

Saturday Writers Newsletter

October/November/December • 2020

Saturday
Writers



Writers Encouraging Writers Since 2002

A Chapter of the Missouri Writers Guild

A Nonprofit Organization / Corporation

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It's Never Too Late to Join or Renew Your Membership to Saturday Writers!

Don't miss out on another year of honing writing skills through monthly meetings, October workshops, members-only critique groups. Or another year of contests, virtual open mics, and, when social distancing is back to inches instead of feet, face time with friends who understand your obsession over proper punctuation. Renew your Saturday Writers membership for 2021 before it gets lost in the holiday frenzy. Current rates apply:

Paid 2020 members can do so at \$30.

New members can join for \$35.

Anyone who joined after August 1, 2020 is automatically renewed for 2021 at no charge (the cutoff for a new membership to apply to the following year is usually after Sept 30).

Same Household Discount of \$5 off the total fee for two people living in the same household who join or renew at the same time remains.

Follow this link to renew today:

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

Saturday Writers 2020 Holiday Party

Saturday, December 5

11am – 1pm

Where: Zoom Room

2020 will certainly be a year to remember. To wrap up this unexpected and challenging 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.

Come one, come all. 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 2021 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 (hopefully, COVID-free) new year.

NOTE: A Zoom link was sent via email and will be sent again the day before.

Welcome to

Saturday Writers

Due to social distancing, until further notice monthly meetings and other events will be held via Zoom and recorded. Recordings will be provided to members via email.

Join us on the last Saturday of each month, January through September to hear speakers share their knowledge of craft, writing process, marketing, all things writing in all genres.

Members will receive an email with access information. Guests are welcome to attend our virtual meetings for free. Please email Jeanne.F@saturdaywriters.org for access information. Membership is \$35.00 per year.



• 11:00-1:00 p.m.—Regular meeting **VIA ZOOM** for business items and our guest speaker.

• Doors open at the Zoom room 10:45 a.m.

• Visitors are welcome to attend for free at this time.



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From the President's Desk . . .

Looking back . . . and Looking Forward

Now that 2020 is wrapping up, I'd like to take a minute and applaud our members who kept on writing in spite of what has arguably been the weirdest year in memory. Yay if you were able to put words on the page. I know of at least 4 members with new books coming out still in 2020. To those who have struggled to get even a word out, don't give up. I'd say drop and give me 20, but...

In 2020 we moved into our new meeting venue, and then just like that, out of it when the library shut down due to COVID-19. After a hiccup with the March meeting while we regrouped to figure out how to continue, Saturday Writers launched into the world of Zoom and online meetings. While I know many of our members were either unable to attend or chose not to, all of our monthly meetings were a success with between 30 and 50 attendees at each. But no worries if you couldn't make one or more—all were recorded and are available to members on our password-protected page. The password was sent out via email shortly after each meeting.

Our workshop season kicked off with Ryan Dalton and "Build a Story Live," continued with Catherine Rankovic talking about poetry



Jeanne Felfe

translation, Ines Johnson's "Using the Structure of Episodic Television to Craft Your Serialized Novel," and wrapped up with Claire Taylor using the Enneagram for character development. If you missed any of the workshops and you're a member, you can access the videos for only \$10 each at the link in the email you were sent.

What do we have still coming up in 2020? Our annual holiday party is scheduled for Saturday, December 5, from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Yes, it's virtual, but guaranteed to be loads of fun! Even if you don't normally like Zoom meetings, please come hang out with friends, have fun, and win prizes.

As I look toward planning for 2021, I have my fingers and toes crossed that we will once again be back in our beautiful Spencer Road Library venue. One of the silver linings that has come from our forced switch to online meetings is learning that many of our members love them. This includes a few of our far-flung members who would never be able to attend in person. Even our workshops were extremely well-attended, topping our usual number of attendees by a significant number. What this means for the future is that we will be evaluating ways to offer both in-person and online events in 2021. While our focus will always be getting together face-to-face, there's no reason to rule out jumping feet first into current technology.

I hope everyone has managed to stay healthy during the pandemic and that your loved ones are all doing well. Stay safe and I'll see you at the party!

—Jeanne Felfe, President

August Contest Winners

Reminder: All certificates will be held until the contest season ends and be mailed or handed out together.

PROSE

First Place: Larry Duerbeck for "Change Partners"

Second Place: Susan Gore Zahra for "Time of Turmoil, Time of Peace"

Third Place: Donna Mork Reed for "Seeking True Valor"

Honorable Mention: Cheri Remington for "The Sandwich Man"

Honorable Mention: M. Rose Callahan for "The Trouble with Peeking"

Honorable Mention: M. L. Stiehl for "Decades with a Close Friend"

POETRY

First Place: Nick Sweet for "Preacher and Paperboy"

Second Place: Cathleen Callahan for "Only Time for a Ditty Tonight"

Third Place: Cathleen Callahan for "Despite It All"

Honorable Mention: Cathleen Callahan for "Critical Mass Paradox"

Honorable Mention: Donna Mork Reed for "Behind Closed Doors"

Honorable Mention: Nick Sweet for "The Aisle 3 Cashier"

What's The Big Idea?

Writing Through the Pandemic



Diane How

We're nearing the end of an unusual year, but the enthusiasm of our writers hasn't waned.

The August theme, "Any Decade Goes," kept the judges busy and we had a record number of requests for critiques. It's great to know our members are taking advantage of getting valuable feedback at a reasonable cost.

Larry Duerbeck rose to the top for his prose entry, "Change Partners." This personal story is about dance instructors who refused to allow him, as a young teen—whose head was always buried in a book—to sit on the sideline. The delightful anecdote challenged me to pause with each sentence and appreciate the subtle humor mixed with the insecure angst of a young man being forced to attend lessons.

When asked about his unique rhetoric writing style, Larry explains that he "enjoys underplay and writes from his ear." With an English degree and having devoted a lifetime to reading, he feels confident when his choice of words sounds just right. I was curious about Larry's favorite author. "Currently, Bill Bryson has a style that I'm drawn to. He writes personal stories and one of his books that caught my attention is *Dictionary of Troublesome Words*."

Larry offered a few helpful suggestions for fellow writers. "The quicker you can develop a calloused hide, the better." As he's learned over the years, some judges appreciate his unusual style and some don't. "Submitting is like playing a slot machine. Maybe you'll win with one judge or it might be with the next one." He also reminded us that "editors can critique bad punctuation, poor grammar, and holes in plots, but they can't do a thing with a blank page."

Congratulations on your entertaining prose. I'll keep my dictionary handy for your next one!

Nick Sweet, a non-member of SW, secured first place in poetry for his entry, "The Preacher and the Paperboy." Nick learned about the SW contests from the Christian Writers website. His poem shares a fictional story of a young man whose unstable home environment causes him to fall asleep during church services.

While Nick shared with me that he did deliver morning papers as a young boy, the poem does not reflect his home life, rather it presents deeper issues to consider. "This poem is NOT autobiographical. I've always been attracted to the 'grey areas' of behavior. As a philosophy minor in college, we dealt with

topics like 'situational ethics.' Example: Would you steal to feed your family? I'm a stage director by trade. I wanted the preacher to have to come to terms with the internal conflict of his actions, which were illegal. But were they also immoral?"

Songs and poetry have always interested Nick. "In college, I wrote poetry that was overwrought and trite—just bad poetry. When I turned 50, I started playing basketball and softball in Senior Olympics. They also had a literary competition, so I started writing poetry again."

Nick currently is co-writing a musical with a Nashville singer/songwriter. The show "chronicles the life of a Cherokee tribal leader, first honored as a War Woman, and later revered as a peacemaker during the American Revolution." Nick also directed a historical outdoor drama and currently is busy adapting the musical into a screenplay.

Best of luck in your endeavors, Nick. Hope you share more of your talents with Saturday Writers.

That's all for now, folks. Keep those pens, pencils, and keyboards active. Stay healthy!

—Diane How

From the Board . . .

We would like to briefly address a disappointing situation with our Pen & Paint One contest, offered in conjunction with the St. Peters Arts Centre. We eagerly looked forward to seeing the artists' representation of the ten winners' works. Unfortunately, as a result of the pandemic, some artists chose not to participate, and we didn't know until after the art was displayed. The Arts Centre only received five paintings—they were for "Beneath Violets" by Susan Gore Zahra, "Puzzling Puzzle" by Melanie Koch, "Golden Words to Live By" by Donna Volkenannt, "A Thousand Words" by Cheri Remington, and "Magnificence Unseen" by Jeanne Felfe.

We offer our most sincere apology to the five authors whose stories did not receive paintings: Sherry Copeland for "Morning Walks," Diane How for "The Last One Standing," Marilyn O'Neill for "Late October," Marcia Estep for "Postcard Perfect," and Sherry Cerrano for "Blades." All stories will still be printed in the anthology.

There were some initial issues with the display not including the author names nor any reference to Saturday Writers. Both of those situations have been resolved—signs with the author names and bios have been added, as well as a sign highlighting our partnership. The oversight was partially due to having a new director at the Arts Centre and a few missteps regarding communications on our part.

We are deeply sorry for the disappointment our wonderful writers feel and fully commit to ensuring that next year's contest will run more smoothly.

SW Fall Workshops Focus on Creating Compelling Character, Developing Plots That Hook Readers, Translating Poetry

Not even a pandemic shutdown can keep writers from writing and improving skills. The 2020 fall workshops offered a variety of topics for us to practice over the next few months. If the synopses of the workshops pique your interest but you were unable to attend, videos are available for \$10 at the address that was sent to members via email.

Build a Story in 5 Basic Steps

Ryan Dalton opened the workshop season October 5 with “Build a Story Live.”

When creating a story, there are five basic steps one should take. This is regardless of whether you have an idea of something you want to write, or if you are starting with a blank screen and no clue what to write.

Step 1. Pick a genre. In our workshop exercise, we picked two subgenres and combined them—Urban Fantasy Rom-Com.

Step 2. Create your protagonist. Decide on the traits of this person or creature or machine. The more characteristics and background you give them, the more real they become to the reader. Traits include such things as species, sex, place in society, shy *vs.* bold, rich *vs.* poor, how they were raised (in a family *vs.* broken home, etc.). Even giving your character a name will change how this character will act or react in your work.

Step 3. Create a secondary character. Develop subplots from there. Does he have a past love? Is she deceased? Broken up? Still in his life? Each layer of information will help shape and form your work, changing its direction.

Step 4. Create your world. Where and when will your story take place? Current day, past, future? On Earth, subterranean, or in outer space?

Step 5. Create an antagonist. Person or a thing—usually a bad guy—though it can just be someone who has a goal they want that can only be reached if the protagonist’s goal is not.

Most novels can be developed based on a three-act outline:

Act 1: The setup/opening snapshot/status quo—catalyst/inciting incident.

Act 2: Taking action/Character dives into change/new world; Introduction of supporting characters and subplots; Major plot and character progressions, up to halfway point of the story; Midpoint/raising the stakes/Climbing toward the climax; Lowest point/apparent defeat/lose all and the recovery of all.

Act 3: Turning Point/discovering how to overcome plot challenges/on the road to character growth or redemption; descent to the finale/ultimate victory or defeat; aftermath

Now that you have worked out the perfect plot for the perfect novel—a best seller I’m sure—your next step is to write it. It isn’t an easy job to sit down and create something from nothing. However, if it is your JOB or you would like it to be, you must be diligent. You don’t have to write every day, however, you must find what works for you. Here are some ideas Dalton shared for writing when stressed.

Make space for yourself—both physically and or mentally.

Don’t stress when your routine gets disrupted—life happens. Just get back up and continue on after your detour.

Writing is 10% inspiration, 90% perspiration (i.e. hard work)—If you wait to feel inspired, your writing may stop.

Whether you are a plotter or a pantser, these steps will help you come up with an idea or develop one you already have. If you have never written a novel but want to give it a try, consider participating in NaNoWriMo in November (www.nanowrimo.org). Or simply write at your own pace and join one of the SW critique groups. And if you become a New York Times Best-selling Author, remember, all us little people that helped you on your way! Just write. It’s what writers do.

If you want to see this process in action, pick up the workshop recording for \$10 at the link you were sent by email.

—Donna Mork Reed

Expanding Understanding Through Poetry Translation

“Go Global—A Hands-on Exploration of Poetry and Cultures” offered a new approach to poetry on October 10. We had the privilege of being introduced to and guided through the joys and challenges of poetry translation. Catherine Rankovic, a poet and creative nonfiction writer, first came to appreciate the gift of translation through her own six-year effort to transcribe a treasure trove of materials unearthed at a university library, that were originally written in Gregg shorthand. Her familiarity with the obscure markings ultimately revealed important information long hidden within those pages.

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Workshops—Continued from page 4

Beyond simple translation, there are several noble reasons for taking up the work: preserving the ancestors' language, introducing a new generation to an old world or attitude, providing an important foreign writer a more global audience, or shedding light on the challenges of a distant culture. But the act of translating another's writing can go beyond benevolence; it can simply serve as inspiration to the translator—exploring new subjects or different perspectives, even stepping deeper into emotions that aren't naturally our own. Sometimes the translation morphs into something that is, in its own right, beautiful and more personal, and now a second original to appreciate and inspire.

Translation of word, thought, or intent is instinctively part of everyday life. We first looked to what is likely the best-known example: the Bible, which can be found in hundreds of versions and thousands of languages. A comparative review of just six translations of Psalm 78:9 revealed variations in phraseology, cadence, intended spirit, and message emphasis, with each translation providing a different takeaway that ranged from literal meaning to a more artistic, intuitive feel. The benefit of each new variation is an altered relatability which, in turn, increases the potential for audience reach.

From there we stimulated our appetite for translation through a look at a Chinese menu, with each selection listed in original language, an easy letter and number transliteration, followed by the English version.

Finally, we turned to the more expressive writings of five poets from around the globe—Gabriela Mistral, Birago Diop, Choi Young-Mi, Else Lasker-Schuler, and Perhat Tursten—who added their voices to the world of words from the late 1800s to the contemporary era. It is imperative to know and remember the cultural context, political climate, and the author's typical subject, approach, and tone or effect.

Thankfully, to translate, we need not be masters of the language or have traveled to these far off lands; we need only an interest in the poems of that world and time, and a reliable Internet connection. With the invention and availability of various technologies, we have at hand research tools that allow us to study, better understand, and transform foreign words into relatable poems. To watch translations in action and learn about the available tools, members can buy the workshop video for \$10 at the address you were sent via email.

—Holly Elliot

Using the Structure of Episodic Television to Craft Your Novel

Have you ever started watching a new TV series and been hooked before the first episode has barely begun? Ever wondered how the writers do that, and if there's some way for you to apply those same strategies to your own writing? That's exactly what our October 24 workshop presenter, Ines Johnson, showed us how to do by applying her experience as a television writer and using the TV series *Scandal* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

There are two kinds of series, and this applies to both TV and print stories—series and serials. Though the names are similar, they are different things. A series has the same or related characters and worlds but can be read or watched in any order. A serial, on the other hand, has the same characters and worlds, and *must* be read or watched sequentially in order for them to make sense. Series examples include *Seinfeld* or *I Love Lucy*. You can drop in anywhere and understand what's happening. *Game of Thrones*, *Hunger Games*, and *Harry Potter* are examples of serials. Each book or movie sets up the next and starting with the end of the serial would be confusing.

Ines listed several reasons why you might consider writing a serial.

To develop your craft. Writing a serial teaches you how to hook the reader...the thing that makes them turn the page.

A between major release strategy. This works quite well if you're a slower writer so you give your readers something between books.

Implement a rapid release strategy.

Reader appreciation. Create something that's not available for sale to show readers how much you appreciate them.

In a three-hour workshop, Ines walked us through her 12-step process to create fiction that is sure to hook the binge-watching/reading culture. Recognizing that the structure of a good story is always the same—beginning, middle, and end—her steps dive into the Setup, Confrontation, and Resolution in such a way that you'll be writing tight, hookable stories in no time. She also outlined the "secret sauce" to ensure your reader will pick up the next book. No, it's not a cliffhanger—readers hate those—it's an open door that bridges the current story to the next one. If you want to see how it works, grab the first episode of *Scandal* (currently on Hulu) and pay attention to the end.

This is a must-see workshop.

—Jeanne Felfe

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Workshops—continued from page 5

Nailing Character Motivations with Enneagrams

Want your readers to identify with your characters? Want to have your story take on a life of its own? Your characters to grow and change in ways that make perfect sense? The Enneagram is a system of personality types that shows how different people experience internal emotions and sense of identity, and how external triggers motivate characteristic responses.

Claire Taylor led SW through the basic principles of how the Enneagram works and how understanding the nine personality types can help develop believable characters. The system provides insight into how people of different types interact with each other, what triggers both healthy and unhealthy responses to situations.

When faced with a blank piece of paper or screen, the possibilities of how characters behave or interact are infinite until you understand which fears and desires are most likely to motivate each character. When fears and desires clash, one will take over. By rooting your protagonist in one Enneagram type, you lay the groundwork for understanding what motivates them to grow and what can block their growth.

Your antagonist's job is to block growth, to throw obstacles in front of your protagonist. For example, the Type 3—Achiever desires to feel valuable and fears being worthless. Type 8—Challenger desires to protect their independence and fears being harmed or controlled. How might they clash or block each other's progress toward their desire and away from their fear? The workshop group also engaged in a lively discussion of conflicts that occur when both protagonist and antagonist are of the same type and how their desires and fears might clash.

Using instructional diagrams, short writing exercises, and guided discussion, Claire provided a basic understanding of how to use Enneagram personality types to develop main characters and effective secondary characters; guide their actions and paths to healthy development or self-destruction; and come to an ending that satisfies readers.

You can find out more about Enneagrams and take a test costing \$12 at www.enneagraminstitute.com. Free tests are available at <https://enneagram.bz>. Claire offers a variety of publishing services, including a free 5-day course, and can be reached at www.ffs.media.

—Susan Gore Zahra

What SW Poets Do Over Their COVID Vacation

For those of you who have missed the “Poets Corner” section of our newsletter, rest assured that SW Poet Laureate Robert Sebacher is still writing and encouraging others to write poetry. During the 2020 isolation, Robert, Carol Roberson, and Marcia Estep spent about a month collaborating on a group poem of somewhere close to 500 lines. The group is now editing their poem with the hope of getting it published.

“The poem is a renga, a form of Japanese poem over 700 years old,” Robert explained. “Two or more poets take turns writing sections of the poem. The first person writes a haiku, a three-line poem with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, five in the third for a total of seventeen syllables. The second person writes two seven-syllable lines that relate back to the previous section in some way. The third writes a haiku, the fourth adds two seven-syllable lines and so on. Adding two seven-syllable lines to a haiku produces a tanka. We set a goal of 100 tankas. Each additional section links to the previous section except the last one, which links back to the beginning haiku.”

Robert said he would be happy to try this again with another group.

“Writing with the group gave me something to look forward to each day, something to distract me from the isolation of COVID-19” was what attracted Marcia to the group approach to writing poetry. “I was challenged to be more concise with words. Some lines came easier than others. Some took hours of thought. There were times I thought we were going in one direction, to find out Robert had something different in mind.” She advises anyone attempting a renga to be committed to the project because other people are waiting for your lines.

Carol found trying something new exciting. She advises working with people you enjoy, or it could be a struggle. “There were a lot of technical problems with all of us working on different systems. We had some conflicts with Robert's mighty warrior. Marcia is a vegetarian, and I would prefer to pet Bambi than skewer it with a long bow. It helped us get to know each other better.”

Camaraderie played an important role in getting through those 500ish lines. Their working title reflected their relationship: “Four Blossoms, Eight Moons by Three Friends.”

—Susan Gore Zahra

Congratulations to Saturday Writers Who Keep on Writing



Kudos to SW member **Wes Ginther**. His memoir, "The Young Wrangler," won 1st place in the Ventura County Writers Club 2019 Memoir contest. The story about a day of babysitting that took a surprising turn appears in the Summer/Fall special edition of *The Write Stuff*, the club's newsletter. The story takes place in Wes's studio, giving us a glimpse of his many talents. A retired newsman, he continues to write how-to articles, short stories and essays, many appearing in SW anthologies. He is also a graphic artist, landscape painter, accomplished photographer, and avid golfer.

The Dahlonga Sisters: Veins of Gold, is the second in **Diane How's** series about three fictional, fun-loving, middle-aged sisters living in the historic gold rush town of Dahlonga, Georgia. "I fell in love with this lovely town while visiting relatives and knew it was the perfect location to share with my readers." In its final stages of production, *Veins of Gold* follows the sisters as they explore their ancestry through DNA tests.



The Gold Miner Ring, first in the series, was released in 2019, and Diane has already begun work on the third novel.



Poverty, Virginty and Love: Memoirs of Asia and Other Places, a memoir by **Shirley Anderson**, begins with the audacious dream of Africa and Heaven that led her to enter the convent at the tender age of 17. Her life of poverty, chastity and obedience as a Maryknoll Missionary led her to a life far more adventurous than she expected. When Shirley arrived in Pusan, Korea, for her first assignment in the 60s, the city was impoverished and disease ridden. Over six years, she saw the positive transformation of the city and economic progress of the country. Later, she accepted a position in war-torn Saigon, South Vietnam. Her comforting words to her parents were "Not everyone comes back in a body bag."

After changes in the Catholic Church and intense prayer, Shirley was released from her vows and began a free and virginal life as a laywoman at 36. She had no family or friends nearby. Intense loneliness drove her to date with abandon, until she found an amazing man with whom to share her adventurous life. Her memoir is due to be released in both paperback and ebook formats early in December, 2020.

Pat Wahler is delighted to announce the upcoming release of *Pathway to Home*, third and final book of the Becker Family contemporary romance series. The story features Mira Gordon, a young woman who discovers a shocking secret after her mother's death. What she learns sends her on a journey that will change her life forever. A Five-Star *Readers' Favorite*, this standalone novel will be available for preorder during the cover reveal, expected to take place before the end of November 2020.

Ken Lee released *One Size Fits All* in August 2020. Butch, a six-foot-seven eighth grader who is forced to leave the idyllic country town where he grew up to care for his grandmother in the inner city of Kansas City, Missouri, in 1967, encounters prejudice and racism for the first time. He develops his first crush on a six-foot-tall Jane, plays basketball as a "minority member," and must learn how to communicate with his stoic father all in one school year.



An ordained minister with the Assemblies of God, Ken is preparing to release the first volume of *Voices from the Bible*, an anthology of plays written by for use in churches of all denominations. Volume One includes all of Ken's original one-character plays that have won him critical acclaim, plus other shorter monologues written for amateur performers, both women and men.



Pen & Paint One on Display

Take a look at the collaboration of Saturday Writers and St. Peters Arts Centre produced this year. Writing and paintings will be on display through December 13, 2020.

Thrill Me!

Don't spend another minute wondering if you have what it takes to write a thriller. You know you do. Maybe you require a little nudge? Write it with abandon. You're not writing a sweet romance ironed out on Plotr, but perhaps a psychological thriller plays out in your mind when you lie down at night. If you didn't have to write "pretty" and you could empty the twisted story from your head, read the following tips and—

WAIT! Before you dive in, did you catch a whiff of, what is that odor? Blood? I'm not sure. It reeks of rusted iron and smells like blood. And. And what is THAT...that thing holding a, a severed head by the hair, the ends dripping with dark red goo? Think! Can you run fast enough to escape? Your hand reaches for your neck, and you wonder if you will feel pain as the blade slashes through your spinal cord. Escape is impossible and death inevitable. I saw a flash in your pupils, a brief calculation of the seconds that will pass if you turn on your heel and run? Can you escape the fanged entity lunging to grab your shirt?

Escape is impossible when you are dead set on scaring the holy hell out of your reader. But how do you ensure your reader experiences the obligatory rapid heart rate, dry, staccato breaths, and wide-eyed face of terror? Fasten your seatbelt and follow these tips:

Your protagonist cannot be all sugar and nice. She must have defects in her personality so the reader is never sure if this defective character will make it out alive. One of her imperfections could be the death of her.



Tammy Lough

Think Mel Gibson in *Lethal Weapon*.

The character, Martin (Marty) Riggs was such a head-case you wondered if he was

psychologically capable of living to the movie's second scene or taking a bullet to his temple. When Gibson pulls the gun from his temple, shoves it in his mouth, and pulls the trigger back, the tension is palpable. Fans of thrillers buy and read this genre for the pain/pleasure of such an adrenaline fix. They merely turn the pages from their recliner and by reading your perfectly placed creative words, can feel their body react like they are riding on the final suicide plunge of a roller coaster.

Trick and Tease. Write a scene and then stop to ask yourself what a reader may expect will happen next. Create a list of at least three paths the story could take. Choose the least common choice, the freshest path.

Avoid "stock characters." The alcoholic, divorced, tumbleweed-tummy detective, the snarky female forensic pathologist, the FBI agent who lacks facial expressions. Ditch them for a "real" imaginary person.

Raymond Chandler advice: When things slow down, bring in a man with a gun. It doesn't have to be an actual man with an actual gun, of course. It can be anything that bursts into a scene and shakes things up: A whimpering dog, the cries of a newborn, the first pulls of a chain saw cord, etc.

Make your villain feel justified for his actions. (In His Own Mind). Like Hannibal Lector in *Silence of the Lambs*. A study by psychology expert, Shadd Maruna, indicates that the majority of criminals do not attempt to justify their actions prior to committing

a crime, but rather after, as a way to mitigate the guilt.

Standout thrillers need complexity and webs of conflict so every page buzzes with tension. If your thriller has killer scenes but they don't meld with your story, you must kill the little darlings. But not until you copy and paste these jewels into a "Cuts" file.

Put pen to paper and write a bestselling thriller. Writers Write!!!

—Tammy Lough

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Our meetings will be conducted using Zoom until further notice.
For access information, please contact jeanne.f@saturdaywriters.org.