

# 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

June 2023

## Inside this issue:

June Speaker	1
The President's Desk	2
What's the Big Idea?	3
ICYMI	4
The Writer's Muse	5
Anthology	6
June Picnic	6
Contest Winners	7
Contest Rules	7
Upcoming Events	7

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 P (Previously 265)
- ◆ Members are invited to participate via Zoom. The link will be sent out separately.

## June 2023 Speaker: Michelle Mason, The Craft of Writing—Brainstorming and Outlining Your Novel

Traditionally published young adult author Michelle I. Mason will discuss how to brainstorm and outline your novel at our June meeting. Already have a draft in the works? It's not too late for an outline! It's helpful to look at structure even after a book is in progress. Michelle prefers an interactive group, so be prepared to discuss potential plots. For those interested in writing for younger audiences, Michelle will also

speak to considerations writing for kids and teens.

Michelle I. Mason is the author of *Your Life Has Been Delayed* and *My Second Impression of You*, both from Bloomsbury YA. Michelle spent ten years as a PR manager promoting everything from forklift rodeos to Hotel Olympics before deciding she'd rather focus on made-up stories. When she isn't writing, she's probably



reading, watching too much TV, cross-stitching, baking amazing brownies, or playing the violin. Michelle lives in St. Louis with her husband, two kids, and matching dog and cat.



## From the President's Desk: The Cure for Writer's Disease

Do you suffer from Writer's Disease? What is Writer's Disease?

Have you ever been envious of another writer's success? Why did he win that contest? you ask. Or why did she get that book deal? She's really not a very good author. I can write much better. That's Writer's Disease, also known as envy. And if we are being honest, we have all suffered from it at some time in our writing experience. Probably, more than once. Some of us may have a chronic case of it.

Envy is a natural human emotion. It's okay to feel jealous from time to time. Just don't let it consume you.

With the advent of social media, the number of cases and the severity of the affliction has only gotten worse. You can hardly look at Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram without hearing about someone and their amazing writing achievements. Usually something that I have been struggling to accomplish but just can't seem to get. Sure, I'm happy for them, but still, do you have to rub my nose in it?

When we do achieve some milestone in our writing career, and we post the news for all to see, it seems like someone else outperforms us. News of our recent release of a self

-published book is overshadowed by someone else's signing of a three-book deal with a major publisher. No matter what we do, it's never enough.

The worst is when a young, new writer finds success early. Especially when it's doing something you've been trying to do for years. Maybe you've been entering a particular contest over and over with no success. Then you hear about the 20-something kid that won first prize on her first try. It's not fair. Writing is supposed to be hard ... it takes time to learn ... it's a process ... apparently not for everyone.

If we're not careful our envy will ruin our writing. It can turn the writing we once loved into something we hate. So, what can we do about it? I don't think there will ever be a cure for Writer's Disease, but I do think there are a few things we can do to minimize its effects. Here are a few suggestions.

**1. Remind yourself why you write.**

You probably write because it makes you feel good, you enjoy it. Don't let someone else's success take away that feeling.

**2. Look back at how far you've come.** Recognizing that you have made a lot of progress toward your writing goals can give you motivation to continue to work on your craft.

**3. Focus on others instead of yourself.** A good way to deal with envy is to take the focus off yourself and put it on others.

**4. Keep creating things.** Engaging my creative mind has always helped me keep negative emotions away.

**5. Keep a positive comment file.** Keeping a list of positive, encouraging comments you have received, and occasionally reviewing that list, can boost your spirits.

**6. Cut down on social media.** If the postings of others bothers you, then don't look at the postings.

**7. There is more to life than writing.** Always remember that writing is only one part of your life. If you get to a point where writing becomes unpleasant, it may be time for a break. Focus on your friends and family for a while. Then come back to writing when you're ready and refreshed.

This article was inspired by an article in the May 2023 issue of The Writer entitled *An Antidote for Writer's Disease* by Tim Waggoner. I hope it helps you in your journey. Until next month, keep writing, writing, writing.

Jeffrey Czuchna – 2023 President

**"If we're not careful, our envy will ruin our writing. It can turn the writing we once loved into something we hate."**

## What's the Big Idea?: Straight From the Heart

The Saturday Writers March contest produced two first place entries—one for poetry and one for a short story. Both were slice of life, straight from the heart pieces.

Holly Elliott's poem, An Easter Toast, was inspired by a deer that frequented her yard and feasted on apple cores, greens, and leaf porridge. She's learned a lot about and from the wildlife living in the wooded areas which surround her home.

"One particular deer family has held a special place in my heart since 2019, with the eldest one I called The Old Lady. (Deer sometimes possess distinguishing traits to set them apart. Ever since they appeared in my life, I have called to each member of this family during their near-daily visits by their Holly-given name.)

"The Old Lady had a hind leg affliction, sometimes limping when she walked or standing on three legs. However, she remained steadfast in her visits, sometimes spending hours resting in our backyard.

"Tragically, the night before Easter, the Old Lady had an encounter with a coyote on our street, just one house away. My heart sunk when I found her lifeless body. As no one was available to remove her until Monday, I made periodic trips outside after dark to ensure her body remained undisturbed. During one of my final checks, I interrupted the coyote, who had come back for more. Essentially, I wanted to pen an "I was here" poem on her behalf."

While Holly doesn't have a preference of form style for her

poetry, most of her poems fall into the free verse category. Although she predominantly writes poetry, she also enjoys and has written short stories about human nature and wildlife.

Holly added, "My desire is to learn more of the finer details of poetry as well as develop greater comfort and confidence in other forms of creative writing."

What a passionate effort and beautiful tribute to Old Lady! Thank you, Holly.

The first-place prose entry, Lunch and Friendship with Cookies To Go, was submitted by Susan Gore Zahra. This thoughtful story begins with Ira and Sam who, as many retired folks often do, have established a daily routine which includes watching an unusual woman walk past their house every day. The strange woman shows up at Ira's door and a friendship grows.

Susan shared this about her story. "A "bag lady" wandered around my neighborhood when I was growing up. She seemed to have a home a couple of blocks from my house—I occasionally had to point out the street she was looking for. Ima and Sam were my grandparents, although Sam in the story is very different. One day, after my grandfather died, the bag lady did show up at Grandma's door with mending, and Grandma did feed her."

As a frequent contributor to the SW anthologies and participant in the on-line critique group, I



wondered how taking advantage of the group has helped or disappointed her. She replied with this. "The on-line critique group was my first SW group. When my schedule loosened up enough to add the in-person group, the on-line group became my "polisher." Someone always finds something no one else caught or has expertise that helps fine tune some description or process. I really enjoy responses about how something relates to the critiquer's experience. Those things let me know I have communicated on a somewhat deeper level."

As for disappointments, she shared that sometimes the responses are sparse. "The more comments, the easier it is to refine the story. If anyone is hesitant about joining a critique group, try it at least two or three times. The group varies a bit, but several of us are pretty consistent.

Thanks for sharing that, Susan. And congratulations—AGAIN!

That's it for now. Come back next month for more advice from another remarkable writer.

—Diane How

## In Case You Missed It: Monique Danielle, Self-Formatting with Atticus

You've finished your novel. Your editing is done, and your Beta readers have given you their feedback. You're ready to publish, and you've decided to self-publish. What do you do next? Monique Danielle came to speak to us on Zoom about Atticus, an online formatting program available to writers.

Atticus allows writers to format their own books for self-publishing as opposed to paying someone to do it for you. That helps you keep money in your pocket instead of cutting into your profit.

Atticus also has a writing platform that you can use. It is simpler than other writing platforms, so it reduces distractions while you're writing. They offer a timer to do sprints, a word count goal along with breaking it down into due dates, and basic word processor functioning. On the down side, it does not have all the options that other writing programs offer.

If you prefer to write in another program, simply import the file. DOCX is currently supported, as well as RTF, although they have plans to support EPUB and MOBI as well.

Once you've written or uploaded your book onto Atticus, it's time to start formatting. There are 17 available pre-formatted themes currently. If you're more of a DIY type, you can also customize a theme using design elements. They

can be designs that Atticus provides, or you can upload your own designs. Atticus will walk you through the process using prompts.

Atticus works for both eBook publishing as well as Print. You use one file for both, and you can export to any available ebook selling platform. You can select the size you want as well as getting a preview of what your book will look like on different ereaders. No need to worry about industry standards—Atticus's defaults are set to produce publication-ready files. Another feature that Atticus offers is combining your books. With a few clicks, you can create a box set.

Atticus works with BookBrush, too, a platform that we learned about during our monthly meeting in January 2022! It's also integrated with BookLinker, Grammarly, and Pro Writing Aid. Another feature of Atticus is that you can change access permissions. If you want to share with Beta readers, co-authors, or editors, you can give them limited access either by chapter or by time.

There is no preview of Atticus available other than what Monique shared with Saturday Writers during our presentation, unfortunately. However, the

price of Atticus is a one-time purchase, and you will never be asked to pay another fee for any additional upgrades. It is not a subscription, but a purchase of the services provided by Atticus.

Purchasing Atticus for the price of \$147 is much less than you would pay to hire someone to do your formatting for you. If you only format one book using Atticus, you will have gotten your money's worth out of it.

Visit their website at [www.atticus.io](http://www.atticus.io). You have a 30-day money back guarantee if you are unhappy for any reason. Atticus offers live demos and training sessions on a regular basis to help you learn how to use the platform. In addition, they have a YouTube Channel with tutorials, and many other customer support and learning options.

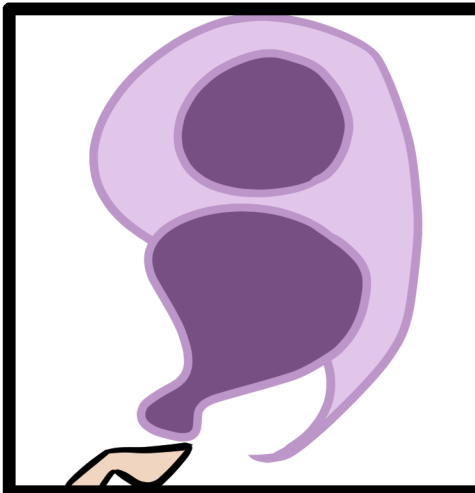
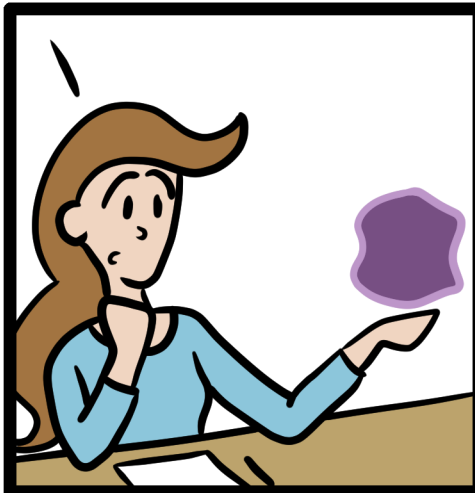
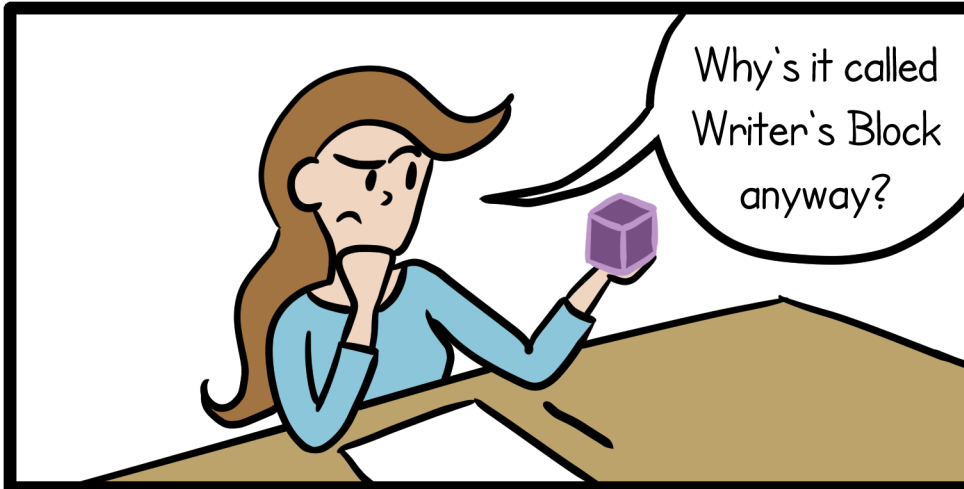
Atticus is a great tool for the writer who wants to self-publish, but doesn't know where to start. For any questions, contact Monique at [Monique@atticus.io](mailto:Monique@atticus.io).

—Beatrice Underwood-Sweet



Writer and Muse: Writer's Block

by Emma Vogt

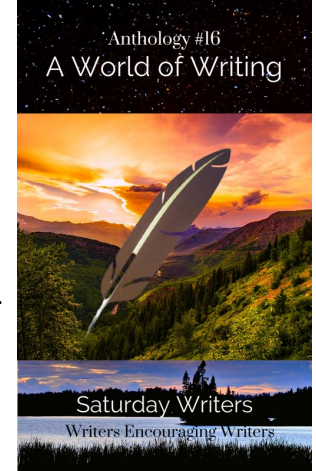


## Welcome to our Newest Feature: Writer & Muse!

We have the talented Emma Vogt joining us each month with a special comic, drawn just for Saturday Writers! These comics will be exclusive to Saturday Writers for the month after they're published, then will be posted on Emma's website. If you are interested in seeing more of Emma's work, visit her website here: <https://crimeshow.art/comics>

## Anthology Release

We held our annual release party on May 31st at the Spencer Road Library. If you weren't able to make it, you missed an inspiring and informative event. After the writers and audience had a chance to mingle for a little while, our Social Media and Publicity Chair, Pat Wahler served as a mediator for a panel that included the 6 writers who had contributed the most to this year's anthology. Those writers were Cheri Remington, Donna Mork Reed, Ken Lee, Diane How, Heather Hartmann, and Susan Zahra. They shared the wisdom they've gained from their years of writing and some insight into how they are successful as writers. Finally, the contributors were available to sign the anthology. Anthologies are still available at \$20 apiece. See Diane How at our next meeting, or visit the website to pay by Paypal.



## Picnic

We had a good turnout at this summer's first activity, our picnic at Brommelsiek Park on June 10th. Hotdogs and hamburgers were available for all and families were welcome. We hope to see you at our next social event, TBA!



## April Contest Winners

### POETRY:

First: Holly Elliott for *An Easter Toast*

Second: Cheri Remington for *Balance*

Third: Donna Mork Reed for *Invisible Girl*

HM: Kenneth Lee for *The Deer Visitor*

HM: Sherry Cerrano for *political cousins*

HM: Kenneth Lee for *What All Sunflowers See*

### PROSE:

First: Susan Gore Zahra for *Lunch and Friendship with Cookies to Go*

Second: Jeffrey Czuchna for *Whatever Happened to Professor Potts?*

Third: Jessica Baumgartner for *Hungry Bird*

HM: Jim Nuelle for *Not Yet*

HM: Heather Hartmann for *Best Seller*

HM: Christine Anthony for *Allison's Castle*

## June Contest Rules

**Theme: Specialty Recipes/Meals, i.e. Grandma's Famous \_\_\_\_\_**

**Prose:** 2023-word limit

**Poetry:** 50-line limit

**Begins:** 5/27/23

**Prose Deadline:** 6/24/23

**Poetry Deadline:** 6/24/23

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

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

## Upcoming Events

**June Meeting:** June 24th, Michelle Mason

**July Open Mic:** Thursday, July 6 at 7 p.m. via Zoom

**July Meeting:** July 29th, Kizzi Roberts — Self-Publishing.

**August Open Mic:** Wednesday, August 16th at Middendorf-Kredell Library

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

### 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:**