



Scribbles

California Writers Club – Central Coast Writers Branch

centralcoastwriters.org

July 2023

July 18, 2023

Writing Active Hooks—Or How Many Hooks are Enough?

Mary Buckham



Ready to learn what exactly a hook is, and what a hook isn't? The simplest way to avoid a sagging middle, and to keep a reader reading, is to understand how to continually build hooks into your writing. In this presentation, explore what hooks are and how they work, discover the 10 most common (universal) hooks and why they're so widely used.

USA Today bestselling author [Mary Buckham](#) creates lots of disorder in her two Urban Fantasy series—*Alex Noziak* and *Kelly McAllister*—as well as her co-authored young adult sci fi action-adventure series under the name Micah Caida. In her spare time, Mary writes writing craft books including *A Writer's Guide to Active Setting*, *Writing Active Hooks*, and *Break Into Fiction*® co-authored with Dianna Love.

August 13, 2023, 1-3pm

CCW Summer Picnic!



goods, plastic cutlery, and water.

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

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Welcome to July 2023, and I wish you a patriotic Fourth.

Our speaker this month, Mary Buckham, will be discussing literary hooks. A literary hook appears early in any tale and entices the reader to turn the page. One of my writing teachers described the first page of a book as prime real estate because that could be the only page people see before deciding whether or not to read farther.

"Alpha and Omega," a short story by Patricia Briggs, introduces her main character, her problem, and a snippet of the setting in the first two sentences: "The wind was chill and the cold froze the ends of her toes. One of the days she was going to break down and buy boots—if only she didn't need to eat."

Robin D. Owens in *Heart Thief* names the book's hero, the main villain, and the conflict in its first two sentences: "Ruis Elder stared out windows that faced the street, checking as he did several times a day that no strangers loitered nearby. No assassins or guardsmen hired by his uncle Bucus."

L. M. Montgomery in *A Tangled Web*, a collection of short stories, stated the unifying motivation of the whole collection on the first page. "A dozen stories have been told of the old Dark jug. This is the true one." NOTE: Dark is the surname of one of the families involved in the great struggle. I'm looking forward to hearing what Ms. Buckham has to say on the subject.

To change the subject, let me issue a correction of an error in my June President's letter, which was caught by none other than David Book. Josephine Baker was born on June 3, 1906 NOT June 8, 1867.

This month's meeting is on Tuesday, July 18. As I mentioned above the speaker, Mary Buckham, will be describing *Writing Active Hooks--or How Many Hooks Are Enough?* We will be meeting at the Center for Spiritual Awakening, 522 Central Avenue, Pacific Grove, CA. It is across the street from the Pacific Grove Public Library.

If you want to help set up, doors open at 5 p.m. Or, any time between 5:30 and 6:15 is an excellent time to arrive. As always, admission is free for members and guests. Don't forget—FREE pizza!

Let me remind you of other coming attractions:

- The Literary Salon meets the Sunday after our monthly meeting. This month it is Sunday, July 23 from 1-3 pm at Juice n' Java.
- The next Writers Round-up is on Saturday July 29 from 1-3 pm at The Little House in Jewel Park across the street from the Pacific Grove Public Library. Joyce Krieg will be sharing tips on writing mysteries, thrillers, and suspense.

Sarah E. Pruitt
President
Central Coast Writers



The Art of Flash Fiction

Flash, a story or essay of up to 1000 words, has become very popular, said writer Andrea Firth. The key elements of flash fiction are urgency, conflict, compressed time, close observation, and a twist. Flash fiction stories are complete stories with a beginning, middle, and end, she added. They are *not* part of a larger story, an edited-down short story, or an anecdote/vignette. Flash fiction has a distinct voice and its topics and themes are wide ranging. The tone of flash runs the gamut from somber to playful to contemplative, yet it always examines the human condition and—at times—the difficult unanswerable questions.

Flash needs to be “hot” from the first sentence, Firth said. Conflict must be immediate and characters must come to life quickly. A very basic formula for writing flash is: show a lot, tell a little, don’t explain. More specifically, flash features a singular moment in time, few characters, vivid scenes, and a pared-down plot that allows language to factor more prominently. Setting in flash is implied, descriptions are minimal and specific, and dialogue may or may not be included. To add urgency to a flash story, Andrea suggested using the present tense or opening with dialogue that introduces immediate conflict.

Firth then debunked some myths about flash fiction. The first, *smaller is easier*, implies that because flash is short it’s easier to write. The story is small, Firth asserted, because the writer has chosen to tell it that way. Indeed, as flash fiction writer Stolman put it, flash can be thought of as a literary dehydrator that eliminates all but what is most essential. The second myth, *readers have short attention spans*, is also untrue. In fact, flash requires a more sophisticated reader who pays close attention and is an active participant in the story. “Flash creates a symbiosis between the writer and reader,” Firth said, “both on and off the page.” The last myth, *bigger is better*, implies that flash is a less important form than the traditional short story. “Flash is its own genre,” Firth said, “and needs to be read and evaluated on its own terms.”

Flash fiction titles should carry meaning and be integral to the story. A good title clarifies, provides backstory or exposition, contains a revelation, adds emphasis, foreshadows, or ties the story beginning to the end. One effective method, Firth said, is to use the same word for the title and last word of the story, “one serving as an introduction and the other as an illumination.”

Firth suggested that writers interested in trying flash start with a six-word story. Choose a simple plot with a resolution, a small or pivotal moment; filter and leave in only the most informative words; and use punctuation to add context and connection. “Take the reader on a journey,” Firth said, “and leave them with an emotion.” Flash teaches brevity, urgency, compression, and discernment, she added. “Writing flash will make you a different and better writer.”

Announcements

New CCW members

Please welcome new members Elizabeth Latona, Suzan Briganti, Caria Martins Hilary LeFort, and Julie Tully; and returning members Jane Parks-McKay, Margret Maria Cordts, and Terry Mihok



Member Congratulations

On July 16, Sunday, at 1:00 pm, member **Frank R. Southers** will have a book signing at River House Books in the Crossroads Shopping Center in Carmel, for his new murder mystery, [*Persons of Interest*](#).

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

Sunday Salon

Sunday, July 23, 1:00—3:00 pm
Juice n' Java, 599 Lighthouse Ave., Pacific Grove

August Picnic

Our annual summer picnic will take place on August 13 (Sunday) in the backyard of one of our members. It's beautiful, isn't it?. 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.



Announcements (Cont.)

Next Writers Roundup

Joyce Krieg, on Crime Writing

Saturday, July 29, 1:00—3:00 pm

The Little House in Jewell Park, next to Pacific Grove Library, PG



Mysteries, thrillers, and suspense are perennial reader favorites. They are always right up there with romance and fantasy/sci-fi as the top fiction sellers on Amazon and in brick-and-mortar bookstores. Not only that, these page-turners offer a tried-and-true method for the unknown, unpublished writer to break into traditional publishing with a major house, or to find success as an indie author.

But how, exactly, do you write a whodunit? Join CCW's Joyce Krieg for inside secrets in our July Writers Round-up. "Even if you're not writing a mystery, there's something we mystery authors can offer to every fiction writer," Joyce points out. "Dramatic tension is at the heart of every compelling story, and that's what we mystery writers specialize in."

Joyce is the author of three mysteries published by St. Martin's Minotaur. Her first book, [Murder Off Mike](#), landed a three-book deal when she entered and won a contest sponsored by St. Martin's to find the best first mystery by an unpublished author. She is a long-time CCW member and a past president of our parent organization, California Writers Club.

Previous Writers Roundup

In May, Dennis Hamilton led a Writers Roundup focusing on poetry. This was very well-attended, and participants enjoyed the session so much that *Scribbles* was asked to include one of Dennis's poems.

At Point Lobos by Dennis Hamilton

The coast falls away into the ocean,
Just drops off the earth.
You can see the remains, the eroded chunks of the world,
islands, washed by the tides.
Now they are home to cormorants and seagulls and red-legged guillemots.
Now they are born again,
these rocks, bearing life.
Buried for eons,
pushed into the open by continents colliding,
mountains rising in slow motion.
It takes your breath away, this eternal patience.

Yesterday, in a quiet cove an egret stood,
still, on a submerged log
one leg up, swaying with the undulations,
patient as the rocks, waiting for the world to come to it,
waiting for the fish to offer its flesh,
waiting for the transubstantiation,
fish into egret,
sea into sky.
Eventually everything comes back to itself, changed, glorious.

Announcements (Cont.)

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.
- **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.

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



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.



“I’m Not Really a Writer”

Heather Lazar

Heather Lazare joined CCW back in 2014, but she may be our only member who’s not a writer. Okay—that’s not entirely true, but it’s the response you’ll get when you ask her how long she’s been a writer. “I’m actually an editor,” Heather says, adding that she’s “sort of” a writer because in 2021 she published the memoir of her husband’s great-grandfather, W.R. Holman of the famed Holman’s Department Store. Titled *My Life in Pacific Grove*, the memoir was gifted to Holman’s friends and family more than 40 years ago and is now published in guidance with fellow CCW members Joyce Krieg and Patricia Hamilton under Patricia’s imprint, Pacific Grove Books.

Heather’s career as a professional editor launched after she graduated with honors from UC San Diego with a major in Literatures in English. In 2002, she worked for the Sandra Dijkstra Literary Agency, and then cultivated her editing skills during an apprenticeship with Senior and Executive Random House editors in 2007. In 2011, she was hired as Senior Editor at Simon & Schuster; however, two years later, she moved her family from New York City to Pacific Grove where she started her own editorial and consulting business (heatherlazare.com).

Heather exclusively works with fiction, specializing in historical, women’s, and literary fiction as well as thrillers, mysteries, and contemporary romance. At her home office, she’s accompanied by her three-and-a-half-pound Teacup Yorkshire Terrier, Coco, adopted into the family in October. “Coco’s the best colleague! She lets me know when we need to get up and stretch and keeps me on a solid walking schedule.”

Though she may not consider herself a writer, Heather has plenty of professional-grade advice for writers eager to improve their craft, including the age-old mantra to read in the genre you’re writing. “What authors do you love?” she says. “What is the emotional heart of the story?” She also suggests dissecting an author’s work to see what makes it tick. “What beats are they hitting and when? What keeps you turning pages? What’s the main character’s story arc and why (or why not) is it satisfying in the end?”

As co-founder, Heather’s going into her ninth year hosting the annual Northern California Writers’ Retreat in Carmel Valley. “Writers from all over the country apply, and the talent is very high,” she says. “I only accept 18.”

To learn more about Northern California Writers’ Retreat held each spring, visit norcalwritersretreat.com.

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





CONTESTS AND OPEN SUBMISSIONS

The Cincinnati Review Robert and Adele Schiff Awards

Deadline: July 15, 2023 11:59 p.m. EDT

Entry Fee: \$20 (includes a one-year subscription to The Cincinnati Review)

Website: <https://www.cincinnatiareview.com/contests/robert-and-adele-schiff-awards/>

Prizes: 1st Prize: \$1000 each for one poem, one piece of fiction, and one piece of literary nonfiction, plus publication in the Review.

Guidelines: See website for Guidelines. Submit up to 8 pages of poetry, 40 pages of a piece of fiction, or 20 pages of a piece of literary nonfiction, per entry. Previously published manuscripts, work published in any form, will not be considered. No restrictions on form, style, or content.

Great Novelist 2023 Page One Prize

Deadline: Friday July 14, 2023 5 p.m. EST

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

Website: <https://gutsygreatnovelist.com/page-one-prize-submissions/>

Prizes: 1st Prize: \$1000, 2nd: \$500, 3rd: \$250

Judge: Joan Dempsey

Guidelines: See website for Complete Guidelines. *NO AI GENERATED OR AI ASSISTED ENTRIES ALLOWED.* Although work can't be submitted under pen names, those names can be published on the winning work, if requested, after win notification. Author names may not be included on the work itself as this is a blind judging contest. Submit only the first page of chapter one of your novel in progress. No word counts, page may end mid paragraph or mid-sentence.

The Scriptation Showcase Script Competition

Deadline: June 25, 2023, 11:59 PM EST

Entry Fee: \$64 for late entry before June 25th, \$74 for final entry by July 23rd

Website: <https://showcase.scriptation.com/>

Prizes: Grand Prize Gold for Best Overall Script \$1000 plus 1-year industry pro access, Silver Prize for Top Overall Teleplay, Screenplay and Short- \$500 plus 6 months industry pro access, Bronze Finalists -three in each category, get 3 months of industry pro access. All winners get 1 year of Subscription Showcase and a virtual meeting with pro TV/Film writers, Gold and Bronze will have a one-on-one meeting with a Film/TV Exec., Grand Prize Gold winner gets featured story and promotion

Guidelines: See website for Complete Guidelines. Read all guidelines.

WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

The July 2023 WC GLAWS Writers conferences both in person and online are postponed until further notice. Tony Todaro, the founder and organizer of these GLAWS events, has had a major stroke and is still in the hospital. Tony has selflessly helped hundreds of writers achieve their publishing dreams. Visit his [GoFundMe page](#) if you want to help him.



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 *Barbara Siebeneick*.

[Jackdaws](#) by Ken Follett, Penguin Books, 2006.

Ken Follett has been one of my favorite authors ever since I read *The Pillars of the Earth*. Whenever I find a new book of his, I snap it up and am never disappointed. *Jackdaws* is the story of a group of undercover British spies who assist the French Resistance in WWII. They are all members of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry or FANYS for short. They were also all women.

After an initial failed attempt by the Resistance to destroy a vital communications hub, a plan is hatched to send the FANYS in to finish the job. Under torture from the Gestapo, agents captured in the first attempt divulge enough information about the organization to allow the Germans to give false information back to the British. The head investigator for the Germans is Dieter Franck who is aware that the leader of the FANYS is named Flick and he will do anything to capture her and the information she has about the other Resistance groups.

Flick puts together a group of six women who plan to go into the hub as cleaners and destroy their ability to transmit information. After all, who pays attention to women? They can slip in places where men would be suspect. Unfortunately, Flick does not know that Franck is aware of her as the head of the underground and her contacts have been compromised.

The group reminded me of the movie, *The Dirty Dozen*, a hodgepodge of people drawn together to fight a common enemy. Women were pulled from prison, society and the general public for their expertise in certain elements of the mission. Unable to find a woman with radio experience, she even enlists a female impersonator who has the necessary qualifications. The sections of the book are divided by the six days they have to prepare, train and pull off the operation. They are under a time constraint because the Allies are planning their biggest invasion of the continent since the war began.

The characters, even the Germans, were written so well that the reader can feel their personal conflicts and dedication to their cause. Flick and her women want to end the war, the Germans want to capture, torture and kill those they see as enemies of the Reich. Will Flick and the FANYS succeed? Will Franck finally capture his sworn enemy, Flick? Read it and see. You won't be disappointed.



A question asked of authors: How do you know when it's finished? I'm never sure how to answer the question. For me, it's not a specific place, like when my editor says it's finished, or the outline ended there, or simply not having anything left to say. It's more of a "feeling." It might be easier to explain with shorter works, like poetry. When you get the sound and rhythm of the words and phrases right, it feels—magical. And for some reason, this time of year, it brings to mind—fireworks.

On the 4th of July, some thirty years ago, I was living in Gig Harbor, Washington. Besides writing a boating column, I taught sailing and ran charters. That afternoon I sailed some folks out into the bay to watch the Tacoma fireworks display. Taking people, whom I didn't know, out on the boat was always a bit stressful. Sailing sounds romantic, but the sailor always has to consider winds, tides, propensity to seasickness, and the like. A skipper frets and prepares, has a plan, and remains flexible.

That day nature cooperated beautifully. We sailed in calm winds, barbequed off the stern railing, enjoyed friendly conversation, and basked in the glow of summer on the water. As the sun settled into dusk, we donned sweaters and jackets—the cozy feeling of a summer day well spent, a slight burn-chill on our noses and cheeks. It felt right, but the day wasn't quite over yet.

As we awaited the holiday display to the south, the tideflats to the east began to glow. We watched in awe as a full moon rose slowly, innocent of its splendor. Perhaps everyone gasped, I know I did. If I'd known there would be a full moon, I could never have imagined just how dazzling it would be—gold-orange, and spreading along the full horizon as it bloomed whole. I didn't know a moon could look so big. This could have been an enchanted ending to a lovely day, but the fireworks had just begun. From the Tacoma shore, colors and lights exploded and sparkled overhead. We agreed, it was the most dynamic display we'd ever seen.

Once that spectacle concluded, a myriad of boat navigation lights swarmed the bay, heading home to various marinas. Those lights, like red, green, and white fireflies, mimicked what we had seen above, but also signaled the end of a dreamlike day. It was finished.

If that day had been a novel, the sailing, the barbecue, the conversation would have been the exposition leading to the rising action of that spectacular moon. The fireworks would have been the falling action, leading to the resolution—heading home amidst the dwindling sparkle of navigation lights.

In a story, when you get the words, the sentences, the chapters right, that's the feeling you're waiting for. The one after all the preparation, all the contemplation, all the worry and the wonder. That feeling that brings a smile to your lips. The one you get when you know it's complete, when it feels true and fitting to write "The End."



Mike Beck (pregnev001@gmail.com) here again, asking for you folks to share some of your favorite prompts. This column of *Scribbles* would love to share them if you wish.

For those present at the April meeting, Kevin Fisher-Paulson asked that we all write on the prompt 'Lilac.' Here is one rendition.

Lilac, six years old, wore dirty, scuffed pants, sock-less tennis shoes, her favorite shirt with its permanent Lilac streak across her back. What did she know?

.....
Today, she sat on the curb, mesmerized by the column of ants marching in step. Antennae bobbing, probing the environment, each ant's six feet stamped out a cadence in the dry gutter bed below the curb. Met with an impediment, the column found a way around, over, under, through, Lilac amazed at their industry.

.....
The girl wondered who led the column? Had he a map in his head or was this a scouting party. Did the ants wear tiny boots to muffle their footsteps? Did they know their way home as well?

.....
For Lilac, life was a series of questions, followed by more questions, each new answer rich and fulfilling through her senses. Today, she so wanted to join the line, march in time, the cadence to calm her mind and soothe her soul.

.....
When she lifted her gaze from the gutter, harsh screams and loud bangs invaded her awareness once more. Her mother wailed. The screen door slammed. Her half-drunk father stormed off. Headed back to a bar to soothe his soul and chill his scuffed knuckles. Lilac wincing. If only she were an ant.

.....
Would love to have members share their prompts. *Scribbles* is looking for your work. Mike Beck (pregnev001@gmail.com).

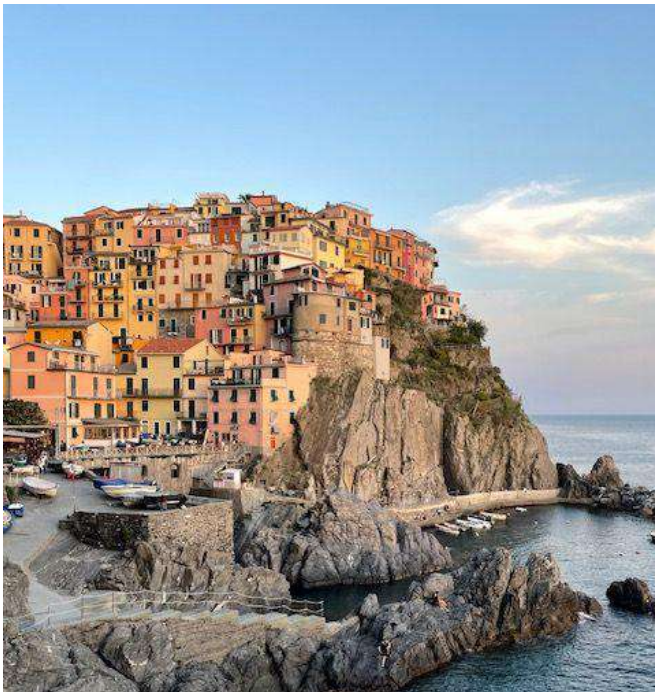
The Last Word
Christine Sleeter



Editing Scribbles

I've enjoyed editing *Scribbles* for the past few years, but am now looking for someone to take over the editorship. It's been a great way to get to know more people in the club, and I always feel some satisfaction when I send out the finished newsletter each month to all of you.

But I'm beginning to do more traveling, and editing *Scribbles* doesn't always fit my travel schedule. Imagine working on the newsletter from here, for instance:



That was me in May. You are receiving this issue from the [Empire Builder Amtrak train route](#) bound for Milwaukee. I'd love to help transition a new editor. Please contact me if you might be interested.

Christine (csleeter@gmail.com)

CCW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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