

Writers' Notes

The Newsletter of
Women Who Write, Inc.

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President's Message

Good news!! Andy Skurna, our webmaster, has agreed to take on the job of the Membership Directory, so we do not need a member to volunteer. The bad news for members (and it's really not that bad) is that Andy insists on a strict deadline for submitting your membership registration: *midnight, June 15*. The registration form will be online at www.WomenWhoWrite.org by May 1.



More good news!! When you renew your membership, your email address will be added into our new, still-private but better distribution email system, replacing the more complicated Yahoo group emails. After June 15, only members who renew will be receiving emails from WWW and it will be via the new system.

Happy Spring!

- Ginger Pate

Writing Resources: What We're Using Now

By Michelle Hollander

Most of the time, writing is a solitary endeavor, whether you write at home or in the middle of a crowded café. And while we may be alone with our thoughts and the blank page (even if a curious six-year-old is peering over your shoulder, as is often the case for me), many of us have learned that we have plenty of "writing company" in the form of various resources that aim to educate, inspire, guide, or entertain.

For this edition of *Writers' Notes*, I polled the WWW members to find out which resources you use and why. And while the response was modest (*come on, ladies, these online surveys are quick and fun, I promise!*), the results were still quite useful.

So, first, thanks to my fellow writers who took the survey. You represent a cross-section of genres, including poetry, adult fiction, children's/YA, and non-fiction/memoir, and you use a variety of resources to support your writing, from magazines and books about writing to websites/blogs to workshops, classes and conferences. More than any other resource, however, our intrepid respondents noted that they look to their critique groups (WWW and/or others) regularly for support.

Not surprisingly, some of us (myself included) enjoy mainstream writing publications, such as *Writer's Digest* and *Poets & Writers*, and one respondent was particularly keen on the benefits of the *New York Times Book Review* and other sections of the *New York Times*. *Romance Writers Report* was also mentioned, as was *Poetry*, with the following comment: "Poetry has been in print since 1912. Very difficult poems sometimes to decipher, however the essays are challenging and many times it leads me to do some research on a particular subject matter or inspires the beginning of a poem...".

Book recommendations ran the gamut: *On Writing* by Stephen King, *Writing the Breakout Novel* by Donald Maass, *Beautiful and Pointless: A Guide to Modern Poetry* by David Orr, *The True Secret of Writing: Connecting Life with Language* by Natalie Goldberg, and several others. One respondent didn't name a writing book, but rather,

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Mark Your Calendar

Goldfinch Launch Party will be held on Thursday, April 23 from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the Bernardsville Library, 1 Anderson Hill Road, Bernardsville. Readings by WWW members published in Goldfinch will be followed by an open mic sign-up at the event. Please feel free to bring guests!

Women Who Write's Fifth Annual Writers' Conference will be held on Saturday, October 24. This year, attendees will have more flexibility to choose which sessions to attend, and will also have more sessions from which to choose. More information to come.

New WWW Group Focuses on Thrills and Chills

Women Who Write is pleased to introduce a new genre-specific group that's more than a little "out there" (in the best possible way, of course). With the tentative title "*Spooky Ladies*" ("*Ghoulish Gals*" or "*Wizardly Women*" are also on the table), this group brings together members with a shared interest in writing science fiction, fantasy, thrillers, mystery, magical realism, paranormal and horror.

What started out conceptually as a one-time get-together to share ideas and get to know each other was so successful that about 15 members decided to form an ongoing group. Unlike most other WWW writing groups, this one will discuss a variety of topics rather than critique each other's work. For example, the March topic was novel outlining.

The group meets one Saturday a month at the New Providence Library, usually between 12:00 and 2:00 p.m., and some spots are still available. If you are interested in joining, please contact **Mary Olmsted** at knicks2000434@cs.com.

A Note from the Editor



Welcome to the on-the-cusp-of-spring edition of *Writers' Notes*. We've certainly endured a long, challenging winter in the Northeast. And while some of you may do your best work with Jack Frost at your side, I'm the sort of writer who draws energy from the warmer, longer days and inspiration from the flowering trees and singing birds. That said, I'm excited to write more in the coming months, and looking forward to using some of the resources I've learned about from our survey. I hope you find the information—and the sunshine—similarly motivating!

Writing Resources—continued from front page

listed several successful authors, such as Sue Grafton, Maya Angelou, and Jon Krakauer. Without a doubt, there's much to be learned *about* good writing, and also much to be learned *from* good writing.

Those of us who explore the Internet for information about different aspects of writing (or just to pass some time instead of actually writing) know that there's no shortage of online resources. *Writer's Digest* publishes a list of their favorites in their annual yearbook, and our own members mentioned a few blogs by name as well, including those written by Kathy Te-mean, Tara Lazar, and Jane Friedman.

And what makes a writing resource valuable? Sometimes it's a very practical consideration, such as "Something I can scan/read quickly!" and "if I can use it at the stage that I am currently at." But respondents also mentioned "skill, honesty," "solid, specific information, not just platitudes," and "Ideas for showing emotions, unusual vocabulary," all of which ring true for me.

Whatever resource works best for you, the very fact that so many are available (including the many critique groups WWW offers) is a wonderful reminder that we may write on our own, but we are part of a larger community, rich in experience and knowledge and eager to share.

Writers' Notes editor: Michelle Hollander

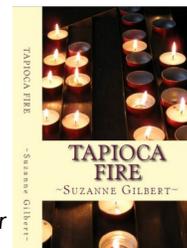
Copy editor: Marlaina Cockcroft

Success Stories



Dorothy Ryan had a poem accepted for *The Stillwater Review* Vol. 5 2015. She credits the acceptance in part to the Editor's Panel created by Maureen Haggerty for the WWW Conference's Poetry Track in September 2014.

Suzanne Gilbert's novel *Tapioca Fire* was selected in 2014 to be one of four books on the list for Concerned Parents for Adoption (CPFA). Suzanne was the keynote at a National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) luncheon, where she gave a reading and talk on *Tapioca Fire* and one of its themes, opposing human trafficking. She also participated in two recent book signings: one for *Tapioca Fire*, and the other for the anthology *Dear Wonderful You: Letters to Foster and Adopted Youth*, along with two dozen other contributors.



Amy Reade's latest novel, *The Ghosts of Peppernell Manor*, will be released by Kensington Publishing on April 28, 2015.

JoAnn D. Jackovino was hired to teach a story writing class last summer, but couldn't find one book that met the class requirements. Rather than settle for what was available, she decided to use her 20 years of experience teaching English to write her own book. *Elements of Story Writing: A Teacher's Resource and Student's Workbook* covers all the story writing elements, and also includes worksheets, quiz sections, literary definitions, and a note taking section for student use. The book can be purchased at: <https://www.createspace.com/4944364>.

Juanita Kirton will graduate from Goddard College in Vermont on June 28, 2015 with her MFA in Creative Writing/Poetry Track. This is Juanita's third Master's Degree (Special Ed and Ed.Admin), and she also earned a Ph.D. (Developmental Disabilities)



Marcia Ivans continues to support her new book of poetry, *Darkness on Sunny Days*, with readings at various venues. She participated in Girl Talk, a Celebration of Women's History Month at West Caldwell Library on March 28; hosted an open poetry reading at Bobby's Books as part of Poetry on Main in Boonton on April 3; and read at the Caldwell Library on April 9 as part of the Poetry Learning Project with Caldwell University students.



Deborah Gerrish read her poetry at the Holocaust Council of MetroWest in Whippany on February 18. As a featured North Jersey Literary Series poet, she read with Deborah La Veglia at Classic Quiche in Teaneck on March 28, and was one of 30 poets reading at Girl Talk at the West Caldwell Library, also on March 28.

Writing Workshops That Challenged and Inspired

Poetry with Gretna Wilkinson

Gretna Wilkinson and I go way back to the early 1990's when she was a member of Women Who Write and, like me, was part of the Murray Hill poetry group. That group was one of the first poetry genre coterie formed, since at that time, there was only mixed genre available to writers. And now, years later, Gretna has returned to us as a visiting Dodge Poet.



Our poetry workshop, *From Thought to Page: Writing That Matters*, was held at the New Providence Library on Saturday, February 28. Gretna engaged the poets in a variety of challenging writing activities and left participants spellbound with the striking and unique pieces they crafted.

Poets first tapped into the subconscious with a breathing exercise and guided instruction. Gretna read some poems by Collins, Wagoner, and Hirschfield. Following this, original member-poems were triggered by prompts using unusual objects Gretna pulled out of her poetry bag.

Emphasis was focused on “dropping a mouse” into the poem and stirring things up. In other words, Gretna directed us to disrupt the expectation and to write from this place of emotion, by holding onto the moment and to the “attitude.” The technique was very effective as writing took us to unexpected places. The bottom line was not to think; don't even think about thinking. The key guideline was, “Let the poem find you and surprise yourself.”

Many attendees expressed a desire to invite Gretna back again. Sounds like the perfect suggestion and another opportunity for poets to take pause, beckon their muse, and fertilize their creativity.

Prose with Chris Messineo

by Deborah Gerrish

The Women Who Write Prose Workshop, *Creating Unique and Compelling Characters*, was held at the NJ Film School in New Providence on Saturday, March 21. Chris Messineo, screen-writer and owner of the film school, led a prose workshop on character building that was interactive as well as inspiring.

Chris challenged participants with three writing activities that aid in problem-solving when the writer gets stuck. The exercise first focused on 11 questions regarding the “secrets” of your character. Responses helped shape the character's bio so as to create a connection.

Then the attendees worked on a collaborative exercise for creating the premise for the story. The Character-Goal-Obstacle framework helped to wire the writer's thinking differently since multiple attendees contributed. From there, we moved into crafting a “milestone monologue” for their specific character. Chris showed a clip from *American Beauty* that illustrated the epiphany-moment that transformed the character, delivering realism, intimacy, and credibility to the character's development.

These approaches to creating character provided triggers to launch the character profile without drafting straight biography and provided variation for shaping personality and voice in characters. It was a remarkable approach and a wonderful learning experience for all who attended.



WWW Winter Gathering

by Ann Frommer

Café Beethoven in Chatham was once again the setting for a warm Winter Gathering of WWW members on January 11. Thirty-one writers of mixed genres gathered to network, share writing experiences, and offer support while enjoying café owner Andy Copp's delicious brunch offerings. The cheerful European-style café's tiny tables topped by small bunches of red roses cast an inviting atmosphere for all manner of discussion, from serious idea exchanges to casual conversation.

Special thanks to Marcia Ivans, poet and WWW Board member, who coordinates this annual event.



Annual Coordinators' Meeting

by Amy Reade

The Women Who Write Annual Coordinators' Meeting was held on Saturday, October 19, 2014, in the New Providence Public Library. Guest speaker Ann Ordway, a lawyer and mental health professional who works at Fairleigh Dickinson University, addressed the coordinators regarding communication basics and how to address problems that may crop up during critique group meetings and other WWW events.

Member Events of Interest

Poetry & Pastries, an annual Open Poetry Reading, will be held on Tuesday, April 14 at Café Beethoven, 262 Main Street, Chatham at 7:00 p.m. Please contact Marcia Ivans, who has facilitated this event for 11 years, for more information: marciaivans@gmail.com.

Haiku Poets of the Garden State will hold a reading on Sunday, April 26 at 2:00 p.m. at the Summit Library, 75 Maple St., Summit. The event is free. Please contact Diane Lynch at dlynch92@comcast.net for more information, or visit the group's website at hpgs.weebly.com.

Deborah Gerrish will be reading poems on April 30 at the **College of Saint Elizabeth's program commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915**. The program includes featured speakers, the showing of the powerful film, AGHET, music, poetry, testimonials of survivors recorded in the 1980's, and Armenian food. The event is free and open to all.

Emerging Voices: Uncovering the Writer's Inner Light, a Jean Zipser Pahaquarry Foundation Women Writers' Retreat, hosted by Women Who Write, Blairstown, will be held August 1-2 at the Kirkridge Retreat Center, Bangor, PA. For information and registration, please contact Dr. Juanita Kirton at (570) 588-0653 or juanita.kirton@gmail.com

To avoid date conflicts, please contact Deborah Gerrish, Programs VP, if you are planning an event that will include WWW members.

Guidelines for Submitting to Writers' Notes

- Please submit in a Word document (cannot be read-only); 12-point Times New Roman or 10-pt Gill Sans MT (preferred).
- Please query before submitting, so we can determine length and be sure there is space for the article.
- Submissions are edited for length, grammar, etc. and will be formatted to the newsletter. Try to place the most important points of your piece in the first paragraph, journalistic style, since space may require us to make cuts.
- Success stories & events may be submitted at any time, without queries.
- By all means send pictures to accompany your submissions. Photos may be cropped.
- Deadlines for each issue are announced through Yahoo Groups.
- Submit to writersnotes@womenwhowrite.org



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