



Women Who Write, Inc.

Since 1988

SAVE THE DATES!

September 9, 2-4:
OPEN MIC at the
Martinsville
Community Center

October 1, 2-4:
WWW 35th
ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION at the
Madison Community
House. Open to
members
and non-members.
(members will**
be able to sell their
books)

October 21:
WRITERS'
CONFERENCE,
In-Person at the
Madison
Community
House. Since it will be
recorded, you can still
register if you can't
make the event.



WRITERS' NOTES

Women Who Write, Inc. Newsletter

July, 2023

Message from WWW President Ginger Pate

Dear Members,

Congratulations to those members who are published in this year's edition 2022-2023 of Goldfinch. If you've never been published, you are now a published author. Some of you were able to read your work at our Goldfinch Launch chaired by Editor-in-Chief, Donna Piken, followed by an Open Mic of more writers.

*I'm hoping next year's Goldfinch will have a higher number of members' work published. I've asked Joanne Flynn Black, a long time Board member and past Editor-in-Chief of Goldfinch, to record a session: *Submitting Work to Goldfinch, 101*. Watch your emails for the date and details.*

In writing we should always put our best work forward if we want to be a professional writer. We must always follow the submission guidelines no matter where we submit our work or most likely, we won't get published.

Many of our members belong to a WWWW critique group. They can submit their work to their group before submitting it to Goldfinch. If you don't belong to a critique group, you can join one. Our VP Membership, Megha Malhotra is always happy to help members find a group.

You will receive notification of the dates when you can submit your work to Goldfinch 2023-2024 and more information about Joanne's program.

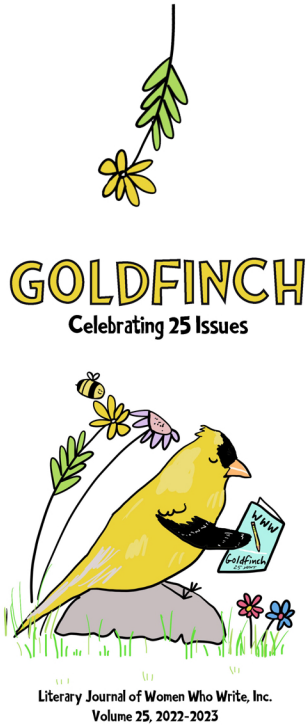
We look forward to reading your work.

Ginger Pate



WWW's 25th *Goldfinch* Issue and Launch

The sun came out of hiding on June 24 as Women Who Write celebrated our 25th *Goldfinch* issue. This milestone occasion was held in the Chase Room at the Madison Library and was well attended by members and non-members alike. Those who had their pieces published in this year's *Goldfinch* had the audience mesmerized with their beautiful, moving, and often humorous work. As with all our events, it was a supportive and energizing experience. The Open Mic portion after the member readings was a great way to keep the fun going. *Goldfinch* Editor Donna Piken ended the event with a wonderful reading about the first time she got published in *Goldfinch*. It was simple, from the heart and inspiring. Ginger Pate, WWW President, encouraged everyone, attending or otherwise, to submit to *Goldfinch* next year. It is a cherished literary magazine of WWW that contains gems one after the other. What a treat to be surrounded by such talented writers and readers.



Copies of *Goldfinch* are available for purchase at womenwhowrite.org/goldfinch for \$10 each.

WWW's Third Open Mic

On March 23, Cafe Metro in Denville was bursting at the seams with writers, readers and an enthusiastic audience. Surrounded by eye-catching nature wall art and a refreshments table laden with wine, desserts and healthy snacks, the white tableclothed tables were filled with more than 50 people. After an inspiring introduction by WWW President Ginger Pate, readers began to share their heartfelt works of poetry, prose, memoirs, historical fiction and samples from working manuscripts. Each reader had up to 4 minutes and almost all took advantage of that length. Passages covered various topics and emotions but all were heartfelt and beautifully written and presented.

Throughout the afternoon, gift basket prizes were handed out to lucky winners. Local businesses such as Denville Liquors, Urban Muse and Zebulon 51 were very generous in their donations. My favorite prize was the bag containing one of Ginger's picture books that went to a lucky new grandfather. VPs Dana Punzo and Prachi Jain put together a very memorable, enjoyable and inspirational event.

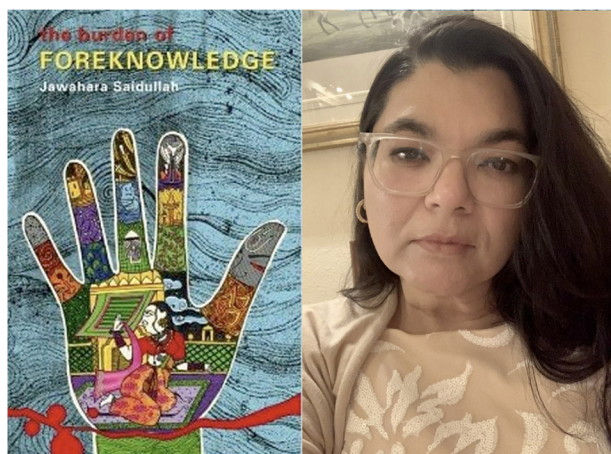
WWW's Open Mic events are increasing in popularity: in fact, due to space restrictions, registration had to be closed. So, sharpen up your pencils, maybe start practicing in front of the mirror, and get ready for our next Open Mic on September 9, from 2-4 at the Martinsville Community Center. It's sure to be a smashing success.



Published Author Jawahar Saidullah, Zoom Book Discussion

On May 21, Jawahara Saidullah discussed her historical fiction book, *The Burden of Foreknowledge*, as well as her writing process and upcoming books. In the story, Nadee travels from her flood-ravaged Indian village of Zameerpur to the burning ghats of Kashi, the courts of Agra and then to the city of dreams, Sikri where her destiny is fulfilled. Jawahara spoke of her intention of a dream-like story and prose, where reality and fantasy blend, inspired by the dreams that are tied to Fatehpur-Sikri. The idea for the book came from what happens at the end... and she then worked backwards. Attendees spoke of her beautiful and poetic writing and the compelling journey/story.

Jawahara talked about how she approaches writing and encouraged everyone to follow the path that works best for them. Jawahara, who is currently living in Germany with her family, shared how motherhood inspired her to write her next book, a nonfiction memoir on the Warrior Queens. Also available later this year is her fictional book, *Where the Rivers Meet*. She provided insight into working with multiple agents and publishers and of her lifelong love of writing. Jawahara is excited about her podcast called *Kissa: A Story Podcast*, a fun and new way to tell her stories. Her books are available on Amazon and at bookstores.



Take the Guesswork Out of Submitting to the *Goldfinch* Literary Journal

by Joanne Flynn Black

Do you find yourself saying, “Maybe next year I’ll submit to *Goldfinch*.” But then you’re at the deadline doubting your labor of love and not hitting the submit button? We are here to help! Three former Editors-in-Chief of *Goldfinch*, Joanne Flynn Black, Mary ann Mosa and Donna Piken, will have a session to discuss ways to be more successful with submissions to *Goldfinch*. They will talk about the submission process and what they have seen over the years. Including:

- *The guidelines
- *How to submit
- *The judging process
- *The most common mistakes and how to avoid them
- *Why you should submit

There will be a question and answer period, so come with your questions. Emails will be sent out with the date and more details. It will be recorded, so if you are unable to make the date you can view the recording. Watch your email for the link to join.

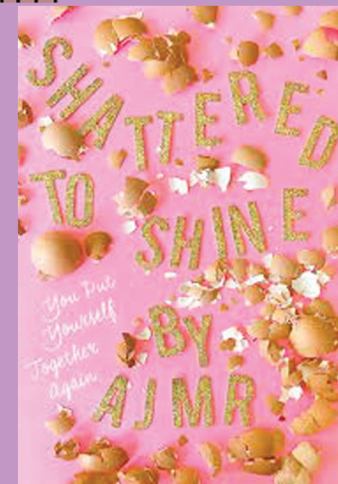
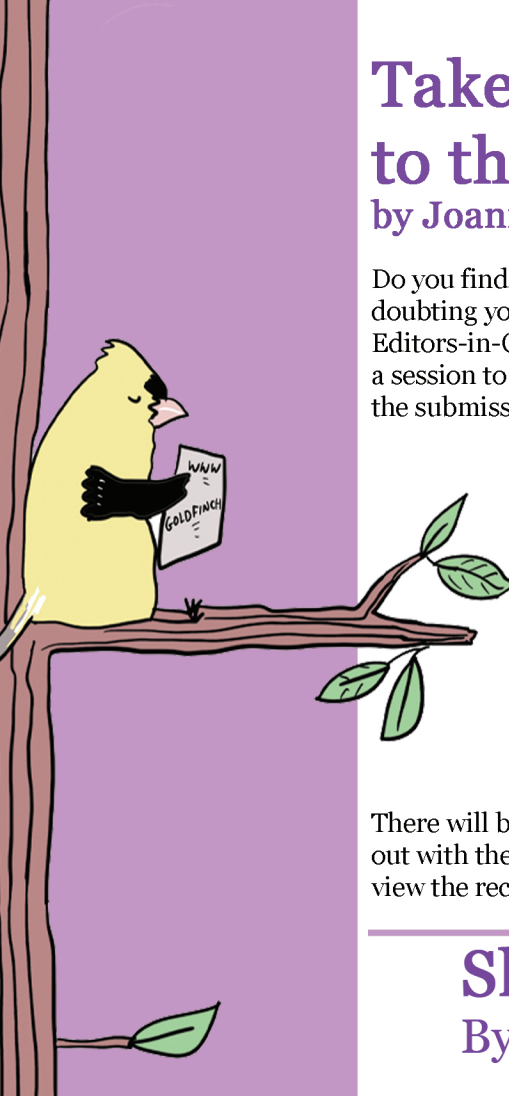
Shattered to Shine By Abigail Morrissey Riordan

On New Year’s Eve, January 2016, Women Who Write member Abigail Morrissey Riordan slid off the top of a banister. She fell backwards and landed on her left elbow — the bone broke through the skin. This fall left Abigail physically and mentally broken. She was disabled for six months and unable to continue working as a pediatric nurse. Her accident and frustration with the western medical system led her on a quest to heal her body, mind and spirit.

In 2020 she wanted to share all that she learned and she started writing a book about her journey in hopes to help someone else if they had a “fall” and still felt broken after the doctors “fixed them.” Her book *Shattered to Shine: You Put Yourself Together Again* is all about her journey and was published in January 2023. It guides you on what to do after a life-altering “fall.” You will identify what led to the fall and learn to reclaim agency in your life. She urges readers to keep at it and reminds them they are not alone. The book includes:

- *Reflection questions to connect you to your emotions and fall.
- *Meditations and practices and ways to integrate big feelings within yourself.
- *Guides on how to say no, set boundaries and tips for prioritizing rest and healing.
- *Reference guide to alternative practices, healers and holistic modalities.

If you are ready to take ownership of your life, and you desire to heal from your fall, then this book is for you. Now Abigail is a yoga teacher, postpartum doula, RN and author. She is the owner of Set on Shine Wellness, which empowers mothers and children to heal themselves.



“Samuel Squirrel and the Seed Branch”: From Creation to Publication

By Laura Daniels

In May 2021, I spent lots of time watching my birdfeeder. An athletic male squirrel, stronger than any I'd seen before, found my feeder and entertained me with his calisthenics. He hung by one toe and pulled himself up and down to get seeds. I took photos to document his antics.

I began referring to this rugged he-man squirrel as Samuel Squirrel. He inspired “Samuel Squirrel and the Seed Branch” and made me wonder, "What would happen if the other squirrels, who were not as strong as Samuel, needed help reaching the feeder (the seed branch in squirrel-speak)?"

I had a story idea and went online to learn more about squirrels. I also needed to learn how to write a children’s story. I attended workshops through Journey to KidLit, Picture Book Summit, and Highlights Foundation. These workshops taught me how to structure a preschooler book, the acceptable word count, and where illustrations would fit in. I also read current children's books for the 2 to 6 age group.

Once I had a first draft, it was time for the WWW writing groups. I submitted the draft and then revisions to the multi-genre and the children's writing groups. The feedback received helped me rethink word choices and line breaks.

It took over a year to get “Samuel Squirrel and the Seed Branch” ready for publication. The final book had 428 words and 63 lines of short text.

I found three publishers that were a good fit. On September 17, 2022, I sent the book to: *Cricket Children Magazine* (for ages 3 to 6), *Humpty Dumpty* (for ages 2 to 6), and *Smarty Pants Mag for Kids* (for preschoolers).

On September 19, 2022, “Samuel Squirrel and the Seed Branch” was accepted by *Smarty Pants Mag for Kids* Editor Sandra Muncaster. Soon after being accepted, I was emailed an e-proof of the animated story narrated with music and sound effects. The online story would be both written and spoken.

I worked with Sandra to edit the story before going live on September 22, 2022. She wrote to me, “This doesn't usually happen so fast, but your timing was perfect for submission.” As with many writing projects, no money was exchanged. It was done as a work of love.



This photo taken by Laura Daniels was the inspiration for her story.

https://smartypantsmagazineforkids.com/2022/09/25/audio-story-samuel-squirrel/?fbclid=IwAR1GoLcjVqVtdcmim_nEoeuBqrsBi6VrfNga9UE3GkW9DXDRVZSO551CH_A

Copy and paste to hear audio story!!! ↗

WWW's Standing Rules

Standing rules help organizations administer operations under the provisions of their bylaws. An addition (in italics) to WWW's bylaws under Section 6b, was recently approved by the WWW Board, and it now reads as follows:

Non-members may attend meetings of critique groups up to two times, even a closed group, without membership before electing to become members of WWW. After the second meeting, the person has to join WWW to continue receiving benefits of WWW. *If a group is unable to meet with a potential member, a member from the existing group will volunteer to help facilitate the starting of the new group.*

If a member is interested in joining a group that has the maximum amount of members and it is not possible for her to sit in on 2 meetings, she will instead receive guidance and help in setting up the new group. This support will help ensure the new group gets off to a great start.

WWW's bylaws and standing rules can be found at www.womenwhowrite.org as well as a list of the many critique groups members are able to join.

Meet our Current WWW Board Members



From left to right: Kim Crumrine (Writers' Notes), Lisa Napolitan (Secretary), Donna Piken (*Goldfinch* Editor 2022-2023), Mary ann Mosa (Trustee-At-Large)

From left to right: Megha Maholta (VP Membership), Joan Freling (Trustee-at-Large), Prachi Jain (VP Programs), Ginger Pate (President), Dana Faulkner Punzo (VP Programs), Lucy Orfan (Caring+Sunshine), Joanne Flynn Black (Technical Support), Pat Weisner (Treasurer)

Roots of the Essay and How Mine Emerged

by Diane Masucci

The word “essay” originates from the old French word *essai* or trial; the verb comes from *assay*, which is the process of testing a metal or ore to establish its quality. Writers use the essay form to instruct, record personal experiences, or just try to capture the nugget of something. It’s a way to test out ideas, like metal testing, and push them out into the world.

First you need an idea for an essay, which is probably the hardest part to decide. What is it you’re trying to argue? In an essay, the writer is exploring an idea and needs to provide evidence to that idea.

Essays are written in prose because that’s what readers are accustomed to. Shakespeare, for example, might have been trying to persuade the audience that it’s not smart to borrow money from people (“Neither a borrower nor a lender be”) but he writes it into dialogue to be performed by an actor in *Hamlet*. A poet might write rhymes or prose poetry to accomplish the same goal. A fiction writer might create a character who, through dialogue or action, persuades the reader that one should never loan money to an old buddy. But fiction is just that; it’s a way to get the reader to think about and empathize with the character, but it’s really a product of the writer’s imagination. It’s not an essay. It’s not reporting on currently accepted facts.

Modern day essays are usually in prose form with an introduction and a middle, or body of arguments written into sentences that form paragraphs and finally reach a conclusion. An essayist must research and verify the facts presented. Dates, times, places and spelling need fact-checking or the essay will not succeed.

My latest essay, “*Safe schools, stores, streets: just a pipe dream?*” (<https://montclairlocal.news/safe-schools-stores-streets-just-a-pipe-dream-town-square/>) emerged over the course of months in which I wrestled with my inability to process violence I heard of, read about or personally experienced. A close friend died suddenly last year. A local synagogue was firebombed. Police killed a black skateboarder in Memphis. Three students at my college campus were randomly shot and my cousin’s granddaughter, an EMT, was first on the scene to declare the first victim dead. Then a gunman in Buffalo killed 10 grocery shoppers in a racist attack. Then the elementary school slaughter of 19 kids and two teachers at Uvalde. Then the Club Q massacre of five in Colorado. I needed a scorecard to keep track. Or should I? Daily the list grew, seemingly from every walk of life. Could I distract myself enough with Wordle or Tik Tok?

After attending the funeral of an elderly uncle, my granddaughter, age 6, corrected me when I said he had died. “Passed” she suggested was a better word. It’s a softer word, giving rise, perhaps, to people floating through fluffy clouds to heaven or into the wild universe...people in hospice are now said to be “transitioning.” Many spiritual traditions teach us ways to deal with death and our own mortality. All healthy.

But hearing a child describe death as “passed” startled me. “Passed” felt appropriate to describe deaths that were anticipated or expected. I started to wonder if our language was being whitewashed to distract us from reality? Did anybody else feel this way or was I just alone in my own little world?

I started writing. Writing is my way of doodling around with ideas. Often those ideas end up in the trash but every once in a while, if I follow the thread, I find the facts open me up to see things in a different way. A good essay, like a good teacher or explorer, will hopefully open the eyes of the reader.

I often turn to writing to process my feelings. The first time I recall doing this was when I wrote a letter to God when I was 8. In it, I asked God to please help my parents figure out how to stay married as they seemed to be having a lot of fights. No, I never showed it to them but it helped my childhood self understand why I was feeling so sad.

With this essay, death loomed large in my mind. I became more keenly aware of my own mortality having survived cancer, but I'm 72 and know that life is limited. At my age, I expect death, disease, disfigurement to find me soon enough. But I'm old. It's expected. What I was having trouble processing was how random acts of violence, seemingly increasing, were adversely impacting vulnerable young, middle-aged and old people in locations that once seemed safe. What was causing it? It started to feel like the tables were turned, the game was rigged. It seemed, in this game of life, terribly unfair.

I didn't know.

I nervously read it to my writing group on zoom. Their thumbs up response encouraged me so I sent it to *The New York Times*. It was rejected. I sent it to my local newspaper where I had shared another essay last year. Every publication has, under its masthead, a list of people usually beginning with the publisher, editors, writers/contributors, editorial departments. I attached my essay and forwarded it to the e-mail of the managing editor, where, within two weeks, it was published.

I was elated to finally find an audience.

To pitch your work, you need to think about the audience. If, for example, you're writing an essay about your local traffic problems, it's best to target the publications (either online or in print) that will already have an audience whose readers travel on those local streets you're writing about. If you're writing about something like healthcare that affects everyone in the country, you might try pitching your essay to a national publication like *The Wall Street Journal* or *USA Today*. Study the mastheads of each publication to see who the editor is. Many publications will have e-mails set up online.

The Montclair Times published my essay in their op-ed section as a guest writer. I've worked at three newspapers but this is the only one, supported as a non-profit like National Public Radio, that has survived through public support. I believe it's really important to support your local or regional newspaper outlet so they can hire reporters to help you understand your local community. It's a forum for people from all walks of life and political persuasions to write letters, challenge authority, explore their neighborhoods and yes, help to preserve our democracy. I urge you to both write for and subscribe to your local news organizations. I know I'm just one voice but I hope I'm contributing to the conversation.

It's a good feeling to see your work in print. I think I tapped into grief and fears others might be feeling.

I know I'm only a drop in the bucket. But it has gotten people to tell me their stories and fears about violence.

At least we're talking.

From the Editor:

What fun to have the opportunity to work on Writers' Notes. I am grateful to former WN Editor Maria Dewaik and WWW President Ginger Pate for their support and guidance. And a special thanks to Bernice Bellouny for her editing of this newsletter.

As an illustrator, I couldn't help adding a few drawings, which I hope complement the interesting and helpful articles members submitted. If you would like to write about one of your success stories or a relevant topic, please email me at WritersNotes@WomenWhoWrite.org I will be delighted to discuss how your idea might fit into one of our issues.

I've been a member of Women Who Write for only two years, but as I often say, I can't imagine how I got along without all of you! It's been a pleasure getting to know everyone, and as editor of WR, I got to meet and work with even more members. I feel so lucky!

Kim Crumrine

