

Saturday Writers Newsletter

October/November/December • 2021

Saturday
Writers



Writers Encouraging Writers Since 2002

A Chapter of the Missouri Writers Guild

A Nonprofit Organization / Corporation

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Announcing New Officers



Get acquainted with SW's new president, **Jeffrey Czuchna**, on page 2, "Welcome and Thanks for the Opportunity."

Donna Mork Reed, new vice-president, grew

up in the Ozarks and resides in St. Charles with her husband, Dave, and Newfoundland dogs, Barnabas and Ace. She authored an inspirational true story published in *The Joys of Christmas 2015*, a Guidepost Publication, and is published on *Tin Lunchbox Review*, *Ibis Head Review*, and in

the Saturday Writer's anthologies from 2015 to present. She holds an M.L.S., a B.S. in biology and is a librarian. She also won photography awards at the 2015, 2016 and 2018 Douglas County Fair. She enjoys writing everything from poetry to picture books to novels and everything in between. In her spare time, she likes to sleep. She is pictured here with one of her Newfies, not her husband, Dave, who is also an SW member.



Continued on p. 7—New Officers

Twisting Your Writing

Amanda Flinn showed SW members how to twist a plot in picture books at the September 25th meeting. She began by defining a plot twist as a technique that introduces a radical change in the direction or expected outcome of the plot in a work of fiction. If the twist happens near the end of the story,



it's called a twist ending or surprise ending. Examples of movies include *Sixth Sense*, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Gone Girl*, to name a few.

Two main methods of coming up with a twist are: 1) Happen upon it. This is accidental, like the invention of chocolate chip cookies. 2) Follow the recipe. Her recipe for a good book is as follows:

- 1 dash of great characters
- 1 heaping pile of conflict
- 1 squirt of heart/voice

In preparation for using this recipe, you must read mentor texts; you must read picture books to see how story and pictures work together.

Another recommendation during the writing is to make a dummy.

Continued on p. 6—See Flinn

Welcome to Saturday Writers

We hope to be back meeting in person at the Spencer Road Library in January 2022, most likely with some changes due to the ongoing risk of Covid. If all goes as planned, our meetings will be hybrid—in person combined with Zoom for those who can't make it.

Join us on the last Saturday of each month, January through September, to hear speakers share their knowledge of all things writing. Membership is \$35.00 per year.

December 4

Holiday Party

see page 6 for details

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Farewell and Thanks for the Fish

Or so say the dolphins at the end of *Hitchhiker's Guide*. We're approaching the end of my third, and final, year as president of Saturday Writers. The two years prior as secretary and membership chair equate to five years of serving on the board. Serving has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I'm honored to have done my part in helping Saturday Writers not only remain a great organization for writers, but also continue to provide wonderful content during our time in forced apartness. But all good things must end, and so does my time as your leader.

I leave you in Jeffrey Czuchna's capable hands as your new president. Donna Mork Reed will be filling Pat Wahler's shoes as the new vice president. Diane How and Sarah Angleton have agreed to stay for one more year in their roles as treasurer and secretary respectively, and Diane is adding membership chair to her responsibilities. Thank you to all of them; I appreciate you.

And I appreciate all the volunteers who have continued to do their parts. Saturday Writers is a 100% volunteer organization and we couldn't function without each one of you. If anyone would like to help out, email president@SaturdayWriters.org—I'm sure Jeffrey can find a suitable role for you.

A few other changes are in the works. Susan Zahra is retiring as our newsletter editor, with the new editor still to be determined. Thank you, Susan, for your years of hard work to keep us informed. Thank you to Sherry Cerrano, who will continue as the assistant editor. A new component for future newsletters will be a staff of "reporters" who have offered to rotate creating the speaker write-ups. If you would like to be part of that group, please email president@SaturdayWriters.org.

I applaud all of you who kept writing, kept creating, kept putting one foot in front of the other during the pandemic. Hopefully, we've all come through unscathed, even if changed in a myriad of ways.

Keep writing. Explore the world around you and put words on the page to share it. I look forward to seeing everyone in person, hopefully in January 2022.

—*Jeanne Felfe, President*



Welcome and Thanks for the Opportunity

The year 2022 promises to be an exciting one. I'm confident that it will be another year filled with more changes. One of those changes may be a return to a normal world, as the pandemic seems to be under control. Does anybody remember what normal looks like? Wishful thinking, you say, maybe so. We can only hope and remain optimistic. One thing I do know for sure, there will be changes in the Saturday Writers leadership for 2022. Jeanne Felfe will be stepping down from her three-year role as president, and Pat Wahler will be vacating the vice-president position. I accepted the position of president, and Donna Mork Reed will be the new vice-president. Sarah Angleton will be returning as secretary, and Diane How will remain as treasurer. I want to thank Jeanne Felfe and Pat Wahler for their leadership and tireless dedication to making Saturday Writers an exemplary organization.

I first attended a Saturday Writers meeting in April of 2018 when Sue Fritz invited me. I met Sue at a writing course offered by the St. Charles Adult and Community Education Center. At that first meeting, I was struck by how open and friendly everyone was, and I immediately felt welcome and part of the group. Nicki Jacobsmeyer invited me to the children's critique group at that first meeting. I had just started to write what I thought might turn into a middle-grade book about a young boy who moves to a new school.

I have been part of that critique group for the past four years. I cannot tell you how valuable the experience has been. The wonderful people of that group have taught me so much about writing. They are extraordinarily supportive, and, when necessary, they are also brutally honest. I cringe when I think back at some of the early work that I submitted for their review. I had no idea what I was doing back then, and my writing showed it. However, every bit of advice came with a healthy dose of encouragement. The focus of the group has always been to help others become the best writers possible. Isn't that what Saturday Writers is all about? I encourage writers to find a group of like-minded people with whom to share and discuss everyone's writing. You won't regret it.

I started writing at a relatively late stage of life. After a 38-year career at McDonnell Douglas/Boeing

Continued on p. 7—See Czuchna

A Bountiful Harvest of Poetry and Prose

This time of year *leafs* (hehehe) me with mixed emotions. Fall brings with it cooler mornings, magnificent mums, and trees painted in gold. Unfortunately, the wicked winds whoosh away the Saturday Writers contests for a few months. I have to remind myself the change of seasons is a good thing. It provides a much-needed time for resting, reflecting, and refreshing.

The names of our first-place winners for poetry and short stories should sound very familiar. Heather Hartmann wrote a sentimental reflection on Father's Day. Here's what she said when I asked, "Which emotion most often inspires you to write a poem?"

"I am going to start with I am floored I won this contest. With my poems, I write from a place of raw vulnerability. Whether its emotions pulled from my experiences or emotions pulled from empathy. Also, one of my favorite parts of writing poetry is being able to play with the format of a poem to help make the impact I'm after."

Those words echo the message shared in one of our recent workshops. Kelli Allen noted the choice of words before a line break and the design of each stanza can help support the intended impact of a poem. Thank you, Heather, for demonstrating this technique. Be sure to read it when the next anthology is released.

Besides squeezing in writing winning entries into her busy day, Heather also volunteers for website maintenance, social media, and contest chair for Saturday Writers. I asked her to share how she became involved.

"My gosh why did I volunteer...probably because Brad somehow tricked me into it. Haha. Honestly, I saw that the group needed help keeping the website up to date and knew I could help fill that role. That almost went hand in hand with volunteering to help with social media pages. As far as the contest chair, I still don't know what compelled me to say yes. I was really nervous about taking on that role but have found I really enjoy it. A large part of my being able to enjoy it comes from being able to work with other great volunteers making the sometimes-challenging job worth it. I couldn't do my part without them rocking theirs! This group runs on volunteers. If you ever want to help, just speak up! Most of us volunteers would welcome help in their roles. Often, the group has open roles to fill."

The prose winning entry, "Just an Idea," was submitted by Jeffrey Czuchna. Although he has taken first place in the last two contests, he expressed how winning has encouraged him to keep writing.

"I am very surprised that I have been so successful recently. Just when I was thinking maybe I needed to quit writing for a while and reassess my efforts, I start to win these contests. Maybe I do know what I am doing. Winning certainly has encouraged me, and I am feeling excited about resuming a bigger project I put on hold about a year ago."

Jeff's short story is about a man who struggles to come up with the plot for his next novel. His muse finally speaks to him, and he develops a sci-fi story within his story. I wondered if the plot is the basis of a novel in progress.

"No, 'Just an Idea' is a standalone short story. I do have a longer story in the works that could grow into a novel though."

Like many of us in this organization, Jeff writes as a hobby not a career. He shared some background on how he joined Saturday Writers and how it has impacted his work.

"I retired two years ago from my job as an engineer and needed something to occupy my time. I thought I would try writing. My original objective was to tell my life story for my grandchildren. But I quickly found that I like writing fiction instead. I may return to my memoir in the future.

"I belong to the Saturday Writers Children's Critique group. When I first joined SW, I was writing some children's stories, so I joined that group. I have learned so much about good writing from that group. I also belong to the SW on-line critique group. I have gotten a lot of invaluable feedback from those people, too. Saturday Writers has been such a blessing to me."

Jeff closed with these thoughts. "If you are feeling discouraged with your writing, don't give up. Stay diligent and keep working at learning the craft. Read and write all that you can. You may not realize it, but you are getting a little better with every story you write. Keep submitting stories and asking for critiques. Work on your stories and resubmit. One of my first-place stories I submitted five times before it won." Something tells me this won't be the last we hear from Jeff.

Well, here we are. The end of another successful year. Kudos to all the writers who have submitted. As the upcoming holiday seasons fill your calendars with lots of distractions, please remember to pencil in a few hours every day or week to write. As the seasons change, so does Saturday Writers. I'm excited to see where the new year takes us. Blessings to all.

—Diane How

Fall 2021 Workshops Cover Developing Characters' Emotions, Writing Painful Stories, Poetry of Place, and Productivity

Need a Second Chance at Fall Workshops?

Did you miss one or more of our Fall 2021 Workshops? If you missed any, no worries. All workshops were conducted via Zoom and recorded. 2021 members can order the video recordings for \$10 each. Watch for an email with ordering instructions. If you're not yet a member, and want to purchase them, join now to receive that email: <https://saturdaywriters.org/membership.html>.

Hooking Your Readers through Characters' Emotions

Local author Debbie Burns opened Saturday Writers fall workshops with "Keeping Readers Hooked by Eliciting Emotion in Fiction" on October 5. Her workshop was peppered with passages from books in different genres to illustrate her three main topics.

First, she discussed building an engaging plot. The three-act, six-act, and Hero's Journey plot structures were briefly mentioned. She went on to recommend knowing your protagonist's goal at the beginning of the story, and doing authenticity checks at major plot points to ensure that their reaction is true to their personality.

The importance of every scene having a purpose and moving the story forward was stressed next. Your world-building is important, and you want to build a world that your reader wants to escape to without over-describing the setting and bogging them down in details.

The merits of different points of view were discussed in brief detail and that there really are no set rules for which POV to choose. Debbie pointed out that some genres lean toward one POV more than toward another. Deep POV was discussed, which minimalizes the distance between the character and the reader, making the character's reactions and feelings more close at hand than some other points of view and their thoughts just as important as the actions in the scene. The drawback is that it is difficult to maintain throughout a manuscript.

When writing characters, she stressed that it is important that you know your own personality first to verify that the character you are writing is different than your own. Debbie mentioned several different types of personality tests that you can use to determine our own personality. They are also helpful if you are the type of writer to build an in-depth profile of your main character. Meyers-Briggs is very popular, along with the Enneagram. On the other hand, if you want to write a simple profile, you can think about what governs each part of your character: mind, body, and heart.

Another important factor here is not to do an info dump and overwhelm your reader with details the first time you "meet" them. She showed us how to weave a character's back story in with other action in a scene or multiple scenes as opposed to giving all the information at once.

Ask how the character's background factors into his or her actions or inactions, and consider the Dark Side

when writing. What negative reactions or behaviors do they have because of what has happened to them in their past? Some common reactions were the provoked attacker, the perfectionist escaper, the controller, and the character who wants to burn it all down.

Debbie opened the floor to questions. When asked about finding an agent, her advice was to be persistent. Often, finding an agent is easier through contests, virtual pitches, and in-person pitches at conferences. "Writing is a long road of rejection by agents, editors, sometimes readers," she noted. The challenge of the YA market is due to quickly changing interests and demands, and often depends on having the right kind of manuscript available at the right time.

Amidst all the discussion about publishing and rejection, the one thing that she said that rang true was "You have to write because you love it." That is what made participants show up for her workshop and keeps Saturday Writers coming back for more.

—Beatrice Underwood-Sweet

Honoring Your Space

In her workshop on "Poetry of Place," poet, editor, and educator Kelli Allen described place as something you are born into and carry with you like a turtle shell. She quoted Wendall Berry: "If you don't know where you are going or where you have been, you don't know who you are." Place is internal as well as external. In his poem, "Finding the Father," Robert Bly writes, "My friend, this body offers to carry us for nothing."

Kelli noted that, when we become comfortable in our turtle shell space or body, we don't pause to feel gratitude, wonder or even interest. We acknowledge the privilege of being in the presence of ordinary objects or places by honoring them with words. We honor our bodies by accessing our senses. "Creativity requires you to sit down, stop and really be in the space you are in, not what to do next."

The theory behind poetry of Place with a capital P is an act of what Romantic poet John Keats called negative capability. First, we must negate what we think we know to really understand objects. We must figure out what emotion behind actions and objects *might* mean in order to provide a bigger framework for questions about what Place is and how we fit in.

Both theory and technique play a role in creating poetry of Place. Kelli provided poems to illustrate X technical considerations.

Choose specific nouns—unless there is a reason to be non-specific. In Robert Bly's "The resemblance between your life and a dog," the poet deliberately uses both specific and non-specific words as metaphors. Sparrows as metaphor for childhood, are specific, cheery, chirpy little birds, that burst from your hand

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not just with glee, but with fiery glee. You see them later in hedges, which exist to form boundaries, rather than bushes. Bly's use of the non-specific word dog as metaphor for you points to the universal human change from the energetic glee of childhood through changes, sometimes as unpleasant as "Your face becomes deranged trying to adjust/To it." The "it" is another metaphor for life change.

Allow the specificity of the present lead to past and back through present into the non-specificity of future.

Kelli urged us to examine how spaces connect us to memory, but also how you project them into the future. "What about them makes you hopeful or want to come back? How are they representative of a desire or wish that you have for yourself?"

Challenge yourself to write in spaces that you dislike. "Put yourself in places that you dislike or are unpleasant to you, that make you uncomfortable. Physically challenge yourself in order to mentally challenge yourself.

"Is it too hot, too cold, too ugly? Perfect! We want to get at emotions that make us upset or worried or anxious as often as places that make us feel grateful or warm or comfortable.

Break lines where you want readers to pause, shift meaning. Read the last word of each line to find one more meaning.

Kelli Allen's workshops cannot be compressed into a compact summary. She included analysis of several poems, as well as a writing assignment followed by reading and discussing our poems. If you missed this workshop, you can still purchase access with more resources than will fit in this space. "Poetry of Place" also pairs well with David Schuman's workshop, "Writing Painful Stories."

—Susan Gore Zahra

Writing Painful Stories

Some Saturday Writers may remember David Schuman from our January 2020 meeting about flash fiction. He returned this year to present "Writing about Pain."

What do we talk about when we talk about pain?

Pain noun 1: the physical feeling caused by disease, injury, or something that hurts the body

2: mental or emotional suffering : sadness caused by some emotional or mental problem

3 informal: someone or something that causes trouble or makes you feel annoyed or angry

We focused on the second definition in this workshop, since it's a topic that many people struggle to write about. David presented it through the lens of nonfiction, but much of what he had to say also applies to writing about pain in fiction. David pointed out that you can write about pain, or you can ignore pain because everything you are writing is pain.

Use images to do the work for you. Pain is massive, but it is also abstract, so we find ways to gesture at it, and images can convey what words can't. Prescription bottles lined up on a dresser might give us a glimpse into the pain

of the writer or character when we can't or don't want to use our words to say that someone is in pain.

Live past the pain. Distance gives us power, and time passing gives us power over our pain. Sometimes you have to wait in order to be able to best address the pain of an event. David described what he called the Yank Method here, where you look back at something that happened a long time ago and bring it into the present.

Use formal structure or style. He gave us several different examples of this, such as listing; repetition; alternate structure similar to a WebMD entry, or a Facebook or dictionary entry; something that is non-chronological and so forth.

Humor. Everybody's heard that old adage, "If you don't laugh, you'll cry," and that's certainly true for grief. David played a clip from a Netflix series called *I Think You Should Leave* to illustrate this, although he did warn that the series could get quite rude.

Use a diversion. Try writing about one thing, but let something else in. Write as a metaphor. Digress and go off on a tangent. Use sleight of hand.

If you want to read some examples of essays using some of these techniques, David recommends *Brevity Magazine*, found online at www.brevitymag.com.

Many of the topics and techniques of writing are searchable here. If you would like some prompts to get you started, try using an object as an entry point at *Significant Object*, specifically this page: <https://significantobjects.com/2009/11/17/insignificant-object/>.

—Beatrice Underwood-Sweet

PROactive=PROductive

Ever wondered how the folks that seem to get so much writing done do it? They understand and manage the difference between being proactive and reactive. Our October 25 workshop speaker, Mary Buckham, outlined the Secrets to Productivity.

Small shifts in mindset and routine can take you from never getting that book finished to writing as many as you want. Part of the process is clarifying your intentions. In other words, your what and why. If you don't know what you're trying to accomplish and why, you're more likely to spend your day REacting to everything *someone else* wants you to do, instead of PROactively choosing what *you* do. When you understand your goals, you are more likely to act on tasks that move you toward long-term benefits.

REactive tasks are easier, safer, and feel like they provide an immediate benefit. These tasks aren't planned, and include things like: email (only 1% need a "now" response), checking phone messages, jumping up for child/pet/spouse wanting immediate attention, doorbell, hunger (often triggered by stress), saying yes because ____ asked you to do _____. Often you're assuming that *you* are the *only* one who can handle whatever it is. Doing these things sets you up to be reactive instead of proactive.

They eat away at your writing time and before you know

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This is when you fold paper to form a “book” and put your text on the book where you think it should go to see if the page turns are correct. The words and pictures need to work together. But unless you are an author/illustrator, this will happen later. You first need to write the great story, and that rarely happens in the first draft.

Your plot twist needs to be logical. It should be unexpected and surprising but not make the reader feel like they’ve been misled or tricked. It should make the reader question how they could have missed that coming and have them go back to reread the text to see the hints the author gave along the way that they missed in the first reading.

Techniques to creating great plot twists:

Let the characters lead. Get to know your characters. They will often take you in directions you weren’t expecting.

Use misdirection. Draw the readers’ attention to one thing so they won’t notice something else that is going on at the same time.

Foreshadowing. Drop in hints and clues throughout the story. Often with picture books, this is done in the artwork, so the author/illustrator has the advantage here. But a good writer will leave space for the illustrator to work their magic.

Withholding information. Don’t tell the reader everything they need to know to figure out the ending.

Tell the story from the point of view of a character with limited knowledge. In this case, the

main character will be surprised and hopefully, so will the reader.

The turn of events can come in the middle of the manuscript or near the climax. Or there can be a double twist. But the twist needs to be related to a major choice that is made.

Delivery. Keep the momentum up regardless of where the twist is. Give the reader closure and satisfaction. It doesn’t have to be a happy ending, but there does need to be enough ending to make the reader happy.

Some examples of children’s books with great twists include:

I Want My Hat Back by Jon Klassen: There was a predictable repetition. Dialogue was similar each time. The story line was simple. There were hints within the text, with foreshadowing and then surprise, the rabbit gets eaten.

Eat Pete! by Michael Rex: Three times the monster does not eat the kid, then he does. SURPRISE. Humor in that he spits him out. Gets a hug at the end so the monster is redeemed. Sweet ending component.

If Wendell had a Walrus by Lori Mortenson: Two kids make friends while they are waiting for what they think they really want, not realizing it is their friendship that is really what they wanted all along. The ending is fun, where the whale and walrus get the messages that were sent to them.

Amanda included many resources for additional research on this topic.

Now, time to get twisting, I mean, writing!

—Donna Mork Reed

Upcoming Events



2021 is ending with high hopes for meeting in person again in January. To wrap up this continuing saga of another pandemic year, we’re going to have some fun. Albeit online fun, but fun all the same. Even if you don’t like online, come anyway—we miss seeing your face.

**Calling all members!
Bring your own holiday beverage and non-sharable snacks!**

There will be fun and games and prizes...and even some writing. Plus, we’ll have an ugly mask contest—holiday themed or otherwise—kind of a take on the ugly sweater theme. Decorate your own or find one, but have it handy for the contest. Alas, there won’t be a basket contest or silent auction.

How to prepare: Find or make an ugly mask for the contest. Think about your writing goals for 2022 and jot them down—you’ll be able to share them with the group if you want. Have a holiday-themed (or not) beverage to toast the upcoming (and hopefully, COVID-free) new year.

Mark your calendars!

Holiday party is Dec 4 from 10-noon on zoom. Click on this link for the meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89064031890>

When the box requesting the password pops up, type in 081305.

The meeting ID is 890 6403 1890 if needed.

Czucha—Continued from p. 2

as a structural engineer, I started writing in 2018 at the age of 58. I wanted to write for two reasons: first, to have something to do in retirement, and second, to leave a legacy for my grandchildren. My original plan was to tell my life story in a series of short stories for my grandchildren. To date, I have completed just two of those memoirs. Along the way, my interest shifted to fiction. I like to write stories in the style of the old TV series, *Twilight Zone* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. I have also tried a few children's stories using my grandchildren as inspiration. There are some longer stories in the works that might turn into a novel someday.

I am excited to be taking a more active role in Saturday Writers. I have received so much from the organization, and now I have an opportunity to contribute. I hope I can live up to the high standards that Jeanne has set.

I look forward to meeting more members when we return to the Spencer Road Library for in-person meetings in January (hopefully). I promise to do my best to continue to make Saturday Writers the best writers' club in the region.

—Jeffrey Czuchna, Incoming President

PROactive=PROductive—Continued from p. 5

it, hours have elapsed with no words on the page. 80% of our time is usually spent on REactive tasks.

PROactive tasks are those that are important to reach your goal. They don't feel urgent, but provide significant long-term benefits to you. They are planned based on your goals. And the biggest problem: they feel scary. It's much easier to read a bunch of emails than it is to reach out to an author who is more successful than you and ask if you can be part of her critique circle. Twenty percent of our time is spent on being PROactive, but it should be 80% instead.

When you're doing REactive tasks instead of PROactive, you're procrastinating.

To help move from REactive to PROactive—or working on those things that you decide to ACT on—identify your goals and which tasks fall into which bucket. Identify three (initially) high priority tasks; low-priority, but necessary to do only after completing the high priority tasks; and your never-to-do tasks. For those last ones, ask yourself: are you the best person to do that task? What would happen if you stopped doing it or did it less often? Are you using this task to avoid a riskier, scarier PROactive task?

Try including these five actions: 1) Sleep more. 2) Stop saying YES to everything—instead say “let me think about it.” 3) Stop being a perfectionist. 4) Organize to reduce friction. 5) Play more.

—Jeanne Felfe

New Officers— Continued from p. 4

Sarah Angleton will continue her role as secretary, keeping us informed of what's coming up next.



Diane How continues serving as treasurer counting the money and has added membership chair counting our members.

Many thanks to our volunteers!

'Tis the Season To Renew Your Membership for 2022

To say that 2021 didn't go exactly as we had all hoped, is well ... I don't even have words. While the country is slowly getting vaccinated, the variants are proving to be tenacious. I have high hopes January 2022 will be different, and I look forward to seeing everyone again.

We've had some amazing speakers this year, including many we could only host because of Zoom.

- **New Memberships** paid after October 31, 2021: \$35
- **Renewed Memberships** paid before midnight Feb 28, 2022: \$30
- **Renewed Memberships** paid after March 1, 2022: \$35

New Memberships: Please also complete a Membership Form (renewals only need to complete if changing address/email information).

<http://saturdaywriters.org/membership-form.html>

Advantages of Membership

- Network with 100+ members covering all genres
- Attend regular *monthly meetings* with guest speakers at no charge
- Participate in our *members-only* discussion/critique groups and events
- Enjoy *discounts* on
 - * Saturday Writers Fall workshops
 - * Saturday Writers contests
 - * Missouri Writers' Guild events
- Access to members-only expertise database
- Published authors can share up to 5 books on our members' bookstore, a new feature on our website.
- Special events
- Write-ins
- Open Mic Nights
- Meet and Greets

Precision, Persimmons, and Really Knowing

"Persimmons," a dramatic monologue by Li-Young Lee, tells of the bi-cultural problem of learning a second language from the first-person point of view. This poem can be found at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43011/persimmons>. We each see a poem through the lens of our own past experiences. Here is my interpretation.

In his poem of eighty-eight lines, Lee takes the reader through many transitions. Lines 1 through 5 set the scene: "In the sixth grade Mrs. Walker / slapped the back of my head / and made me stand in a corner / for not knowing the difference / between persimmon and precision."

In lines 7-17, Lee shows us that he knows persimmons, "all of it, to the heart." I like the enjambment that occurs in versions that have a stanza break between lines 6 and 7, pushing the two words side by side. At first, I thought this might be a poem about bigotry and a pompous teacher thinking she was the intellectual superior of a child unlucky enough not to have been born in a land where English was the "national" language.

In line 18, Lee slants off in a different direction. This stanza presents the most pleasant and idyllic way to acquire a new language that can be imagined. At this point, I thought he had two separate poems, both having merit.

As Lee's poem progressed, I became aware of the interconnectivity of the whole. In the next stanza (lines 29 – 39), he takes us into a loving moment with his mother, again showing us the difference in depth between connotation and denotation of words with his brilliant metaphors.

In the next stanza (lines 40 – 45), Lee once more demonstrates his teacher's lack of knowledge. I love persimmons and can attest to the fact that every student's face was puckered and pained. Unripe persimmons are astringent and bitter.

Lee compares a ripe persimmon to the sunny warmth of his mother's love in lines 46 – 48. In lines 49 – 60, he gives two persimmons he found to his father after he had let them ripen in the rays of the sun and a cardinal's song. He gave this gift of love to his father, who was going blind.

The remainder of the poem focuses on Lee's father, now frail and completely blind. Lee discovers three paintings by his father, seated nearby on "tired, wooden stairs." One shows two persimmons that he describes as "so full they want to drop from the cloth." I see them as the two he described as "swelled heavy as sadness, and sweet as love" when he gave them to his father. His father asks which painting Lee is looking at and reaches out to touch it. In line 79, he tells his father it is the painting of the persimmons.



R.R.J. Sebacher

We now come to the last stanza, lines 80 – 88, in which Lee brings the poem around to the beginning with the words, "precision" and "persimmon." Then using all our senses, Lee gives us a magical image of how his blind father, in a reciprocal act of love, painted precisely and perfectly those persimmons that his son had so lovingly given him.

Li-Young Lee to my amazement keeps elevating this poem stanza by stanza, level by level to a height where poems are referred to with a capital P and poets, if they can produce a goodly number of this caliber, are referred to as Greater Poets. I would compare this poem and poet to one of the Greats, but I have learned it is silliness and a disservice to both to make these comparisons. Poems and poets must stand on their own.

—R.R.J. Sebacher

Pen & Paint II Winners

Lips: Denise Scott for "Mouthing Truth"

Tree: John Marcum for "By Moonlight"

House: Donna Mork Reed for "Gumption and Cookies"

Unicorn: Donna Mork Reed for "A Simple Wish"

Sea Turtle: Diane How for "Bits and Pieces"

Young Woman: John Marcum for "The Smile"

Washing Machine: Cheri Remington for "The Washer Wars"

Canine: Cheri Remington for "Wolf in the Woods"

Fishing: Heather Hartmann for "Fish"

Cardinal: Diane How for "A Man of His Word"

This was our last contest of the year. All 10 winning entries will be included in our 2021 anthology. Come back next year for a whole new theme. *Theme will be announced at our Holiday party, then posted on social media after!*

A huge congratulations to our winners!

The winning stories and accompanying art will be displayed at the Art Centre. This show will feature both Pen & Paint Part I and Part II winning entries, as well as the five stories from 2020 that missed out on paintings—twenty-five painting/story combinations.

Pen & Paint Show

October 21 through December 12, 2021

Location: St. Peters Cultural Arts Centre
1 St Peters Centre Blvd
St Peters, MO 63376

A Pro at Procrastination

I want to draft an article for the newsletter, something relatable, something I've experienced. *Making Lemonade from a Lemon* is an apt subject. So where to go from here? Like many writers, I have folders of incomplete short stories and poems stashed on my laptop. Deletion is out of the question. Even the most abysmal story holds something salvageable.

This folder includes a story for an online-competition I paid to enter but didn't finish. The contest guidelines specified the subject had to have something to do with Russia. I dived right in, coming up with a young adult story that included time travel. The piece was fun to write but impossible to submit, a lemon if there ever was one. Early on it was apparent I know little about Russia and less about Russian history. I seem to remember Napoleon getting stuck in a Russian snowstorm without a shovel but otherwise, nothing. Research would have helped but it just didn't happen. There's a lesson here. Instead of wasting fifteen dollars on something I'm not prepared for, I can get a cookie dough concrete from Dairy Queen and a judge's critique from Saturday Writers, both worthwhile purchases.

Dairy Queen.

I might need a snack before writing. It would take maybe twenty minutes to drive to Dairy Queen, wait in line, and return home. Too much trouble. Be healthy and grab an apple instead.

Apple.

I need to look into an Apple watch. Jan uses hers for everything and loves it. Am I getting 10,000 steps every day? Doubtful. Instead of walking around the block or walking to Dairy Queen, I continue to sit in front of a laptop.

Laptop.

That's right, I should be looking on my laptop for the *Lemonade* story. Scroll, scroll, scroll. Look, my photos from the zoo! The lion was gorgeous, posing, yawning, snoozing in the sun. But I'm lyin' to myself if I think these photos will help my story.

Scroll, scroll, scroll. There's the piece I wrote about my grandma, whom I never met. In the late 1800s, she traveled from her town in the Apennines to Rome and lived there until she emigrated to the United States. But how did she get from the mountains to Rome? Did she walk that distance? Ride in a donkey cart? A train? Back in the Neanderthal days we had to physically go to a library to dig for information. Now I can investigate nineteenth-century Italian transportation, as well as Russian history, while sitting in my living room with reruns of *NCIS: New Orleans* running in the background. There's no excuse not to do the research necessary to create a plausible story. On the other hand, I could ask someone who had first-hand knowledge of Grandma—my cousin.

Of course. I should ask my favorite and oldest cousin who goes by Cuz. Why haven't I?

'Cuz I've been busy procrastinating.

This obvious solution somehow escaped me, even

though Grandma and Cuz are forever linked by the exceedingly long and unpronounceable name that saddled both—Marie Assunta Bartoloni LoNigro, and in my cousin's case, add Caruso to the end.

Name.

My friend Christy just had a baby and named her Joy, the perfect name for an infant who took an exceptionally long time to join her family.

New baby.

I might be ready for a new baby myself, but mine will be furry and most likely a rescue animal. I'll click on Petfinder.com and see what's out there. . . Gosh, a whole bunch of black dogs, often difficult to place for no good reason. If I had a black dog, I'd have to name him Dog Vader.

Vader.

Bader, Harrison Bader. Center field.

What a strange season the Cardinals had this year. That reminds me—I need a new Cardinals shirt, something I can wear in cooler weather. Maybe with Tyler O'Neill's number and name on the back, since he spells his the same as mine. Something nice enough to wear to work.

Work.

Back to work on my story. I can't google random subjects on the internet and still finish my newsletter article. Time is short and a deadline calls. I've always been able to change the subject at the drop of a hat. My friends in college called it "tangential thinking." I call it "lack of focus," possibly a mild case of ADD. Please don't ask me to concentrate when I get like this. It won't happen. But I should try, I guess. No more procrastination for me.

My laptop contains potential subjects for future work, including some that would make a nice cycle of poems. Yeah, too daunting for this evening. I have a topic anyway—taking a lemon and making lemonade.

I wonder if there's any in the fridge.

—Marilyn O'Neill

Thanks for the Adventure

As I leave editing the newsletter, I would like to thank all of the volunteers who have contributed their writing and proofreading to making the newsletter happen. A special thanks goes to Jeanne Felfe, whose "cat-herding skills" helped me keep track of all the pieces and parts. To those of you who were brave enough to write a news article instead of your usual genre, I admire your courage in trying something new. I look forward to seeing what the next year brings in terms of new horizons with the newsletter, speakers and hopefully, meeting in person again.

Peace on the journey,
Susan Gore Zahra

Painting Word Pictures in the Air and on the Page

In the movie, *CODA* (Child Of Deaf Adults), the scene opens on cloudy sky and choppy ocean. We hear the slap slosh of waves. The camera pans to a ship floating far away on open water. As the camera approaches the ship, we hear the engine grinding and music. Focusing in closer, we hear Ruby, the only hearing member in the fisherman's family, belting out "Something's Got a Hold on Me" along with Etta James's recording while she operates the winch to haul in the nets of her family's fishing boat. Full shots of her father and brother show them emptying nets and sorting fish, oblivious to the music even after Ruby cranks up the volume.

American Sign Language (ASL) instructor Tom Flynn uses film to help his students learn about perspective shifts and point of view (POV). "Both movies and ASL tell stories. 'Movies' is a shortened form of 'moving pictures.' ASL is described as 'making pictures in the air.'"



The extreme long shot of the ship in *CODA* provides context both physically and emotionally by painting a picture of isolation. Ruby's deaf family is isolated from others in the fishing community. Away from her family, Ruby also is as isolated as their boat.

For both ASL and writing, an extreme long shot, such as the vast ocean and tiny boat, provides the background, or context, for communicating the story. When Tom interprets, he prepares by learning as much as possible about the people (both speakers and audience) and the situation. When interpreting at religious services, for example, he learns about the customs of that church. "The sign for baptism looks different in a Catholic church, where water is sprinkled on the head, and a denomination that practices immersing a person into water, but both use the same word. I have to sign the right picture to show the correct form of baptism."

Whether writing fiction or non-fiction, we need to know everything about the people involved, the location of the story, and the time frame. Then, we narrow our focus to what is germane to the story. What we know but don't include isn't wasted; it informs our choice of words to paint the pictures of characters and events that we do include in the story.

In *CODA*, most shots of people show full or partial bodies because ASL uses the whole body to make the air pictures. All but one scene uses closed captions so that hearing people understand what is signed and deaf

people understand what is spoken. When her music teacher asks Ruby how she feels when she sings, she cannot speak the words. Her signs show how the turmoil in her gut relaxes and her self floats away so eloquently that no captions are needed. When her family goes to her choir concert, there is no sound and no captions for the singers, only for her parents. They sign how pretty Ruby looks as she sings a duet with her first sweetheart, then discuss what to fix for supper. When they start looking at people around them, they see—and we see—a man nodding his head to the music, their son and his hearing girlfriend holding hands and leaning close, a woman patting away a tear and finally, the standing ovation. We see how they read body language and realize Ruby is gifted in a way they cannot understand.

When writing, we have choices—does showing how the main character moves and behaves paint the best picture of their change or growth? Or does showing how the people around them move and behave give a clearer picture?

What background about time, place, people is necessary to the story? Do we need an extreme long shot moving in closer, like the boat and ocean? Or can we jump right onto the boat with a full shot?

Go play with painting pictures on your pages. See what objects and background also show feelings and personalities of your characters.

In addition to being an ASL instructor and interpreter, Tom Flynn teaches English writing to American deaf students, and to American and international non-deaf students, as well as English as a second language to international deaf students. He has a B.A. in linguistics; M.A. English, teaching writing; and graduate certificates in teaching writing and teaching English as a second language.

—Susan Gore Zahra, Editor

Looking for a Volunteer Opportunity?

Do you have a book published or plan to within the next twelve months? Want to work with others on how to market? Step right up! The Marketing Co-op group needs a new leader as Jeanne steps aside from volunteer duties. If you would like to take this group and guide it to success, email Jeanne at Jeanne.F@SaturdayWriters.org.

SW Members News

Congratulations to **Nicki Jacobsmeier** for receiving a WOOP (Work of Outstanding Progress) Grant Award from Society of Children's Books Writers & Illustrators (SCBWI) to recognize excellent works in progress. The SCBWI sets aside special grants for the hard-working volunteers that run each regional chapter. Nicki has served as the Assistant Regional Advisor for the Kansas/Missouri region for four years.

Scraps of Hope is a picture book about pack horse librarians delivering books during the 1930s deep in the Appalachian Mountains. When the Great Depression started, folks stumbled on hard times. Many lost their jobs, homes, and struggled to support their families. Most of all, people craved hope for the future. Hope arrived with the pack horse librarians through President Roosevelt's New Deal. Each week children, families, and schoolhouses celebrated when their pack horse librarian arrived at their door with books.

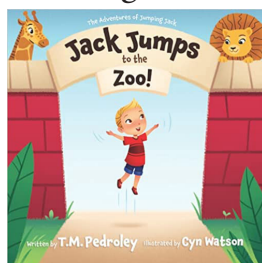
After being handled by many cherished hands, reading materials needed to be taken out of circulation. The librarians constructed scrapbooks and filled them with beloved items—recipes, quilt patterns, pictures, and stories. Nicki has permission to use over 350 photos of original pack horse librarians' scrapbooks from the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York.



Tara Pedroley has expanded her horizons to include a children's picture book, *The Adventures of Jumping Jack: Jack Jumps to the Zoo*. An engaging book for infants, it also makes a fantastic first reader for children up through about first grade.

The colorful illustrations were done by **Cyn Watson**, aka Brad's daughter, who also designed a number of SW anthology covers.

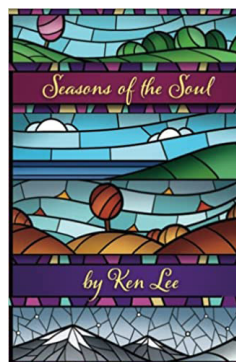
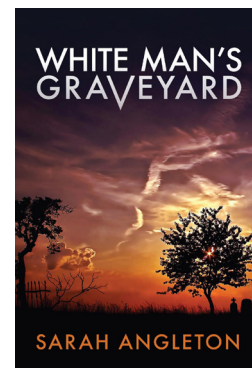
It's now available on Amazon



for paperback and Kindle this link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1737104016>.

Distance SW member **Robert Walton**, a retired middle school teacher living in King City, California, recently had a poem posted on Your Daily Poem, a poetry web page edited by Jayne Jaudon. You can find Robert's poem, "Dusk Again," at [Dusk Again by Robert Walton - Your Daily Poem](#).

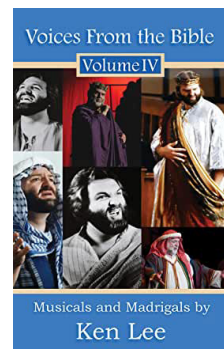
White Man's Graveyard, a new historical novel by **Sarah Angleton**, will be available on Amazon November 15th. Abolitionist siblings Annie and Sylvanus find themselves on opposite sides of the issue, and the ocean, when the plan to settle former American slaves in the colony of Liberia divides the movement and pits political conviction against family loyalty.



Christian playwright **Ken Lee** has released *Voices from the Bible; Volume Four: Musicals and Madrigals*, four Broadway-style musicals about biblical characters. Cast size is flexible and may be done with or without music, which is available upon request. He also includes three scripts for Christian madrigal dinners.

Add your own medieval music and you'll enjoy a night of fun and puns! Ken has plans to put together a fifth volume in his series of Christian plays.

He also has a new book of devotionals, *Seasons of the Soul*, is now available on Amazon. The book is similar to *Seasons in the Son*.



Thanks for All Those Tammyisms

For over six years, Tammy Lough has filled this back page with writing wisdom delivered in her unique, memorable style. Jeanne Felfe, one of her long-time critique partners, shared what she calls true Tammyisms.

“One thing that has always stood out both in her writing is her use of unusual phrases. For instance, her September 2016 article includes: ‘a creative jump-up-and-slap-your-pappy sizzler.’

“No matter what life throws at her, Tammy always finds the humor. Tammy’s nursing background showed us some creative ways to kill a character in her September 2017 article, ‘When Your Character Deserves a Good Killing.’ She recommends that you ‘Get [your victim] to munch on a handful of [strychnine] blossoms or seeds, which have a weak, curry powder odor, and in 10 to 20 minutes, wallah, he will become living challenged and in one to three minutes, wins the grand prize: A brand new toe tag!’ So, how does SHE know they smell like curry?”

Donna Mork Reed enjoyed the article, “Think Z - Before A,” from January 2021. “I love how she reminds us to have the beginning and ending in mind before you start writing. I do better with a full, if bare-bones, outline as I’m not a true pantster. I also enjoy all of her quirky humor she sprinkled throughout her articles. Now, what do I do about my current dilemma—the LMNOP is all mixed up? Thanks to Tammy, I have my Z and my A down pat!”

Marilyn O’Neill appreciates Tammy’s piece on meditation from the June 2021 newsletter. “It’s



Tammy Lough

a wonderful lesson on how to focus and ‘let the world go’ before concentrating on creative work.”

Nicki

Jacobsmeier shared one of her favorite Tammyisms from the May 2019 issue. “In ‘Life Gets Snarky, Write Anyway,’ not only can I relate to life getting snarky, but Tammy spoke my love language when she started talking non-fiction regarding the science of writing down your thoughts. She had me at limbic system! She ends the article with a simple truth I constantly remind myself: ‘Today’s worries probably won’t matter tomorrow and for sure by next week they will have found pathways toward resolution.’”

Diane How remembers “laughing and cringing when I read ‘So You Want to Write a Novel’ in June 2020. In a style only Tammy has perfected, she said “You will bleed, yes, BLEED, one-by-one the perfect, impossible to convey words onto the page.” Her frank and humorous explanation reminded me of the true grit needed to complete a manuscript. It also entertained and encouraged fellow writers to stick with it and not give up. Thanks, Tammy, for your many columns smothered in unforgettable laughter.

Cheri Remington expressed her appreciation for Tammy’s thought-provoking articles. “Each one was a gift of how-to wisdom. My favorites were about pre-planning and using a formula to set your writing in motion. But the real lesson is your example of seeking out the information we need.”

If you find a need for a Tammyism fix, you can still find her Back Page pieces starting

with June 2016, at <http://saturdaywriters.org/newsletter-archive.html>.

As for my favorite? “Writers Write!!!”

—Susan Gore Zahra, Editor with Jeanne Felfe, Marilyn O’Neill, Donna Mork Reed, Nicki Jacobsmeier, Diane How, Cheri Remington

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Sue Fritz

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Newsletter Assistant:

Sherry Cerrano

Pre-Meeting Saturday

Works-in-Progress Café &

Creative Writing Salon:

R.R.J. Sebacher

Publicity Chairs: Rose Callahan

Speaker/Workshop Chair:

Jeanne Felfe

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Heather Hartmann

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Our meetings will be conducted using Zoom until further notice.
For access information, visit SaturdayWriters.org and look under the Meetings tab.