



# Scribbles

California Writers Club – Central Coast Writers Branch

[centralcoastwriters.org](http://centralcoastwriters.org)

June 2023

June 20, 2023

## In a Flash: The Art and Craft of the Short, Short Story

Andrea Firth



In this presentation, learn what flash fiction (and flash nonfiction) writing is and isn't, how it breaks the rules, and why and how flash shorts are "hot" from the first sentence. Discover the keys to the flash form--urgency, conflict, and a twist--and debunk myths about flash, such as it's easier to write and readers have short attention spans.

**Andrea A. Firth** is a writer, journalist, editor, and educator living in the San Francisco Bay Area. She is an Editor at [Brevity Blog](#) and the co-founder of [Diablo Writers' Workshop](#) where she teaches and provides editorial consulting. Read her

work at her [website](#) and find her on [Instagram](#).

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.

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## CCW President's Letter By Sarah Pruitt

Welcome to June 2023.

On June 8, 1867, Josephine Baker was born. She was a famous entertainer, a spy for France during World War II, and a supporter of American Civil Rights. Ms. Baker turned down leadership of the American Civil Rights movement after the death of Dr. King. (Her twelve children were only half-raised.)

Born in 1897, thirty years after Josephine, Frank Lloyd Wright became an influential mid-century architect. His son, John Wright, invented and patented Toy Cabin Construction, now known as Lincoln Logs.

Hattie McDaniel was born June 10, 1895. In 1940, she received an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress for her work in *Gone with the Wind*. She received the statue after making her way to the podium from a segregated table at the back of the Oscar dining room.

Born June 14, 1811, was Harriet Beecher Stowe. Sixth of eleven children, she was born into the abolitionist Beecher family. At the age of forty, her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published; it contributed to the slavery debate. Three hundred baby girls were named Eva in Boston alone that year. (If you haven't read the book, Shirley Temple played Eva in *Dimples*. I only saw my dad tear up three times. Once was during Shirley/Eva's death scene.)

This month's meeting is on Tuesday, June 20. The speaker will be Andrea Firth speaking on *In A Flash: The Art and Craft of the Short, Short Story*. Ms. Firth will be examining myths and rules of flash fiction. I can't wait to hear her. We meet at the Center for Spiritual Awakening, 522 Central Avenue, Pacific Grove. It is located 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!

As usual, Sunday Salon meets the Sunday after our monthly meeting. This month it is Sunday, June 25 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at Juice n' Java, b599 Lighthouse. Pacific Grove. There is no Writers Roundup this month.

Sarah E. Pruitt  
President  
Central Coast Writers



## Advance Internet Research for Writers

"I'm going to give you lots of lists," Geri Spieler informed the CCW crowd as she began her talk on Advanced Internet Research Skills. "And don't worry, I'll give them to you on a thumb drive!" Ms. Spieler, journalist, research expert and author of *Housewife Assassin: The Woman Who Attempted to Shoot Gerald Ford*, used examples from her own work to push writers to dig much deeper with their research than simply crafting one word Google searches.

She explained that the internet is composed of three areas: the Surface, which are open access information sites; the Deep Web, which are password protected sites; and the Dark Web, which requires special browsers to access but is not just for criminal activity as some people think. Less than 5% of the internet is on the Surface, Spieler said, therefore anyone doing serious research must understand the internet's structure, how to prepare search terms and how to use multiple search engines in the process.

"You wouldn't just use one book if you were doing library research, would you?" Spieler said. Spieler advocated that researchers must:

1. Define their questions carefully, keeping them simple. Be sure to frame the problem accurately. If the writer searches for Washington, the search engine doesn't understand whether to provide information on the US President, the state or Washington DC and the results may be garbled.
2. Be skeptical of everything. Ask yourself, who wrote this? Who is paying for the information? Is someone trying to sell me something? Always check for the source of the information. If it is not readily apparent, scroll down to the bottom of websites for sources, a help button, contact information, publication dates. If the data presented is not sourced, then you cannot accept it as accurate. This healthy skepticism includes comparing results from various sites, browsers and areas of the internet. Use Wikipedia sources as data checks. Watch out for plagiarism—both for yourself but also from others. Use sites that check for plagiarism.
3. Use multiple search engines. Spieler recommends a minimum of three search engines for everything. Google, Yahoo and Bing are for the Surface Web but there are many more out there that writers should be using.
4. Everything is NOT on the internet. Use libraries for the expensive databases, academic research and books not yet digitized or sources only on microfiche. Reference librarians can be terrific helpers in the research process.
5. Have solid organizational tools since you will be gathering research from many locations.

The many lists Spieler mentioned include the following listed below. If you are interested in obtaining her thumb drive of research tool lists, contact Geri at [gspieler@gmail.com](mailto:gspieler@gmail.com). Geri Spieler Lists:

- Applications to organize both primary and secondary sources
- Tools for note-taking
- Online resources for hiding your searches
- Common and uncommon search sites
- Government sites
- Specialty sites which you often can access without a password
- Databases usually accessed via a library or paid subscription
- Metasearch sites which have several databases within them
- Directories, from professional organizations, which hold multiple sources
- Deep Web search engines
- People search sites

# Announcements

## New CCW members

Please welcome new members Patrick O'Connor, Mr. Ramanda and Donna Drewes.



## Sunday Salon

Sunday, June 25, 1:00—3:00 pm  
Juice n' Java, 599 Lighthouse Ave., Pacific Grove

## Next Writers Roundup

Joyce Krieg, on Writing Mysteries  
Saturday, July 29, 1:00—3:00 pm  
The Little House in Jewell Park, next to Pacific Grove Library, PG

## Member Congratulations

Member **Nicki Ehrlich's** book *Ellis River* and Feather Bay Books (her imprint) won gold in the 35<sup>th</sup> annual [IBPA Benjamin Franklin Award](#)<sup>TM</sup> program in the category of The Bill Fisher Award for Best First Book (Fiction). *Ellis River* also received a Grand Prize Honorable Mention for Eric Hoffer Awards.

Member Christine Sleeter's novel *Family History in Black and White* was featured in a wonderful article in the [Monterey Herald](#).

Have you published a book within the last month? Won a writing award? Please send information to [csleeter@gmail.com](mailto:csleeter@gmail.com).

## Membership Renewal Ends this Month!

We at Central Coast Writers are in the middle of our annual membership renewal period, which runs through the **end of June**. If you have already renewed, thank you for hopping in early. Your karma has earned serious bonus points, and we wouldn't be surprised if someday you're reincarnated as perhaps a majestic humpback whale. If you haven't renewed yet there is plenty of time and several ways to get us that tax-deductible \$45.00 that will ensure your enshrinement in the halls of literary genius:

- You can pay your renewal online using our CCW website at <https://centralcoastwriters.org/ccw/membership-information/renewonly.htm>. This payment page gives you several options like PayPal, Venmo, or using a credit card.
- If you already received your renewal invoice in an email and are just waiting for the next major planetary alignment to occur (March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2080), you may want to click the "Pay now" button, follow the instructions, and get it crossed off your "to do" list. Who knows if it will still be tax-deductible 57 years from now?
- You can always send us a check made out to "Central Coast Branch CWC" and mail it to:  
Central Coast Writers Club  
PO Box 997  
Pacific Grove, CA 93950



# Announcements (Cont.)

## Scenes from Good Old Days



## August Picnic

Save the date and mark your calendar! The CCW annual August picnic will take place on Thursday, August 13. The location will be announced at a later date.



# Announcements (Cont.)

## Election of Officers

Election of officers for 2023-2024 will take place during the meeting on June 20. The offices that are up for election include President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The slate of nominations will be presented by the Nominating Committee (Nancy Middleton and Sharon Law Tucker). All of the current officers (Sarah Pruitt, Scotty Cornfield, Joyce Krieg, and Gary Parker) are running, but if anyone would like to make an additional nomination, please contact the nominating committee.

## A Very Successful May 18 Workshop

Several guest speakers at the CCW monthly meetings have mentioned that having an attractive and easy-to-navigate website is an important promotional tool for authors to have in their writing kitbags. Unfortunately, many writers view creating and maintaining a website as a mysterious undertaking requiring hiring a professional web designer (or at least your 15-year-old nephew who spends way too much time on the Internet). The reality is that it does not have to be all that hard to get a basic website up and running.

The CCW hosted a free author website workshop on May 18<sup>th</sup> at the Monterey Public Library to teach how to build a basic author website. Led by CCW member Tiffany Bierbaum, the workshop provided hands-on experience in creating basic individual websites for each attendee. The attendees had a wide range of technical experience, so the workshop focused on the basics. Many of the attendees left with a new confidence that they could establish an internet presence to promote their work.

The CCW has members with a wide range of subject matter expertise who volunteer to lead peer-led workshops on a variety of subjects. If you have a skill or experience you would like to share with fellow writers, contact the CCW at [info@centralcoastwriters.org](mailto:info@centralcoastwriters.org) with your idea.



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.

# Announcements (Cont.)

## Fall into Writing Nov. 17-20 on the Central Coast!

Come to the beautiful Central Coast of California this November for 4 days and nights of writing, walking the beach, and all things writerly (including eating!). Arrive Friday afternoon November 17th for a meet-and-greet, spend Saturday, Sunday, and Monday learning skills and techniques to improve your craft, and participate in critiquing in the afternoon. The rest of the time is for you to write, hang with other writers, and enjoy the beach steps outside the door to this beautiful retreat in Pajaro Dunes. The house is about thirty minutes from Monterey and Carmel in a quiet beachside community.

This cozy retreat welcomes 10 writers. There are 3 available bedrooms, if you'd like to stay at the house (though you can stay elsewhere if you desire).

Cost: To stay at the house, you would book all four nights (Friday-Monday, departing Tuesday morning). Includes breakfast, lunch, and snacks. Total: \$695. If you want to come and attend the day sessions only: \$495 (includes group and personalized instruction, lunch and, of course, coffee).

Reservations and Cancellation Policy: A \$50 non-refundable deposit is required to hold your space. Full payment is due by August 1. If you cancel after that date, you will only be refunded if your space can be subsequently booked (whether staying at the house or not).

For more information, email C. S. Lakin: [cslakin@gmail.com](mailto:cslakin@gmail.com)



C. S. Lakin is an award-winning author of more than 30 books, fiction and nonfiction, and works as a professional freelance copy editor and writing coach. She has worked with and taught more than 6,000 writers in 6 continents through mentoring, teaching, editing, and critiquing. Her online school, Writing for Life Workshops, offers video courses and master classes in writing craft, and her blog Live Write Thrive has more than 1 million words of instruction for writers.

## Call for Contributions to “One Universe to the Left” Anthology

Pointed ears. Pointed teeth. Eyes that glow with magic or electricity. Aliens, robots, magicians, eldritch beings disguised as trees; what else might you find in a world different from ours? You are invited to explore the possibilities in this year’s prose anthology, which has a theme of fantasy and science fiction. Submissions will be open from May 1st to June 30th. From the utterly fantastical to the merely strange, this year’s theme is out of this universe!

Send your fantasy or science fiction story for possible inclusion in the next Redwood Writers anthology. Open to all CWC members. For more information, see <https://redwoodwriters.org/2023-one-universe-to-the-left-anthology/> Nancy, Jack London Award.



## “Challenge your Assumptions”

### Edward Corpus

During high school, a visit to Edward Corpus’ English and creative writing class by author Frank Conroy, who’d recently published his memoir *Stop-Time* inspired Ed, to try his hand at writing. However, his formal visual arts education was launched, in part, by childhood “mystical experiences of alternate realities.”

In the years after graduating from Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art in New York where the movie *Fame* was filmed, Ed took several courses in visual arts, creative writing, and computer and information sciences. Later, he returned to school to study graphic design with an emphasis in animation. He earned a B.S. in Information Technology & Communication Design at CSUMB.

Ed worked various occupations, including as a bank fraud investigator and a licensed private investigator. As a young man, he even spent time in a cult. He describes other jobs he held as “soul-killing and menial.” However, all of these experiences contributed to the maturation of his world view and the pursuit of his lifetime passion of visual art wherein he attempts to “visually and literally describe the ineffable.”

A CCW member since July 2020, Ed coined the term “cultural subversive” to describe his take on the surreal magical realist genre in which he paints. “As a professional artist, I need to be able to speak and write about my art and what drives it. As my art often contains psychological and social justice themes, this is also reflected in my writing about art and the creative process.”

Now retired from what he hopes was his last day job as a graphic designer, Ed devotes himself full time to art and writing, spending a minimum of 28 to 30 hours at his craft each week. But his writing is subordinate to his practice as a visual artist. “I write in my artist studio where I integrate the two creative activities as best I’m able,” he says. “Tension always exists as to where I need to prioritize time.”

In 2021 Ed’s biographical essay *The Connie in the Mirror* won First Prize in the Lyzette Wanzer Intercultural Essay category of the Soul-Making Keats Competition. Currently, he’s rewriting several essays for a memoir that he illustrates graphic novel style as well as collaborating on a science fiction screenplay. He also maintains a blog on his website ([emc animator.com](http://emc animator.com)) and occasionally edits a subscription newsletter, *The Art of Dreams*.

“Be observant to the small details of human behavior,” Ed advises fellow creative types. “Continuously challenge your own assumptions, remain open to the new and seemingly bizarre, and read voraciously.”

*Michelle Smith’s articles have been published in a variety of magazines. Her website is [www.theebonyquill.com](http://www.theebonyquill.com).*







### CONTESTS AND OPEN SUBMISSIONS

#### **The Barbara Mandigo Kelly Peace Poetry Awards Sponsored by The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation**

**Deadline:** July 1, 2023

**Entry Fee:** \$15

**Website:** <https://peacecontests.org/>

**Prizes:** 1st Prize: Adult winner: \$1000 plus publication

**Guidelines:** See website for Complete Guidelines. The adult entry for this contest requires the entrant to put the words "Adult entry" on the cover page. Entry fee includes up to three unpublished poems of up to 30 lines each on the subject of peace. Read previous winners on site. Follow the rules carefully.

#### **The nycmidnight Flash Fiction Challenge**

**Deadline:** June 9, 2023

**Entry Fee:** \$67 entry deadline June 8, 2023, \$5 discount for tweeting or FB post about the event, plus a charitable donation to a cause of your choice.

**Website:** <https://www.nycmidnight.com/ffc#register>

**Prizes:** 1<sup>st</sup> Prize: \$6250, 2nd: \$2500, 3rd: \$1250, 4th: 750, 5th: \$500, 6th: \$300, 7th: \$250, 8th: \$225, 9th: \$200, 10th: \$175

**Guidelines:** See website for Complete Guidelines. This challenge starts at midnight EST and runs 48 hours for a series of creative 1000 word writing challenges. The subject will be assigned to each writer. Read the guidelines and make sure your inbox won't filter out the contest's emails for subject and start information.

#### **The Writer's Digest Annual Poetry Contest**

**Deadline:** June 5, 2023, 11:59 PM EST

**Entry Fee:** \$20 for first entry, \$15 for each additional entry

**Website:** <https://www.writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions/poetry-awards>

**Prizes:** 1<sup>st</sup> Prize: \$1000

**Guidelines:** See website for Complete Guidelines. Multiple entries accepted. Poems of 32 lines or fewer accepted. Read all guidelines.

### WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

#### ***Clever Magazine* Short Story Clinic with Andrea Caswell**

**Event Dates:** Virtual Clinic ongoing

**Location:** Monthly virtual or feedback in writing clinics.

**Fee:** \$100 for up to 2500 words, \$150 for up to 5000 words. \$50 add-ons for 30-minute zoom consultations or expedited 2-week turnaround on feedback.

**Website and Registration:** <https://www.clevermagazine.com/short-story-clinic/>

**Details:** Short Story Clinic is open to all fiction writers. 5000 words max. Include specific questions for feedback in your cover letter. If this clinic fills up, a new clinic will open the following month. *Clever Magazine* is Philadelphia's International Literary Magazine.

## What's on your Nightstand?

Barbara Siebeneick



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](mailto: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 *Christine Sleeter*.

[\*The Island of Missing Trees\*](#), Elif Shafak, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.

Elif Shafak is an award-winning British-Turkish novelist. Until a friend recommended this novel, I hadn't heard of her, but apparently she is a best-selling novelist in many countries around the world. *The Island of Missing Trees*, her most recent novel, was shortlisted for the Costa Award, RSL Ondaatje Prize, and Women's Prize for Fiction.

The novel tells the story of a Turkish-Greek love affair on Cyprus, and eventual marriage in the UK, which produces a Cypriot-British daughter who is trying to make sense of her life. Her parents had been torn apart during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Liaisons between Turks and Greeks had been forbidden, so the young couple met in secret. But when the war broke out and the young man (Kostas), who was of Greek descent, was in the UK due to his relatives' efforts to break him away from his Turkish lover (Defne), their relationship seemed to be finished.



A surprising and delightful character in the book is a fig tree that Kostas took with him from Cyprus to the UK. Through the fig tree, we learn a great deal about the history of Cyprus, the ethnic conflict there, and the emotions surrounding emigration from one's native land to another place far away. The fig tree is also able to communicate with animals, birds, and insects in its sphere, and shares stories she learns from them.

This was a delightful book that I recommend with enthusiasm. I loved the characters, and I gained a better sense of the Greek-Turkish ethnic conflict in Cyprus. I listened to the book on Audiobooks, and loved the two narrators, who captured the various characters, especially the fig tree, very well. My friends who read it rather than listening to it enjoyed the book just as much as I did.



Just back from the Independent Book Publishers Association conference in San Diego, I keep hearing a two-word answer that was given to so many of the questions asked there. Those two words? “It depends.” I thought I knew something about Indie Publishing, and I did, but I learned so much more. What’s the best way to publish a book? It depends.

There are three kinds of publishers: Traditional Publishers, Author/Publishers (self-published), and Hybrid Publishers. I knew that. You probably did, too.

We all know the “Big 5” traditional publishers—Penguin Random House, Hachette, Simon & Schuster, HarperCollins, and Macmillan. Each of these five major publishing houses contains many imprints. Great if you can get there—you’ll need an agent, a thick skin, and patience.

I balk at the term “self-published,” for a couple of reasons. One, because of the negative bias the term can instill in readers. We’ve all seen, and maybe read, a self-published book that lacks the editing and design standards of a well-published book. And two, because if you do it well, it’s not done by your “self.” There are editors and designers and beta readers and proofreaders, and well, the list goes on. I prefer the term *author-published*. It’s the author’s imprint yet somehow the term feels more professional. There’s a lot of homework involved to author-publish well. You’ll need, at the very least, an editor, a designer, and the acceptance that this is the business part of being an author.

Hybrid publishers cross the lines and fill the spaces between traditional publishers and author publishers. Some hybrid publishers are home to publishing professionals who have, for one reason or another, left the traditional publishing world. They may have known and fostered professional relationships with editors, designers, and distributors, contacts that could be out of reach for author publishers. But they sometimes care more about their authors than the Big 5, and provide support that can be helpful to authors who do not want to play the game alone.

What I saw at the conference were many variations on the theme of hybrid publishing. If writers seek out a hybrid publisher, they must do their homework. Most of them have a pay-to-play business plan. That is, authors pay up front for the hybrid services. But usually, the authors will get a much higher royalty cut than in traditional publishing. Part of what they’re paying for is marketing through the publishers’ advertising campaigns; they may also be paying for distribution, possibly with a major distributor. Not all hybrids offer these things, but in my humble opinion, a good one would. If all a hybrid can offer is what the authors could get themselves, why pay extra for that? But a respected hybrid publisher’s imprint, and major distribution, could help a book succeed. If you find a hybrid that fits you and your book, you’ll need to trust that extra money up front will be worth it.

Today’s publishing world is vast and changing at warp speed. Will you enjoy your publishing journey? It depends.



“With a Trowel not an Axe: The Gentler Way of Editing”, CCW’s speaker Kevin Fisher-Paulson showed that a good writer knows that editing is a part of the process, like gardening is to the growth of flowers. But some go at their gardening with indifference, and some go at it with an axe. He asked all present to write to the prompt, “Lilac.”

Prompts challenge hesitant speakers to start the process, put down the germ seed, put “butt in chair,” and draw us into a world yet 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](mailto:pregnev001@gmail.com), so we share ideas.**

### The Axe and the Trowel

Did you hear the one about the young lumberjack and the old mason who met in a bar? After a few, they started to argue.

“The pen is mightier than the sword,” the elder mason slurred, teetering after six shots and beer chasers. The towering lumberjack with wild mustache and bulging arms, just starting to whet his whistle, let the stonemason slobber and flop about, knowing full well which was more destructive.

He was surprised when his white-haired companion with gnarly hands raised another debatable point, rather articulate in his condition. “Which is better at building, an axe or a trowel?”

The lumberjack was stymied at the challenge. His axe, the mightiest in the forest, cleared land for farms and roads and houses, brute force brought to bear to tame the land. Surely, an axe was mightier.

Not drunk enough to care less, the question intrigued the woodsman. As the mason caught a few z’s before facing the next round of drinks, the lumberjack considered the alternative. Instead of clearing the land, the trowel helped lay cornerstones, raise walls of brick and mortar, monuments to oppose the force of nature itself. Yes, yes, the axe cut the wood to shape the skeleton. But once erected, the axe was abandoned, the trowel taken up.

Humbled by that thought, it was only prudent that the lumberjack join his companion and drink himself into oblivion. Who was he to judge?

## The Last Word Christine Sleeter



### Save the Cat!

I recently came across a wonderfully useful tool for strengthening the way I've plotted the novel I am working on. It's called the [Save the Cat Beat Sheet](#). It was developed by Blake Snyder, based on an analysis of well-constructed stories. The name refers to the moment in the story in which the protagonist does something heroic—like saving the cat.

Beats are the driving moments in a story that propel it forward. In the common three-act novel (the opening in which the protagonist is pulled into a conflict, the middle of the story in which the protagonist tries various actions, and the resolution), there are typically 15 beats, or moments, that move the story forward.

I'm currently analyzing a draft of my novel in relation to these 15 beats. (Well, actually I'm **currently** exploring Milan, Italy—I'll get back to the novel when I return home.) My first scene does what it is supposed to do, but the next scenes don't quite state the theme or clarify what is getting in the protagonist's way of getting what she wants. Gotta fix that before I go on to the catalyst, which I now realize needs development.

If you haven't tried using this tool, I recommend checking it out.

**Christine**

## CCW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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### CCW Website

[centralcoastwriters.org](http://centralcoastwriters.org)

Click *Scribbles* Newsletter for archived copies.

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You can join at a monthly meeting or online at:

[Centralcoastwriters.org](http://Centralcoastwriters.org)

### NorCal Group of California Writers Club

[cwnorcalwriters.org](http://cwnorcalwriters.org)



