



Scribbles

California Writers Club – Central Coast Writers Branch

centralcoastwriters.org

August 2023

August 13, 2023, 1-3pm

CCW Summer Picnic!



Our annual summer picnic will take place in the backyard of one of our members. The address is 941 Via Mirada, Monterey. Please bring a dish to pass, plus anything you would like to drink. The club will supply paper goods, plastic cutlery, and water.

September 19, 2023

Finish your Book in Three Drafts

Stuart Horwitz



Have you ever asked yourself while writing, “How many drafts is this going to take?” It may seem like such a question couldn’t have an answer, but this session will propose that the answer is three, provided we approach each draft with the right spirit and take the right actions between drafts. The first draft, or messy draft, is all

about getting the material down. The second draft, or method draft, is about bringing the best parts up a level, and the third draft, or polished draft, is all about making it good.

Stuart Horwitz is a ghostwriter, independent editor, and founder of Book Architecture (www.bookarchitecture.com). He is the author of three acclaimed books on writing: *Blueprint Your Bestseller: Organize and Revise Any Manuscript with the Book Architecture Method*, *Book Architecture: How to Plot and Outline Without Using a Formula*, and *Finish Your Book in Three Drafts: How to Write a Book, Revise a Book, and Complete a Book While You Still Love It*.

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CCW President's Letter

By Sarah Pruitt

Welcome to August, which is the birthday month of many writers, but lucky for you, I'm just listing a few. Herman Melville wrote *Moby Dick*, and H.P. Lovecraft wrote horror stories. Both were very prolific despite economic pressures and personal challenges.

James Baldwin wrote essays, novels, plays, and poems about growing up in Harlem. Julio Cortázar, an Argentinian, was one of the founders of the Latin American boom—a literary movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Susan Collins wrote *The Hunger Games* about a dystopian world—a beloved series for many teenagers, adults, and two of my pre-teen nieces.

As I researched (on Wikipedia), the overall message about their lives was to keep writing. Melville lost two grown sons, Lovecraft's parents died in institutions for the mentally ill, and Baldwin struggled with racial inequality. Cortázar died too young of either leukemia or, more likely, AIDS from a blood transfusion. Collins published a five-book series called *The Underland Chronicles* before achieving best-seller status with *Hunger Games*.

In June, I attended the Cascade Christian Writers Conference and took a three-day workshop entitled *Deep, Deep, Deep POV*. To paraphrase my instructor, Linda Glaz: "The goal of a writer is to get your reader so *immersed* in the character's voice that the reader 'hears' the character telling the story."

To accomplish this, Ms. Glaz suggests doing away with filter words. Don't say, "I saw Antigone standing in the field." Say: "Antigone stood in the field." (By the way, Antigone was part of the Oedipus Rex menagerie, and no good came from her standing anywhere.)

Another suggestion was regarding dialogue tags. Ms. Glaz introduced this subject by stating, "Women don't purr, and men don't growl. I am sick of reading that in romance novels!" She got some pushback from one of the men in the audience who claimed, but sadly did not demonstrate, that he could growl. I agree with him because a policeman in front of San Francisco's Macy's growled at me once as a teenager. It scarred me for life. (Just kidding.) Ms. Glaz wanted tags to remain simple, as in, he said, they said, etc.

To establish the speaker's emotions, have a descriptive sentence that identifies who is talking and hopefully indicates the character's emotions: Madison stamped into the room. "I'm cleaning your house." (From chapter 14, page 93 of *Choose Your Fantasy*). It is evident that Madison is the one talking and will work off his temper by sweeping, dusting, polishing, and vacuuming. So much more productive than going for a jog (light romance) or beating a partner half to death (as in mysteries where the murder victim was an abusive spouse).

I don't recommend ANY of the above while writing your first draft, but they do make for stronger writing on second or third editing.

We do not have a regular CCW meeting in August. Instead we offer our annual picnic on

Sunday, August 13, 2023
from 1- 3pm

It will take place in the backyard of one of our members at: 941 Via Mirada, Monterey.



Please bring a dish to share, plus anything you would like to drink. The club will supply paper goods, plastic cutlery, and water. There will be some plugs available for crockpots—first come first served.

If you have a large ice chest, please bring it to help keep the drinks cold.

The house has a circular driveway. Please use this to drop off your dish but park on the street.

If you need a shorter distance to walk, there is a driveway to the RIGHT of the garage that leads to a 2-3 car parking space in the back.

NO Sunday Salon in August. We are looking forward to it in September.

Meanwhile,
See you at the picnic,

Sarah E. Pruitt
President
Central Coast Writers



How to “Hook” Readers

The function of a writing hook, according to author Mary Buckham, is to raise a question and elicit a response from readers that compels them to read just a little bit further. In other words, hooks are “breadcrumbs” that keep readers turning the pages of your book. Your challenge as a writer is to discover which hooks work for you, always keeping in mind the type of book you’re writing. She then identified ten universal hooks:

1. **Action/Danger** - Action that creates a sense of danger uses strong verbs and can involve a specific character or be inherent in a situation (such as defusing a bomb).
2. **Overpowering Emotion** - Simple emotion can transform into powerful emotion by adding only a few words. (*He was dying.* vs. *The teenage boy was dying alone.*)
3. **Surprising Situation** - The contrast between what is expected and what is revealed can surprise either the character or the reader.
4. **Evocative** - When the author’s voice is essentially the hook there must be a sense that “no one else could write it this way.” This type of hook comes naturally to some writers and will either appeal to or turn off readers. Since the writing style IS the hook, it must be sustained throughout the book.
5. **A Unique Character** - A character the average reader does not know or expect to see in a certain place or situation can be effective. A waitress in a diner is not as interesting as a waitress on a spaceship, for example.
6. **Foreshadowing** - This can be used with or without a warning, although including a warning will strengthen the hook. For example: *Watch where you’re going* (foreshadowing) or *the boogeyman will get you* (warning).
7. **Surprising/Shocking Dialogue** - The context of dialogue (either external or internal) can upend readers’ expectations. A nun who uses profanity is more interesting than a biker dude who does, for example.
8. **Totally Unexpected Event** - The juxtaposition of what is expected to happen vs. what actually happens can shock characters and/or readers. (This is essentially a surprising situation taken to the next level.)
9. **Questions Raised** - The easiest hook to use is one that prompts readers to ask questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why?). This hook often overlaps with other types.
10. **Humor** - Readers of certain genres expect humor, although it can be effective in any type of writing. “Humor revealed through external or internal dialogue can quickly create an empathetic bond with the reader,” Buckham said.



The placement of hooks is important. Editors evaluating your book for publication will look for them in the opening sentence, end of the opening paragraph, and end of the first page (16-17 lines into the story), Buckham said. For readers, hooks are most effective at the openings and endings of chapters and scenes. When writing a series, you should always include a hook close to the end of each book.

Although writers in the past certainly used hooks, perhaps unintentionally, it’s vital for writers of today to use them effectively as they’re competing with so many other forms of entertainment. Examine the hooks used by debut novelists, Buckham suggested, for good examples. “The writer who’s able to understand the power and versatility of all ten hooks can powerfully engage their reader.”

Announcements

New CCW members

Please welcome new members Olivia Brooks, Jennifer Coté, Rachel Goss, Pete Ingle, Elisa Schmit, and Kelly Yarborough, Michael Berry, and Carrie Wilson and; welcome back former member Shanna Iudice.



Member Congratulations

Member **Scotty Cornfield**'s newest book *Fast Fiction, Vol. 2: Man Vs. Machine* will be published on August 15th and is available for pre-order now on [Amazon](#). This latest installment still consists of 101-word stories (all based on prompts supplied by readers), but just to make it a bit more interesting, after writing the stories, Scotty fed the same prompt into AI system ChatGPT. Readers get a side-by-side comparison of who writes the best stories based on the same prompts.

On July 8, member **Michelle Smith-Johansen** participated in an event titled Creative Alchemy. The event showcased the works of four collaborative teams of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) writers and choreographers who came together and merged their ideas into a performance of dance accompanied by the spoken word, before a full audience in an art gallery setting. The event was followed by a question-and-answer session with the creative artists and was very well-received.

Have you published a book within the last month? Won a writing award? Please send information to csleeter@gmail.com.

Next Writers' Roundup

Saturday, September 23, 1:00—3:00 pm
Mary Smathers on Self-Publishing Basics

Volunteers for CCW Needed

We have several opportunities for members to become involved in the workings of Central Coast Writers. These are great opportunities to get to know other club members, and to make a contribution to the club itself. We need a new:

- **Scribbles Editor:** The *Scribbles* editor compiles material that other members write each month, lays out the document, and emails it to members. None of this is terribly time-consuming; most of the work takes place during the latter part of each month. For more information, contact Christine Sleeter (csleeter@gmail.com).
- **Webmaster:** The CCW Webmaster is a member of the club Executive Committee and of the CCW Webpage Design Task Force, tasked with making recommendations on updating the club webpage. The Webmaster is responsible for all aspects of running and maintaining the CCW website to include updating content (e.g., upcoming events, president's messages, speaker reports, regular columns) based on input provided by others. The Webmaster is responsible for communicating with the web host to maintain the account and resolve any access issues, and ensuring the club's domain name remains registered and licensed. Webhosting and domain name fees are paid by the CCW. Previous webpage experience is highly recommended, but a strong desire to help the CCW webpage remain fresh, timely, correct, and relevant is just as important. For more information, contact Gary Parker (CCWBranch.Treasurer@gmail.com).
- **Hospitality chair:** The Hospitality chair retrieves the box of supplies from the closet, checks people off on the sign-in sheet, gives them their name tags, welcomes guests, reminds people of the \$5 donation jar, then gathers up Hospitality supplies at the end of the meeting. For more information, contact Sarah Pruitt (Sep23@sbcglobal.net).

Each of these volunteers is also invited to participate in monthly Executive Committee meetings on Zoom.



“Better Over Time” Roger Mathews

Roger Mathews says he was horrible at English back in his early school days when he thought of spelling and grammar as “torture.” He didn’t even consider himself a writer until 2020 after the self-publishing industry had grown in popularity and newer technology enabled writers to improve their craft.

“I’ve had no prior experience in writing,” Roger says. “If it weren’t for the current technology, specifically predictive typing and grammar checkers, I wouldn’t be able to write at all.”

In thoughtful reflectance, Roger explains his take on the writing industry: “For a long time, to publish their work, writers needed to write a perfect book, or what some believe to be perfect, to pass the gatekeepers, editors, agents, and publishers,” he says. “Other artists, painters, sculptors, and such could start small and gradually put their works out in small venues. Self-publishing now allows writers that opportunity.”

Now in his second year of membership with CCW, Roger writes young adult fantasy/science fiction under the pen name, PB Fox, and he always concludes his stories with a happy ending. He uses Draft2Digital to distribute his books to major retailers such as Amazon, Apple, and Barnes and Noble, as well as library services in the U.S. and around the world. Roger came up with his pen name using “PB” for Pebble Beach and “Fox” as a derivative of his dog’s name, Foxy. “I thought it would be a fun thing to do. If it turns out that I’m terrible at writing, my relatives and friends won’t be scandalized.”

While he’s put five or six books up for sale, Roger is reluctant to refer to them as “published.” Although he eagerly embraces editorial innovations to his advantage, he’s yet to develop a website. “I don’t do social media of any kind,” he says.

A “semi-retired” senior citizen and Monterey Peninsula resident for 15 years, Roger plans to keep writing as long as he’s having fun doing it. He hopes to finish the second book of his prequel by this fall. “I don’t have the patience to work on a single book for 10-plus years,” he says. “I thought I would write what I can and hope that practice makes me, if not great, at least better over time.”

Michelle Smith’s articles have been published in a variety of magazines. Her website is www.theebonyquill.com.





CONTESTS AND OPEN SUBMISSIONS

The Val Wood Prize for Creative Writing 2023, The Hungry Tide

Deadline: Aug. 31, 2023 5pm BST (British Summer Time)

Entry Fee: Free

Website: <https://www.valwood.co.uk/val-wood-prize>

Prizes: **1st Prize:** £100 plus publication and a signed copy of *The Hungry Tide*, **2nd Prize:** a signed copy of *The Hungry Tide*, **3rd Prize:** a signed copy of *The Hungry Tide*

Guidelines: See website for Guidelines. Word Count: 1500 words. Contest wants entries that focus on the ebb and flow of the ocean and the rivers that lead to it, as the tide itself rolls in for the central focus of this year's competition. Contest is open to all writers worldwide. No poetry will be considered, only creative fiction. No genre restrictions.

Stories That Need To Be Told Anthology Contest

Deadline: August 9, 2023 Midnight PDT

Entry Fee: \$20 per entry, multiple entries allowed with fee per each entry.

Website: <http://www.tuliptreepub.com/contest.html>

Prizes: **Grand Prize:** \$1,000 and a 2-year (\$100) gift certificate to *Duotrope* literary magazine. **Five Additional Prizes:** \$200 will be given for stories that excel in the merits of Humor, Passion, Depth, and (any form of) Love. **Bonus Prize:** \$200 awarded in a wild card category, to be determined by the entries. Additionally, winners and Honorable Mentions will be published in, and receive a free copy of, the annual *Stories That Need to Be Told* anthology.

Guidelines: See website for Complete Guidelines. Word limit: 10,000 words. Judging will take place in two rounds. There is only one category: The Story. There is truth in any story, and the reason you choose to tell a particular story may be the most important story of all. Submissions should tell a story. It doesn't matter if you consider it fiction, nonfiction, or poetry—if it tells a story, it fits.

WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

Jane Edberg *The Craft of Writing, Workshops for Olli CSUMB*

Website: <https://csumbeeip.com/Olli/Fall2023/10/>

Workshop Location: Livestream on Zoom

Dates: Tuesdays, Oct. 3, 10, 17, 24

Time: 1:00 - 3:00pm

Fee: \$45 (4 sessions), sign up through Olli online, must be age 50 plus to attend.

Join noted local author and Olli instructor Jane Edberg, M.F.A., for a series of lectures focused on writing craft elements fundamental to great writing. You will discover how to find the heartbeat of your story, design an effective story arc, and incorporate takeaway and deep reflection. You'll receive strategies for effective dialogue, interesting ways to show place, setting and time, as well as how to structure your words for clarity and dynamic storytelling. Learn how to write and edit your story until it is powerful and memorable.



What are *you* reading now? What book has moved or engaged you in a special way? Share it with the other CCW members. All genres will be accepted. Please send your review to Barbara.siebeneick@gmail.com. Remember to add: Name of book, author, publisher, date of publication and your name. Tell us what the book is about (without giving away any spoilers), your reaction to it and why. This month's review is from *Wanda Sue Parrott*.

[The Life and Times of Rembrandt van Rijn](#), by Hendrik Willem Van Loon (Garden City Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1930; Copyright 1930 by Horace Liveright)

Interviewing Rembrandt in person wasn't possible, so the author of this historical novel combined his own prescient imagination with historic notes from his distant Dutch ancestor, Doctor Joannis "Jan" van Loon, to let Rembrandt speak from beyond the grave in which he was dumped, covered in lye, and buried as a pauper at age 63 in 1669.

Author Hendrik Willem van Loon opens this book with an introductory testimonial about his ancestor, Doctor Joannis "Jan" van Loon, from whom he drew his inspiration, as the doctor's great-great-grandson nine times removed:

An account of the last years and the death of one Rembrandt Harmenszoon Van Rijn, a painter and etcher of some renown, who lived and worked in Amsterdam and died of general neglect and diverse other unfortunate circumstances on the fourth of October of the year of Grace 1669 and who was attended in his afflictions by one Joannis Van Loon, Doctor Medicinae and Chirurgion in extraordinary who. . .found time to write down these personal recollections and which are now for the first time presented in 1930 in the town of Veere which is in Zeeland.

An outstanding feature in this book is this truncated version of Rembrandt's own autobiographical sketch about an afternoon in 1621 when Rembrandt, age fifteen, was working in his father's mill with his brother Cornelis:

...I have been convinced that every object in the world is surrounded by a substance (call it light or air or whatever you like) which somehow or other it must be possible to express in terms of light and shade and half a dozen primary colors. . . Anyone can learn to paint the things that are there. But to paint the things that one merely suspects to be there, while one can't possibly prove that they are there, that, my good Doctor, that is the sort of task that makes life interesting. And that is the sort of thing that makes other people afraid of me.

In my opinion, the painter who gave up orthodox religion in his quest to capture the living soul through paint was a prophet who exceeded the cliché: You can't tell a book by its cover.



“Isn’t it easier to write the second book?” they ask.

“No, it is not,” the author answers.

I’d love to hear what other authors have to say about this, but now that I’m nearing “the end” of my second novel (a sequel to the first), I admit I’ve been surprised how difficult it has been. Don’t get me wrong, I am not one of those authors who complains about writing being “so hard.” It may be challenging at times, but I truly love writing no matter its tasks and trials.

Here’s the thing: When I hear how much readers liked the first one, I realize I have to make sure the second one is as good as, or better than, the first. An author gets a much clearer picture of their audience *after* the first book is published and in readers’ hands. When readers say they’re waiting for the next one...or can’t wait...I don’t want to disappoint. I’ve had to remind myself (or have my characters remind me), their story can’t be forced. So, I sit with my laptop, fingers poised above the keys, waiting for the story to catch up, and hear that voice, “C’mon, c’mon...they’re waiting!”

Writers all experience their own “editor” voices in their heads when writing (oh, yes you do...), and now the readers’ voices are chiming in. It’s a challenge to keep the fingers tapping keys while trying to ignore the noise—and accept the constructive criticism that will, indeed, make the story better.

As I’m closing in on the last chapters, I feel the need to go back and read not only this book from the start, but also the first book. I want to make sure the books flow together—that the characters remain true to themselves even as they change and grow. How does time change life and landscape? Does every element of the plot have a reason? Does each scene move the story forward? I want the things readers loved in the first book to continue in the second, and I want to offer even more and answer any questions I created.

I’ve been listening to readers talk about their favorite authors. They loved the first book, the second was okay, but oh my, the fifth of the series—what happened? At the July CCW meeting, Mary Buckham reminded us that the average time it takes a writer to finish their first book is twelve years. Then they land a contract and have to write the next one in a year. Maybe we should give ‘em a break on what we think about that second book.

When author-publishing, there may be no set schedule, but you don’t want to lose your audience. The unhurried development of that first book is begging to be expedited this time around. When I click that publish button, it’s going to be just a little bit scarier than the first time—back when the publishing component was shiny and new. Now, things are expected. Will I meet those expectations? I don’t have a contract to adhere to, so I’ll take my time, talk things through with my characters, and let the readers be the judge.



Prompts challenge hesitant writers to start the process of writing, put down the germ seed, put “butt in chair,” and draw us into a world to be created from our minds. The column is meant to be a lectern, displaying writer’s notes. ***Please send your prompts to Scribbles % Michael Beck pregnev001@gmail.com.***

In June 2023, members heard Andrea Firth speak about Flash Fiction, which is 1000 words or fewer. On the Central Coast, we have the Monterey County Weekly’s annual 101-word challenge. Luckily for CCW, we have Scotty Cornfield, an author of a collection of 100-word stories. He is willing to share one story weekly with any CCW member. Just send your e-mail to scotty@scottycornfield.com. Here is one of his flash stories for your enjoyment.

He's Still Got It

The little superhero, deep in thought, sits at the breakfast table.

Time to save the world again, he thinks.

His mom’s voice interrupts the adventure. “Billy, finish your cereal or you’ll miss the bus.”

Twenty years later...

Alone in the employee break room, Billy, deep in thought, sips coffee.

The dealership’s in trouble, but if I break the record and sell ten cars today, we’re saved.

“Billy... Earth to Billy!. They need you on the showroom floor. Some kid just puked. Don’t get any on your new tie, Mr. Overdressed.”

Billy springs up and grabs his janitor’s cart.

Back to work.

The CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB is a 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit, dedicated to educating members and the public-at-large in the craft of writing and in the marketing of their work.

The Last Word Christine Sleeter



Point of View

I'm pretty good at sticking to a character's point of view as I write. I rarely head-hop or insert information the character wouldn't know. But I'm working on refining point of view by closing the distance between the character and the reader.

Writers commonly place some distance between character and reader with words like saw, noticed, or watched. For example:

Tamara noticed a strange-looking man coming around the corner.

In this sentence, the reader's attention is drawn to Tamara as she notices something. Contrast it with this:

Suddenly a strange-looking man came around the corner, walking rapidly in Tamara's direction.

Now your attention is drawn to what Tamara saw, with hints about what she was feeling. Much more vivid. As the reader, you are now looking at the world through Tamara's eyes rather than looking at Tamara.

As I edit the development of each main character in the novel I'm working on, I'm doing a lot of reworking of sentences to put readers in the characters' shoes, so to speak, rather than telling the reader about those shoes.

Christine

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Scribbles is published by: Central Coast Writers, Post Office Box 997, Pacific Grove, CA 93950

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