a casual reader, but an avid reader is best. Third, I want a mix of writers and non-writers. An experienced writer will be able to understand and provide suggestions relative to the craft of writing, but a non-writer better represents my target audience. Fourth, I need to be sure they can provide comments clearly and specifically. A critique of

"I didn't like the story," is not of much help. A Beta Reader should be able to articulate exactly what they like and don't like about a story, and why. Finally, they need to be honest. If a story sucks, they need to be willing to say so, and not worry about hurting my feelings. On the other hand, if there is something they particularly like about the story they should be willing to point that out too.

As the author how should I respond to Beta Reader comments? First, be grateful for the time and effort put in by each reviewer. After all, they probably put in a significant amount of effort to help me out—without being paid. Second, don't take offense. Keep in mind that everything is simply a suggestion. Third,

"A Beta Reader is someone who reads an early draft of your story and offers feedback on what is working and what is not."

don't argue. I don't have to agree with, or incorporate, everything commented on. Fourth, remember the two-person rule: if two people have the same comment/suggestion then I probably need to do something about it. Keep in mind that the second person could be me. If I recognize right away that the comment is correct, then I should go ahead and make the change immediately. Finally, return the favor. Always be willing to be a Beta Reader and offer critique to others when asked.

Until next month, keep writing, writing, writing.

Jeffrey Czuchna – 2023 President

What's the Big Idea? An Ocean Between Want and Need

Unfortunately, the May prose contest winner, Robert Weismiller, was unavailable for an interview. Perhaps he was fulfilling an obligation. I'm hoping he was relaxing on a beach soaking up some rays. Robert recently shared information and inspiration with his March first-place win. For May's Ethnic Food theme, he wrote *Somewhere Between Paris and Istanbul*.

This fascinating story invites the reader to contemplate the struggle between duty and desire. It begins with a man on the last night of his vacation sitting on the patio of an exquisite ocean-front Mexican restaurant waiting for his girlfriend. Other nearby couples chat about the beauty of the sea and then the conversation turns to business, a subject the man doesn't want to think about until he's

forced to return to work on Monday morning.

Much to the dismay of one of the boisterous patrons, a pan-handler intrudes asking for a handout. As the stranger approaches, the outspoken customer plans to make a scene but his intentions are blocked by others. The drifter shocks the group with amazing tales of enticing worldly adventures.

The man waiting for his girlfriend is captivated by the option of a carefree lifestyle versus a demanding career path. The strong urge to grab his passport and walk away to fulfill his dreams is silenced when his girlfriend returns and utters two words. Of course, I'm not going to spoil it by telling you what they were! Be sure to read it in the next anthology.

Tip of the month: Beat summer's brutal heat by



sitting in an air-conditioned room crafting an entry for our next contest! Get writing!

In Case You Missed It: Michele Mason, Brainstorming & Outlining Your Novel

"I truly believe if you brainstorm effectively, you can turn that into a strong outline."

No matter the writing process or style, most writers will use the two tools from Michelle Mason's presentation at some point in their projects. Michelle led the group in a practical discussion of brainstorming and outlining, and how and when to use them.

Brainstorming

Michelle demonstrated how to focus brainstorming so that it will yield usable results that are tailored toward the three act story. The method is to begin with five W questions and one H question. What, Who, Where When, Why and How.

What if? This is the kind of question that is the catalyst to develop a scenario that contains the kernel of your story.

Who? Who are the people in this scenario? Ask the following questions for key characters. What is their role in the story? physical appearance? personality, habits and mannerisms? occupation? hobbies or interests?

Explore internal and external conflicts. What does your character want? What do they need? What stops them? The theme of your book can be found in considering what your character wants vs what they need. What prevents the character from meeting their goal? This is the external conflict.

What happened in the past that is relevant to what is happening now? This is their background.

What else about this character may impact their interactions with the world or other characters?

Where? The setting can affect plot and characters and may require research, perhaps a bit of online searching or maybe a visit to an exotic locale.

Does the setting affect the characters or plot? Do the characters travel from one place to another? How does it look, smell, feel? What are the customs of the world?

When? Past, present, future? There are reader expectations dependent upon genre.

Why? What happens to interrupt the character's normal life? What is the moment that changes the course of their lives? Something they can't rewind? It's possible the *why* could relate back to the *what if* question. The *why* could also be the inciting event.

Where does everything start going wrong or moving in an unexpected direction? Who or what is working against the character?

How does it end? Michelle said she likes to know where she's going before she writes the middle. She acknowledged that pantsers may not like this.

What is the main character's arc? Ascending to overcome their flaw or descending to give into their weakness? Is it transformational or flat? What is the theme? How does the plot wrap up? Will all questions be answered? or will you leave it open for another story?

What happens in the middle of the story? It's easier to answer these questions if you know what the ending is. Here are a handful of questions to help with the middle. What are the worst things that could happen to a character? What are the best things that can happen to a character? How will the best and worst things collide? How will the goals of other characters conflict with the goals of the main character? What are the stakes, both personal and more widespread, if the main character fails at their goal? What changes will the character need to enact to achieve the goal as a result of the conflicts?

Outlining

Outlining is a tool that can be used before, during or after writing. It is a great guide while writing a story, but it can be used when editing to see if the structure of the story is balanced and hitting the correct marks.

Michelle presented two popular methods of outlining. They each follow the three act story structure. They are a great way to organize your brainstorming into a usable format.

One is [Structuring Your Novel](#) by K.M. Weiland.

The second is [Save the Cat Writes a Novel](#) by Jessica Brody.

Michelle presented and compared the two side-by-side. Both follow a three act structure, but are balanced slightly differently. One may work better than another depending on your story.

Following are the steps for each method organized into Setup, Act 1, Act 2 and Act 3.

Setup

Weiland

First Act: Set up characters, setting and goals
Hook: opening moment, grabs reader's attention

Brody

Opening image (0-1%): A before snapshot of your hero and their world
Theme stated (5%): a statement that hints what the hero must learn by the end of the book
Setup (1-10%): an exploration of the hero's status quo life and all its flaws

Act One

Weiland

Inciting Event (12%): Kicks off the plot
The Key Event: Officially engages the character in the plot and usually occurs at the first plot point – there's no going back now
First Plot Point (25%): End of the first act and the character's "normal world"

Brody

Catalyst (10%): A life-changing event that catapults the hero into a new world or new way of thinking – there's no going back
Debate (10-20%): Reaction sequence usually presented as a question (Should I go?)

In planning Michelle puts the midpoint into outline to help her build the story
Midpoint keeps readers going, key reveal

Act Two

Weiland

First Half of Second Act (25-50%):
Reaction/coping with first plot point
First Pinch Point (37%): Reminder of antagonist's power & setup of midpoint
Midpoint (50%): Clearer understanding of overall conflict/moment of revelation
Second Half of Second Act (50-75%): Period of action
Second Pinch Point (62%): Reminder of antagonist's power & setup for third plot point
Third Plot Point (75%): Moment of seeming defeat (but this is not the climax)

Brody

Break into Two (20%): Hero accepts the call to action, a decisive action beat that separates the status quo world of Act 1 from the new "upside-down" world of Act 2

B Story (22%): New character(s) who will help the hero learn the theme (could be a love interest)

Fun & Games (20-50%): See the hero in their new world, succeeding or floundering
Midpoint (50%): False victory or a false defeat. Something raises the stakes and pushes the hero toward real change (The midpoint is what keeps readers engaged.)

Bad Guys Close In (50-75%): Downward path where things go progressively worse for the hero OR upward path where things seem to get progressively better for the hero

All is Lost (75%): An action beat where something happens to the hero that, combined

Writer and Muse

Writer and Muse: Bedtime

by Emma Vogt



ICYMI cont.

with the internal bad guys, pushes the hero to rock bottom
Cont. Pg. 5
Dark Night of the Soul (75-80%): The darkest hour is right before the hero figures out the solution to their big problem and learns the theme or life lesson

Act Three

Weiland

Third Act: Final conflict is resolved
Climax (88%): A final turning point that pits the protagonist against the antagonist in a final battle

Climactic Moment: End of climax; moment conflict is finally resolved
Brody

Break into Three (80%): The hero realizes what they must do to not only fix the problems created in Act 2, but more importantly, fix themselves

Finale (80-99%): The hero proves they have learned the theme and they enact their plan. Bad guys are destroyed, flaws are conquered, lovers are reunited. The hero's world saved and becomes a better place.

Act Three

Weiland

The Resolution: Final scene or two to tie up loose ends

Brody

Final Image (99-100%): A mirror to the Opening Image, an after snapshot of the hero after the transformation

Whether you're a plotter, a pantsler or something in between, brainstorming and outlining, as Michelle presented it, can be adapted to enhance your process and bring out the best in your efforts. Give it a try next time you set out on a new project!

—Cheri Remington

Local Author Event

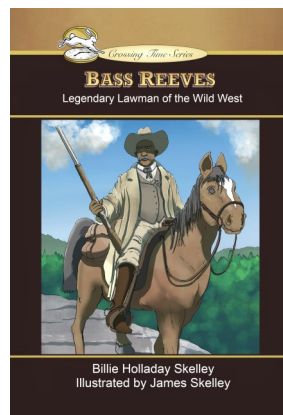
Save the date!
Six Local Authors and Cold Craft Brew

Local Books N Beer
Wednesday, September 6, 2023
7 - 9 p.m.

Third Wheel Brewery
4008 North Service Road
St. Peters, Missouri 63376
<https://www.thirdwheelbrewing.com/>
Stay tuned for more info to follow

Book Releases

Billie Holladay
Skelley's book, *Bass Reeves: Legendary Lawman of the Wild West*, won First Place in the Biography/Autobiography Category of the 2023 Purple Dragonfly Book Awards. Congratulations, Billie!



Lenny Tocco has a new book currently being edited. Its title is *Richness*. From the synopsis: "A modern-day re-telling of the infamous Vanderbilt Family. *Richness* is a fictional twist of what may have been for the Vanderbilts. It looks at cold hard cash and what it means. It looks at how a fortune can mold a life and predict and manifest it's future. Release dates and other information soon to come!

May Contest Winners

PROSE:

First Place: R. G.

Weismiller for *Somewhere
Between Paris and Istanbul*

Second Place: Larry

Duerbeck for *A Multiethnic
Holiday*

Third Place: Cheri

Remington for *Cheer Up,
Harry*

Honorable Mention: Susan
Gore Zahra for *Cousins*

Honorable Mention: Robert
Walton for *Alexander the
Greatest*

Honorable Mention: Jeffrey
Czuchna for *A Fable Agreed
Upon*

July Contest Rules

Theme: Junk Food & Desserts

Prose: 2023-word limit

Poetry: 50-line limit

Begins: 6/24/23

Prose Deadline: 7/29/23

Poetry Deadline: 8/26/23

For more information, visit our website [here](#).

For submissions, visit this [page](#).

Upcoming Events

July Monthly Meeting: July 29th—Kizzi Roberts, Self Publishing

August Open Mic: August 16th, Spencer Road Branch Library
6:15-8:15

August Monthly Meeting: August 26th—Allie Pleiter, Dynamic
Dialogue

September Open Mic: September 12th, Zoom Only!

September Monthly Meeting: September 30th

October: Information about our workshops is coming soon!

Officers and Volunteers

President: Jeffrey Czuchna
president@saturdaywriters.org

Vice President: Donna Mork Reed
vicepresident@saturdaywriters.org

Secretary: Holly Elliott
secretary@saturdaywriters.org

Treasurer: Diane How
diane.h@saturdaywriters.org

Assistant Treasurer: Alice Vierck

Volunteers/Chair Positions

Directors: Brad Watson, Jennifer
Hasheider

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: Pat Wahler

Publicity Chairs: Pat Wahler

Hospitality Chair: Bob Weismiller

Hospitality Assistant: David Reed

Holiday Party Chair: Donna Mork Reed

Poet Laureate: Robert Sebacher

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: Heather
Hartmann

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

Write-In Chair: Brad Watson