



WRITERS' CONFERENCE PROGRAM

October 21, 2023

REGISTRATION and Light Breakfast: 9:00 – 9:45 am

NOTE: First Pages drop-off table is located next to the registration table.

WELCOME: 9:45 am

MORNING KEYNOTE: 10:00 – 10:50

Lessons From a Writing Life by Author Mally Becker

How letting go of rigid plans led one mid-life writer to a three-book contract. We all crave certainty, especially after the past several years. But we limit our creativity and our own potential when we rigidly define ourselves by our past decisions or by restrictive goal-setting. Our writing needs room to grow in ways we may not have anticipated. As writers, we need to grant ourselves the same grace ... to say “yes” to unexpected opportunities, to view a decision to change direction in our stories or lives as growth (and not failure), and to allow ourselves to enjoy the process of writing.

SESSION A: 11:00 – 11:50

How to Pitch Your Book to a Literary Agent by Agent Eric Smith

The process of finding a literary agent can be competitive but determination, professionalism, and a well-crafted pitch can increase your chances of success. Join Eric Smith as he prepares you on how to create the perfect pitch, as well as query tips, to guide you on your journey to becoming a published author.

Querying from Start to Finish by Agent Bridget Smith

How to write a query letter that grabs an agent's attention and makes it all the way to the back of the book, with examples written by authors, agents, and editors.

Circle of Associates: A Poetry and Memoir Workshop by Poet BJ Ward

Much emphasis in contemporary writing workshops is placed on “writing until you discover something you didn’t know you knew.” It’s terrific advice, but how does one do that? One path to consider is starting with an object and writing outward (as opposed to the inward-gazing of many poems with first-person narrators).

Examples of this compositional strategy can be found in poems by Yehuda Amichai, Tracy K. Smith, Yusef Komunyakaa, and Thomas Lux, among others. We will look at these poems, then launch into our writing activity. This is a prompt-based, generative workshop.

SESSION B: 12:00 – 12:50

First Pages - Children’s

Women Who Write VP of Membership Megha Malhotra reads submissions by attendees who write for children (up to YA) to our expert faculty, Publisher Sharona Wilhelm and Agent Eric Smith.

NOTE: If you sign up for either First Page Session please see below.

So Your Agent is 'On Submission'—What Does That Mean?

by Agent Roma Panganiban

How do agents develop a sub list and decide which publishers, imprints, and editors are the right fit for your book? What does a 'submission letter' to an editor actually look like? When does an editor get permission to say the magic words: "I'm prepared to offer an advance of \$\$\$"? And where do you, the author, fit into all of this? Pitches, P&Ls, pre-empts, and more—there's a lot to learn, but it'll be great to know! Come ready with your questions for a robust Q&A during this rare peek into an agent's world.

The Time-Traveler’s Strife: A Poetry Workshop by Poet BJ Ward

Not everyone wishes s/he could travel through time to change or address a particularly galling moment, but some of us do. In this workshop, we’ll give ourselves permission to do just that—and, hopefully, in the process, discover things we didn’t know we knew. Examples of this compositional strategy can be found in poems by Li-Young Lee, Sharon Olds, Philip Levine, and Stanley Kunitz, among others. We will look at these poems, then launch into our writing activity. This is a prompt-based, generative workshop.

LUNCH: 12:50 – 2:10 (on your own – explore lovely downtown Madison)

SESSION C 2:10 – 3:00

Pitch it to Me by Agent Eric Smith: - Join Eric Smith for an immersive live pitching program that promises an invaluable experience! Eri will personally review and critique members' pitches in real-time, offering insightful feedback, valuable lessons from the beginning to the final closing. You'll learn the art of crafting a compelling pitch that captivates your audience.

First Pages - Prose

Women Who Write Board member, Joan Freling reads submissions by attendees who write prose to our expert faculty, Agent Bridget Smith and Agent Roma Panganiban.

NOTE: If you sign up for either First Page Session please see below.

AFTERNOON KEYNOTE: 3:10 – 4:00

Where Does My Fiction Fit In? by Publisher Sharona Wilhelm:

Where does my fiction fit in? has become the sixty-four-thousand-dollar question in modern publishing. Before the age of self-publishing and small presses, the Big Six ruled, and “small” presses like Tor, Harlequin, and Kensington offered few alternatives, as they operate like the Big Six and require an agent to get in front of an editor. Now, with small and micro presses popping up almost every day, and the Big Six now the Big Five, and “small presses” like Harlequin being gobbled up by large presses like Harper Collins, even the most discerning of writers can get lost in the sea of good and sometimes not so good information. Sharona will touch upon the differences in small and large presses, and self-publishing, writing Middle Grade fiction, graphic novels, and diversity and Queer fiction. Time permitting, she will discuss the differences in freelance editors and editors in publishing houses.

CLOSING REMARKS, Prizes, and Refreshments: 4:00 – 4:20 pm

* FIRST PAGE SESSIONS

If you signed up for either selection of First Pages you need to do the following:

- **Bring four copies of a first page of a single manuscript** with you to the conference and place it in the designated bin upon arrival. It will be located near the entrance. As many First Pages as possible will be read aloud by a volunteer reader and two editors/agents will give their critiques. First Pages will be read in the order in which they are received.
- **It must be the very first page of your work,** not the first page of a later chapter. Do not put your name on the paper, but do include a title and indicate the genre (picture book, chapter book, middle grade, young adult, adult). Your manuscript must fit on a single sheet of paper (begin at the top of the page). If you submit a second page, only the first page will be read.
- **Formatting** - Use standard manuscript formatting—double spaced, 12-point Times New Roman or Courier font, one-inch margins all around, half-inch indents for each new paragraph, single column of text. You may include up to the first 23 printed lines (not sentences) of text from your manuscript.



CRITIQUE GUIDELINES

For Conference 2023

Please print out and keep handy to format your manuscript.

Total submission cannot be longer than 15 typewritten pages of a Fiction, Middle Grade or Young Adult novel, or of sample chapters of a non-fiction work or a Short Story. Complete Picture Book manuscript will count as one submission, even though it may contain fewer than 15 pages. If you would like to have a summary included, it must be part of the 15 pages. Poetry: one poem per critique.

1. Submissions must be typed double spaced on an 8½ x 11 white paper with 1” margins all around, in a Times New Roman, Courier or Garamond Font no smaller than 12 pt.
2. Please put your name, title of the work, genre (Fiction, YA, MG, PB, NF) and complete word count of your finished novel (if you have one) on the first page, your last name, and the title on all subsequent pages on the top lefthand corner of each page.
3. Please number all pages on the top righthand corner.

IMPORTANT: Send your submission as a **Word** document (.doc or .docx) to ConferenceCritique@WomenWhoWrite.org no later than September 20, 2023.

In the SUBJECT, please say 2023 PROSE (or POETRY or CHILDREN’S or SHORT STORY) CRITIQUE SUBMISSION so it won’t get lost in our mailboxes. We will confirm receipt within a couple of days. Regular mail submissions cannot be accepted.

Just some quick tips:

- Editors and agents notice things like misspelled words, or words that the computer has spell-checked incorrectly (use of *their* instead of *there*, or *to* instead of *two* or *too*.) So, before you hit that send button, please be sure to read over your work carefully and send in your very best.
- Please follow the formatting rules to show you are a professional (does not apply to poetry).
- Do not expect your editor or agent or author to accept your work for publication. A critique is exactly what the word means.
- Your editor or agent will tell you what they liked about it, but also what confused them or slowed them down or what they feel needs to be worked on. If you go in with that in mind, you will come out with some great professional advice on how to make your work better.