

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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MARCH SPEAKER, KELLI ALLEN: FINDING YOUR WAY BACK TO MYTH THROUGH POETRY

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.

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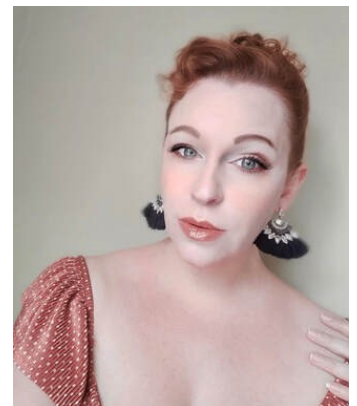
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The discussion will focus on what it means to be culturally engaged with collective stories and storytelling and how poetry is a unique vehicle for connecting universal tales through image. From the *Iliad* to *The Tempest* to *Coyote Stories*, images that weave throughout our histories remind us that myth and poetry have long shared the same hut.

Bio: Kelli Allen's work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies in the US and internationally. Allen is the co-Founding Editor of *Book of Matches* literary journal. She is an award-winning poet, editor, and dancer. She is the recipient of the 2018 Magpie Award for Poetry. Her chapbook, *Some Animals*, won the 2016 Etchings Press Prize. Her chapbook, *How We Disappear*, won the

2016 Damfino Press award. Her collections include, *Otherwise*, *Soft White Ash*, (2012), *Imagine Not Drowning*, (C&R Press 2017), *Banjo's Inside Coyote* (C&R Press 2019). Allen's latest book is *Leaving the Skin on the Bear*, C&R Press, 2022. She currently teaches writing and literature in North Carolina.



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK...



Sacrifice for Success

Last month I talked about how important balance is for a happy life. This month I'm going to tell you why a balanced life may not be what you want. Contrary advice you think? Just remember, every coin has two sides.

How do successful people do it? How does Tom Brady perform at such a high level in the NFL? How does Stephen King produce so many bestsellers? To be sure, some of it is natural talent, some of it may even be luck, but most of it is hard work—very hard work over a very long time. Highly successful people have a passion for what they do, and they work hard at being the best. Consequently, they do not lead a balanced life. Most highly successful people put a disproportionate amount of time and energy into a single aspect of their life, and just like you would expect, other parts of their life suffer.

Great success comes with a price. If you want success at a high level, you're going to have to sacrifice something. All you have to do to become a

bestselling author is to love writing above everything else and do nothing but write, every day, all day. Until you achieve superstar status your life will be out of balance. Are you willing to lead the kind of life necessary to achieve that level of success?

I know what you're thinking: Why so negative, Jeffrey? This doesn't sound like encouraging advice. Trust me, my intentions are indeed positive. I'm not trying to shoot down your hopes and dreams. My point is: if you're not as successful as you think you should be, if you haven't written that best seller, or even published your first book, it's probably because you have not made enough sacrifices. Instead, you chose to lead a more balanced life.

How much sacrifice is required? That depends on how much success you want. The greater the sacrifice, the more out of balance your life, and the greater your potential success. You must find what works for you. Stop comparing your writing to others. You have no idea what another writer may have sacrificed to

get where he/she is. Focus on *your* journey. Decide what *you* really want, determine how *you're* going to get there, and what sacrifices *you're* willing to make along the way. Then go for it. And of course, enjoy the journey.

In the spirit of "writers encouraging writers," here is this month's review of another how-to-write book.

Plot and Structure by James Scott Bell is one of the better books on writing. This book is part of *Writer's Digest Write Great Fiction Series*. The author is an accomplished writer and an excellent instructor. The book is filled with lessons on how to structure your story and create a compelling plot. Each chapter is easy to understand with exercises at the end to insure you have grasped the lesson. I give it four stars out of five.

Until next month, reexamine your goals with an eye on what you are willing to sacrifice, and of course, write, write, write, and keep writing.

Jeffrey Czuchna – 2022 President

"If you're not as successful as you think you should be, if you haven't written that best seller, or even published your first book, it's probably because you have not made enough sacrifices. Instead, you chose to lead a more balanced life."

PRESIDENT'S CONTEST WINNERS

Poetry

First Place: Donna Mork Reed for "Moon Writings"

Second Place: Tara Pedroley for "Three Roses of Saturn"

Third Place: Billie Holladay Skelley for "Pity Poor Pluto"

Honorable Mention: Donna Mork Reed for "Dogs' Christmas Present"

Prose

First Place: Christine Anthony for "Home"

Second Place: Christine Anthony for "Pretty Venus"

Third Place: Donna Mork Reed for "First Contact"

Honorable Mention: Jeanne Felfe for "Odd Peg"

PEN & PAINT I CONTEST WINNERS

Poetry Winners

Marilyn O'Neill for "Photographic Memory"

Cheri Remington for "Winter at the Catnap Inn"

Sue Fritz for "Orchestra Train"

Sherry Cerrano for "Milk Cows"

Billie Holliday Skelley for "The Plant Doctor"

Prose Winners

M.L. Stiehl for "Kitty on Parade"

Sherry Copeland for "The Fairmount Theater"

Sherry Copeland for "The Troublesome Miss Maize"

Christine Anthony for "First Kiss"

Donna Mork Reed for "True Love's Name"

Congratulations to all our winners! Want to see your name here? Check out this month's theme and guidelines on the next page to submit.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA —DIANE HOW

Greetings! I'm excited to be back writing about SW first place contest winners. The President Contest received many interesting entries for poetry and prose, challenging Jeffrey to decide on the best. The theme was planets.

Moon Writings by Donna Mork Reed won first place in poetry. This visual poem invites the reader to imagine the moon sending messages. Intrigued by the suggestion, I asked Donna about the origin of her idea. "I was looking out the window because the moon was out and it was so bright it looked like day. Then I noticed the shadows in the woods cast by the moon and thought, wow, that kind of looks like writing in the snow. What if the moon is sending a message?"

As one of our frequent poetry contest winners, I asked Donna for some tips on finding the rhythm to her poetry. "I do read my poem out loud and I also tap it out with my fingers on my desk to make sure the rhythm works. Sometimes it does, sometimes I have to tweak it, and sometimes I just give up because I

like the sound of it even if it isn't perfect. Reading it out loud really helps, especially on words that have more than one pronunciation"

Donna's favorite poet is Ted Kooser. "I read everything I can get by him, follow him on social media, and try to emulate his work. He takes everyday common occurrences and turns them into poetry."

When asked what keeps her stimulated when writing poetry, Donna shared this:

"I read poetry often, from the "poem-a-day" and "American Life in Poetry" that come to my email, to reading lots of poetry, to just writing, writing, writing, stretching myself to try even when I don't feel it. In April, I do the poem a day that Writer's Digest prompts for. Some of the prompts I have no idea how I'm going to do it, but I push myself and do it. Sometimes I get junk and other times I'm pleasantly surprised at the outcome."

Her advice to others is don't be afraid. "You might find enjoyment in it. And you might

surprise yourself and find out you are pretty good at it."

Keep writing, Donna. You have a gift and I'm glad you share it.

The winning short story, Home, was written by Christine Anthony. Inspired by world events, she created a science fiction tale about a desperate attempt to find a new planet on which to survive.

"I believe if we don't take care of our world, we will pay a heavy price someday. If you look at what's happening - COVID, climate change, loss of species, and now the war in Ukraine, I think a lot of people are questioning whether or not humans will survive if things don't change. No one knows what the future holds, but, as I tried to show in Home, there's always hope."

Christine doesn't limit herself to any specific genre when writing. "When the urge to write hits, I don't consider the genre at all. I go wherever the story takes me."

I love that! Imagination

should have no boundaries.

As a member who frequently submits contest entries, I asked Christine about her experiences with Saturday Writers. She said she has more confidence since joining the organization. "Every member I have contacted has answered my questions and given me advice when needed."

Her advice to other writers is simple. "Don't stop writing. If you love to write, don't ever become so discouraged that you stop doing what you love. You will have bad days when nothing seems to go right, but don't give up."

Valuable words of encouragement. Thanks, Christine, and congratulations.

That wraps up our President's Contest first-place winners. Will we see your name and valuable words of advice next month? Hope so. Get writing!



POET LAUREATE'S CONTEST

Theme: Silver

Deadline online: FRIDAY, March 25th by Midnight

Deadline on Paper: Saturday, March 26th in person

****No entries will be accepted after the March meeting ends at 1 p.m.**

If you are submitting a paper copy, do not include your name on the poem, only on a coversheet.

Find more information and the submission link here: <http://saturdaywriters.org/poet-laureate-contest-submissions.html>

MARCH CONTEST DETAILS

Theme: Bodies of water—lakes, rivers, oceans, reservoirs, etc.

Word Limit: For prose, 2,022 words. For poetry, 50 lines or less.

Entry fee: \$5 for members, \$7 for non-members

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>

FEBRUARY SPEAKER REVIEW

Anthony Clark Showed and Told Us!

All of the speakers chosen for our Saturday Writers' Meetings are gifted but few have been as entertaining and effective as our most recent speaker Anthony Clark. He led us in a participatory session about the differences between simply giving information to our readers (telling) and showing them the scene so clearly that they can see what our character sees and experience the moment for themselves (showing).

He began by helping us notice the difference. If our writing is lacking dialogue, deals with abstract or general concepts rather than specific detail, and overuses the verb "was," we are telling too much. However, it is also possible (although less

likely) for us to show too much to the audience. "Purple prose" overemphasizes specific details to the extent that insignificant characters or events are rendered with the same minute detail as the more significant elements and turning points in the story.

Most of us are guilty of telling too much rather than showing too much to our readers. Mr. Clark recommended that we use a consistent, specific point of view, incorporate more dialogue, appeal to a multitude of senses (especially smell which is often overlooked), choose more "picture nouns" and "action verbs," and write scenes in real time in order to show more in our work. He also quoted Michael Burns who advises that we cut our use of emotional adverbs such as "happily" or "menacingly" because they tell too much and

show almost nothing. A word like "happy" is too generic and summons up different mental pictures for different readers. The audience must be allowed to think and feel for themselves.

I was personally thrilled when Mr. Clark advised that "telling" is sometimes more effective than "showing." When there is a passage of time in our story, it is advisable to simply announce the new date. Telling allows us to transition effectively between voices or tone of description. It can move a story along so as not to bore the reader and offer information or backstory in an effective way. Showing is a special spotlight; telling can shift that spotlight without including misleading or distracting details. Telling is often a wonderful way

to summarize previous scenes and bring the audience's earlier experiences into new perspective.

Mr. Clark is an amazing storyteller with a personal charisma that is not easily ignored. He tried to include contributions from as many attendees as possible and sought honest feedback which endeared him all the more to me and made me want to apply his teaching. Thanks to those who brought him to our attention. Hopefully, my writing will soon *show* how much I learned this Saturday. I already *told* you...didn't I?

—Kenneth Lee

THE POET'S CORNER

A Few Thoughts On Adding Depth To A Poem

As an example, I will use this month's contest topic – water. A simple Pastoral or Idyll poem would suffice to meet the requirements for this contest. Although we may all desire a simpler, kinder world during these troubled times naïve rustic descriptive images can leave us wanting more. Relating these images to our human condition can elevate a poem to the next level by showing us a temporal truth. Explicating an eternal or archetypical truth takes the poem to an even higher plane.

As I have been honored to be named Saturday Writers Poet Laureate, I find it problematic to be entering our poetry contests. Therefore, these poems are not entered in this month's contest and are merely used as examples for this article. See following three poems.

Papaw Leaves

settling on my palm
composed of chartreuse,
veined rivers

connecting to the crimson,
veined rivers
of my hand held aloft
flowing into a calm,
cerulean, ocean of sky

serene summer day on the
Mississippi
mirrored on a surface of
deep, murky water
floating swiftly into the gulf

R.R.J.Sebacher ©

Delta Dawn's Faded Flower

[Or The Swamp]

Speaking on current affairs
Rose colored glasses don't
help

Wasted political polemic
Our journalists swim in
Yellow rivers of platonic
platitudes
Ink separated by oceans of
infinity

Muddy tidal mouths
Statesmen that are not
No longer care if caught
Once our nations fertile
ground

Now the Cottonmouth rules
R.R.J.Sebacher ©

New Orleans Sad and Lovely Decadence

Their fathers worked from
dawn to dusk
Both free men and slave
piling earth and rock in
marshy musk
Honest men who built the
dykes while wailing out their
blues
Fearing God, river, and the
sea – all now quiet in their
tombs
Yeoman's work their fathers
did - lasted quite awhile it's
true

Without vigilance and care
there is nothing time will not
undo

Perhaps too comfortable
tucked high into the
Mississippi's womb
All their fathers lived for -
they valued no more
Living off their songs and
graft - greed ruled in the
parish poll
No fear of the sea - for they
lived too far from the shore
Too proud for work they
were mostly on the dole
Celebrating Mardi Gras the
license of both rich and poor

Katrina gave days of warning
- yet their leaders could not
agree

Who is responsible men now
swim where once they would
stand?

With busses all parked in lots
they knew not how to flee
Beating chests - blaming
everyone now that water
reclaims the land
Nothing in life is free and if
you're not building up you're
tearing down
Betraying their fathers -
betraying children in trailers
without a town

R.R.J.Sebacher ©

One could also relate how
civilization has spread along
riverways and the mouths of
rivers for transportation,
commerce, and travel. Water is
a vital element for life. Wars
have been won and lost in
naval engagements. These are
but a few of the ways to relate
water to the human condition.
In the Bible before there was
light and sky, water hovered
over the Waters.

Creating great images can be
enhanced by adding meaning
beyond the childlike simplistic
beauty of the fantasy of a
utopian unrealistic view of
existence. My first rule of
poetry is there are no rules.
This is my opinion and should
be taken as such and no more.

Attendance Policy

- Any member with a fully paid 2022 membership may attend the live meeting to be held at 11am on March 26th at the Spencer Road Library, room 240. 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 February meeting and have access to the meeting via Zoom on March 26th at 11am. All future Zoom meetings will be available to members only.
- **Only members will be sent the link to view the recorded meeting after March 26th**

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.
- New anthology pre-order information will be on the website soon.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April Open Mic: In Person! 6:30 to 9 pm on Tuesday April 12 at Shamrocks, 7337 Mexico Rd, St Peters, MO 63376

April 30: Shana Youngdahl, The Power of Words to Create Tone, Mood, and Setting

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: TBD

August 27: Maria O'Rourke

September 24: Claudia Shelton