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THE WD INTERVIEW

Scott Turow

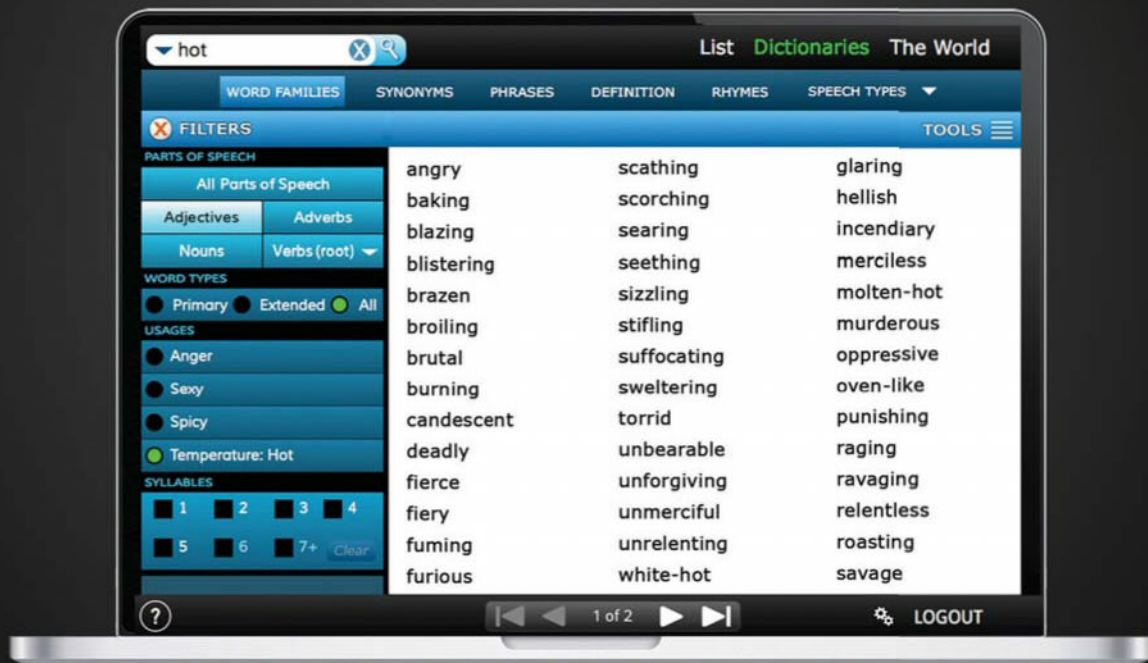
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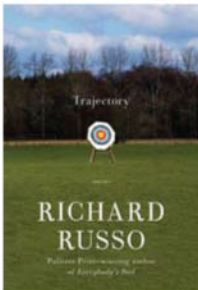
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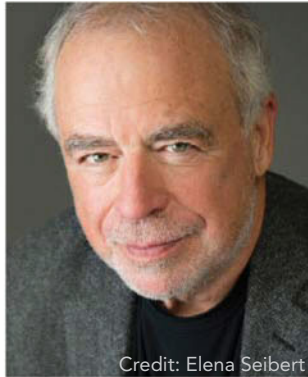
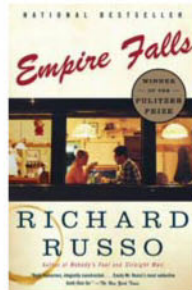


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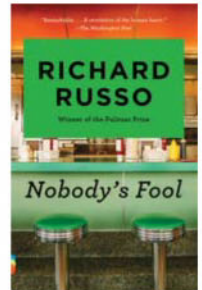
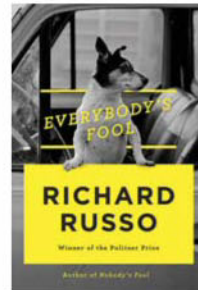
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Richard Russo is the author of eight novels, two collections of short stories and *Elsewhere*, a memoir. In 2002, he received the Pulitzer Prize for *Empire Falls*, which was also adapted into an HBO miniseries. His most recent novel is *Everybody's Fool*.

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THE WEB

Issue

20

#Hashtag Happy

Who would have thought that a little blue bird and a pound sign could enhance your #writing life—and even land you an agent? Tweet your way to success with this handy guide to the best hashtags for writers.

COMPILED BY THE WRITER'S DIGEST STAFF

27

Premium Upgrades

These 6 alternatives to your go-to word processor aim to enhance productivity, form and function.

BY RICH SHIVENER

24

Get Your [Facebook] Group On

If you use it wisely, social media isn't a time suck—it's a gold mine. See how connecting with other writers (and readers) on Facebook can help advance your craft, community and career.

BY ORLY KONIG

30

THE 19TH ANNUAL 101 Best Websites for Writers

Our latest roundup of the best online resources is filled with advice, community, info and creativity.

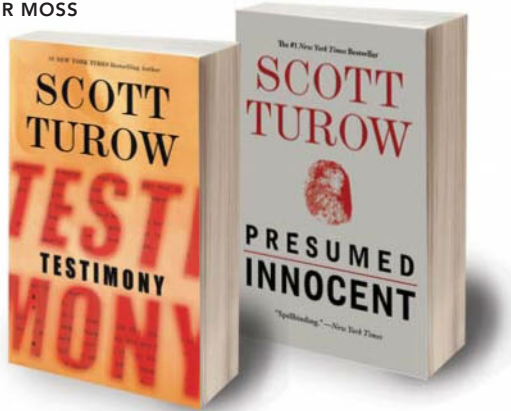
BY BAIHLEY GRANDISON

42

THE WD INTERVIEW: Scott Turow

With 11 bestsellers over a 40-year career, the two-time Authors Guild president testifies on the secrets to sustained success.

BY TYLER MOSS



46

Gambling Man

The winner of the 12th Annual Writer's Digest Popular Fiction Awards rolled the dice on a suspenseful story outside of his usual genre.

PLUS: A complete list of the winners in all 6 categories.

BY CRIS FREESE

WRITER'S WORKBOOK

Shaping Scenes

53 **ADDING EMOTIONAL POWER**

BY DONALD MAASS

57 **USING INTENTIONS TO DRIVE A STORY**

BY JORDAN ROSENFELD

INKWELL

- 8 **ABANDONMENT ISSUES:** The decision to dump thousands of your carefully crafted words is rarely made lightly. Here's how one writer learned to let go.
BY SHAWN KLOMPARENS
- 10 **PLUS:** 5-Minute Memoir: Writing Women's Fiction as a Man • Paradise Lost: Remembering in Real Time • Poetic Asides: Trimeric • 4th Annual WD Self-Published e-Book Awards • The Formula for Suspense

COLUMNS

- 17 **MEET THE AGENT:** Anjali Singh, Ayesha Pande Literary
BY KARA GEBHART UHL
- 18 **BREAKING IN:** Debut Author Spotlight
BY TYLER MOSS
- 48 **FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK:** Playing Genre Roulette; Publishing From Afar; Writing What You Love to Read
BY BARBARA POELLE
- 50 **YOUR STORY:** Contest #78, First Things First
- 60 **STANDOUT MARKETS:** Vox First Person; *The American Legion Magazine*; *FIELD*; Morgan James Publishing
BY TYLER MOSS
- 62 **CONFERENCE SCENE:** California Crime Writers; Fairfield University Summer; Historical Novel Society
BY DON VAUGHAN
- 72 **PLATFORMS OF YORE:** Jane Austen



ON THE COVER

- 30 101 Best Websites for Writers
- 53 Tips for Stronger Scenes
- 20 How a Hashtag Can Get You an Agent
- 24 Facebook Groups to Grow Your Career
- 27 6 Software Programs Worth the Upgrade
- 42 The WD Interview: Scott Turow

PLUS: 4 online exclusives 5 editor's letter 6 contributors 7 reader mail

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1 Turow's *Testimony*

Fictional Kindle County has served as the setting for nearly all of Scott Turow's novels, yet his latest takes readers to The Hague. In these bonus outtakes from our WD Interview (Page 42), Turow explains the departure, and describes how disparate threads come together to form a story.

2 Ebb and Flow

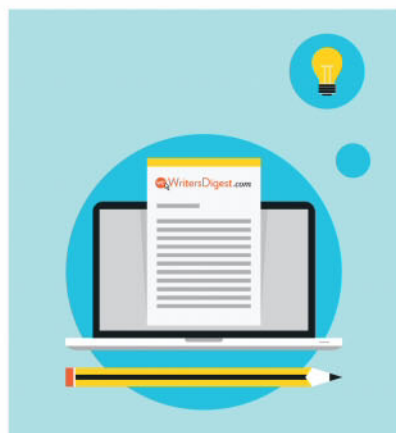
In this bonus Q&A, author Connie May Fowler (Page 12) expands on lessons learned while combining journalism and memoir in her new book about the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. "Good memoirists don't peddle anecdotes. They craft artful stories greater than the sum of their parts."

3 Trigger Warning

Read "Party Tricks," WD's 12th Annual Popular Fiction Award-winning story about a troubled Russian roulette-playing daredevil (Page 46), and learn more about its genre-bending writer, Travis Madden.

To find all of the above online companions to this issue in one handy spot, visit writersdigest.com/jun-17.

PLUS: Feed your appetite for writerly advice on the WD blogs!



THE ART OF REREADING

English professor turned novelist Matthew FitzSimmons shows how taking the time to reread our favorite books can bring new lessons to light.

bit.ly/artofrereadingWD

POST-CONFERENCE PLANS

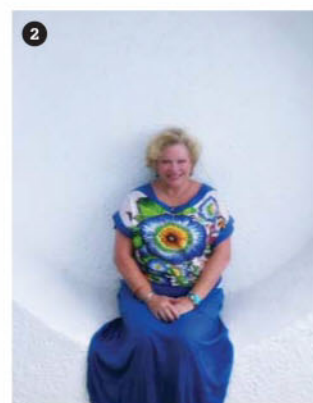
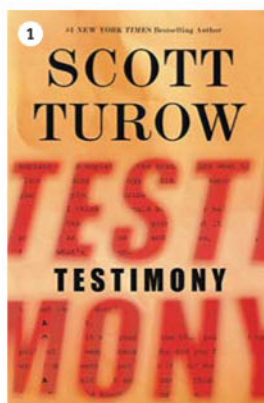
Advice abounds on how to prepare for a conference, but how best to proceed following the final keynote? Agent Irene Goodman provides vital post-conference dos and don'ts.

bit.ly/postconferenceWD

FIERCELY FEMALE SLEUTHS

Barbara Nickless, award-winning author of *Blood on the Tracks*, shares tips for muscling female investigators into the traditionally male world of the police procedural.

bit.ly/femalesleuthWD



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EDITOR'S LETTER



At Last ...

After a lifetime of dreaming, it's finally here.

And I have you to thank.

When I first joined WD, in 2001, one of my first jobs was to write our column spotlighting debut authors. Today you know it as *Breaking In* (Page 18), but then it was called *First Success*, and it focused in depth on one author at a time. I'd read their books,

speak with them by phone, and hang up full of contagious excitement at what they'd managed to accomplish, often after years of perseverance through false starts and rejections. More than any other interviews I've done, those conversations were tangled with emotion: joy, gratitude, relief, uncertainty, trepidation, passion and, above all, *hope*.

That's why it's still a thrill for me to see those authors' names crop up again and again: Steve Berry, who now has more than 20 million thrillers in print; Brent Hartinger, whose young adult novels have been adapted for TV and film; and dozens of others who have me as a cheerleader for life because I had the privilege of sharing in that first moment—when anything seemed possible.

This is mine.

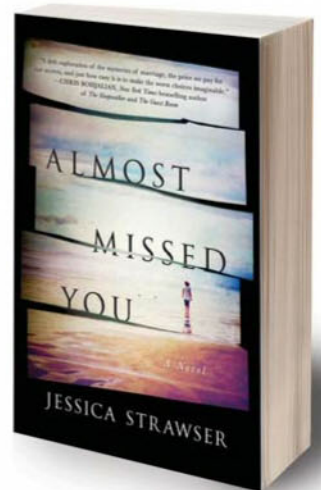
My own debut, *Almost Missed You* (new in hardcover, e-book and audio from St. Martin's Press), is a story about love, friendship and family; about missed connections and what might have been; about our belief in what's meant to be.

And when it comes to my personal meant-to-be list, WD is near the top.

My novel was born through years of editing articles on fiction techniques and itching to put them into practice. Through heartfelt conversations with authors who I admired so deeply I could no longer deny that I aspired to be among them. And through interactions with you, our readers, the most determined, inspiring crew I know, who gave right back to me the very gift that we at WD strive to impart every day: that electrical charge of feeling a part of something, and of being as well-equipped as anyone can be for the journey ahead.

I've been dabbling on the page since I was a child, but when I got serious about pursuing the craft, nearly a decade ago now, I did so largely in the closet, uncertain how my efforts would be received. I can't tell you how many well-timed insights, wisdoms and words of encouragement landed with me purely by happenstance when I needed them most.

Thank you for accompanying me on this adventure, and for continuing to invite me along on yours. I'll never forget this moment—or how lucky I am to share it with you.



CONTRIBUTORS



BRENDA DRAKE (“#Hashtag Happy,” Page 20) is *The New York Times* bestselling author of *Thief of Lies*, *Guardian of Secrets*, *Touching Fate* and *Cursing Fate*. Drake hosts workshops and contests for writers—including the popular #PitchWars and #PitMad—on her blog, on Twitter and at pitchwars.org. She’s represented by Peter Knapp of Park Literary & Media, and can be found online at brenda-drake.com or on Twitter @brendadrake.

ORLY KONIG (“Get Your [Facebook] Group On,” Page 24) is an escapee from the corporate world, where she spent 16ish years working in the space industry. Now she spends her days chatting up imaginary friends, drinking too much coffee and negotiating writing space around two overfed cats. Founding president of the Women’s Fiction Writers Association, her debut novel, *The Distance Home*, hits bookstores in May. Find her on Facebook at facebook.com/OrlyKonigAuthor.



BRAD PARKS (“The Formula for Suspense,” Page 16) is the only author to have won the Shamus, Nero and Lefty awards, three of crime fiction’s most prestigious prizes, which he was awarded for his Carter Ross mystery series. A former journalist, he is now a full-time novelist living in Virginia with his wife and two school-age children. His first stand-alone thriller, *Say Nothing*, was released in March in the U.S. from Dutton, and with 13 other publishers worldwide. Visit Parks online at bradparksbooks.com.

WADE ROUSE (“Writing Women’s Fiction as a Man,” Page 10) is the internationally bestselling author of seven books, including his latest novel, *The Hope Chest*, and his debut, *The Charm Bracelet* (both written as Viola Shipman), which has been translated into nine languages. Rouse’s writing has appeared in *Coastal Living*, *People*, *Salon*, *Good Housekeeping* and *The Advocate*. His third novel, *The Recipe Box*, comes out in 2018. You can find him online at violashipman.com.



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JACK OF ALL TRADES

I've been a WD subscriber since the '70s, and I read every issue from cover to cover with enormous pleasure. The one place that I thought WD was weak, however, was in covering

genre fiction. As a writer of both romance and fantasy, I sorely missed your magazine's insights in that area. Much to my delight, you're now covering genres! I couldn't wait to dive into the January issue. My thanks to all of you!

Kathy Trueman
Lone Oak, Texas

TIES THAT BIND

Richard Campbell's January Inkwell piece, "A Life Well Written," was most enlightening. I've started exploring pieces of my life through

blog writing—"mini memoirs," as he called them—and these scraps of memory placed side by side have shown me where the jagged edges fit. Writing is the thread that mends me,

and others, too. I hope others take Campbell's advice and discover the beauty of their patchwork lives.

Jean Lee
Madison, Wis.

SPOTTED ON TWITTER

For the record, this *may* be my fave WD issue EVER. Loved the interview with the FAB @debbiemacomber! #writers #writing —@C_Herronauthor

I love when the current issue of Writer's Digest arrives in my mailbox. Happy day! —@ellenphinney

Writing. Writing. Forgot lunch, then remembered. Ate while *reading* about writing in the new @WritersDigest. —@LeslieLindsay1

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Abandonment Issues

The decision to dump thousands of your carefully crafted words is rarely made lightly. Here's how one writer learned to let go.

BY SHAWN KLOMPARENS

One of my greatest accomplishments as a writer, after finishing my first manuscript and trying for months upon months to secure agent representation, was willing myself to finally give up on the damned thing and move on.

I mean, sure, it didn't feel *great* at the time. Letting go was hard! But now that I have three published novels to my name, and even the privilege of being a resident faculty member for the Jackson Hole Writers Conference, I honestly believe none of my success would have been possible if I hadn't told myself, "Screw it," on that first one and started over from scratch.

NEVER LET GO

Writing a book is no simple task. As you delve into a draft, you visit the heights of joy and confidence, and the lows of despair and self-doubt. The good times are easy—you type away and the pages feel effortless. The bad times are something different entirely. You consider pounding your head against your desk. Sometimes you *do* pound your



head against your desk. To sustain momentum, you have to maintain headstrong tenacity—to believe that your book has the potential to *be* something: a Pulitzer Prize-winner, a *New York Times* bestseller or at minimum a manuscript attractive to publishers.

It may not be true, but it's a necessary fiction. When I finally got rolling on my first book after a few false starts, it was confidence that drove me forward. I'd read a few how-to books on the craft of novel writing, but had no real idea how to write a novel other than to sit down

and try. I also knew it was advisable to *write what you know*, so as a young guy living in a ski town, I decided to write about ... wait for it ... young guys who lived in a ski town. A concise summary might have been: “Hemingway goes to the mountains and hangs with his bros.” Who wouldn’t want to read *that*?

I took my time writing, all the while convincing myself in the face of doubt that the work was amazing. That stubborn belief kept me going. After finishing a draft and spending long hours on revision, I started sharing it with my friends. They liked it, too—or so they said. Convincing myself it was solid gold became even easier.

I put together a spreadsheet of prospective agents. I purchased a book on query writing and followed its precise instructions. And it wasn’t long before the replies began to trickle in.

They were not good.

“Not quite there,” they said. “Not for me.” But sometimes: “This isn’t my thing, but if you ever write something else, will you think of me?” How could an experience be so positive and so awful at the same time? And why couldn’t they see my talent?

MAYBE LET GO

The summer wore on. Rejection after rejection piled up on my desk. I began to have doubts about my work. Real doubts. Spirits sinking and spreadsheet forgotten, my queries became sloppy. Copy-Paste and a swapped-in salutation were good enough. Not surprisingly, the responses were no less painful:

“Not at this time.”

“Not taking on new clients.”

“No.”

Months passed, then a year. My rejection count climbed into triple digits as the seasons changed. After 120

or so no-thank-yous, I finally started to entertain the idea that maybe, *just maybe*, it was time to move on.

There was a piece of advice I had distinctly ignored from the how-to books. It was hard to miss, because it showed up in all of them: During the query process, *you must keep writing*. Being so focused on the process of submission, and feeling so weighted down by rejection, I’d underestimated the importance of continuing to do what I’d set out to do in the first place: to write. And I’d done so at my own expense.

Only when you’re truly honest with yourself—when you can finally cut through the ego, when you can admit that the last manuscript was a lesson learned and not a waste of time—can you finally be free.

Then one night, after months without jotting down a word, I sat at my kitchen table and began to type. I didn’t know what I was doing or where I was going; I just let the words flow. I forgot everything I thought I knew. I told myself I didn’t know anything, really. I wrote and wrote, and a few hours later I had ... a chapter? The start of a new book?

Around midnight I sent it off to a highly trusted reader. In spite of the late hour, her response was almost immediate. “DROP THE OLD BOOK,” she replied. (She wasn’t one to use Caps Lock lightly.) “FINISH THIS.”

So, I did. I was tired. Tired of the waiting, tired of the rejection, tired of the doubt.

DEFINITELY LET GO

The truth is, sometimes we doubt ourselves for a reason. Not every

project we write deserves our obstinate dedication. In my case, I needed my friend’s nudge to step away. The enthusiasm she conveyed was wholly new and inspiring—a response that I’d failed to recognize the prior project had lacked.

So I put my head down and got to work on the next manuscript. When it was finished I drafted a fresh query, one addressing those who had replied favorably in the past, reintroducing myself and saying, “In fact, I *have* been working on something else. Would you like to see it?” I had

an agency agreement within a month, and not long afterward, my first novel was published.

The truth is, without letting go, it’s tough to move on. Only when you’re truly honest with yourself—when you can finally cut through the ego, when you can admit that the last manuscript was a lesson learned and not a waste of time, when you can acknowledge that your career is a work-in-progress and not a straight line of ascent—can you finally be free, and empower yourself to do the hardest work of all.

And as for my not-so-Hemingwayesque-after-all ski town story? I see now that all those agents were right: It’s awful. I reread it last year to be certain, and will never look back again.

Shawn Klomparens is the author of several novels, including *The Banks of Certain Rivers* (written as Jon Harrison).

5-MINUTE MEMOIR

Writing Women's Fiction as a Man

BY WADE ROUSE

"For those of you expecting a woman, you're only partially correct!" That's how I began book events for my debut novel, *The Charm Bracelet*. Many readers didn't know I'd used a pen name, and expected to see the female author whose name was featured on the cover, Viola Shipman, rather than the man, Wade Rouse, who actually wrote it.

But, like a sort of literary *Victor Victoria*, the two are one and the same.

The No. 1 question I receive from readers is how I, as a man, can write female characters and story lines so well.

"Who do you channel?" readers ask. "Why does writing female characters interest you?"

I grew up in kitchens and sewing rooms. Like many Southern women, my mother and grandmothers were oral storytellers. Their sentences contained no periods, their stories a patchwork of memories, like the quilts they made.

My grandmothers dreamed of being fashion designers, but instead sewed in factories and church basements. My mother, a nurse, dreamed of being a doctor, but never had the means. I spent my early years in the presence of extraordinary women whose voices few had taken the time to hear. They inspired me to fulfill my dreams in a way that theirs had eluded them—and my dream was to become a writer.

I've always been compelled to give voice to society's marginalized. My first four books were memoirs, and I used my voice as a gay man—silenced for the first three decades of my life—to share the pain of coming out, workplace discrimination and societal demonization. I used humor as a means to teach rather than preach.

I learned my seminal lesson on the matter as a child in the rural Ozarks, not the ideal setting for a boy with a fondness for ascots and headbands. I was heckled offstage during a middle school talent show in which I'd attempted to sing "Delta Dawn"—while holding a faded rose, no less—to a crowd that made the fellas from *Deliverance* look like the Jonas Brothers.



I ran off that plywood stage furious my mother and grandmothers had let me humiliate myself. But they were already waiting with two gifts: a journal and a copy of Erma Bombeck's ● *The Grass Is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank*. It seemed fitting: My life was crappy.

"You'll need both of these—laughter and writing—to make sense of your world," they said.

Inscribed inside was a quote from Bombeck: "Laughter rises out of tragedy, when



you need it the most, and rewards you for your courage."

We all have unsung heroes whose quiet sacrifices changed the course of our journeys. That's why I chose my maternal grandmother's ● name as my pseudonym: so readers would say *her* name forever.

It was daunting for a man to tackle three generations of the opposite sex in *The Charm Bracelet*, and the voices of a woman battling Lou Gehrig's disease and her female caregiver in *The Hope Chest*. But I imbued my work with the lessons the women in my life had shared: That a charm bracelet isn't just jewelry, and a hope chest isn't just furniture—these are holders of precious memories and dreams. That we must laugh—and, if we're called to do so, write—when life gets hard.

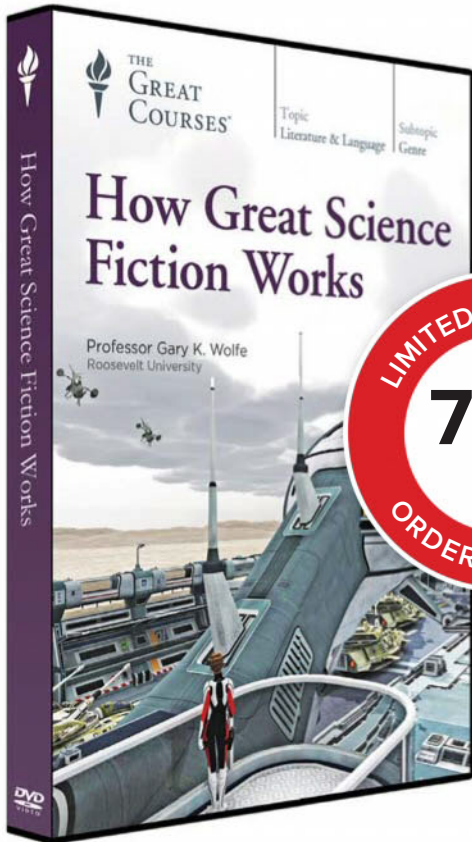
Mostly, they taught me to be the person I am today. It is a privilege and honor to be their heir. It is a privilege and honor to give them voice.

Wade Rouse is the author of *The Charm Bracelet* and *The Hope Chest*, as well as several humorous essay collections.

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Paradise Lost: Remembering in Real Time

In her new memoir, *A Million Fragile Bones*, Connie May Fowler bends the boundaries of the genre, combining on-the-scene reporting with powerful reflection to show the many ways in which an environmental disaster can hit home.

BY JACQUELYN MITCHARD

A lifelong Florida resident, novelist and essayist Connie May Fowler started that April day on Alligator Point much as she'd started every day for the past 16 years: walking out among the dune grasses and water birds to watch the dolphins at play. She'd been dabbling in the early stages of a memoir encompassing this, her sacred space, her own Walden. But within hours, a nightmare began to unfold that would consume most of her consciousness for more than a year: the cataclysmic 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Fowler began writing about the tragedy as a reporter on the scene, setting down what she saw as it unfolded, but quickly realized she needed to be more than a witness—she needed to write about its impact, about the personal aspects of the tragedy. Just as clear was this: Her memoir of paradise could no longer remain as she'd conceived of it. “By virtue of the disaster, the intent and complexion of the project changed completely. What I thought would be an idyll became a tragedy.”

And thus, she found herself bending—even reinventing—a genre. Memoirs are typically written to sort through and to share a great lyric passage in the writer's *past*. The nature of memoir suggests that the story is not only at least somewhat distanced in time, but also filtered through the consciousness of the writer who lived



Florida's Alligator Point before (left) and after the 2010 BP oil spill.

the events. Could she really write this *while* she was living it?

“I needed the gravitas only reflection offers,” Fowler says. “My primary task then was to bend narrative time. I had to meld the past, present and even the future into a single dynamic narrative thread. The past was continually influencing the present danger and my response to it, [while] the present danger was forcing me to re-evaluate all that had come before, and the future, while unknowable, was clearly going to be unlike anything I had ever hoped for because my life would be irrevocably changed by the Gulf disaster. Such labyrinthine time whorls don't occur in traditional memoir forms.”

The memoir that emerges this spring as *A Million Fragile Bones* is “part personal journey, part autobiography and part reportage.”

Tragedy was not unfamiliar fodder for Fowler. In essays published in *The New York Times*, *The Times of London*, *Oxford American* and elsewhere, she'd shared her own painful legacy of childhood violence, poverty

and abuse. Throughout the 1990s, she'd dedicated herself to aiding women and children in need, founding and directing the Connie May Fowler Women With Wings Foundation.

Now she was mired in a wholly different situation with similarly dark themes: “I needed to show Alligator Point pre-spill, because paradise lost means nothing if you don't first define and reveal both paradise and why it was important for the narrator to discover it,” she says. “I needed to show why I ended up at the end of the road on a small and isolated peninsula jutting into the Gulf of Mexico.”

Fowler, 57, was born to mixed-race parents. Her 1996 breakout novel, *Before Women Had Wings*, was semi-autobiographical, drawing upon her childhood in a family torn by violence. After Oprah chose it as one of the early selections in her fabled book club, Fowler went on to adapt the novel for film. Three of her other novels were International DUBLIN Literary Award nominees. Her first memoir, *When Katie Wakes*, dealt with her part in a generational cycle

of domestic abuse.

“[Violence and cruelty were among the] things that pulled me to a place where nature, not humankind, was in control. In nature, I felt safe and therefore could heal.” In 2010, with that environment shattered, Fowler says she had to dig deep.

Acutely aware that she must not over-personalize the loss, she turned her initial focus outward. As the oil gushed into the Gulf, she wrote “in a state of angst, horror and disbelief” about how the landscape would be altered for generations to come.

Still, the story kept challenging her to look within. “How [does] a policy wonk get people to care about the financial fine points of family leave or debt reduction? The answer is deceptively simple: Put a human face on it. Because there was no way to tell the story without the larger context, I had to make the reader care as much as I did.”

When she applied more traditional memoir techniques to the work-in-progress, Fowler found herself exploring the real reason location played such a fundamental role in her personal narrative—one that was not so different, after all, from her wrenching essays that had come before.

Why *had* she come to Alligator Point in the first place, to a spot where reliable nature would be her “constant companion?”

In the book, she writes of her father and their life in St. Augustine, which came to a halt with his death when she was just 6 years old. “I was my father’s reflection. He fished, so I fished. He cast nets, so I cast nets. He loved little dogs, so I loved little dogs. He gazed at the big blue sky and smiled, so I gazed at the big blue sky and smiled.”

Fowler had fiercely protected her memories of her father, but upon

WD THE MEMOIRIST'S JOURNEY
Fowler reveals her advice for writing memoirs in a bonus Q&A at writersdigest.com/jun-17.

examining them now, she saw for the first time that he’d grown ill at ease in that seaside life as development had claimed more and more of the surroundings, until his hometown wasn’t his anymore. “I so closely associated him with both love and a love of nature, that my act of moving to Alligator Point—to a place that resembled the wild lands he so enjoyed in his youth—was truly a daughter’s search for her father, to ease him even in death, and an attempt to remain connected to him.”

It also was an act of mourning. As she imagined how her father had grieved over the loss of his home to development, she grieved over the loss posed by the oil spill. “Because of the dispersant BP sprayed, which made the situation far worse for the Gulf’s wildlife, I suffered health consequences. My doctors recommended I move out of the area, an action that essentially made me an environmental refugee.” The book became “very much about finding home and examining what that word encompasses.”

Fowler, who now lives with her husband on a small Mexican island in the Caribbean—a cultural leap, with little preparation, worthy of a book of its own—says: “I will never regain the solitude and immersion in nature I was lucky enough to experience at Alligator Point. But something wonderful happened nonetheless.”

Jacquelyn Mitchard is the bestselling author of 11 novels, among them *The Deep End of the Ocean* and her newest, *Two If by Sea*.

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Poetic Asides

No matter what you write, a bit of poetic license can be a valuable asset to any writer's arsenal.

BY ROBERT LEE BREWER

POETIC FORM: TRIMERIC

The trimeric is a newer form devised by award-winning poet Charles A. Stone. The rules are simple enough:

- There are four stanzas.
- The first stanza has four lines.
- The other three stanzas have three lines each.
- The initial line of each stanza is a refrain of the corresponding line in the first stanza.

That's it! Line length, meter, rhyme and subject matter are all up to you.

Let's break down an example by a Poetic Asides reader.

"Flow" by Jane Shlensky

When you get to *Sunders Crossing*,

- a take a right to find the mill
 b down that slice of the New River
 c where the rocks jut, big and still.
- a Take a right to find the mill
 that's weathered gray as winter skies,
 but the wheel still turns at flood time
- b down that slice of the New River,
 where the current pulls things under
 and tired froth floats near the shore
- c where the rocks jut, big and still,
 like the shoulders of a mourning man
 hunched and weeping, waiting for you.

The opening quatrain should be treated with extra care, as it sets up the rest of the poem.

This trimeric integrates the refrain lines seamlessly.

Shlensky does a terrific job of closing the poem on a strong image of a man in devastating sorrow.



POETIC PROMPT:

Write a phobia poem, describing fears that you harbor (or know or imagine someone to harbor). Fair game are the better-known phobias, including arachnophobia (fear of spiders) and claustrophobia (fear of confined spaces), but don't be afraid (pun intended) to explore more obscure conditions, such as omphalophobia (fear of belly buttons) or hydrophobia (fear of forests).

Robert Lee Brewer is the editor of *Poet's Market* and author of *Solving the World's Problems*.

➔ **SHARE YOUR POETIC VOICE:** If you'd like to see your own poem in the pages of *Writer's Digest*, check out the Poetic Asides blog (writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/poetic-asides) and search for the most recent WD Poetic Form Challenge.

Authorial Advocate

WD's 4th Annual Self-Published e-Book Awards winner draws attention to real issues through his fiction.

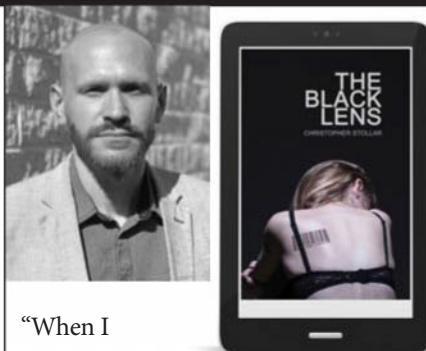
BY CRIS FREESE

Difficult subject matter can be emotionally taxing for the author and uncomfortable for readers. Handling such stories in a way that truly invites readers in takes a deft hand.

Christopher Stollar from Columbus, Ohio, spent more than three years conducting background research on sex trafficking for his novel, *The Black Lens*—interviewing survivors, social workers and police officers. Stollar's goal: to tell a story that would shed light on this dark underworld. The resulting thriller topped more than 600 entries in eight categories to win the grand prize in the 4th Annual Writer's Digest Self-Published e-Book Awards. With that honor, Stollar takes home \$5,000 in cash and a trip to the Writer's Digest Annual Conference in New York City, among other prizes.

"I first became aware of sex trafficking about 10 years ago when I was working as a reporter in Oregon," the 34-year-old explains. "Part of my beat included a small rural town that had a truck stop, which some of my sources encouraged me to investigate as a potential hub for trafficking. Unfortunately, I was never able to independently verify that—even though I knew in my gut that something was wrong. That began a decade-long quest for me to research and write about this issue."

The Black Lens is about a teenage girl and her sister who are forced into sexual slavery, and the local news photographer who tries to help them.



"When I was doing research, I discovered that many excellent nonfiction books about trafficking already existed, but good fiction was lacking. The few novels that did address the topic took place mostly overseas—not in the U.S., and especially not in rural America. I realized that my book would meet a unique need in the marketplace, while also raising awareness about one of the largest criminal activities in the world."

The book has garnered media coverage as well as more than 100 reviews and ratings with a 4-star average between Amazon and Goodreads. But Stollar hasn't stopped with raising awareness: 10 percent of his book earnings are donated to organizations that combat sex trafficking.

"The more I learned about trafficking, the more I wanted to fight it. Words were my best weapon," he says. "My hope is that those who read *The Black Lens* will be changed."



THE WINNER'S CIRCLE

To read more insight from Stollar and to see Honorable Mention winners, visit writersdigest.com/jun-17.

THE WINNERS

GRAND PRIZE

THE BLACK LENS by Christopher Stollar (\$4.99, Kindle; Kindle Unlimited; \$14.99, paperback; \$19.99, hardcover), Boyle & Dalton, christopherstollar.com

CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS

WHERE DO YOU LIVE, ANIMAL FRIEND? by Laura Bullock and Izzy Bean (illustrator) (\$8.99, Kindle; Kindle Unlimited; \$9.99, paperback), CreateSpace, laurabullock.com

GENRE FICTION

LIVING IN SHADOW by Georgia Florey-Evans (\$3.99, Kindle; Kindle Unlimited; \$20, paperback), georgiaevansauthor.com

INSPIRATIONAL

THE HUNGER BLESSING by L. Philips (\$1.99, Kindle; Kindle Unlimited), thesamaritansong.com

LIFE STORIES

AMERICAN YELLOW by George Omi (\$5.99, Kindle; \$14.95, paperback), First Edition Design Publishing, georgeomi.wordpress.com

MAINSTREAM/ LITERARY FICTION

TELEMACHUS by Peter Gray (\$2.99, Kindle; Kindle Unlimited; \$7.99, paperback), CreateSpace, petergray.org.uk

MIDDLE-GRADE/YOUNG ADULT FICTION

SUPERNATURAL HERO AND THE ZOMBIES by Eran Gadot (\$0.99, Kindle; Kindle Unlimited; \$7.99, paperback), CreateSpace

NONFICTION

THE PATHWAY TO LOVE: CREATE INTIMACY AND TRANSFORM YOUR RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH SELF-DISCOVERY by Julie Orlov (\$6.95, Kindle; Kindle Unlimited; \$16.95, paperback), Larimar Publishing, julieorlov.com

POETRY

EL AROMA DE CAFE. MEMORIA POETICA BILINGUE by Victoria E. Franks (\$4.99, Kindle; Kindle Unlimited; \$9.99, paperback), CreateSpace

The Formula for Suspense

BY BRAD PARKS

OK, kids, it's time to get out your protractors, your slide rules, your graphing calculators, because today in writing class we're going to do some math.

I hear you groaning—especially you in the back, Dude Who Thinks He's Literary. But writers can't afford to be arithmophobic, because it turns out there really is a formula for suspense.

Expressed algebraically, it is:

$$\text{Suspense} = (x-y) * u^2$$

Where ...

x = What I Want to Know

y = What I Know Already

u = How Bad I Want to Know It (designated "u" for "urgency")

In sentence form: Suspense is the difference between What I Want to Know and What I Know Already, multiplied by How Bad I Want to Know It squared.

Now, I know that some of you—like Girl Who Is Basically Hermione Granger, sitting up front—already get this. But for the rest of you, let's unpack the equation, shall we?

Start with the first variable, x , What I Want to Know. Writers often struggle with this, particularly when they craft breathless-but-vague prologues:

I had fallen, and I couldn't get up. The thing had ripped open a hole in me that even the most skilled surgeon couldn't suture. How bad was it? So bad that ...

Etc. It's apparent that *something* awful happened to this character. But because we don't know the character—or what's wrong with him, or why he's

so broken—we don't really care.

We have to be given some inkling of what's going on. But not too much. This brings us to y , What I Know Already. Don't write:

Rock N. O'Hardplace confronted the 300-megaton hydrogen bomb, knowing that the only way to defuse it was to cut the green wire.

There has to be a disparity between What I Want to Know and What I Know Already. And that disparity should be made known quickly. Start the story by posing a problem (*How will Rock defuse the bomb? Can he?*) or by asking a question (*Who killed Mrs. Flibberwit?*)



that you don't solve or answer until the end. That's suspenseful.

What isn't? Having the protagonist spend the first 50 pages talking to her best friend in a coffee shop about something that happened seven years ago. That's just backstory and, besides, nothing interesting happens in coffee shops. Yes, I'm looking at *you*, Dude Who Thinks He's Literary.

That brings us to the last variable, u . How Bad I Want to Know It. Urgency. It's squared because it's the

most powerful part of the equation.

So, for example, if I begin a presentation to a room full of people by locking the doors and saying ...

"We're going to have lunch in 45 minutes, and I'm not going to tell you what it is."

... I've succeeded in the first part of the suspense equation, because I've created a disparity between known and unknown. But I've failed at the end, because lunch isn't that important.

Compare that with locking the doors and saying ...

"One of you is going to die in 45 minutes, and I'm not going to tell you who it is."

... I'm guessing I'd have people's attention. Something big—a person's life—is now at stake. And stakes are what make a novel go. Take something

that really matters and put it in jeopardy, whether it's a life, a marriage, a community's sense of security or the fate of the entire wizarding world.

It really is that simple. *And* that difficult.

If you need extra help, just ask Girl Who Is Basically Hermione Granger. She'll be glad to explain it to you.

Brad Parks is the only author to have won the Shamus, Nero and Lefty awards, three of crime fiction's most prestigious prizes. His latest, *Say Nothing*, is his first stand-alone.

MEET THE AGENT

BY KARA GEBHART UHL

Anjali Singh

AYESHA PANDE LITERARY

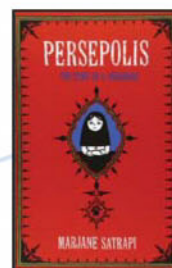
Anjali Singh grew up splitting time between New Delhi, India (her father's hometown), and Alexandria, Va. (her mother's), while spending summers on the Rhode Island coast with her grandmother. A graduate of Brown University, Singh went on to study Hindi, Urdu and French in Wisconsin and Paris, and took time to travel around India before eventually settling in New York City. She did editorial stints at various publishing houses—including Vintage Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and Simon & Schuster—then turned her focus to agenting, joining Ayesha Pande Literary in 2015.

Singh works in Harlem and lives on the Upper West Side with her husband and two daughters.

Sherine Hamdy and Myra El Mir, authors of *Jabs* (forthcoming from Dial Books for Young Readers)

Bridgett M. Davis, author of *What Does Happiness Play For?* (forthcoming from Little, Brown)

Arif Anwar, author of *The Storm* (co-agented with Ayesha Pande; forthcoming from HarperCollins Canada and Atria in the U.S.)



CLIENTS

Edited and published English translation of *Persepolis* at Random House after discovering it on a friend's bookshelf in Paris. (It was originally printed in French by a small publisher.)

GrubStreet's The Muse & the Marketplace, Boston, May 5-7

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"I started out in publishing because I loved reading and writing. I've stayed because it's a wonderful community to belong to, and being an editor—and now an agent—has allowed me to help people whose stories I believe in become published writers."

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"Know what it is you want to say, what your book is contributing to the world and why it's important."

QUERY PET PEEVES

"I'd love to find another truly great graphic novel or YA book that is at once very personal but opens up an important piece of history. I'd also love to read and represent more books that contribute to our understanding of the minority/immigrant experience in America, or a book like [one of] Patti Smith's [memoirs], at once very personal and also beautiful, while illuminating a certain time and place."

"Speaking about yourself in third person."

"Using more than 350 words to describe your book."

SEEKING

"Graphic novels (young adult and adult), particularly stories we haven't seen before; memoir; literary fiction."

FUN FACTS

"I love biking around NYC. Citi Bike has changed my life!"



"My favorite vacation would involve a good long hike along a seaside cliff or forested mountain trail, followed by an afternoon in a hammock with a good book."

BLOG:
The Millions
(themillions.com)

MANTRA:
"Never compare your insides to everyone else's outsides."
—Anne Lamott

FAVORITE

LIVING AUTHOR:
Patti Smith: "I just heard her interviewed and was reminded again of what an amazing artist and human being she is."

PLACE:
South County, R.I.

DRINK:
Manhattan



Kara Gebhart Uhl (pleiadesbee.com) writes and edits from Fort Thomas, Ky.

BREAKING IN

Debut authors: How they did it, what they learned and why you can do it, too.

BY TYLER MOSS

Emily Cavanagh



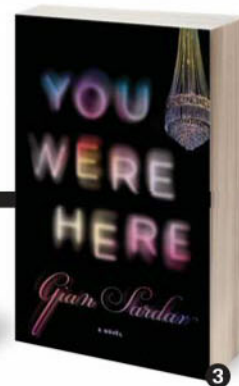
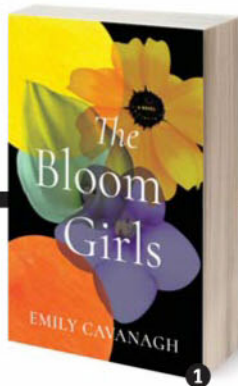
1 *The Bloom Girls*

(women's fiction, March, Lake Union Publishing)

"When the news of their father's death reaches them, sisters Cal, Violet and Suzy Bloom have to set aside their personal crises as they struggle to understand the secrets their father left behind—and each other."

WRITES FROM: Martha's Vineyard, Mass. **PRE-BLOOM:** I'd been writing seriously for about 10 years. I'd published a few short stories, but had been focusing on novels for a while. Though [this] is my first published novel, it's the fourth novel I've written.

TIME FRAME: I wrote the novel in about a year and a half. However, the characters started when I was in graduate school for creative writing at San Francisco State University. I wrote a collection of short stories about the Bloom sisters, three young women named after the flowers in their mother's garden. I put the stories away and moved on to something else, but the characters stayed with me. **ENTER THE AGENT:** I pitched *The Bloom Girls* to Ann Collette of Rees Literary Agency, [who] told me that the work wasn't right for her, but she thought it would be perfect for [Marlene Stringer of Stringer Literary Agency] and that I could use



her name when I queried. Marlene requested the full manuscript, I got the phone call, and I signed with her a few weeks later. **BIGGEST SURPRISE:** For the first time, I'm thinking about my writing *career*, rather than just getting one book published. **ADVICE FOR WRITERS:** Don't get hung up on one novel. If agents are rejecting you, move on to another project and keep querying. You'll become a stronger writer with every story you write, and when you do sign with an agent, she'll want to see other work. **NEXT UP:** My second novel with Lake Union will release next March. **WEBSITE:** emilycavanaghaauthor.com.

Cale Dietrich



2 *The Love Interest*

(young adult, May, Feiwel & Friends)

"Two teenage spies are tasked with competing for the affections of the same girl, but end up falling for each other instead."

WRITES FROM: Brisbane, Australia.

PRE-LOVE: I wrote and edited five manuscripts that were all somehow

rip-offs of both Harry Potter and "Supernatural." I also studied creative writing at university, so I was constantly writing and getting critiqued for three years. **TIME FRAME:** I finished the first draft in about two months, [and] edited for another month before I started querying. Once I had an agent, I revised for about a year before it was good enough to sell. **ENTER THE AGENT:** I read that new agents at reputable agencies were a great opportunity for querying. I saw an announcement that my now agent [Leon Husock of L. Perkins Agency] had been hired, and when I was ready to query I pitched him. **WHAT I DID RIGHT:** I'm proud of the work I put into my query letter. I revised it for two months, and got a lot of feedback. Having it read and critiqued by so many people gave me a lot of confidence. **WHAT I WOULD'VE DONE DIFFERENT:** I would've revised more before the manuscript [went out] on submission. Then again, that [first round of submissions] led to the revise-and-resubmit request that transformed the manuscript into something that sold in two weeks

in the second round. **ADVICE FOR WRITERS:** Find a balance between listening and learning from other people, while also following your instincts. **NEXT UP:** I'm working on my second book. **WEBSITE:** caledietrich.com.



Gian Sardar

3 You Were Here

(genre fiction, May, G.P. Putnam's Sons)

"Determined to find the root of her recurring nightmares, Abby Walters returns home to Minnesota, where a series of horrific crimes are playing out and a long-buried secret from her family's past may finally rise to light."

WRITES FROM: Los Angeles. **PRE-HERE:** I'd been working on short stories and scripts. I [also assisted with writing a

friend's] memoir, *Psychic Junkie*, published in 2006. **TIME FRAME:** Though I wrote the first draft in less than a year, subsequent drafts were delayed by other projects. This book lived in my computer for years before I worked up the nerve to put it out there. From start to finish, [it took] eight years.

ENTER THE AGENT: Every year I'd buy the *Guide to Literary Agents* and highlight my dream few that I wanted to submit to—but never did. Then I was asked to help another writer, and realized I should ask if she knew any agents. Well, she did, and without asking who the agent was I agreed to send off the manuscript. Next thing I knew, [Lucy Carson of The Friedrich Agency] (*the agency I'd highlighted every year as my dream agency*) was my agent. **BIGGEST SURPRISE:** Those nagging thoughts were legitimate! If

WD CONSUMMATE PRO

Cavanagh reflects on how professional success changed her writing at bit.ly/WDBreakingIn.

I thought to myself, *Is it slow here?*, more often than not my instinct was right, and those things were flagged.

WHAT I DID RIGHT: Write for yourself—what makes you happy to write and what you would love to read—and then *force* yourself to submit.

ADVICE FOR WRITERS: I try to write each page like it's the only one.

That way I'm not overwhelmed with the whole, and proper attention is paid to every bit. **NEXT UP:** I'm at work on another novel.

WEBSITE: giansardar.com. **WD**

Tyler Moss is the managing editor of *Writer's Digest*.

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Amy Reichert – author of women's fiction *The Coincidence of Coconut Cake, Love, Luck & Lemon Pie*, and *The Simplicity of Cider*

Melissa Marino – author of women's fiction, *So Twisted*

Dee Romito – author of middle grade novel, *The BFF Bucket List*, and guru for Scrivener writing software

Bronwen Dickey – contributing editor at *The Oxford American* and the author of *Pit Bull: The Battle over an American Icon*

Brenda Drake – author of young adult novels and creator of #PitchWars Contest

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Dana Kaye – Dana Kaye Publicity, author of *Your Book, Your Brand*

Carol Topp, Certified Public Accountant – author of eleven books including *Business Tips and Taxes for Writers*

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#HASHTAG *Happy*

Who would have thought that a little blue bird and a pound sign could enhance your #writing life—and even land you an agent? Tweet your way to success with this handy guide to the best hashtags for writers.

#MSWL

IN THE WORDS OF JESSICA SINSHEIMER,
Manuscript Wish List co-founder
& associate agent with
Sarah Jane Freymann Literary Agency

HOW IT STARTED: Years ago, when I was a newer agent, I found that people would tell me about their wonderful manuscripts—exactly the sort of projects I wanted!—and then say, “Oh, but you aren’t interested in projects like that.” Because I hadn’t sold [or mentioned those topics or genres] yet, no one knew I wanted them. I found myself having this discussion over and over—

and figured that if I was having this problem, other agents would be, too.

I sent an email to about 20 other agents, suggesting we spend a day tweeting about what we wanted. When that day came, amazingly, #MSWL began trending on Twitter. Quite suddenly, we had the attention of the writing world.

We’ve since expanded to several events a year, a full website at manuscriptwishlist.com, and now an online conference: The Manuscript Academy. Our mission is to give writers access to the knowledge and people who can make all the difference, to demystify the submission process, and to show that agents are, in fact, real people who want to help you. Often the difference between a request and a rejection is completely avoidable—a lost opportunity



for everyone involved. I think we can all agree that education is power—and we want to bring that to as many people as possible.

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: If you're looking for an agent, this is an excellent place to start. Agents are wonderfully complex people. We're always looking for something new to learn, to read about, to represent—that's how we keep things interesting, and keep ourselves in business. I would wager that every agent has a passion that isn't represented in her current client list. You can look at a list of [desired] genres, sure—but if you're writing a steampunk romance with a strong female protagonist, wouldn't you love to know about agents looking for *exactly* that?

WHERE IT LIVES OFF TWITTER: You can find the fuller version of #MSWL—complete with searchable profiles, submission information, recent acquisitions and upcoming events—on manuscriptwishlist.com. You can also find our free podcast (which features interviews with #MSWL agents, how-to tips, panels and more) at manuscriptacademy.com/ourpodcast or in the iTunes store under the title “The Manuscript Academy.”

WHEN TO FOLLOW: We host several events a year, all of them mentioned first on manuscriptwishlist.com and #MSWL. Join our mailing list to have those dates, and the newest agent and editor profiles, delivered to your inbox—and/or follow me on Twitter @jsinsheim for submissions tips, Q&As, free live publishing panels, and information about all of our events designed to connect writers, agents and editors.

WHO IT CAN HELP THE MOST: Writers looking for agents are the most obvious fit—but it also helps those looking for inspiration for their next project, and has even helped agents find editors to purchase manuscripts. #MSWL can also help writers pinpoint editors open to direct submissions from unagented authors.

WHAT IT COULD DO FOR YOU: We have a long list of writers who are now agented, and published, thanks to #MSWL and manuscriptwishlist.com. It's often research that makes all the difference when pitching your work.

Conversation Starters

#amwriting / #writing: Can you tweet and write at the same time? From the immense popularity of these hashtags, it seems so. Use them to connect with others who are at their keyboard in real time, or simply to announce your solidarity before going offline to focus.

#1linedwed: Join the many writers sharing one line of their manuscripts on Wednesdays, in line with that week's theme as set by @RWAKissofDeath, or simply eavesdrop in search of inspiration.

#writerwednesday / #WW: These tweets highlight other writers worth following, in the spirit of paying it forward.

#fridayreads: Writing is all about the readers, after all—so why not join in this weekly status update by sharing what book is currently keeping you up at night?

#pubtip: Share or search using the hashtag for bite-sized tips on publishing (but, of course, always check that the source is a knowledgeable one).

#writetip: Like #PubTip, but with writing.

#indieauthor: Connect with others who are interested in self-publishing or are actively doing so.

#askagent: Have a submissions question? It's worth a try to ask it with this hashtag and see whether you get an answer. Or, wait until you notice it trending on a day when agents are feeling generous, and hop in the conversation. (Note: Not recommended to directly pitch specific agents on Twitter, which is generally bad form outside of structured forums for doing so.)

#litchat: This more vague earmark tracks literary chats that others might find interesting. —WD Staff

#MSWL will enrich your agent search, and give you the confidence of knowing you've given your work its best possible chance.

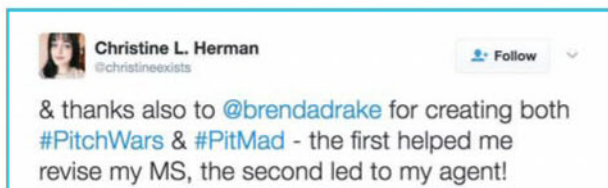
Jessica Sinsheimer is most excited about representing picture books, young adult, upmarket genre fiction (especially women's/romance/erotica, thrillers and mysteries) and—on the nonfiction side—psychology, parenting, self-help, cookbooks, memoirs, and works that speak to life in the 21st century. She especially likes highbrow sentences with lowbrow content, smart/nerdy protagonists, vivid descriptions of food, picture books with nonhuman characters, and justified acts of bravery.

#PitchWars & #PitMad

IN THE WORDS OF BRENDA DRAKE,
founder & bestselling author

HOW #PITCHWARS STARTED: The first Pitch Wars contest was in 2012. After running several contests for writers, I discovered that the requested pages or full manuscripts agents received [from the winners would often receive feedback that amounted to] the writing and/or story falling apart after the first few chapters. Then one fated day, I was watching “Cupcake Wars.” A baker had an assistant help create beautiful cupcakes for the judges, and I thought: *That's what our writing community needed.* We needed experienced mentors (published and/or agented mentors, industry interns and editors) to help writers who were getting rejections from literary agents work out what was failing in their manuscripts.

WHY YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION: Pitch Wars has had close to 200 successes with writers finding agents and book deals [to date]. More than 50 authors were offered representation and/or publishing deals from our 2015 event, and our 2016 contest ended with 24 mentees signing with agents—and one snagging a publishing deal within the first month of the agent showcase ending!



WHERE IT LIVES OFF TWITTER: Pitch Wars has lived on my blog at brenda-drake.com/pitch-wars, but is moving to a website of its own at pitchwars.org. The site is currently under construction and we hope to have it live by the time you read this. It will have numerous resources for writers, as well as a forum for Pitch Wars community [members] to hang out and help each other throughout the year.

WHEN TO FOLLOW: March is the best time to start following the contest. [Ultimately, during the submission window in August, you'll be applying directly to your top four choices of mentors, so you'll want plenty of time to meet all the prospective mentors, to learn more about how to present yourself and your work, and to make yourself known in the conversation thread ongoing under the hashtag.] Leading up to the submission window, we host critique workshops, mentor interviews, and a blog hop with the mentors' bios and what categories and genres they want to mentor.

WHO IT CAN HELP THE MOST: Writers with a finished, polished and unpublished manuscript who are looking for agent representation.

WHAT IT COULD DO FOR YOU: Not only can it help your writing, but it can also get you noticed by many of the top literary agents in the industry.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED: Follow the website (and be sure to read the complete contest details there). Participate on the hashtag #PitchWars all year long to tap into a great community of writers helping writers and cheering each other on. Many writers have found close friends and critique partners on the feed. Mentors share advice, too. Then, submit your applications in August, and you never know—you might be our next success story!

SO WHAT ABOUT #PITMAD? #PitMad is solely a Twitter pitch party, hosted quarterly, and happens only on the hashtag. Dates are announced and pitching guidelines are posted in advance of each event at brenda-drake.com/pitmad. #PitMad has connected many writers with

How (& Why) to Host Your Own Tweet Chat

BY CRYSTAL KING



Imagine a party with lively and interesting conversation. Now imagine that party on Twitter, with dozens of participants asking questions and sharing information. Tweet chats are fantastic ways to network with other authors and readers.

Typical tweet chats start at a specific time, usually last an hour, and use a chat-specific hashtag to earmark each tweet (e.g., #bookchat). Joining a tweet chat is easy. Hosting one is a little trickier. Here are some tips and tricks:

- Participate in a few tweet chats before hosting your own. Find a chat through sites such as twubs.com/twitter-chats or tweetreports.com/twitter-chat-schedule.
- For fast-flowing chats, the native Twitter client can be clunky. Consider using a free service such as TweetChat, or free tools such as TweetDeck, Twitterfall or Hootsuite to orchestrate things in real time.
- Choose a date and time wisely. Tweriod.com can tell you when your audience is most likely online.
- Unless you have a large Twitter following and can attract a crowd, inviting friends to help you keep the conversation going is advised.
- Decide on a format. Do you want to ask questions of all the participants, or do you want to invite influencer guests (for example, known authors, book bloggers or experts in your topic) to answer the

main questions, with the audience chiming in to ask their own?

- Promote your chat, using its predefined hashtag, the week before it takes place. Remind your audience again a few times in the hour leading up to the chat.
- Create visuals to help promote and advance the chat. (A tool such as canva.com can help.) Encourage participants to include images related to topics you are discussing, as tweets with images tend to draw more eyes.
- The best chats grow from predetermined questions that use a Q1, Q2 format alongside the hashtag. Answers should be prefaced with A1, A2, etc., and are best typed out in advance for simple cut and paste when the time comes. (If you're invited to participate as a special guest and are not serving as the primary host, request any predetermined questions in advance so you can prepare your answers.)
- Encourage participants to ask their own questions. Retweet the most interesting responses.
- Don't forget to check your @ mentions to see who is speaking to you directly. Follow interesting participants to encourage follow-backs and future conversation.

Crystal King (crystalking.com) is a social media professional, an instructor at GrubStreet writing center in Boston, and the author of the novel *Feast of Sorrow*.

agents and publishers. (Success stories are featured at brenda-drake.com/pitmad-successes.)

WHEN TO FOLLOW: During the event: Each designated #PitMad day runs from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern time.

WHO IT CAN HELP THE MOST: Writers with a finished, polished and unpublished manuscript who are looking for agent representation or a publishing deal.

WHAT IT COULD DO FOR YOU: #PitMad is a fun way to pitch literary agents and get to know the community. Sometimes it's successful, sometimes not, but it's great practice. Jumping in a bigger pool and seeing if anyone bites helps writers see if they have their hook down [to an effective teaser]. Also, it helps writers learn how to focus on the main plot of their story and how to pitch it.

[Agents "favorite" pitches to show interest, and sometimes a writer will garner interest from an agent/publisher who she wouldn't have thought to pitch.] It helps bring literary agents, editors and writers together.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED: Prepare several 140-character pitches for your manuscript, making sure to include sub-hashtags for category and/or genre. Then, on the day of the Twitter pitch party, tweet your pitches. You get three tweets per manuscript, so be sure to spread them throughout the day. Easy! **WD**

Brenda Drake (brenda-drake.com) is *The New York Times* best-selling author of *Thief of Lies*, *Guardian of Secrets*, *Touching Fate* and *Cursing Fate*. She is passionate about hosting workshops and contests for writers. Find her on Twitter @brendadrake.



GET YOUR (Facebook) GROUP ON

If you use it wisely, social media isn't a time suck—it's a gold mine. See how connecting with other writers (and readers) on Facebook can help advance your craft, community and career.

BY ORLY KONIG

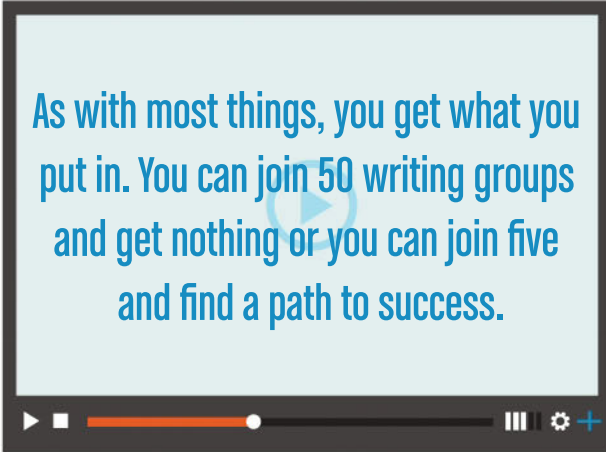
They say writing is a lonely endeavor. *I* think the people saying that have yet to venture into the amazing world of Facebook writing groups. Because, baby, it's not lonely over there!

You're probably wondering why you need virtual groups when you already have a local clan of writers you meet with once a month, or a critique partner you exchange chapters with every week. Why venture onto that slippery productivity slope of Facebook? One word: *connections*. OK, two words: *connections* and *support*.

The Many Faces of Writer Facebook Groups

Whatever you're looking for, there's most likely a group for it. Writers and readers sharing book recommendations? Yup. Writers in a specific genre talking shop? Absolutely. Writers supporting each other through querying and writing and publishing and coffee addiction? Oh, yes!

Since I'm writing about the topic, I thought I should do a quick check on the number of groups I'm involved



in: 84 (*gasp!*), 63 of which are writing related. Why so many? Each serves a different purpose.

- **CRITIQUE GROUPS:** These can be small (three or four members who exchange work regularly) or large (with participants exchanging on an as-needed basis). Both have benefits, though I find that smaller groups are more likely to foster regular critique partners who come to know you and your writing. For me, this is the group I go to first when I need a kick in the pants, want honest advice or have writing-related news to share.
- **GENRE-SPECIFIC GROUPS:** These groups are gold mines for connections. Chat about issues specific to your genre and meet other authors who face similar writing or promotional challenges.
- **ASSOCIATION GROUPS:** Some organizations (the Women’s Fiction Writers Association, for example) have dedicated members-only Facebook groups for social interaction. These are fun forums for getting to know fellow writers at varying levels in their careers.
- **MARKETING/PROMO SUPPORT GROUPS:** Let’s face it: You write a book, you need to sell the book. These groups can be like having your very own marketing team made up of fellow writers, each sharing experiences of what works and what doesn’t—plus unbounded determination to help one another strategize and build buzz.
- **AGENT/PUBLISHER GROUPS:** Not all agents/publishers host their own clients/authors group, but if yours does, *join*.
- **EVENT-SPECIFIC GROUPS:** Many conferences (including the Writer’s Digest Annual Conference) have groups set up where registered attendees can connect in advance, trade info during the event and stay in touch

afterward. I’ve even participated in private Facebook groups for more intimate writer’s retreats.

- **READER-ORIENTED GROUPS:** There are some wonderful groups on Facebook that connect readers and writers (which is, after all, the end goal). The book recommendations will topple your TBR (social media shorthand for “to be read”) pile, but the supporters you’ll connect with are priceless.

How to Get Involved

The best way to find groups is by asking around. Start by seeking out recommendations from writers in your genre, and those at a similar stage of writing, but don’t stop short of approaching writers at different levels or phases in the writing/publishing process. You can learn from them all.

For independent browsing, Facebook is also nice enough to show you what groups your friends

📶 Create Your Own
📶 📄

Despite the many writer-focused Facebook groups out there, there will be times you just can’t find what you need and you’ll want to set up your own. Here are a few things to consider:

1. What will the focus of your group be? What will make it different from the others? What’s your motivation for starting it?
2. What type of group do you want it to be—secret, private or open? Facebook has clear definitions of what each type involves.
3. Who will be included in the group? This is mostly a concern if you’re establishing something other than a public group. Do you want to handpick members, or allow anyone to join?
4. What guidelines do you want to enforce? For example, will you allow self-promotion and if yes, any time or only on certain days? Are there limitations on discussion topics? Include the guidelines in the description of the group and pin a thread reiterating the guidelines so members are reminded when they enter the group. Give some thought, too, to how you’ll address violations.
5. What about group maintenance? Depending on the type of group you’ve set up, you may need to assign admins to help moderate member requests and/or be sure nothing inappropriate is being posted.



The writing community is wonderfully generous. Post a question or request for help, and people you've never met *will* come forward.

are involved with, or of course you can use the search function. Simply click on the Groups button under Explore in the left-hand navigation bar, where you can then see popular groups by topic or locality.

When to Join

That's easy—as soon as you start writing. Seriously. The support, motivation and friendship you'll find is a gift from the writing gods. In one of the groups I belong to, we set weekly goals on Monday, then check in on Friday with the status of those goals. Talk about accountability.

Facebook groups are great places to ask questions and get honest, varied answers. Whether you're starting out or multipublished, there's always more to learn. Even if you're at the early stages of writing or querying, it's not too early to join a group that discusses marketing. There's a lot of value in looking ahead (and it doesn't hurt to start supporting fellow writers in their efforts now, either—they may return the favor later).

What to Expect and What's Expected

As with most things, you get what you put in. You can join 50 writing groups and get nothing or you can join five and find a path to success. Each group will have its own guidelines. Make sure you follow them. For example, many groups don't allow self-promotion, or allow promos only on certain days.

If you're joining a critique group, jump in and critique for others, even if you don't have anything to put on the table just yet. Don't wait until you need a review to offer your services.

If you're part of a closed group sharing advice and experiences, do not share that same information publicly or in other groups. Be sensitive that some information is

shared under the protective umbrella of that particular group. If there's a specific piece of info you want to share more widely, ask for permission first.

A quick service announcement: Don't join a Facebook group when you're up against the wall and need help. The writing community is wonderfully generous. Post a question or request for help, and people you've never met *will* come forward. But if you only come out of the woodwork when you need something and you don't reciprocate, it'll be noticed.

Folks are much more likely to go out of their way to help when they know and respect you. And on the flip side, you can truly trust advice only when you truly trust its source.



A Few Favorites



Of all the Facebook communities I belong to, here's a sampling of the groups I particularly love:

- **GREAT THOUGHTS' GREAT READERS:** Readers and authors sharing book suggestions
- **"A NOVEL BEE":** Book recommendation author adoration society
- **READERS COFFEEHOUSE:** Authors and readers discussing women's fiction
- **THE MOTIVATED WRITER:** Dedicated to writer productivity
- **A REASON TO WRITE:** Writers supporting one another and sharing opportunities

How Much Is Too Much

You could easily spend your waking hours reading every post in every group you join. But a writing group won't help your writing if you're not actually writing.

Facebook allows you to Favorite groups that will then show in the left-hand navigation bar. Set your preferences to favor notifications from the groups you're most involved with, and prioritize your interactions accordingly.

Periodically, scroll through your list of groups. If there's one with a lot of unread posts, maybe it's time to drop out.

Stick to those that work best for you, and you'll find that groups can enrich your writing life in ways you never dreamed of. **WD**

Orly Konig is the founding president of the Women's Fiction Writers Association. Her debut novel, *The Distance Home*, hits bookstores in May.



#HASHTAG HAPPY

GET YOUR [FACEBOOK] GROUP ON

PREMIUM UPGRADES 

101 BEST WEBSITES FOR WRITERS

Premium UPGRADES

These 6 alternatives to your go-to word processor aim to enhance productivity, form and function.

BY RICH SHIVENER

Scrivener Outline. Edit. Storyboard. Write.

Scrivener 2, the program's latest iteration, is designed for organizing, drafting and polishing large writing projects that can become unwieldy in other programs. Among its highlights: The software offers numerous customized templates to start from (script, novel, etc.), and the "Scrivenings" mode allows you to compile and edit non-sequential pages in your draft (e.g., reviewing sections pertinent to a character who appears in only select chapters). For outlining, the Corkboard function displays index cards of grouped pages and any associated notes for easy reorganization. While Scrivener's numerous features and formats might appear intimidating at first, the program contains a robust, interactive tutorial that demonstrates its capabilities and how you can make the most of them.

Central to Scrivener are three default sections: Draft, Research and Trash—all of which are contained in a digital "binder." Thus, while, say, drafting a scene set in

(Windows, Mac and iOS; literatureandlatte.com)

London, you can easily jump to that BBC article you saved in the Research section. If you have an audio file to transcribe, you can create a split screen to type on a page while navigating the audio. And when you're done, you can compile and export your work for a variety of formats, from Word to Kindle.

PRICING: Windows, \$40; Mac, \$45; iOS, \$19.99; free demo available

WHO IT'S PERFECT FOR: Authors, journalists and field researchers

KEY FEATURES:

- Ready-made formats for title pages, layouts, forms, etc.
- Snapshots feature allows you to save and review earlier drafts
- Split screen
- Scrivenings mode



(Web application, iOS and Android; masterwriter.com)

Geared toward creative writers and songwriters, the web application MasterWriter 3.0 becomes most resourceful when you get stuck on a project. Let's say you want to workshop a few problematic passages or stanzas. The program has a simple text interface in which you can call out lines that you want to work with outside of your main document. MasterWriter's value is obvious when you access its robust collections of word families, synonyms, phrases, rhymes and alliterations—all of which can also be filtered and collected into a separate notepad. No need to have another web browser open. Suddenly, the hot weather described in your work is scorching, fiery, boiling, raging.

PRICING: Monthly license, \$9.95; one-year license, \$99.95; two-year license, \$149.95; free demo available

WHO IT'S PERFECT FOR: Poets and songwriters, writers doing line editing, and those looking to focus on word choice

KEY FEATURES:

- World and pop culture database
- Word family, rhyme, alliteration and phrase collections
- Built-in Wikipedia search
- Audio recorder (up to five minutes per session)



(Mac and iOS; ulyssesapp.com)

Unlike James Joyce's ultracomplex novel of the same name, Ulysses aims to keep writing simple and minimal, with a focus on productivity. In this writing program, winner of the 2016 Apple Design Award, you compose on "sheets" (i.e., pages) in plain text (though formatting can be added as needed with markup language, e.g., pressing Command-B to bold words). The program has a sidebar in which you can attach notes, writing goals and images to help you push forward to a word count. It syncs across all your devices (phone, tablet, etc.) so you can access your work anytime, anywhere. When you're ready to export text for submission, publication or another purpose, the program's Quick Export feature allows you to choose and preview styles and formats (from ePub files to letter-sized PDFs).

PRICING: Mac, \$44.99; iOS, \$24.99; free demo available

WHO IT'S PERFECT FOR: Minimalist writers, writers seeking discipline, and those on the go

KEY FEATURES:

- Custom markup options
- Writing goal tracker
- Typewriter mode
- Cloud syncing (to iCloud or external folders on Dropbox)
- Publish directly to Medium or WordPress
- Numerous styles available to import from the Ulysses Style Exchange (contributed by users and developers)



(Windows, Mac and iOS; finaldraft.com)

Now in its 10th edition, Final Draft has been a go-to program (sometimes even called the industry standard) for screenwriters. With templates and keyboard shortcuts, the program makes script formatting efficient, so you spend more time writing and less time toying with style. Final Draft also has templates specifically for writing comic books, TV episodes and more. (It does have templates for prose writing, but you might be better off using a more standard word processor

or another program recommended here.) New features in the latest version include the Collaboration tool, which allows writers to connect via chat and share documents, and Alternate Dialogue, which makes it easy to experiment with your characters' words. Story Map and Beat Board allow you to create visuals of where the story is heading and target plot/structural benchmarks within a certain page count or project length.

PRICING: Windows and Mac, \$249.99; iOS, \$19.99; free demo available

WHO IT'S PERFECT FOR: Screenwriters and those drafting scripts for graphic novels, stage, etc.

KEY FEATURES:

- Chat and document sharing with fellow users

- Beat Board and Story Map
- Intuitive Scene and Characters navigators
- Industry-standard templates
- Keyboard shortcuts for formatting characters, action and other script-specific elements
- Alternate Dialogue option

FADE IN

(Windows, Mac, Linux, iOS and Android; fadeinpro.com)

A less costly alternative to Final Draft, Fade In is a screenwriting program designed by Kent Tessman, independent film producer and director. Forgoing the bevy of templates and options available in the other program, Fade In offers a clean interface with more straightforward script-specific features, such as a scene organizer, revision mode and Dialogue Tuner, which displays an editable list of *all* of a select character's dialogue. The program's latest update has new features such as image support and real-time editing with collaborators (think Google Docs collaboration). If you've been using Final Draft or Scrivener and are looking to make a change, Fade In allows you to import and export files from those programs and others.

PRICING: Windows, Mac and Linux, \$79.95; iOS, \$4.99; Android, \$4.99; free version also available for iOS and Android, with limited features

WHO IT'S PERFECT FOR: Screenwriters and other script writers

KEY FEATURES:

- Auto-generated production reports on scenes, characters, locations, etc. featured in a script
- Dialogue Tuner
- Templates for film, TV and stage
- Version histories of scenes (so you don't lose revisions)
- Option to export to Dropbox



Place To Write

(Mac and iOS; placetowrite.com)

You have likely tried to create or find an ideal space to do your writing—whether in a lively coffee shop, a quiet spare bedroom or a scenic area of a park. When you're stuck somewhere *less* than ideal, Place to Write provides a selection of background themes and sounds to optimize your focus or enhance your creativity. It can transport you, for example, to Jutland—a snowy landscape once inhabited by Vikings and complete with whistling wind sounds. Offering just a few fonts and text editing options, this program is best for writers who need few distractions and just want to get words down (and it works best in full-screen mode). What's more, Place to Write offers tools for beating creative blocks; it can randomly generate ideas for characters, plots and themes. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm off to free write about a disrespectful 30-year-old student who is driven by poverty and looking for a new lease on life.

PRICING: Mac, \$5.99; iOS, \$0.99

WHO IT'S PERFECT FOR: Writers looking for inspiration and/or a more creative virtual writing space

KEY FEATURES:

- Minimized text editing options (to help you focus)
- Background themes with animations and sounds
- Built-in timer
- Plot Generators (can place characters together in random situations)
- Character Builder (can suggest appearance, occupation and other traits)
- Inspiration Dice (can provide prompts to boost you through a creative block) **WD**

Rich Shivener is a freelance writer, English doctoral candidate and teacher based in Covington, Ky.

The 19th Annual

101

BEST WEBSITES

for WRITERS

BY BAIHLEY GRANDISON

Nowadays, the amount of time we spend online—more than 20 hours a week, on average—is the equivalent of a part-time job. Considering this wired state, it's easy to see how the internet, with its endless allure of aimless procrastination (cat videos, anyone?), can easily become a writer's greatest time suck. That's what makes lists like this one so valuable. Far better than click-bait, here you'll find the best of the (writerly) internet, expertly curated with your needs in mind.

For 19 years now, we've been doing the hard work of scouring the web for you: sorting through the hundreds of reader-nominated sites that pour in year-round, reviewing honorees from past lists, considering staff favorites and devoting countless browsing hours to the hunt for excellence.

The result: our latest list of 101 first-class free resources to assist every level and genre of writer on every stage of the writing journey. Whether you're looking for inspiration or motivation, tutorials on craft, assistance with platform building, or insight into seeking agents or self-publishing, you'll find it here—and much, much more besides.

To help you suss out the sites that best fit your needs, we've organized them into nine alphabetized sections: creativity, writing advice, everything agents, general resources, publishing/marketing resources, jobs and markets, online writing communities, genres/niches, and just for fun.

Icons (see key below) illustrate at a glance the types of resources each site offers: advice for writers, classes/workshops/conferences (or links to them), contests, critique forums, e-newsletters/RSS feeds, a Facebook group or page, resources for young writers, discussion forums, an Instagram account, job listings, markets for your work, a podcast, a Tumblr site, a Twitter feed or a YouTube channel.

Finally, sites that have never appeared on a previous incarnation of this list (we're always on the lookout for standout newbies!) are indicated by black circles around their corresponding numbers.

Don't waste a minute more. Get your bookmarks tab ready, and prepare to install some critical updates to your online writing life.

101 AT A GLANCE: SYMBOLS KEY

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ✓ Advice for Writers | Instagram |
| 📺 Classes/Workshops/
Conferences | 💰 Jobs |
| 🏆 Contests | 📍 Markets |
| 🗣️ Critiques | 🎙️ Podcast |
| 📡 E-newsletters/RSS | 📌 Tumblr |
| 📘 Facebook | 🐦 Twitter |
| ★ For Young Writers | 📺 YouTube |
| 💬 Forums | # First Appearance on
Our Annual 101 List |

1-7 CREATIVITY

1. BRAIN PICKINGS



brainpickings.org

Brain Pickings' delightful medley of articles about art, science, psychology, philosophy, literature, anthropology and more is carefully curated so as to "cross-pollinate ideas from a wealth of disciplines" and stimulate out-of-the-box thinking—which, of course, is the first step toward out-of-the-box writing. Sign up for the "interestingness digest" newsletter to receive recaps of the week's best articles.

BEST OF THE BEST

2. CREATIVITY PORTAL



creativity-portal.com

An award-winning hub of brain-teasers, prompts, and how-tos on meditation and guided imagery, Creativity Portal provides nearly endless opportunities for sparking your imagination. Get inspired by the 100-plus interviews with creative professionals, or try the Imagination Prompt Generator.

3. THE NEW YORKER CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

contest.newyorker.com

This is about as highbrow as creativity prompts get: *The New Yorker* posts a stand-alone cartoon every week for readers to take their best shot at captioning. The top three advance to that week's voting round (open to the public!) and the winner appears in the magazine.

4. SIX-WORD MEMOIRS



sixwordmemoirs.com

With its collection of micro-memoirs more than 1 million strong, this site would make Hemingway proud. Check out the Six Words channel on YouTube for even more inspiration, or submit your own best six-word missives for a chance to be featured on the website's home page.

5. THE STORY STARTER

Caught in a staring contest with a blank page? The Story Starter's database of more than 300 billion prompts will churn out random one-liners with a simple click of the mouse. For classroom-friendly prompts for the younger set, check out The Story Starter Jr. (thestorystarter.com/jr.htm).

6. STORYBIRD

Create and share virtual picture or chapter books and poems on Storybird, using the site's myriad templates and whimsical illustrations to craft the tales of your choosing. Storybird also offers (for a fee) options for printing your own hardcover or paperback book, wall prints (for displaying poems) and more.

7. WRITING PROMPTS

This imaginative Tumblr blog provides tons of graphics and photos coupled with prompts to kick-start your creativity. Follow for updates, browse at your leisure or use the Random Prompt Button to see what turns up.

8-27 WRITING ADVICE

8. APRIL DÁVILA, STORYTELLER



aprildavila.com

Dávila has been documenting her efforts toward becoming a published novelist for eight years running, and her blog is full of advice for bettering your craft, creating community, staying committed and more. Based in Los Angeles, the full-time freelancer also compiles a weekly roundup (#LitLife) of West Coast writer events.

9. BETTER NOVEL PROJECT



betternovelproject.com

"Deconstructing bestselling novels, one doodle at a time" is the mantra of Better Novel Project's Christine Frazier, who uses digital index "cards"—coupled with hand-drawn illustrations—to break down the common elements (from word count to character archetypes and more) of popular novels such as *The Hunger Games* and *Twilight*. The result is a succinct and comprehensive Master Outline you might find helpful in structuring your own work-in-progress.

10. DAILY WRITING TIPS



dailywritingtips.com

Find your daily dose of grammar and freelance know-how here: From punctuation and word usage tutorials to freelance writing advice, this site will demystify just about any nitty-gritty mechanical question you have. The tips are free, but for \$5/month you can also get access to writing courses, exercises and hundreds of regularly updated job listings.

11. DAVID VILLALVA, LUCID STORYTELLER

davidvillalva.com

Learn the intricacies of creative storytelling—whether in short fiction, novel or screenplay form—and apply them to your own work



with David Villalva’s insightful visual guides. Check out the Create a Villain infographic or The Storytelling Blueprint for examples of his lucidity in action.

BEST OF THE BEST

12. **DIY MFA**



diydfa.com

Offering a do-it-yourself alternative to a master’s degree in writing, DIY MFA provides all the tools you need to “write with focus, read with purpose and build your community”—led by prolific teacher, speaker and writer Gabriela Pereira (author of the companion book *DIY MFA*, from WD Books) via articles, classes and a podcast. The e-newsletter brings regular updates to your inbox with the friendly greeting “Hey there, Word Nerds!”

13. **FICTION UNIVERSITY**



blog.janicehardy.com

Spearheaded by award-winning novelist Janice Hardy, Fiction University will school you in the *hows* of writing. A rigorous weekly schedule—from Writing Tip Monday to Writing Prompt Sunday—makes the site ideal for those trying to develop discipline. The cumulative result is more than 1,000 articles on all aspects of the fiction writing process, from mapping a novel to editing, submitting and more.

14. **FICTORIANS**

fictorians.com

Helmed by a group of 28 authors and editors, and running thousands of posts deep, this blog neatly organizes its all-encompassing advice into helpful categories such as Business,

Craft & Skill and The Writing Life—all with easy-to-peruse subcategories that make finding what you’re looking for a cinch.

15. **GRAMMARPHOBIA**



grammarphobia.com

The brainchild of the author behind *The New York Times*-bestselling grammar title *Woe Is I*, Grammarphobia busts language myths and deciphers tricky usage rules while answering literary questions you didn’t even know you had, such as “Is red beautiful?” and “Does a doorway need a door?”

16. **HELPING WRITERS BECOME AUTHORS**

helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com

Internationally published historical novelist and writing mentor K.M. Weiland boasts an extensive repertoire of advice on story structure, scenes, characters and more, presented via articles, a podcast, an e-newsletter, workshops and videos.

17. **NATHAN BRANSFORD**



blog.nathanbransford.com

A former literary agent and professional social media manager turned novelist, Nathan Bransford brings a diverse breadth of knowledge to his blog. He posts less frequently these days, but you’ll still find plenty of candid advice on building a platform, querying agents, targeting genres, and more in his Publishing Essentials archive, along with robust forums.

18. **SEEKERVILLE**

seekerville.blogspot.com

Nine years ago, 13 Christian novelists started a blog documenting their writing journeys as not-yet-

published authors with the goal of inspiring other writers along the way. Today, all of the “Seekers” are published—many of them to critical acclaim—and their commitment to providing thoughtful advice, encouragement and inspiration remains unwavering.

19. **SEPTEMBER C. FAWKES**



septembercfawkes.com

An avid reader and aspiring speculative fiction writer, September C. Fawkes seeks and shares storytelling takeaways by dissecting popular books and movies: Think *Les Misérables*, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, *Interstellar* and *The Hunger Games*. Adding to her perspective, she also happens to be the assistant of *The New York Times* bestselling novelist David Farland.

20. **STORYBRAIN**

youtube.com/user/storybrain

To help viewers better understand the elements of successful storytelling and compelling characters, StoryBrain breaks down popular movies, iconic personalities and TV series with insightful commentary via weekly YouTube videos.

21. **TERRIBLEMINDS**

terribleminds.com

As a novelist, screenwriter and game designer who’s both self- and traditionally published, Chuck Wendig stockpiles knowledge about fiction writing, revision tactics, publishing in various arenas, and more—which he shares conversationally on his blog in engaging and colorful (read: NSFW) prose.

22. **TOMI ADEYEMI**



tomiadeyemi.com

Writing coach Tomi Adeyemi offers free video courses on mastering plot, along with a library of downloadable writing tools: structure and character worksheets, backstory templates and planners, writing prompts, and more. Her accompanying blog is full of advice on plotting and revising.

23. WRITE NONFICTION NOW!



writenonfictionnow.com

Who says November is just for novelists? This site challenges nonfiction writers to pen a 50,000-word manuscript in 30 days while their fiction-writing counterparts are tackling NaNoWriMo. Founded by bestselling author, blogger and book coach Nina Amir, the site offers communal support and writing advice year-round. For \$30/month you can enroll in the Nonfiction Writers' University and gain special access to educational teleseminars, webinars and more.

24. WRITE THE BOOK

writethebook.podbean.com

Pick up writing tips during your commute via this Vermont-based radio show's "Write the Book" podcast, which features more than 400 episodes of interviews with authors, editors, agents, poets and illustrators.

25. WRITER UNBOXED



writerunboxed.com

A stable of contributing authors and industry experts (nonfiction and fiction, aspiring and bestselling) provides some of the best craft advice out there, in addition to fostering a thriving writing community thousands of members strong. (Looking for offline inspiration and encouragement? The site's accompanying title, *Author in Progress*, edited

by WU founder Therese Walsh, was recently published by WD Books.)

26. WRITERS IN THE STORM



writersinthestormblog.com

Four seasoned writers—and a steady stream of talented guest bloggers—provide craft tips and inspiration to help writers “weather the storm” and deal with the self-doubt, deadlines, rejection, and inevitable encroachment of daily life that can threaten to hinder our writing goals.

27. WRITING EXCUSES



writingexcuses.com

Hosted by Mary Robinette Kowal, Brandon Sanderson and other acclaimed authors, the Writing Excuses podcast is in its 12th season. Episodes are a bite-sized 15 minutes each: “Because you’re in a hurry, and we’re not that smart.”

28-37

EVERYTHING AGENTS

28. ASSOCIATION OF AUTHORS' REPRESENTATIVES INC.

aaronline.org

A nonprofit membership organization for literary and dramatic agents, the AAR helps ensure agent (and agency) reputability by requiring members to meet experience requirements and adhere to a Canon of Ethics. In your agent search, it's a smart stop to cross-reference potential reps against its database of more than 400 professionals.

29. BENT ON BOOKS

jennybent.blogspot.com

Jenny Bent, founder and president of The Bent Agency, shares vast

resources on marketing, editing and working with an agent—along with insight from fellow literary representatives. If you're actively on the hunt, check out the Agents' Wishlist tab for a monthly update on what Bent and her colleagues are looking for.

30. BETWEEN THE LINES



booksandsuch.com/blog

The agents at Books & Such Literary Management blog about everything from the business of writing (platform, branding, etc.) to working with an editor. Struggling to stick to a creative routine? Their frequent posts also offer inspiration and encouragement for making the most of the writing life.

31. BOOKENDS LITERARY

AGENCY BLOG

bookendsliterary.com/category/blog

Full of tips on perfecting submissions and decoding how agents communicate, this site is a gift to writers at the submissions stage (and even those who are newly agented). Don't miss the BookEnds Publishing Dictionary feature (bit.ly/pubdictionary), which explains such thorny items as auctions, pre-empt and North American Serial Rights versus World Rights.

32. JANET REID, LITERARY AGENT

jetreidliterary.blogspot.com

For years, longtime literary agent Janet Reid—formerly with FinePrint Literary Management, newly with New Leaf Literary—has cheerfully bestowed candid advice on pitching, querying and revising in response to reader questions. Her Query Letter



Help section—with a checklist, FAQs and diagnostics—is a must for anyone crafting a book pitch.

BEST OF THE BEST

33. MANUSCRIPT WISH LIST



manuscriptwishlist.com

The home base of Twitter's Manuscript Wish List (#MSWL) hashtag, this site expanded widely in 2017, now offering an easy-to-search database of agents and editors, each with a dedicated bio page detailing what they're seeking, how to submit, and a roundup of every single #MSWL tweet they've made. Fans of audio advice should check out the Manuscript Academy Podcast. (*Editor's Note: For more on the Twitter side of #MSWL, turn to Page 20.*)

34. PUB RANTS

nelsonagency.com/pub-rants

Founder and president of Nelson Literary Agency, Kristin Nelson has been ranting (politely, as she puts it) about the ins and outs of the industry for more than a decade. Her *Agenting 101* series explains contracts and negotiations, and *Agent Kristin's Queries* provides her take on queries that succeeded—and why.

35. QUERYTRACKER

querytracker.net

This searchable database of literary agents and publishers catalogs response times and preferences—and allows you to keep track of when and who you've queried, too.

36. RACHELLE GARDNER



rachellegardner.com

Agent, editor and publishing coach Rachele Gardner has assembled

an expansive and well-categorized archive of evergreen posts about all facets of the industry and writing realm, from blogging advice to business insight to publishing protocol and more. She's also active on Twitter and, as an agent for Books & Such Literary Management, chimes in regularly on their blog (booksandsuch.com/blog).

37. RED SOFA LITERARY

redsofaliterary.com

A mainstay on our list, agent Dawn Frederick of Red Sofa Literary shares clients' success stories, coupled with her own best advice. With an organized archive and guest posts galore, as well as hosted Red Sofa Chats with authors and editors, this site provides hours of reading for new and seasoned writers alike.

38-43

GENERAL RESOURCES

38. BABYNAMES.COM



babynames.com

What to call your characters? Expectant parents' go-to resource works for expectant writers, too. This site's ever-expanding catalog of names, their meanings and even popularity/trends will give you plenty to work with.

BEST OF THE BEST

39. KIRKUS



kirkusreviews.com

Since 1933, Kirkus has been known for its highly regarded book reviews. In addition, you'll find author interviews, contests and "Best Of" lists for every genre. (Book copyediting services are offered there, too.)

40. LITERARY HUB



lithub.com

Managed by Grove Atlantic and *Electric Literature*, this eclectic site offers literary-themed think pieces, book excerpts, news and more. The daily e-newsletters earn a welcome spot in inboxes everywhere by curating the "best of the literary internet" from more than 200 sources, including *The Paris Review*, *The New York Times*, NPR, Big Five publishers, PEN America and more.

41. OTRANSCRIBE

otranscribe.com

Freelance writers and researchers, rejoice: finally, a free, quality app that lets you transcribe interviews. Just upload an audio file or YouTube video, then use the text processor with keyboard controls to stop, pause and insert an automatic time stamp, so you don't miss a beat. Your written record is automatically saved to your browser every second, and is easily exported to Google Docs, Markdown and plain text programs.

42. REDDIT WRITING SUBREDDIT



reddit.com/r/writing

The Reddit writing page acts as a virtual bulletin board of all manner of writing-related queries—from "How do you kill a minor villain?" to "How much is too much, when it comes to world-building?"—from a community of writers 193,000 strong. Come to connect with fellow scribes, gather advice and glean ideas.

43. U.S. COPYRIGHT OFFICE

copyright.gov

Learn how to protect your work and your rights as an author, straight from the source. Study up

on the basics of copyright law, stay up-to-date on fees and more.

44-50

PUBLISHING/ MARKETING RESOURCES

44. AUTHOR.PUB

author.pub

This site is at its best under the “Self-Publish or Not?” tab, where successful self-publishers and marketers field questions of import to those considering the indie route, and help point those who *do* want to self-publish in the direction of success. The “Book Marketing 101” section is a hub of proactive steps an author on *any* path can take to get a new book noticed.

45. BEYOND YOUR BLOG



beyondyourblog.com

Founder Susan Maccarelli is on a mission to help bloggers get published outside of their own websites. She shares loads of tips on growing your platform and pitching your work elsewhere, along with fostering a welcoming community of fellow bloggers, new and established.

46. THE BOOK DEAL

alanrinzler.com/blog

Longtime Big Five editor and publisher Alan Rinzler offers an abundance of advice for business-savvy writers on his blog, The Book Deal. Geek out alert: He also shares stories from having edited the likes of Hunter S. Thompson and Toni Morrison, giving us fly-on-the-wall insight into elite writers and how their books came to be.

BEST OF THE BEST

47. THE CREATIVE PENN



thecreativepenn.com

The New York Times and *USA Today* bestselling author Joanna Penn is one of the top voices on marketing, self-publishing, writing and creative entrepreneurship. In addition to more than 1,000 helpful articles on the blog, she also shares audiobooks and hosts a robust weekly podcast. An indie author herself, Penn’s insight on self-publishing in particular will be invaluable to any writer hoping to publish independently.

48. E-BOOK REVOLUTION



ebookrevolution.com.au

Award-winning indie author, speaker and entrepreneur Emily Craven shows you the ins and outs of self- and hybrid publishing (though there’s info on traditional publishing, too) with a special emphasis on e-books. Authors of all kinds will benefit from her marketing and business advice, and her podcast delves into such topics as “How to Make Your Own Book Trailer” and “Creating Audiobooks.”

49. JANE FRIEDMAN



janefriedman.com

Friedman’s award-winning blog presents an insightful take on the publishing realm: With 20 years of experience in the biz, the popular speaker, “The Hot Sheet” editor and former WD publisher dishes on everything from industry and publishing trends to writing advice—with interviews, guest blog posts and more. Her e-newsletter

will deliver blog posts right to your email inbox.

50. WINNING WRITERS



winningwriters.com

Sign up for the Winning Writers newsletter for instant access to an extensive database of free literary contests from across all genres and media. Advice for writers, literary forums, poetry critiques and more round out the offerings online.

51-60

JOBS & MARKETS

51. DUOTROPE

duotrope.com

The free, info-packed monthly newsletter delivers lists of popular new markets and a roundup of submissions deadlines. And for just \$5/month, you can gain access to this site’s searchable database of fiction, poetry, nonfiction and visual art markets to find places to submit your work—complete with a built-in submission tracker to help you stay organized.

52. ED2010

ed2010.com

Originally created to help accustom burgeoning young editors to the magazine world, Ed2010 has grown into an excellent resource for all experience levels, with career advice from industry experts, mentoring, résumé makeovers, job listings and more.

53. EDITOR & PUBLISHER



editorandpublisher.com

At the online home of the long-running *Editor & Publisher* magazine, you can post your résumé or peruse the job board



for the latest job openings in editing, writing and publishing.

54. **FUNDS FOR WRITERS**



fundsforwriters.com

This site, with weekly stockpiles distilled into a robust e-newsletter, brings you new listings for competitions, markets, job opportunities, grants and residencies from long-time freelancer C. Hope Clark, alongside guidance from contributing experts on writing, submitting, publishing and more.

55. **JOURNALISM JOBS**



journalismjobs.com

Look no further for listings of magazine, radio, nonprofit, online media, newspaper, TV and academia jobs. Valuable career advice, research tools, fellowships and more are available as well.

56. **THE MARKET LIST**



marketlist.com

Since 1994, The Market List has provided writers with a comprehensive index of fiction and nonfiction markets for their work—including magazine, book, small press and screenwriting venues. Sign up (it's free!) to become a Marketlist.com member, and you can promote your own published work on The Market List and connect with other authors on the forums.

BEST OF THE BEST

57. **MEDIABISTRO**



mediabistro.com

An extensive hub of resources for media staffers and freelancers alike, Mediabistro's expert career advice, job listings and newsletters are all free.

An annual membership fee (\$55) adds on exclusive access to editorial calendars from select markets, a mastheads database, "How to Pitch" guides, discounts on digital courses and more.

58. **PROBLOGGER**



prologger.net

Any writer wanting to grow an online platform will find valuable insight here, where site founder and social media guru Darren Rowse has accumulated close to 8,000 blogger-focused posts offering advice, trends and tutorials. The site's job board lists specific blog/article opportunities alongside traditional openings in copywriting, editing, ghostwriting, marketing and related fields.

59. **SUBMISHMASH**



submishmash.com

Parented by popular submissions manager Submittable, Submishmash aggregates "all contemporary literature outlets and opportunities on Earth" into a living catalog, with new markets added all the time. It's the perfect place to "shop" for markets: Flip through the Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry or Visual art categories for venues that speak to you—or filter your search by submission deadline—and Submishmash will link you directly to each market's website. Sign up for the e-newsletter to stay up to speed on the latest added venues and calls for submissions.

60. **THE WRITER'S JOB BOARD**



writersjobboard.com

The Writer's Job Board is an excellent resource if you're looking for freelance or web-based positions. The easy-to-navigate listings are

sorted by categories—Writing, Blogging, Online Content, Editing and Publishing—and you'll also find paying markets, freelance advice and moneymaking tips.

61-70

ONLINE WRITING COMMUNITIES

61. **ABSOLUTEWRITE**



absolutewrite.com

A flourishing online community congregates around AbsoluteWrite's Water Cooler forums, where topics run the gamut from the general (How do you deal with writer's block?) to the more specialized (e-book contracts) to AW-hosted contests and Q&As.

62. **CRITTERS WORKSHOP**



critique.org

Looking for feedback on your manuscript? With 15,000 members and more than 300,000 critiques served since 1995, Critters' prolific following of creatives eager to trade manuscripts may be a good place to start.

63. **FIGMENT**



figment.com

Founded by two former *New Yorker* staffers, Figment is a place for young writers to share their novels, poems and short stories, collaborate with others, and give and receive critiques. The site is flush with interactive resources, from chats (where "Figs" can ask questions of industry professionals) to a library (of users' completed works-in-progress) to a space for educators (in the form of a virtual writing workshop for classroom settings).

64. INSECURE WRITER'S SUPPORT GROUP



www.insecurewriterssupportgroup.com

Wherever you are in your writing journey, the community here will offer encouragement and guidance. Beyond the blog itself, connect with the site's 3,000-plus Facebook group members and register for its monthly newsletter, which has boasted industry pros such as Jane Friedman, Sandra Beckwith and even WD's own Jessica Strawser among its featured guests.

65. LITREACTOR



litreactor.com

The myriad resources featured on LitReactor—including many advice columns from industry pros, author interviews and book reviews (compiled in a free online magazine), an e-newsletter and contests—provide a wealth of advice and support for writers. For \$9/month, you can also register for LitReactor's Writer's Workshop and participate in the lively discussion forums.

66. STORYADAY

Created as a venue to promote creativity, StoryADay revolves around monthlong challenges to write a short story every day (typically in May and September), but doesn't stop there. Visit the blog year-round for weekly writing prompts, subscribe to the podcast or join a Serious Writer's Accountability Group (affectionately dubbed SWAGr) for check-ins on your writing progress.

BEST OF THE BEST

67. TETHERED BY LETTERS



tetheredbyletters.com

An international literary nonprofit, Tethered by Letters has multiple unique programs that foster a thriving online community. Among the offerings: the Celebrity Mentor Program, where renowned authors—think Isaac Marion (*Warm Bodies*) and Scott O'Connor (*Untouchable*)—spend a week answering reader questions on the forums, and Dually Noted, a project allowing writers from around the world to collaborate on stories via weekly installments. For editing, querying, publishing and agent advice, the Writing Resource Center and an Editing Program, where staff editors review submitted work for free, prove most valuable.

68. WATTPAD

On Wattpad, write and share your work-in-progress a chapter at a time, while the site's community of 45 million members reads along, votes and comments on your story—making reading and writing a social experience that you can tap into whether you're on the go (it's optimized for mobile) or lounging at home.

69. THE WRITER'S CHATROOM

No matter your genre or experience level, you'll glean useful tips from the knowledgeable community blogging at The Writer's Chatroom. Mark your calendar for biweekly live chats—including Celebrity Sundays, when notable authors share their best advice—

as well as quarterly critique chats. Subscribing to the e-newsletter is a simple way to keep abreast of scheduled happenings.

70. WRITERSNET

Caught in the WritersNet, you'll find a wide-ranging directory of thousands of writers, editors, publishers and agents categorized by industry—so you can easily seek out what you need. More than a database, it aims to “bring together the elements of literary success in one place,” offering specialized forums devoted to multiple genres, craft, publishing and editing.

71-97 GENRES/NICHES

CHILDREN'S/YOUNG ADULT

71. GO TEEN WRITERS



goteenwriters.blogspot.com

Led by a trio of authors who specialize in YA fiction, this site offers practical help for young writers who want to be published. The free semi-monthly newsletter is packed full of grammar tips, articles, links and tutorials, and the Go Teen Writers Facebook group connects bookish teens and provides a forum for them to swap critiques on works-in-progress.

72. INKYGIRL



inkygirl.com

Artist and children's book author Debbie Ridpath Ohi is perhaps best known for illustrating award-winning children's books (including several for Judy Blume), but her



online presence is equally vibrant. At Inkygirl, she couples writerly inspiration with adorably endearing doodles—you can spend hours browsing without even realizing it.

73. KIDLIT411 
www.kidlit411.com

A one-stop shop for children's authors and illustrators, this site has loads of information about writing, querying, publishing and marketing picture books, chapter books, middle-grade and YA—along with legal resources, market info and tips for school visits. A Manuscript Swap Facebook group (or Portfolio Swap Critique group for illustrators) provides a space where members can trade feedback, while The Weekly 411 newsletter highlights the site's newest posts.

74. YA INTERROBANG


yainterrobang.com

YA Interrobang has the scoop on the latest in YA literature, with regular announcements of new releases and excerpts, news of movie adaptations, book deals, and more. A healthy fandom section, author features and writing advice round out the offerings.

FANTASY/SCIENCE FICTION

75. FANTASY AUTHOR'S HANDBOOK 

fantasyhandbook.wordpress.com

The New York Times bestselling author, former TSR editor and writing coach Philip Athans (author of *Writing Monsters* and *Writing Fantasy & Science Fiction*, both by WD Books) pulls you deep into sci-fi and fantasy—and sends you to the surface with practical writing advice specific to the genre—via weekly

blog posts and the active Twitter account @PhilAthans.

76. MYTHCREANTS


mythcreants.com

This site explores the inner workings of speculative fiction, dissecting popular stories via comics, near-daily blog posts and a semimonthly podcast to share techniques in writing, world-building and characterization you can then apply to your own speculative stories.

77. SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY WRITERS OF AMERICA


sfwa.org

Plenty of free resources live on the SFWA website: Check out the public Information Center for craft, querying and publishing tips, along with its watchdog site Writer Beware for alerts on red flags and scams. For members, (\$70–110 annually, see site for eligibility requirements, as you do need to have published in the genre), there are exclusive forums, support for contractual disputes, a subscription to the monthly journal *The SFWA Bulletin*, and more.

FREELANCE

78. ABOUT FREELANCE WRITING 

aboutfreelancewriting.com

Writing coach and longtime freelancer Anne Wayman shares secrets to freelance success: from determining fair payment, to pushing through job “drought,” to pitching like a pro. Check out the Free Stuff tab for a list of no-cost resources every freelancer should have.

79. FREELANCER FAQS 

freelancerfaqs.com

A user-friendly Q&A-style resource

for all your freelancing quandaries—from getting started to learning the business and staying motivated—Freelancer FAQs is run by a 10-person team of professional freelancers with extensive backgrounds in editing, PR, marketing, travel writing and blogging.

BEST OF THE BEST

80. FREELANCE WRITING


freelancewriting.com

One of the most comprehensive freelance resources on the web, here you'll find job and contest opportunities, a Writer's Guidelines database drawing from more than 750 publications, hundreds of helpful articles and more than a dozen free e-books.

81. THE SUBMISSION GRINDER


thegrinder.diabolicalplots.com

The Grinder does double duty as both a market database (listing more than 4,900 venues open to work, with more added daily) and an in-depth submissions tracker with the ability to measure both yearly and market statistics of submissions, acceptance rates, types of rejections (form vs. personal) and payment amounts.

HORROR

82. DARKMARKETS 

darkmarkets.com
Looking to share some scares? Find both new and established listings for horror anthologies, book publishers, contests, podcasts, magazines and more here, and subscribe to the weekly newsletter for updates.

83. HORROR WRITERS**ASSOCIATION****horror.org**

The website of the official organization for horror writers offers plenty for the public, including a blog, a YouTube channel of author interviews, and a podcast about the genre. With paid membership (\$48–69/year; eligibility requirements apply), you'll also get additional online resources (forum access, agent listings and a library database) scholarship opportunities and more.

MYSTERY/CRIME**84. ELIZABETH SPANN CRAIG****elizabethspanncraig.com**

Bestselling cozy mystery author Elizabeth Spann Craig serves up her take on the genre, with a side dish of advice on self-publishing, staying motivated, platform building and more. Her "Twitterific" roundups showcase the week's top writing links.

85. JUNGLE RED WRITERS**jungleredwriters.com**

Eight crime fiction writers—including bestsellers Hank Phillippi Ryan and Hallie Ephron—chat daily on suspense writing and life. Their nearly 10 years of browsable archives house plenty to investigate.

86. MISS DEMEANORS**missdemeanors.com**

The Miss Demeanors are an accomplished sextet of suspense and

mystery authors "who—when not killing off characters—let their better angels share tidbits about writing, reading and research."

POETRY**87. POETS.ORG****poets.org**

With a database more than 7,000 poems deep, a calendar of poetry events by region and a repository of contest listings, the official website of the Academy of American Poets is one of the best poetry resources around.

88. TRISH HOPKINSON**trishhopkinson.com**

In addition to how-tos on poetry writing, award-winning poet Trish Hopkinson frequently shares calls for submissions from literary journals, along with editor interviews that offer insight into other poetry markets.

ROMANCE**89. ROMANCE DIVAS****romancedivas.com**

Since 2004, the award-winning Romance Divas website, helmed by romance writing pros Kristen Painter, Jax Cassidy and Eden Bradley, has created a welcoming hub for new and established writers in the genre to connect with readers and fans, dish on happily ever afters, find inspiration, and more.

90. ROMANCE UNIVERSITY**romanceuniversity.org**

Regular blog posts by RU faculty and

guests give insight into the genre, while free weekly online lectures—on business and career (Mondays), anatomy of the mind (Wednesdays) and writing/revising (Fridays)—help you advance your craft.

91. ROMANCE WRITERS OF AMERICA**rwa.org/p/bl/et**

The free RWA blog regularly posts news and advice about the genre and reports relevant industry statistics. Membership (\$99/year; see website for eligibility requirements) comes with myriad additional perks: access to the myRWA writing community and RWA University courses; advocacy for fair publishing treatment; an e-newsletter and monthly *Romance Writers Report* magazine; and more.

SCRIPTWRITING**92. THE SCRIPT LAB****thescriptlab.com**

Offering beginner-friendly Screenwriting 101 lessons, more advanced career advice and up-to-date contest listings, it's easy to see why The Script Lab (TSL) is the site of choice for many screenwriters. Don't miss TSL YouTube channel, where you can tune in to discussions on craft with industry experts.

SPIRITUAL/RELIGIOUS**93. THE STEVE LAUBE AGENCY****stevelaube.com/blog**

The Steve Laube Agency specializes in representing fiction and nonfiction books from a Christian worldview, and the staff blog offers up practical advice on querying, submitting and publishing in the Christian market.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE NEXT 101: Don't see a favorite site here? Wish we'd add a new category? Send your comments and nominations for next year's list to writers.digest@fwmedia.com with "101 Websites" in the subject line between now and Dec. 1.



94. THE WRITE CONVERSATION



thewriteconversation.blogspot.com

Author, speaker and social media coach Edie Melson heads this team of bestselling authors and noteworthy industry pros. Visit for faith-infused writing, blogging and publishing advice from the likes of Warren Adler, DiAnn Mills and more.

THRILLER

95. KILL ZONE



killzoneblog.com

Eleven top thriller and mystery writers—including Kathryn Lilley, John Gilstrap and popular writing instructor James Scott Bell—share daily insider advice on the genre, craft and business. A popular feature: free (public) first-page critiques of reader manuscripts, to help others learn by example.

96. MURDER BY 4



murderby4.blogspot.com

The original “4” has evolved over the years, and the blog’s initial focus on thriller has broadened to include other genres, but the quality of guidance on writing, industry trends, publishing and platform building—led by the current MB4 team of Kim Smith, Aaron Paul Lazar, Dora Machado and Anna del Mar—has never wavered.

WOMEN’S FICTION

97. WOMEN’S FICTION WRITERS



womensfictionwriters.com

“No heroes. No zombies. No high heels. Well, maybe high heels.” Novelist and freelance editor Amy Sue Nathan ably delivers advice and commentary on writing in the women’s fiction genre with good humor and aplomb, while encouraging her community of readers to chime in.

BEYOND 101: THE WD FAMILY OF SITES

WritersDigest.com

WD’s hub of free articles, prompts and downloads is filled with career advice, craft tips, competitions and more. Check out the editor blogs for friendly expert advice on writing and publishing, poetry challenges, agent updates and more.

Tutorials.WritersDigest.com

More than 300 instructional videos are available to stream immediately, with new videos added weekly. A monthly subscription is \$25, while an annual is \$199.

ScriptMag.com

Script Magazine offers vital script-writing advice, news and info on spec-scripts, film festivals and more.

WritersDigestUniversity.com

You don’t even have to leave home to get one-on-one instruction from expert authors and editors: WDU classes are offered year-round for every genre and experience level.

DigitalBookWorld.com

DBW offers resources, networking and education, both online and off, for publishing professionals and their partners.

WritersMarket.com

Along with 6,000-plus market listings updated daily, subscribers receive articles, industry updates, submission trackers and more. Monthly, six-month and annual paid subscriptions are available.

98-101

JUST FOR FUN

98. BOOKMOOCH



bookmooch.com

BookMooch is an international online book swap with thousands of members in more than 100 countries. It’s free to join: You earn points by listing/sharing books of your own, and use those points to “mooch” books from others.

BEST OF THE BEST

99. HIGHBROW



gohighbrow.com

It’s often said you should “write what you know.” Well, now it’s easier to know more, in just five minutes a day: At Highbrow you choose a course on just about any subject, and for 10 subsequent days receive quick and easy lessons in your inbox.

100. INKITT



inkitt.com

“The Hipster’s Digital Library,” Inkitt allows anyone to share their stories/manuscripts (vetted per the site’s guidelines) for fellow users to read. Browse curated lists of stories, explore the forums on various genres, or solicit more involved feedback from the beta-readers group.

101. SCIENCE OF US



nymag.com/scienceofus

An offshoot of *New York* magazine, Science of Us distills the latest studies on human behavior from psychology, genetics, sociology and other fields into a daily mix of columns, news stories and visual features that translate the research in a way anyone can understand—and apply to everyday life (or that of your characters). **WD**

ALMOST MISSED YOU

The secrets we shouldn't keep. The past we should let go.

“AN EMOTIONAL POWERHOUSE.”

—GARTH STEIN,
New York Times bestselling author of
The Art of Racing in the Rain

“SENSATIONAL.”

—ADRIANA TRIGIANI,
New York Times bestselling author of
All the Stars in the Heavens

**“JESSICA STRAWSER WRITES
FROM THE HEART.”**

—LISA SCOTTOLINE,
New York Times bestselling author of *Most Wanted*

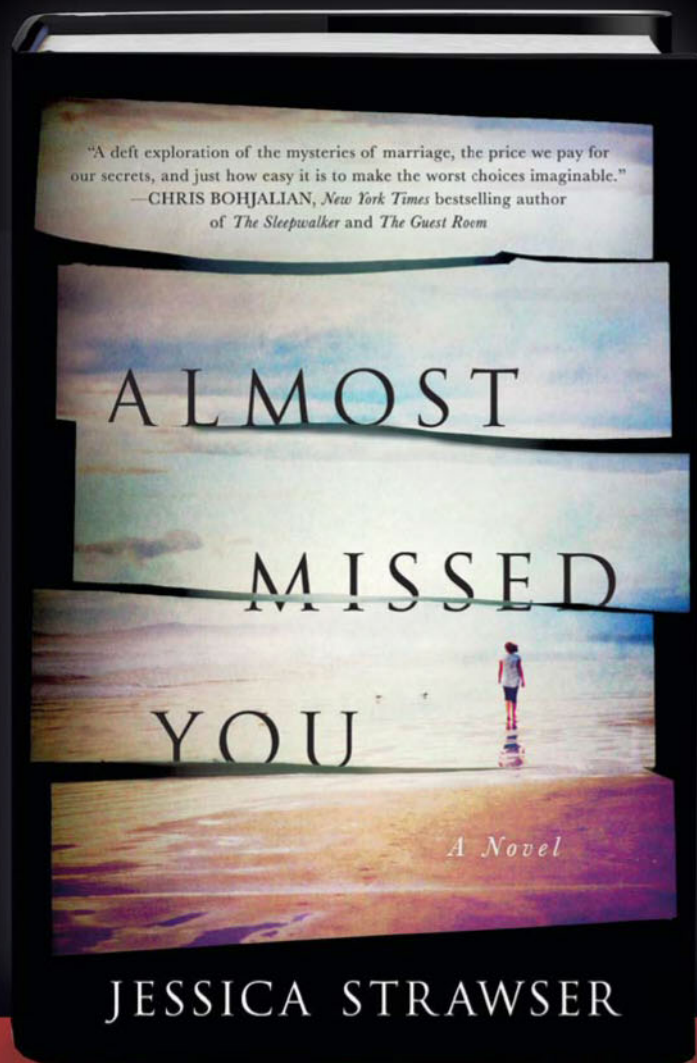
“TAUT AND EMOTIONAL.”

—DEB CALETTI,
National Book Award and PEN USA finalist

“COMPELLING.”

—SOPHIE LITTLEFIELD,
bestselling author of *The Missing Place*

AVAILABLE WHEREVER
BOOKS ARE SOLD



FROM  WRITER'S DIGEST
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR JESSICA STRAWSER

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 St. Martin's Press

Photo by: Corrie Schaffeld



The WD Interview



Scott Turow

PUBLIC DEFENDER

With 11 bestsellers over a 40-year career, the two-time Authors Guild president testifies on the secrets to sustained success.

BY TYLER MOSS

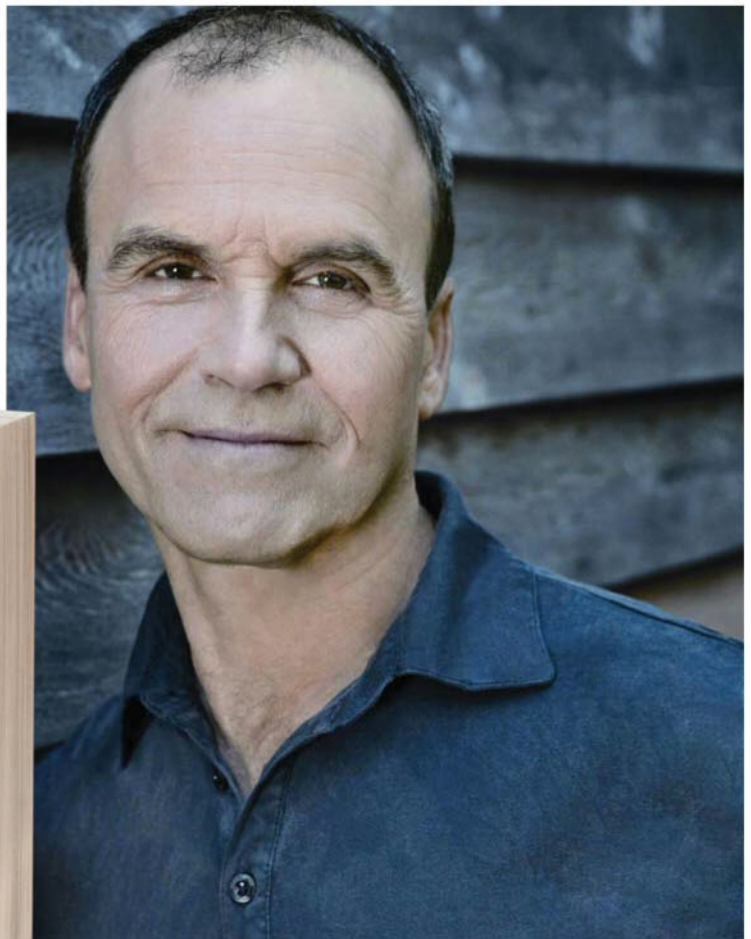
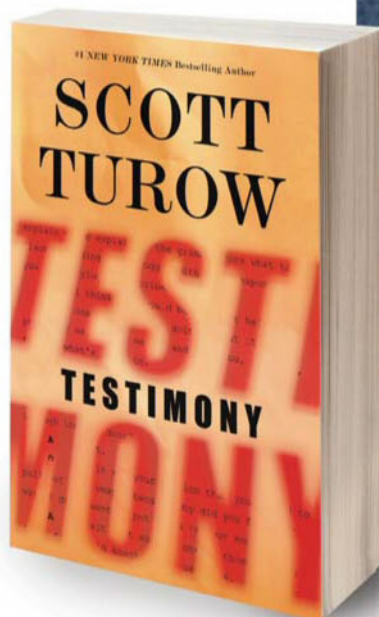


PHOTO © JEREMY LAWSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Author, attorney, advocate—Scott Turow’s collective roles range in scope and responsibility, yet each is a key exhibit in the mountain of evidence that upholds his position in writing’s upper echelon.

Over the past four decades—2017 marks the 40th anniversary of his acclaimed debut, the law-school memoir *One L*—Turow has published 11 bestsellers (nine of them legal thrillers), served two stints as president of The Authors Guild, and penned op-eds for *The New York Times* and essays for *The Atlantic*, all while continuing to practice law (most of it pro bono) in his hometown of Chicago. When asked why he didn’t quit his day job after finding literary success (the way most other lawyers-turned-bestsellers do), his response is firm: “For me, having to produce a book a year would be a form of slavery.”

Indeed, it’s that kind of conviction that keeps Turow’s body of work squarely in the realm of art.

As president of The Authors Guild, he fought relentlessly for writers to receive a fair wage equal to their creative output. His background as a litigator made him an ideal candidate for the position, targeting issues such as intellectual property rights and e-book piracy during his tenure.

With one foot in the literary world and the other in law, the twain meet in his novels. All are largely set in Kindle County, a fictional facsimile of Chicago’s Cook County, where the Cubs are called the Trappers, the Lake looms large and the courts are packed with complex cases. It’s a setting shaped in his celebrated first novel—1987’s *Presumed Innocent*, later made into an eponymous film starring Harrison Ford—in which deputy prosecutor Rusty Sabich is charged with the murder of a beautiful colleague with a mysterious past.

His latest, *Testimony*, Turow’s first novel in four years, drops in May: a suspenseful globe-trotter in which middle-aged attorney Bill ten Boom leaves behind his life in Kindle County for a role with the International Criminal Court in The Hague. His new position takes him to Bosnia, where he investigates an alleged genocide, has a fling with a sultry barrister and becomes involved in the pursuit of a Serbian war criminal. Turow deftly explores identity as a theme both overt and subtle, as ten Boom struggles with a family secret that has roots reaching back to Nazi Germany.

Turow took a short recess from the courthouse and his current work-in-progress to chat with WD from his home in the Chicago suburbs.

[Between your writing and your legal practice, how in the world do you prioritize your time?](#)

When I’m writing I usually push everything else aside and write in the morning until the early afternoon. Now, that can be interrupted—I’ve got a court call on Monday, so it’s not invariable. Life interferes, which is what you would expect of life.

Wally Stegner, who was one of my teachers at Stanford [University’s writing program in the early ’70s, prior to law school], really taught the value of putting your butt in the chair every day, especially if you’re trying to write a novel. I’ve found it a really valuable lesson. He used to say, “It’s true the muse may not visit you every day, but you have to sit down and give her a chance to show up.” I thought there was great wisdom in that. The writing, now and for many years, has had the first claim on my time.

[How do skills honed in practicing law translate to how you approach your writing?](#)

There’s a good deal of back and forth between the two callings. I learned in the courtroom a whole lot about being a novelist that I didn’t learn during my years as a Stegner Fellow at Stanford. I always thought the ideal would be to write a novel that would be equally appealing to—as I put it in my debates with members of the faculty—a bus driver and an English professor. Certainly, as a prosecutor in a courtroom, you’re trying to tell a story to a broad audience.

I learned about being concise because you don’t have infinite patience or attention from a jury. I learned that, whatever I had been taught or valued about literary experiments or refinements, sometimes the tried-and-true was a better idea. I certainly came to embrace crime as a subject matter by recognizing how potent the effect was, both on jurors and everybody else watching in the courtroom.

I realized pretty quickly that, without trying to press the metaphor too far, being a prosecutor and being an author were more similar than I would have thought, in the sense that you are telling the jury a story and it’s a

"I was very proud to be a spokesperson for the American authorial community because, quite frankly, as a general matter, they're getting screwed."

story about how something that the community regards as evil happened. You tell the story through multiple voices—those voices happen to be called *witnesses* in the courtroom—but if you lose track of the need to be telling a consistent narrative, you're losing your way as a prosecutor. I truly learned a great deal in my first couple of years as a prosecutor that I later turned into the writing of *Presumed Innocent*.

Novels in the milieu of the law trend toward a formula: crime, reveals, resolution. Yet your books manage to shirk the formulaic. What's your secret?

My first secret is ... I don't like formulas. [Laughs.] I don't like novels where I know the ending halfway through. It just comes from personal preference. And you're right: The classic detective story has a pretty predictable ending. There's a crime, the detective investigates, the detective solves it, good triumphs over evil and the guilty get punished. So it's always a variation on that theme. I take a certain amount of godlike pleasure in toying with readers and sort of rubbing my hands and going, *They're never going to figure this one out*.

A hallmark of your novels is the casual reappearance of characters from past books. These relationships between characters seem to extend beyond what's on the page. How extensively do you develop their backstories?

I am deeply struck by the way people move from the background to the foreground in life. I got married again this last summer. The woman I married is someone who I met 30 years ago. Twenty-five years later, through a remarkable set of coincidences, we begin pursuing a personal relationship and end up married five years [after that]. I just love that. I love the ironies of it. I love everything it says about the unpredictability of life. So I've built it into the novels.

Will a character in the next book be thinking back to something that happened while Bill ten Boom was U.S. attorney in Kindle County? You can virtually guarantee it. The reflection about ten Boom will be nowhere near

as appreciative of ten Boom as he is of himself. It's like I'm given the opportunity to do further commentary—like when you get a DVD and you've got the outtakes. It's a chance to not only add to the book I'm writing, but to the books I've [already] written.

Your novels proceed at a brisk pace, full of twists and turns. What is your writing process like?

Essentially, I've preserved the writing process that I had in writing *Presumed Innocent*. I was working full time as an assistant U.S. attorney. The job was wonderful, but consuming. The only time I had to write was on the morning commuter train, because by the end of the day I was too overwrought with what had gone on in the office. So it was only in the morning, on the 30-minute train ride, that I could write.

Because I only had 30 minutes, it just didn't seem natural to try to connect things, because there was too much boiling up inside of me that demanded expression. Whatever I was feeling passionate about that I could convert into fodder for the story I was beginning to tell, I'd write down that day—whether it was dialogue, or a particular setting, or the history of a character, a piece of internal reflection about the justice system—I wrote it down and figured I'd someday put it all together. Were it not for the invention of the personal computer, I'm not sure that would've happened. But in 1982 I bought the first of the so-called portable computers, which weighed only 40 pounds. I began typing in all these disparate pieces and thinking about how they'd fit together, trying to put them in order. And that's still the process I follow.

For about a year I write [each story] that way. I feel my way along: Who is the main character, what is his family like, what are those relationships like? I know what I want to write about in general, but the specific contours ... I've got a lot of thinking to do. Once I'm done with that, I'll begin trying to shape it, and that's just a matter of sitting there and going, "What pieces fit together?" And over the course of the year some sequence would've begun to suggest itself to me. I almost never figure out the ultimate resolution—the whodunit—at that point.

You've served two stints as president of The Authors Guild. What compelled you to take on such a public role in the interest of the greater writing community?

Some of it is natural to somebody who has been, at moments, a lawyer for the downtrodden. I've been unbelievably fortunate in my writing career. I have been deeply conscious of the fact that, for the privileged few of us who can call ourselves bestselling writers, almost everything that's happened in publishing—and there've been tremendous changes since *One L* was published 40 years ago—it's worked to our advantage. It's a phenomenon of American society over the last 40 years that it's become much more a winner-take-all society. While it's been great for bestselling authors, it hasn't been good for most people in the literary community. The notion that you publish a couple of books and you have a career and a publisher that'll be publishing your books for the rest of your life, that went out the window. People scuffle to make a living.

My perception of that became dramatically exacerbated by the digital revolution. What fundamentally happened is that [up to that point] authors controlled their copyrights so they had control of the intellectual property, and that gave them a certain bargaining position. With the advent of digital, you had a lot of other intellectual property owners, whether Amazon or others. But it's all big capital. All of a sudden big capital is a player and they're in control in a much different way.

The result has turned into a massive food fight in which all of the various constituencies have decided to improve their position at the expense of authors. I was very proud to be a spokesperson for the American authorial community because, quite frankly, as a general matter, they're getting screwed. There's a lot to complain about—not for me, but for the other 99 percent.

Significant as the digital shift has been, what is the biggest challenge you currently see for writers?

If you look at e-books in the big picture, they have every potential to expand the literary marketplace, and because of that, to expand author's earnings. [But] this becomes an example of everybody [else wanting] to eat lunch at the author's expense. You have publishers who have succeeded in changing the royalty structure from physical books to e-books, so what used to be based on the retail price of a hardcover [is now] based on the net sales. The division of the spoils in the hardcover world is basically 50-50 between author and publisher. The standard e-book royalty is 25 percent of the net, so



SCENE OF THE CRIME

Turow discusses the role setting plays in his fiction, and why the backdrop of his latest, *Testimony*, is so different from past works, at writersdigest.com/jun-17.

author's incomes on e-books have essentially been cut in half.

Then you have the entry of Amazon. And Amazon, in my view, engaged in what when I was in law school was called predatory pricing. They sold e-books for less than they were paying the publishers for them. In my view, the point of this was as a barrier to entry to other people from getting into the e-book market, because how many other companies can afford to enter a market where you're losing two to five bucks every time you sell a book?

The distortions that Amazon was creating in that market ended up coming at the expense of authors. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the e-book as an institution—it's what's come with it that's perilous for authors.

The other thing that concerns me is that as Amazon gets more and more control, they have certainly displayed an attitude of trying to cut down on the share that goes to publishers. If they're ever successful in getting rid of publishers, in my view, the authors are next. There won't be anywhere else to go, and if Amazon says your royalty will be half of what it used to be, then it will be half of what it used to be.

You've written 11 bestsellers over a four-decade writing career. How have you sustained such consistent success?

This process, for me, has not yet become dull. The beginnings with a book require a lot of self-discipline to make myself sit down. But once I'm into it, I get up in the morning really looking forward to writing. And I look forward to what I'm going to discover—and, also, to taking advantage of what I've learned in writing the last book and hopefully not making the same mistakes. Making new mistakes, but not the same mistakes. So to whatever extent I get credit, I think it's because I have not suffered any flagging of interest in what I'm writing. I still love the process. I remind myself all the time: *What a life! You get handsomely rewarded for going upstairs every day and playing with your imaginary friends.* **WD**

Tyler Moss is the managing editor of *Writer's Digest*.



GAMBLING MAN

The winner of THE 12TH ANNUAL WRITER'S DIGEST POPULAR FICTION AWARDS rolled the dice on a suspenseful story outside of his usual genre.

BY CRIS FREESE

A reckless character can provide the types of thrills and page-turning suspense that readers crave. It's the shoot-first, ask-questions-later charisma that has endeared daring rogues to generations of fans.

Travis Madden acted on an impulse of his own with his entry in the 12th Annual Writer's Digest Popular Fiction Awards—a rare thriller outside of his usual repertoire of fantasy and horror—and it paid off big. “Party Tricks” bested more than 1,000 entries across six categories to take home the grand prize: \$2,500 in cash and a trip to the Writer's Digest Annual Conference in New York City, among other prizes.

“Writing [a thriller] is like performing a magic trick,” Madden says. “Everything has to be plotted out perfectly and you have to trickle in just enough clues to let the reader know where you're going, but not enough to give anything away. It creates a very specific intensity.”

“Party Tricks” is the tale of a young man who gambles with his life by playing Russian roulette at house parties—cocking a handgun, spinning the barrel and placing it against his temple before pulling the trigger. Initially inspired by a drunken whim, the macabre party trick he becomes known for leads the protagonist to some disturbing revelations about himself.

“The idea came to me randomly, but it was so extreme and out there I had no idea how I was going to actually make it work,” Madden says. “There had to be a deeper,

darker reason, which led to me exploring what was going on inside [the character's] mind, and wondering if it was really a cry for help, not just a fun stunt.”

At 27 years old, the full-time student of Towson University's Professional Writing graduate program has shown insight into what makes a suspenseful story tick.

“The scare tactics that work in other media don't work in prose, and you have to constantly be aware of that,” he says. “You don't have access to musical cues or jump-scares. For a short story in particular, you don't have any ground to waste. You can't build up tension in a short story the same way you can in a novel. You have to make every single sentence count.”

Madden has a self-imposed quota of at least one page a day—a discipline that has yielded a few dozen short stories and a whopping 15 first drafts of different novels, with outlines of many more. His goal is to one day support himself as a full-time novelist—preferably continuing to gamble with mixing and matching genres.

“I'd like to be able to consistently tread that line of literary fiction and to draw readers in who wouldn't normally [like] these kinds of stories.”



LOOKING FOR A THRILL?

To read the grand-prize short story, “Party Tricks”—along with the first-place winner in each Popular Fiction category and an extended Q&A with Madden—visit writersdigest.com/jun-17.



THE WINNER'S SPOTLIGHT: TRAVIS MADDEN

Who has inspired you as a writer?

Jonathan Maberry and Scott Sigler are my two favorite authors. The way their genre-bending stories include lightning-fast pacing with three-dimensional, empathetic characters is a balance I hope to achieve in my own writing. No matter what events are happening (or how quickly they're happening), [the action] never feels forced. The characters always react to circumstances—no matter how extreme—in realistic ways, and there are always little beats that give you clearer insight into the people themselves.

What aspects of writing have you found most challenging?

Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" has been a big thing I struggle with. It's difficult not to be influenced by all the other amazing fiction that's out there, and can be discouraging if one day you discover the phenomenal original story you came up with is actually very similar to this one book you read last month that everyone else has already heard of and is starting to fly off the shelves at your local library. You just have to tell yourself that ... every single story is influenced in some small way by another story. That doesn't necessarily make it derivative.

What is the best piece of writing advice you've ever received?

Without a doubt it would be to not edit while you write—especially if you're writing something longer, like a novel, because you'll be stuck doing it forever. Just get that first draft completed, knowing it's not going to be anywhere remotely near the quality of your finished work. And be OK with that! You have to have a completely different mindset when you edit as opposed to when you write, so trying to do both at the same time is counterintuitive.

THE WINNERS

GRAND PRIZE

"PARTY TRICKS"
Travis Madden

CRIME

FIRST PLACE

"SISTER'S NIGHT OUT"
Darian Chavez

HONORABLE MENTIONS

"MURDER AT THE TROCODERO"
Thomas Belton

"NINE DEAD DOPE DEALERS"
Sara Jacobelli

"STALKED"
Jean Rover

"THE ULTIMATE MYSTERY: WHY"
Mal King

HORROR

FIRST PLACE

"OAKLAND MOTHERS, OAKLAND WIVES"
Corey Quinlan Taylor

HONORABLE MENTIONS

"GONE FISHING"
Caleb Stephens

"PARLOR GAMES"
Chris Page

"THE SCARECROW MAN"
Sarah Stevens

"SPECIAL DELIVERY"
W.D. County

ROMANCE

FIRST PLACE

"LADYBUG"
Gail Bartley

HONORABLE MENTIONS

"FIX-ME-UP"
Daniel Kushnir

"FURTIVE GLANCES"
Buddy Heywood

"INDIGO DAWN"
Laura Fearon

"A STRING OF BEADS"
Glenda Winders

SCIENCE FICTION

FIRST PLACE

"THE WEIGHT OF BLISS"
A.M. Justice

HONORABLE MENTIONS

"FERRIS WHEEL"
Thomas Drago

"THE MASTER CARPENTER"
Roehl Sybing

"MATTERS OF TASTE"
Brandon Crilly

"WHAT IF THIS IS ALL I AM"
E.C. Barrett

THRILLER

FIRST PLACE

"CHASING HAIR OF GOLD"
Ashley Earley

HONORABLE MENTIONS

"AGGRAVATED"
Didi Oviatt

"THE COLLECTOR"
Allen Rosu

"DARK LIES"
Inge-Lise Goss

"SCENTS AND SENSIBILITY"
Michael Sano

YOUNG ADULT

FIRST PLACE

"THE CALL OF LLYN CALDWELL"
Tamara Grubbs

HONORABLE MENTIONS

"BILLY GOATS GRUFF: A RETELLING"
Catherine Lyon

"COACH PSYCHO'S LIFE LESSON"
Patrick Valentine

"EYES WIDE SHUT"
Nikki Mann

"OLD FIRECRACKERS"
Carlos Ferrand

TAKE A SHOT AT THE PRIZE

Submit your genre story of 4,000 words or fewer to WD's 13th Annual Popular Fiction Awards for a chance to win \$2,500 and a trip to the Writer's Digest Annual Conference in New York. First-place winners in each category (crime, horror, romance, science fiction, thriller and YA) will receive \$500 and mention in WD. For more info, visit writersdigest.com/competitions.



FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK

A literary agent's mostly serious answers to your mostly serious questions.

BY BARBARA POELLE

Dear FYSA,

Is it bad for your career to try writing in a completely different genre if you don't have any luck getting an agent with the genre you've been focused on?

Sincerely, Genre Roulette

Dear Roulette,

Look, if you'd *like* to try a different genre, I absolutely support that. But only in the event that you feel creatively driven to do so, and *not* if you're switching gears because you think it might be a better way "to get an agent" or "to get published" or "to get anything." The latter assumption is bad for your career, much like saying, "Well, this juggling thing didn't work out—guess I'll hop on a unicycle!" It might be the same circus, but it's an entirely different skill set.

I often field a similar question from folks who've been trying to write for adults and think, *Well, this isn't working, so maybe I'll just write a young adult novel instead.* There is an egregiously incorrect assumption in some circles that writing for teens or middle-graders is easier than writing for adults. Take it from me: It's not.

I have also heard some casual commenting along the lines of, "You know, if I wrote *commercial* fiction, I could have had an agent yesterday." *Commercial fiction* isn't code for

easier to write fiction, and you just made the rest of us want to talk about you behind your back for saying that. (In fact, we're going to, and we're going to eat pie while we do it.)

Chasing some idea about what sells or what agents want isn't going to be the best path toward publication. If you have a backlist of previous manuscripts spanning historical fiction, fantasy, YA, upmarket fiction and memoir—all with no takers—that's more likely a sign that you need to devote more attention to improving your craft and less attention to following perceived industry trends.

If you *still* feel pulled to make a switch, I hope it's because you have read several dozen books across that genre and then one day your muse showed up with a book premise, a bouquet of flowers and a handwritten note that says, "I'm just going to keep whispering this idea until you open a blank document and start typing." *Those* are the right reasons.

When you're done, you and your muse are welcome to stop over for some pie.

Dear FYSA,

I'd just bought some bubbly to celebrate the completion of my novel when I learned my family would soon be relocating to another country, thanks to my husband's job. Do U.S. agents ever represent

American authors living abroad? I don't know if I should put my book on hold until we return to the U.S., or if I can still pursue my dream while overseas.

Yours, Anxious Expat

Dear Expat,

Fear not! The interwebz makes all dreams pursuable. (It's just a system of tubes, right?) I represent clients all over the world. It's fun! I like to call Scott B. Wilbanks in New Zealand, where it is always tomorrow, and yell stuff like, "What's it like in the future? Are our monkey overlords merciful? Is gravity still a thing?" Because, *professional.*

But Scott does fly into the U.S. for marketing and publicity opportunities, and I think there are obvious advantages to having a U.S. presence for a U.S. launch—but it isn't a requirement. Hey, depending on genre and content, we might even have a marginally better time selling the rights into the territory you *do* live in. So, yay!

Dear FYSA,

What do you like to read when you're not working?

Signed, Betty Bookworm

Dear Betty,

Well, thanks for asking! Between me and you? I only *really* like reading



ASK FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK! Submit your own questions on the writing life, publishing or anything in between to writers.digest@fwmedia.com with "Funny You Should Ask" in the subject line. Select questions (which may be edited for space or clarity) will be answered in future columns, and may appear on WritersDigest.com and in other WD publications.

Chasing some idea about what sells or what agents want isn't going to be the best path toward publication. That's more likely a sign you need to devote more attention to improving your craft.

thrillers, middle-grades, romances, YA novels, upmarket fiction, narrative nonfiction, commercial fiction, essays, literary fiction, poetry,

magazines, novels in verse, novels in prose, classic novels, bestsellers in translations from other countries, subtitles, playbills, sides of cereal boxes, and damp newspapers blown up against wire fences.

I know—I'm pretty selective.

But this is a question I would spin back to you: What do *you* like to read—and is *that* the genre you're writing in? I've had instances where I've seen a manuscript from a prospective client focused on a genre (usually, for some reason, thriller) where the work comes so close to salable for me that I ask to see whatever he writes next. *Rinse. Repeat.* And there is usually a moment around submission No. 3 where I'm like, "Hold up. This person can write, but something isn't working." So I'll ask, "What do you like to

read?" And dollars to doughnuts (I don't know what that means) the answer is usually not whatever genre he's been writing.

When I say, "Why don't you take a crack at writing that instead?" the next project is often the winner.

If you read a lot of Erik Larson, put that romance manuscript aside and start researching something. If you just reread a Tropper novel, take a break from that thriller and start working on a family drama.

I have a feeling *someone* reading this just had a lightbulb moment. You're welcome. I'll take that dollar and your doughnut. **WD**

Barbara Poelle is vice president at Irene Goodman Literary Agency (irenegoodman.com), where she specializes in adult and YA fiction.

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- 1 There the footsteps stopped.
—Laurie Banks
- 2 It might have been a road sign marking the boundaries between The Here and The Out There, but I needed to get home.
—Lemuel McMillan
- 3 Although meant as a joke, Zac forever changed the world by moving one sign.
—Jaime Liddick
- 4 The doomsayers got it wrong—our graves weren't unmarked.
—Vismay Harani
- 5 Seven years after the bomb the ash still resembled a Robert Frost poem, but someone had activated the beacon and we had to discover whom.
—Kevin Kissig
- 6 She loved winter, when the snow would cover the scorched earth and mix with the grey ash, and they could all forget.
—Kate Laack
- 7 Muggsy stopped short, suddenly realizing why none of the guards pursued him as he made it over the wall and ran toward the woods.
—Michael Michlein
- 8 There've never been signs in the woods by the remote town I live in, but then again, there've never been men in black suits either.
—Julie Anderson
- 9 The tacky prop contamination movie sign wasn't the only warning left behind by the shooting crew.
—Alexander Carle
- 10 I wish I had known that the radiation sign lining the tour where I met Maya would also serve as a warning for our future.
—Danielle Lesnock

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FIRST THINGS FIRST: Write the opening sentence (one sentence only, 25 words or fewer) to a story based on the photo prompt below. You can be funny, poignant, witty, etc.; it is, after all, *your* story.



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NOTE: WD editors select the top 12 entries and post them on our website (writersdigest.com/your-story-competition). Join us online in early June, when readers will vote for their favorites to help rank the top 10 winners!

The winners will be published in a future issue of *Writer's Digest*.
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WORKBOOK

EXERCISES AND TIPS FOR HONING SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF YOUR WRITING

Shaping Scenes

ADDING EMOTIONAL POWER

BY DONALD MAASS

Most fiction writers have a pretty good grasp of plot—or at least know that they need to. They work on it, worry about it, and use templates as varied as snowflakes and the hero's journey to develop it. Scene checklists help them keep things moving. Micro-tension keeps readers turning every page. Get plot down and your novel will have a firm foundation, right? True enough, and yet even airtight plots can fail to keep readers emotionally engaged.

Why is that?

Let's discuss.

There's no denying that plot excites a reader's interest. It pulls her along with urgent questions, tension and uncertainty about what will happen next. What excites her emotions, though, is the tension inherent in where a character is going within a scene and within the narrative. That excitement can be generated by the character's inner need, but more precisely by restlessness, resistance, searching, slow surrender or a sense of being incomplete. The cause can be as specific as a secret or as broad as existential angst. It's invisible, yet palpable.

We all yearn. Things happen to us. We cope, solve problems, suffer setbacks and pursue our dreams. What, though, actually drives us to do those things? It's something inside that has little to do with our challenges and goals. It's a need to relieve inner anxiety, prove something, love and be loved, fit in, stand out or find what makes us happy.

So, do plot events kick off a story, or does the story developing *inside a character* kick off a novel's external events? You can look at this as a chicken-or-egg question,

but I think it's more useful to embrace the duality of fiction: the outer journey and inner journey working together, amplifying each other.

Plot without emotional power is empty, but it gains substance when scenes are treated as emotional opportunities. Let's look at how to shape scenes into emotion-generating moments.

DRIVING QUIETER SCENES

Imagine you're hosting a holiday dinner in your home. A tablecloth is spread. Silverware is laid. All is perfect until you knock over a glass of red wine. Quickly you drop a white napkin over the spill. The puddle of wine seeps through.

Think of this tablecloth as a memory and the napkin as a map of the little puddle. The wine is infused in both the tablecloth and the napkin. Even after you throw them in the wash, the stain remains as a faint reminder.

When you infuse something as strong as red wine into an absorbent piece of cloth, a faint awareness of that wine lingers. Future meals are never entirely free from the memory of that small holiday disaster.

Your novel is like that. It's the dining room, a place where many meals are eaten and finally add up to a story. Every one of those meals, though, involves that tablecloth and napkin—which are imprinted with something that I call your protagonist's *greatest need*. That need is always present, even if you cover up the stain with a table runner and cleverly fold the napkin. You know it's there. You're always aware of it. Have you come across scenes in excellent novels that have little plot but work anyway?

EXERCISE:*What's Happening When Nothing Is Happening?*

Gauge the effectiveness of your quieter scenes with this exercise:

1. Identify your protagonist's greatest inner need, the one that would preoccupy her even if your novel's plot were stripped away. Craft a sentence or short paragraph that succinctly expresses that need.
2. Pick out a minimally dramatic scene from the middle of your work-in-progress. Open a new document on your computer screen, and paste in the sentence or paragraph you created in Step 1. This is the opening of a new version of the scene you've selected.
3. With the underlying need just below the surface of your protagonist's awareness, rewrite the scene. Do not look back at the version in your current draft.
4. The purpose of this rewrite is to get your reader to *feel* the underlying need in your protagonist. Work until you're sure readers will sense that need even if you don't mention it or make it plain.
5. Finally, go back and delete the paragraph you pasted in at the scene's start. How does the scene feel now? Is the underlying need evident even though you haven't spelled it out?

Have you ever felt the undertow of a character's yearning in commonplace action, pulling your awareness below the surface of an everyday situation? Such scenes are infused with the point of view character's fundamental, underlying, unmet need. That need and its tug, twists and turns are all still present while the plot is on hold.

There's a nice example toward the beginning of David Leavitt's novel *The Indian Clerk*, which begins at the University of Cambridge in 1913. It's the story of mathematician G.H. Hardy, who at 36 is one of the great mathematicians of his age. Hardy receives a handwritten letter from an obscure clerk, Srinivasa Ramanujan, who works in the accounts department of the Port Trust Office in Madras. The letter, in which Ramanujan

requests help in getting published, is full of mathematical formulas, some nonsensical, some bizarre and some utterly brilliant. Frustratingly, proofs are not provided.

Hardy and his partner in publishing, Littlewood, decide that Ramanujan's letter contains enough promise to bring the man to Cambridge as Hardy's assistant. This is done, with some difficulty. Ramanujan is different than expected, but also clearly working on a high mathematical level. His way of thinking is unschooled, culturally strange and wildly creative. Hardy is drawn to him, even though he and the rest of the world are distracted by the declaration of war with Germany:

[Hardy] tries, as much as he can, to see Ramanujan. Standing in shadowed profile before the river, his arms folded behind his back and his stomach protruding slightly, he might be the silhouette of a Victorian gentleman, cut from black paper and pasted against a white ground. Restraint and discipline, a certain aloofness, or perhaps even elusiveness: These are his most distinguishing traits. Except when they're talking mathematics, he rarely speaks except when spoken to, and when he is questioned, almost always answers by dipping into what Hardy envisages as a reserve of stock replies, no doubt purchased on the same shopping trip in Madras during which he was supplied with trousers, socks and underwear. Replies such as: "Yes, it is very lovely." "Thank you, my mother and wife are well." "The political situation is indeed very complex." Here he is, after all, in English clothes and on English land, and still Hardy can't begin to penetrate his carapace of cultivated inscrutability. Only occasionally does Ramanujan let something slip, a whiff of panic or passion slips through (Hobson! Baker!), and then Hardy feels the man's soul as a mystery, a fast-moving prickle beneath his skin.

Mostly, those afternoons, they talk mathematics. ...

Why is Hardy so fascinated by Ramanujan and bothered by the man's opaque inner life? Is it because Ramanujan may decipher the proof that has preoccupied Hardy his entire life, the Riemann hypothesis? Is it because Ramanujan is mysterious and elusive? Is it because he is exotic, a foreigner? Is it because Hardy is homosexual and Ramanujan reminds him of an Indian cricketer at Oxford after whom Hardy lusts?

It could be any or all of these reasons. I would say, though, that it is because Hardy is a man whose work is understood by perhaps only 20 people, half of whom are in Germany, now the enemy. It is because he's a man who feels distant from his own collaborator and dissatisfied with his social circle, the distinguished and famous members of a stuffy semisecret society. It is also because he is lonely. Hardy longs to connect. That longing is not stated as such; instead, it's felt through his close observation of Ramanujan and his wish to somehow break through the man's reserve.

Have you come across scenes in excellent novels that have little plot but work anyway? Have you ever felt the undertow of a character's yearning in commonplace action, pulling your awareness below the surface of an everyday situation?

Even when nothing overt seems to be going on in a scene, plenty can be happening. Perhaps it's simmering below the surface, but it's there nonetheless. It's a tension that's not public but personal, a need that pulls at your protagonist, an emotional ache that causes us, in our own ways, to ache as well.

MEETING YOUR CHARACTERS' NEEDS

Quieter scenes with little action on the surface can keep us engaged solely through underlying emotional tension. If we continue to avidly read a scene despite the lack of a plot point, this underlying and unmet emotional need—an emotional goal—might be the reason.

Molly Gloss' novel *Falling From Horses* is the story of plain-spoken Bud Frazer, an Oregon ranch hand and occasional rodeo cowboy who, in 1938 at the age of 19, boards a bus for Hollywood to find work as a stunt rider in Western movies. Seated on the bus next to him is Lily Shaw, an aspiring screenwriter a few years older than him, who is also Hollywood-bound. While the novel spans a full year of their lives in California, their relationship begins on that bus.

At first they are just seatmates—two kids who've never been far from home, embarking on the first big adventure

of their lives. But they are also young and single. What do we expect will happen? Gloss plays with our expectations this way:

I didn't have a lot of experience with girls, but it crossed my mind that she might think I was sneaking looks at her under the cover of looking at the mountain; I thought she might be wondering whether I found her pretty. She wasn't pretty, at least by my standards back then. She had thick, dark eyebrows that just about met over her nose—she hadn't yet begun to pluck them—and she was so skinny there was nothing to fill out the front of her wrinkled dress. Plus the dress was bright green with an orange

EXERCISE: *Setting Emotional Goals*

Look at the scene you're writing right now. Answer these questions to develop its emotional goals:

- Who is the point of view character? At this moment in the story, what does that character have to do, get, seek or avoid? This is commonly called the *scene goal*.
- Shift focus. What does your point of view character need inside? What does she hope to feel? That's the *emotional goal*.
- What in this scene is pulling this character closer to or further away from the emotional goal? What is making that emotional goal impossible to achieve? How does this character attempt to reach the emotional goal in spite of what's happening?
- In what way is this character *afraid* of reaching his emotional goal? What can he do to subvert or avoid it? Conversely, why does the emotional goal greatly matter? What can make it matter more?
- In this scene, how does this character reconcile the loss of the emotional goal, or the achieving of it? What replaces it? What comes next? How is the scene's outcome more satisfying, or less acceptable, than what was originally hoped for?
- Finally, fashion a passage from the raw material you've created that tells or shows your character's inner state in this scene. The scene's purpose should be to capture the dynamic inner self of the character as much as to shift the outer circumstances of the story.

collar, which might have looked all right on the right girl, but it threw an orange pallor onto her face. I didn't have any interest in her, not in that way, and I figured I had better be clear about it. So I said, "I wonder if you'd mind switching seats. I like looking out at the country going by."

Even when nothing overt seems to be going on in a scene, plenty can be happening. It's a need that pulls at your protagonist, an emotional ache that causes us, in our own ways, to ache as well.

Falling From Horses has a flashback framework, in which the story is structured as if it is told decades after the events of the novel. We know from the opening scene that Bud worked as a stunt rider for only a year and later became an artist specializing in Western subject matter. Lily went on to have a successful career as a screenwriter, had multiple marriages and lovers, testified at the McCarthy hearings in the 1950s and wrote a memoir. But on this bus ride they are newbies to everything, including to each other and to love. So what do we anticipate?

What actually happens at this point, romantically speaking, is nothing. Bud denies being attracted to Lily; indeed, he tells us that she wasn't pretty. Is Gloss teasing us or whetting our appetite? We'll find out, but meanwhile we sense that Bud has an unspoken emotional need even more fundamental than the obvious one: He needs a friend. That need begins to be fulfilled on the ride, as we see a short while later:

Lily stuck with her reading for a while, and anyway, being Lily, she wouldn't have admitted to nerves, but we were taking the curves pretty fast, and when she closed the folder of pages and asked me where I was from and where I was headed, I figured it was to take her mind off the curvy road and the likelihood of our bus plunging into the gorge. I don't know if that's right—she has written otherwise—but it's what I thought at the time.

I told her I was going down to Hollywood to work in the cowboy movies, which caused her to perk up slightly.

She said she was headed there too, to get into the business of writing for the movies.

She asked if I was an actor, and I told her I was just expecting to ride in posses and such, which wasn't really acting. Then I told her what I'd heard—that the work was mostly riding fast and pretending you'd been shot off your horse. She had never been on a horse in her life, but she'd seen enough cowboy movies to know what I meant. "You might have to jump onto a runaway buckboard to save the girl," she said, "and maybe shoot the gun out of the bad guy's hand." She said all this with a straight face—she had a dry sense of humor and never liked to give away that she was joking. It wasn't exactly a test, but if I'd taken her for serious I imagine she might have decided I was too dumb to bother with.

Now, tell me that Gloss isn't teasing us! Lily's remark about saving the girl has to be a piece of foreshadowing, doesn't it? Plus Gloss decides to include the metaphor of falling off horses, as well as Bud's self-deprecating suspicion that Lily might regard him as nothing more than a dumb cowboy with Hollywood stars in his eyes. Something's cooking—but what is it, exactly? If nothing else it's a connection between the two young travelers, a friendship, which at this point is what Bud and Lily need more than anything.

Bud doesn't tell us what he needs emotionally, and Gloss is too skillful to lay it out for us in an obvious way, yet her protagonist's yearning is all too evident. At this early moment we don't know the twists and turns that Bud and Lily's relationship will take, but we are driven to hope that these two starry-eyed kids will stick together and support each other, which they ultimately do for many years. Bud's emotional goal is to find a friend and in Gloss' restrained yet warm opening, the young cowboy manages to connect with Lily.

In classic formulas of scene construction, the writer's first act is to set a protagonist's goal. What the protagonist wants to get, do, discover or avoid is the outward goal, the visible objective of the moment, but just as important is the protagonist's *invisible* objective—the emotional goal in his heart. In some cases it's the only goal that matters after all.

Excerpted from *The Emotional Craft of Fiction* © 2016 by Donald Maass, with permission from Writer's Digest Books.

USING INTENTIONS TO DRIVE A STORY

BY JORDAN ROSENFELD

Few things pull a reader from a story faster than an aimless protagonist. To keep your hero from wandering haphazardly about your narrative, give him a job to carry out in every scene. This intention isn't plucked from thin air—it stems directly from the inciting incident and from your protagonist's personal history.

Intention, it's worth noting, does not equal motivation. An *intention*, for our purposes, is best described as a character's plan to take an action. A *motivation*, on the other hand, is a series of reasons—ranging from your protagonist's childhood trauma to his current mood—that accounts for *why* he plans to take an action. Motivation carries throughout a whole story, whereas intention can vary by scene. In a given scene, a character might intend to rob a bank, propose to a woman, go to the store for cigarettes and have some choice words for a misbehaving child. These intentions will drive action and consequences, and thus will help you make every scene relevant to your plot and character development.

As your protagonist pursues an intention, it's the writer's job to oppose it, thwart it, intensify his desire for it and, at the end of the story, typically grant him the satisfaction of achieving it. In doing so, you'll build drama and conflict into your narrative.

Every time you begin a scene, ask yourself:

1. What are the most immediate desires of the character?
2. How does this intention relate to prior scenes and to the plot?
3. When will your characters achieve their intentions or meet with opposition?
4. Who will help your characters achieve their goals? Who will oppose them?

There are two kinds of intentions you'll want to incorporate: *plot-based* and *scene-specific*.

PLOT-BASED INTENTIONS

The first imperative a character has in any scene must be tied back to the plot's inciting incident, or else the scenes that follow will feel free-floating, more like vignettes than a cohesive narrative.

For example, Tess Gerritsen's thriller *Vanish* launches when medical examiner Maura Isles prepares to conduct an autopsy on an unidentified female corpse—and the dead woman opens her eyes. No, this isn't a zombie story. The woman is alive, though barely. Isles' overarching intention is to figure out who this woman is and what has happened to her. How did she end up in a body bag in the morgue? The consequences of the inciting incident pile up very quickly as the press gets wind of what happened, harasses Isles and misquotes the medical examiner's office. The revived Jane Doe, once taken to a hospital, becomes livid with rage and violently defends her own life. All of these events create new intentions for Isles, scene by scene.

Always imagine your plot, no matter its genre, as a puzzle in which every scene fills in one or two missing pieces. Complicating intentions is a crucial part of building suspense.

In one scene, Isles goes to visit Jane Doe in the hospital:

"I'm here to visit a patient," said Maura. "She was admitted last night, through the ER. I understand she was transferred out of ICU this morning."

"The patient's name?"

Maura hesitated. "I believe she's still registered as Jane Doe. Dr. Cutler told me she's in Room 431."

The ward clerk's gaze narrowed. "I'm sorry. We've had calls from reporters all day. We can't answer any more questions about that patient."

"I'm not a reporter. I'm Dr. Isles, from the medical examiner's office. I told Dr. Cutler I'd be coming by to check on the patient."

"May I see some identification?"

Maura dug into her purse and placed her ID on the countertop. *This is what I get for showing up without my lab coat*, she thought. She could see the interns

cruising down the hall, unimpeded, like a flock of strutting white geese.

Returning to the questions outlined on the prior page, lets break down Isles' intention in this scene:

1. WHAT IS ISLES' MOST IMMEDIATE PLOT-RELATED

INTENTION? To interview Jane Doe and determine her identity—as well as discover what, if anything, she remembers of how and why she was left for dead.

2. DOES THE INTENTION MAKE SENSE TO THE PLOT?

Absolutely. Now, for the plot to move forward, something new will have to be revealed about Jane Doe.

3. WILL SHE ACHIEVE THIS INTENTION OR BE THWARTED?

The reader does not know going into this scene whether Isles will be successful in her intention, but the author—Gerritsen—does, and she complicates

this intention expertly, increasing drama. Although the exchange with the clerk may seem inconsequential, it acts as an important tension builder. If Isles walked unobstructed into the hospital, which is thronged by press clamoring to get in, and managed to walk straight to the patient's room unencumbered by hospital staff, the lack of obstacles would kill any element of tension. Since the reader is as curious as Isles about Jane Doe's identity, thwarting Isles' intention serves to keep the reader on his toes.

4. WHO HELPS ISLES ACHIEVE HER INTENTION? In this scene, after questioning her and scrutinizing her identification, the clerk begrudgingly lets Isles through. Now it's up to Jane Doe to propel the narrative forward.

Gerritsen ups the ante when Jane Doe, who is now volatile and has to be restrained, gets ahold of the hospital guard's gun and shoots him, then takes Isles as her hostage. Fearing the deranged woman, the other hospital personnel refuse to get involved. Isles must rely on her wit and skill to avoid being shot.

QUICK TIP: *Infusing Scenes With Tension*

Dramatic tension is the potential for conflict in a scene. When trouble is brewing, or when resolution balances on a pinhead, the reader will be psychologically tense. Such tension will keep a reader turning pages.

Dramatic tension relies on the reader's knowledge that something is about to go down—but the details for how or when have yet to be revealed. Tension keeps the reader waiting with breath held and fists clenched, hoping that the protagonist makes it out of the scene alive, in love or with her goal achieved.

Dramatic tension has the power to turn a domestic scene into a nightmare. To create it, you must:

- Thwart your protagonist's goals and delay satisfaction
- Include unexpected changes without immediate explanation
- Shift power back and forth
- Pull the rug out—throw in a piece of plot information that changes or alters your protagonist in some way
- Create a tense atmosphere through setting and senses
- Utilize the poetic, rhythmic power of language to create sentence-level tension.

To keep your hero from wandering haphazardly about your narrative, give him a job to carry out in every scene. This intention isn't plucked from thin air—it stems directly from the inciting incident and from your protagonist's personal history.

Always imagine your plot, no matter its genre, as a puzzle in which every scene fills in one or two missing pieces. Complicating intentions is a crucial part of building suspense. Remember that if you allow your characters to achieve their intentions too early in the scene, the tension dissipates.

Note that plot-based intentions can be demonstrated by the protagonist's direct response to the inciting incident through use of one or more of the following narrative devices:

- interior monologue that shows his thoughts and feelings

QUICK TIP: *Lending a Hand*

Eventually you want to provide some support for your protagonist's intentions. If you delay a desire forever, your narrative will feel tiresome and unresolved. At certain junctures in the story, give your protagonist allies to help him achieve his intentions. Whether these come in the form of friends in high places—like headmaster Albus Dumbledore, who always helps Harry Potter out of tight fixes—or a kind stranger who offers shelter to a weary protagonist on the run, these little acts of assistance will keep your character—and the plot—moving forward.

Keep in mind that no character should be able to navigate difficult trials alone or with ease. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo needs help from his group of companions to get to Mordor, where he can destroy the malicious ring and save Middle-earth. Protagonists need friends and supporters, small acts of kindness, insight and clues to keep them on task and on the right path.

- actions he takes to change or influence the outcome of the inciting incident
- dialogue in which he expresses his feelings or thoughts about the plot.

SCENE-SPECIFIC INTENTIONS

While your protagonist possesses a set of plot-based intentions that drive her no matter what is happening in the scene, she will also have more immediate, scene-specific intentions. For instance, she might need to find shelter after her house has burned to the ground, or to contact a friend she can trust before the cops find her. These immediate intentions still relate to the plot, but they more urgently relate to *consequences*: the chain of smaller actions and events that stem from the inciting incident.

Let's look at an example from William Trevor's novel *Felicia's Journey*, the story of a lower-class Irish girl. Felicia is pregnant and making her way to England to meet up with "a friend" (as she tells customs): Johnny, the father of her child, with whom she hasn't had contact since their whirlwind dalliance. She doesn't have his address and he doesn't know she's coming, but

Felicia, who is desperate to get out of her small-town life, chooses to believe he is going to marry her when he hears the news.

In an early scene, Felicia has just arrived in England. In this scene, her specific intention is to find the lawn mower factory where Johnny works. She goes to the closest thing she can find—a car dealership:

A man in a Volkswagen showroom is patient with her but doesn't know of a lawn mower factory in the vicinity. Then an afterthought strikes him as she's leaving and he mentions the name of a town that he says is 25 or 26 miles off. When it occurs to him that she's bewildered by what he's saying, he writes the name down on the edge of a brochure. 'Not the full shilling,' is an expression her father uses and '19 and six in the pound': she wonders if the man is thinking that.

Driven by her overarching plot intention to be with Johnny, her scene-specific intentions are directed by whatever information she obtains that will help her find him. In this case, she receives for her trouble the name of the town the factory may be in.

As your protagonist pursues an intention, it's the writer's job to oppose it, thwart it, intensify his desire for it and, at the end of the story, typically grant him the satisfaction of achieving it.

Her immediate intention quickly becomes complicated by the fact that Felicia has very little money and no mode of transportation to get to the town. Her next scene intention, therefore, is to find a way to travel the 25 or 26 miles to this village (which, of course, leads to more trouble).

Thus a chain reaction occurs in which one complication and intention leads to another, until you begin to resolve your conflicts and tie up your plot threads near the end of your narrative. **WD**

Excerpted from *Make a Scene Revised and Expanded* © 2017 by **Jordan Rosenfeld**, with permission from Writer's Digest Books. Visit writersdigestshop.com and enter the code "Workbook" for a 10 percent discount on this and other books to help you hone your craft.

STANDOUT MARKETS

An exclusive look inside the markets that can help you make your mark.

BY TYLER MOSS



WHAT STANDS OUT & WHY:

Past notable contributors include *The New York Times*

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HOW TO SUBMIT: Email the completed piece or a 1–2 paragraph pitch to firstperson@vox.com. **DETAILED GUIDELINES:** vox.com/2015/6/12/8767221/vox-first-person-explained.



WHAT STANDS OUT & WHY:

The official magazine of The American Legion—the country's largest veterans service organization—*The American Legion Magazine* is a general-interest publication with coverage extending beyond military issues. With a dedicated readership including veterans, members of the Washington establishment and policymakers, *American Legion* has the distinction of being the "best read" magazine in the U.S.—with 77.5 percent of subscribers reporting that they'd read at least three of the four previous issues in 2016—according to independent auditor GfK MRI. With 70 percent of each issue written by freelancers, opportunities to break in are plentiful. —TM

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ABOUT: *The American Legion Magazine* informs readers of significant trends and issues affecting the nation, the world and their way of life. Major focuses include national security, foreign affairs, business trends, social issues, health, education, ethics and the arts.

FOUNDED: 1919. **PUBLISHES:** Monthly. **CIRCULATION:** 2.2 million. **LENGTH:** Columns as short as 300 words, features as long as 2,000 words. **PAYMENT:** 40 cents/word.

EDITORIAL INTERESTS: The economy, educational system, moral fiber, social issues, infrastructure, technology and national defense/security, general features and Q&As. **HOW TO SUBMIT:** Email queries to magazine@legion.org. Queries should outline the subject, the article's angle, the writer's qualifications and the subjects to be interviewed.

FOR YOUR POETRY:

FIELD

ABOUT: "FIELD: Contemporary Poetry and Poetics was founded as a periodical devoted to poetry that would combine fresh viewpoints, editorial discrimination, and an attention to the best work being produced in the U.S. and abroad, regardless of allegiance to schools or categories or reputations. It provides a forum where poets, eminent and emerging, show each other and those who follow the course of the art what is innovative and most interesting."

FOUNDED: 1969. **CIRCULATION:** 1,500. **PUBLISHES:** Biannually. **READING PERIOD:** August–April. **PAYMENT:** \$15/page and two contributor copies. **HOW TO SUBMIT:** Send in poems via the online submissions manager at ocpress.submittable.com/submit. FIELD accepts poetry only, and poems must be combined into a single document, starting each poem on a new page. Submit 2–6 poems at a time. **DETAILED GUIDELINES:** oberlin.edu/ocpress/submissions.html.

FOR YOUR BOOKS:

Morgan James Publishing

ABOUT: "Morgan James Publishing was founded in 2003 by David L. Hancock, a mortgage banker at the time, who had written a book and been less than thrilled with the conventional book publishing process—yet pleasantly surprised by the immense power of publishing. Created by an entrepreneurial author for entrepreneurial authors, Morgan James is a hybrid publisher that blends the strength of traditional publishing with the flexibility of self-publishing."

FOUNDED: 2003. **PUBLISHES:** About 150 frontlist titles annually. **IMPRINTS:** Morgan James Nonfiction, Morgan James Fiction, Morgan James Faith, Morgan James Kids. **RIGHTS:** "Author maintains ownership and control of intellectual property rights." **ADVANCE:** Small. **ROYALTY:** 20–50 percent royalty of net sales, paid monthly. **PUBLISH PERIOD:** 3–9 months. **HOW TO SUBMIT:** Upload your manuscript or nonfiction proposal at morgan-james-publishing.com, filling out the question fields. **DETAILED GUIDELINES:** morgan-james-publishing.com/submit-a-proposal.



WHAT STANDS OUT & WHY:

With an appetite for poetry of all forms—including contemporary, prose, free verse and traditional—FIELD serves as a venue for poetry's emerging and established voices alike. Past notable contributors include Adrienne Rich, William Stafford, Charles Wright, Denise Levertov and Charles Simic. Works published in FIELD are regularly selected to appear in the annual The Best American Poetry series, as well as the annual Pushcart Prize anthology. —TM



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Tyler Moss is the managing editor of *Writer's Digest*.

CONFERENCE SCENE

Events to advance your craft, connections and career.

BY DON VAUGHAN

1 California Crime Writers Conference

Put your inner detective on the case at this boutique event in the city that inspired Raymond Chandler, Michael Connelly and other genre greats.

WHEN: June 10–11, 2017. **WHERE:** DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Los Angeles–Westside, Culver City, Calif.

PRICE: \$300 through April, \$335 through May. Onsite registration is \$350, based on availability.

Includes continental breakfast and lunch. Manuscript critiques are an additional \$50. See website for details. **WHAT MAKES THE CONFERENCE UNIQUE:** The CCWC's small size and genre-specific focus are its biggest assets, conference co-chairs Sue Ann Jaffarian and Rochelle Staab say. Panels and workshops cover topics ranging from craft and marketing to law enforcement and forensics, and the congenial atmosphere and fun evening events help to foster camaraderie. "It's a learning conference with a networking bonus," Staab says.

WHO IT'S PERFECT FOR: Authors with a passion for crime writing who are serious about sharpening their acumen for the genre—and building their careers. **HOW MANY ATTEND:** 200. **FACULTY:** Novelists William Kent Krueger (*Ordinary Grace*) and Hallie Ephron (*Night*



Night, Sleep Tight), interrogator/behaviorist Paul Bishop, publisher Eric Campbell (Down & Out Books), editor Alexandra Schulster (St. Martin's Press), agents Jill Marr (Sandra Dijkstra Agency) and Danielle Egan-Miller (Browne & Miller Literary Associates), and more. **HIGHLIGHTS:** "Saturday evening's Agent/Editor Cocktail Party provides attendees a chance to mix with industry pros in a casual setting," Staab says. Also popular is Author Idol, in which a panel of six agents and editors critique one-page blind submissions read by actress and author Harley Jane Kozak.

IF YOU GO: Plan a side trip to the nearby beach town of Santa Monica, Chandler's real-life model for his fictional Bay City, for a stroll along the historic pier, established in 1909.

FOR MORE INFO: ccwconference.org.



2 Fairfield University Summer Conference for Writers

For an affordable taste of creative academia, look to this conference sponsored by Fairfield University's award-winning Master of Fine Arts program faculty.

WHEN: July 14–18, 2017. **WHERE:** Enders Island, Mystic, Conn.

PRICE: \$550. **WHAT MAKES THE CONFERENCE UNIQUE:** Participants gain access to MFA residency programming as well as workshops tailored to their skill levels. "This is an intimate conference that offers participants the chance to talk with current graduate students and faculty and absorb the buzz of MFA program conversation," conference coordinator Elizabeth Hastings

says. “Participants can mingle with MFA students and faculty during the conference, and spend evenings socializing in the gazebo or under the tent on the lawn.” **WHO IT’S PERFECT FOR:** Writers attracted to the benefits and logistics of a low-residency MFA, but not ready to pursue formal admission. **HOW MANY ATTEND:** 10–25. **FACULTY:** Novelist/essayist Meghan Daum (*The Unspeakable: And Other Subjects of Discussion*); novelists Rachel Basch (*The Listener*), Karen Osborn (*Centerville*) and Eugenia Kim (*The Calligrapher’s Daughter*); poet Baron Wormser (*Unidentified Sighing Objects*); nonfiction author William B. Patrick (*The Call of Nursing*); and many more. **HIGHLIGHTS:** The conference features advanced workshops in multiple genres, as well as a generative multigenre short-form workshop, presentations by current graduate students, afternoon craft seminars and evening open-mic readings. Interactive morning workshops are designed to help you “leave for home with new works-in-progress.” **IF YOU GO:** Plan a dinner excursion to Mystic Pizza, featured in the eponymous 1988 Julia Roberts movie. **FOR MORE INFO:** fairfield.edu/writersconference.

3 Historical Novel Society North American Conference

Infuse your historical fiction with authenticity at this popular biennial event.

WHEN: June 22–24, 2017. **WHERE:** Hilton Portland, Portland, Ore. **PRICE:** \$475 for HNS members; \$550 for nonmembers. Pitch sessions with agents and editors and Pre-Conference Academy workshops

are available for additional fees. See website for details. **WHAT MAKES THE CONFERENCE UNIQUE:** At North America’s largest gathering of authors and aficionados of historical fiction, “Authors and readers meet and mingle to share a common experience, glean research tips, immerse themselves in eras they might not have been familiar with, and enjoy a variety of programs designed to help them improve their writing and prospects for publishing,” program chair Leslie Carroll says. **WHO IT’S PERFECT FOR:** Writers of historical fiction. **HOW MANY ATTEND:** 400–450. **FACULTY:** Novelists Geraldine Brooks (*March*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize), David Ebershoff (*The Danish Girl*), Kate Forsyth (*Bitter Greens*) and Selden Edwards (*The Lost Prince*); agent Irene Goodman (Irene Goodman Literary Agency); and others. **HIGHLIGHTS:** Brooks and Ebershoff will each keynote a luncheon. The Blue Pencil Cafe matches emerging authors with published veterans for one-on-one critiques, and Cold Read Sessions offer authors an opportunity to have their first two manuscript pages critiqued by a team of agents and/or editors. Thursday’s Pre-Conference Academy offers interactive sword-fighting and historical firearms courses, as well as an all-day craft class taught by Forsyth. **IF YOU GO:** Pay a visit to The Heathman Hotel’s library during the evening social hours. It houses dozens of signed editions from Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners, as well as U.S. poet laureates. **FOR MORE INFO:** hns-conference.org. **WD**

Don Vaughan (donaldvaughan.com) is a freelance writer in Raleigh, N.C., and founder of Triangle Association of Freelancers.

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CONFERENCE GUIDE

MAY/JUNE 2017

- Keep in mind that there may be more than one workshop in each listing.
- These workshops are listed alphabetically by state, country or continent.
- Unless otherwise indicated, rates include tuition (T) only. Sometimes the rates also include airfare (AF), some or all meals (M), accommodations (AC), ground transportation (GT), materials (MT) or fees (F).
- When you find workshops that interest you, be sure to call, email or check the website of the instructor or organization for additional information.
- All listings are paid advertisements.

ARIZONA

WOMEN WRITING THE WEST 23RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE, *Sponsored by Women Writing the West*, October 26–28, 2017 at Loew's Ventana Canyon Resort, Tucson, AZ. Women Writing the West, an organization that supports authors and other professionals in promoting the contributions made by women to the history, culture and growth of the American West, invites all writers to "Set in the West: Cultures Old and New," on the edge of the Sonoran Desert, a relaxing place to pitch your manuscript to an agent or editor, network with other writers, and gain new insights into writing from panelists and speakers. All levels. \$139/night conference rate for accommodations.

Contact: Jan Cleere
P.O. Box 68902
Oro Valley, AZ 85737
Ph: 520/909-2299
jan@jancleere.com
www.WomenWritingtheWest.org

CALIFORNIA

ANNUAL GREATER LOS ANGELES WRITERS CONFERENCE, *produced by West Coast Writers Conferences*. June 16–18, 2017 at the DoubleTree by Hilton, Los Angeles Westside near LAX. Writers of all genres and disciplines benefit from this popular educational and inspirational three-day event focused on the craft and business of writing. The conference, our 17th, features individual program tracks for what we call the 3-A's (Aspiring, Active and Accomplished) for all novel and screenwriters. Topics are presented by more than 40 literary agents, veteran educators, best-selling authors, industry professionals, and editors in intensive streams of seminars, workshops, and panels so you are immersed in an educational environment all weekend. If you have a work-in-progress, you can participate in Advance Submission ProCritiques™ to have your work reviewed/edited by professional editors and literary agents. Attendees can also meet and pitch literary agents and publishers looking for

new talent with polished manuscripts. There is an informative session with the "agents du jour" to help prepare for your actual meeting. Writers also enjoy a Keynote Address lunch on Sat. & Sun. Open to all levels of literary and screenwriters. *Early registration discounts and financing available from only \$149 per day or \$299 for all three days*. See website for details.

Contact: Lillian or Tony N. Todaro
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Contact: Tony or Lillian Todaro
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Ph: 310/379-2650
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www.wcvriters.com/workshops

2017 MENDOCINO COAST WRITERS' CONFERENCE, *Sponsored by Poets & Writers and The Community Foundation of Mendocino County*, August 3–5, 2017, at Mendocino Middle School, Mendocino, CA. The Mendocino Coast Writers' Conference is a vibrant gathering that offers morning workshops in a wide range of genres and relevant to differing experience levels—from a dedicated emerging writers' workshop to a juried-in master class. Afternoons are packed with craft seminars, pitch panels, one-on-one consultations, and open mics; and every evening offers an opportunity to enjoy the camaraderie and connection that make this conference, in the words of a 2016 participant, "life changing." Instructors: Jody Gehrman, Michael Lukas, Kat Meads, John W. Evans, Shara McCallum. All levels. \$575 early bird (T,M,F). Registration opens March 1. Use code WDCG for a free vintage MCWC T-Shirt on arrival.

Contact: Barbara Lee, Registrar
P.O. Box 2087
Fort Bragg, CA 95437
Ph: 707/485-4031
info@mcwc.org
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INDIANA

MIDWEST WRITERS WORKSHOP, July 20–22, 2017 at L.A. Pittenger Student Center, Ball State University, Muncie, IN. More authors including bestselling authors John Gilstrap, Jess Lourey, Becky Albertalli and more; agents, editors, and industry experts in this 3-day workshop plus 45+ craft sessions, manuscript evaluations, agent pitches, query critiques, tax/business consultations, professional head shots, and social media tutoring. Learn more and register at: www.midwestwriters.org.

Contact: Jama Bigger
midwestwriters@yahoo.com

NEVADA

2017 LAS VEGAS WRITER'S CONFERENCE, *hosted by Henderson Writers' Group*, is scheduled for April 20–22, 2017 at Sam's Town Hotel and Gambling Hall. Join Keynote Speaker Donald Maass and fellow writers, agents, publishers and marketing experts for a weekend of workshops on the publishing industry. Registration is limited to 150 attendees. Sign up now!
www.lasvegaswritersconference.com

WRITING THE BREAKOUT NOVEL WORKSHOP, *hosted by Henderson Writers' Group*, April 23, 2017. A full day with author and agent Donald Maass of the Maass Literary Agency. This all-day intensive workshop is intended for writers who want to take their fiction to the next level. You'll learn techniques that will improve your writing and make your story feel big. For more information, please visit: www.lasvegaswritersconference.com

NEW YORK

WRITER'S DIGEST ANNUAL CONFERENCE, *presented by Writer's Digest*. Join us for the Writer's Digest Annual Conference, taking place August 18–20 at the Hilton Midtown in New York City. This writing summit is a global creative gathering, bringing together writers from around the world to network, learn from bestselling mentors and take part in a wide-ranging selection of sessions on the craft and business of writing. 50 agents and editors will be onsite to hear your pitches! Bring you're A-game and just maybe meet your new agent. Pulitzer Prize-winner Richard Russo (*Empire Falls*, *Everybody's Fool*) delivers the Central Keynote and will inspire you to persevere in your writing career! Register now and save.
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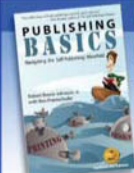
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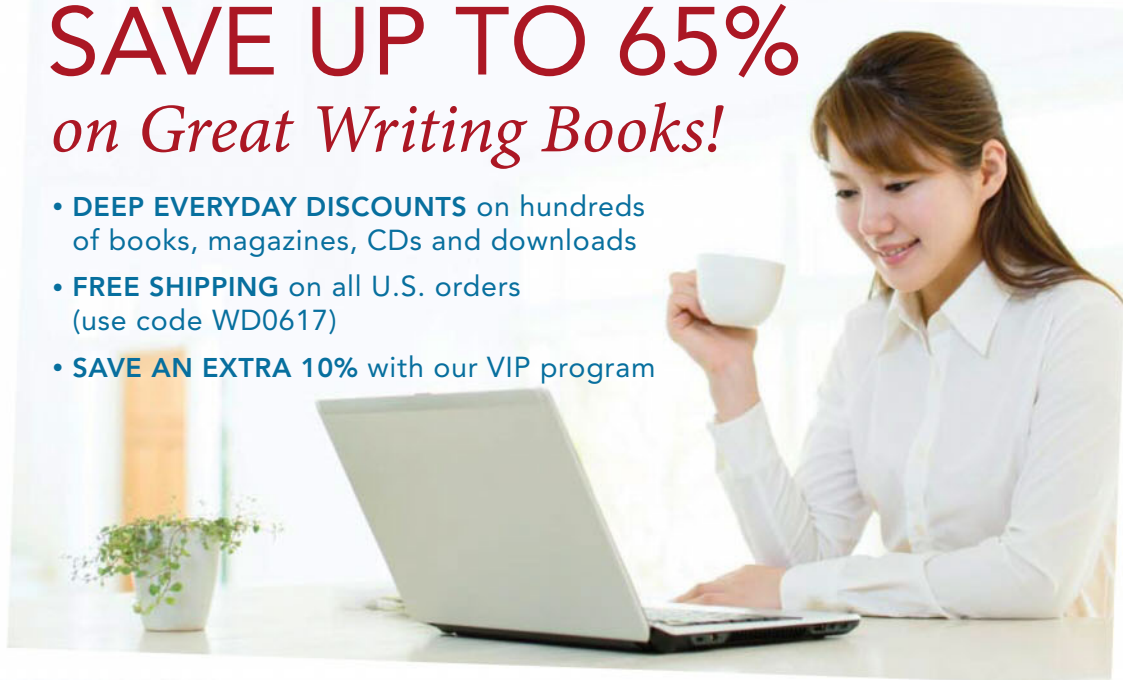
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by Nina Amir

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ITEM #T3891

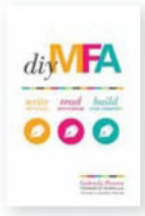
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by Gabriela Pereira

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by Robert Lee Brewer, Editor

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by Therese Walsh, Editor, and the Members of *Writer Unboxed*

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by Chuck Sambuchino, Editor

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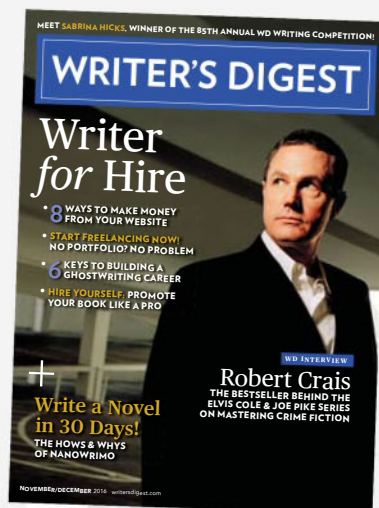
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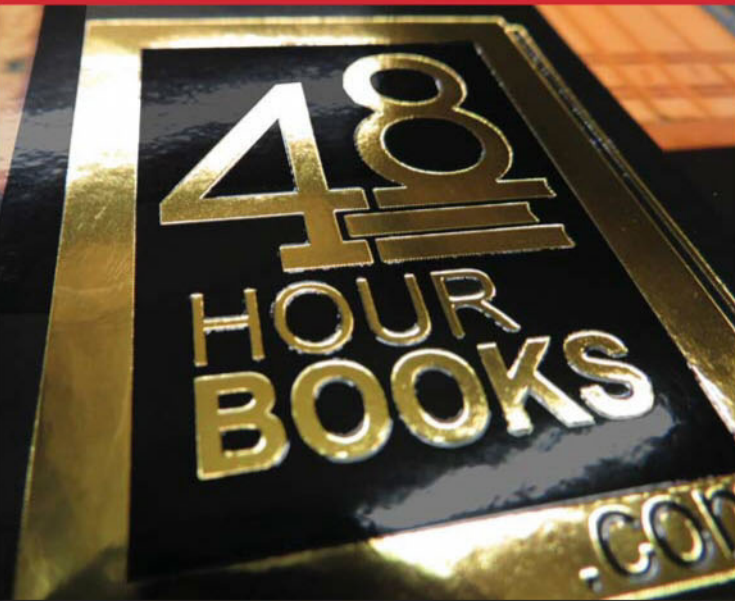
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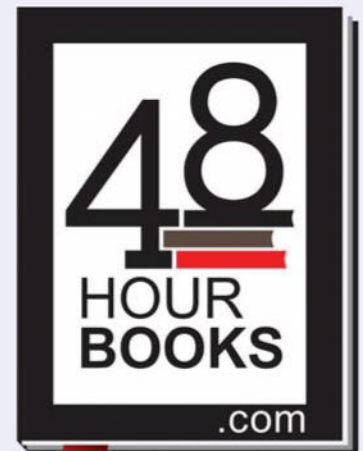
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