



Scribbles

California Writers Club – Central Coast Writers Branch

centralcoastwriters.org

March 2023

March 21, 2023

Paul Zeidman

Screenwriting 101: Learning the Basics, and a Little More



Every film begins with the script and knowing the basics of writing a screenplay can set you on the right path. Among the topics covered in this presentation are: the importance of “show, don’t tell,” what should and shouldn’t be on the page, what we mean by structure and why it’s so important, the meaning of familiar but different (or, *Where have I seen this before?*), and screenwriting as a marathon--not a sprint.

Paul Zeidman is an award-winning screenwriter and the author of three screenwriting books. He has run his screenwriting blog since 2009, co-hosts the Creative Writing Life podcast, and has been the featured guest on several screenwriting podcasts.

April 18, 2023

With a Trowel not an Axe: The Gentler Way of Editing

Kevin Fisher-Paulson



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. This presentation will teach you when to stop writing and start editing, how exactly to kill your darlings, how to edit for someone

else, and when to stop editing and start submitting.

Kevin Fisher-Paulson is a weekly columnist with the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He has written two books, *A Song for Lost Angels* and *How We Keep Spinning*.

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CCW President's Letter

By Sarah Pruitt

Dear Ones,

By now, you should have received the email in which we announced the decision and went into detail as to the various factors that led us to conclude that it was in the best interests of the club to discontinue Zoom. Cutting the Zoom ties was not an easy decision for the CCW Executive Committee and involved much discussion.

I look forward to seeing many of you in person at our next meeting.

According to [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), I am 19% Irish, so I remind you to wear green on March 17 if you are going to be near any school-aged children. Two days later, on March 19, is St. Joseph's Day. In Sicily, many celebrants enjoy the Italian pastry [sfingi di san giuseppe](#). The recipe can be time-consuming, but the results taste lovely. March 21 is National Poetry Day, so I challenge you to write one—or at least a poetic piece of prose.

Our March meeting features Paul Zeidman speaking on *Screenwriting 101: Learning the Basics, and a Little More*. It will take place on Tuesday, March 21 at

Center for Spiritual Awakening
522 Central Avenue
Pacific Grove, CA

The center 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!

I hope this finds you staying safe and writing your hearts out,

Sarah E. Pruitt
CCW President

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.



Finishing that Book! Brooke Warner

“*Mindset* is the most important thing when it comes to finishing a book,” according to writing coach and editor Brooke Warner. “There can be a lot of shame baked into what’s not happening while you’re working on a book,” she added. Writers may procrastinate, hold themselves to ridiculous standards, and compare themselves to more established authors. “As writers, we have to regenerate our own inspiration,” she said, “and this can be a challenge—especially if we’re being really hard on ourselves.” The language of your mindset matters as well. “It’s so important to *claim* that you’re a writer,” Warner said, and encouraged writers to practice saying it aloud in public.



There are bad days and good days while writing a book and to help keep things in perspective, Warner suggested keeping a writing journal made up of three simple questions: 1) Did I write today? 2) How many words did I write? 3) How did I feel? She also encouraged writers to put themselves in an “authorly mindset” by identifying their readership, or even mocking up a book cover early in the writing process. “The more you can claim it as a book,” she said, “the more you will succeed in having it as a book.”

Accountability is another important element to finishing a book and can be as simple as texting a friend to say “I wrote today” or setting deadlines for yourself. There are also groups like CCW, free webinars, paid workshops, and on the extreme end: hiring a writing coach. “It may be expensive,” Warner said, “but when you put your money where your mouth is, the work gets done.”

Being cognizant of word count is also helpful. Warner suggested writers figure out how many words they can write in a specific amount of time and set a goal for each week. “Sporadic writing doesn’t set a good pace or allow you to immerse yourself into the writing,” she said. “You can set yourself up for success by knowing how many hours a week you’ll have to write to hit your word count.”

Establishing and maintaining an author platform is also key, according to Warner. A basic platform consists of a website and social media accounts that (ideally) function as “satellites,” offering engaging content that pulls readers back to your website. “A website is the modern equivalent of a business card,” Warner said. “It shows you’re a serious writer.” But she stressed that platform is more than social media. “Platform is anything you’re doing to amplify your own work,” she said, including public appearances and teaching classes. Writers shouldn’t worry about the number of followers they have on social media, Warner said. And if they’re unsure how to fill their platform with content, a good option is to elevate other writers they admire or who write in the same genre. “Be a generous literary citizen,” she said. “You get to enter the conversation. This is your community.”

Announcements

New CCW members



Please welcome new members Marianne Agnew and Helen Birdsong.

Member Congratulations

Members **Nicki Ehrlich** and **Christine Sleeter** will be doing a reading and book talk at Riverhouse Books in Carmel on Sunday, March 26, 1-3pm. Nicki will be reading from her recent novel *Ellis River*, and Christine will be reading from her recent novel *Family History in Black and White*. Both novels grapple with social issues in American history around the Civil War.

Member **Victoria M. Johnson** just launched a new website, [Creative Breath](#), that describes all of her literary offerings. She includes embodiment practices in her literary teachings: Meditations to release stagnant energy and invite in creativity, breathwork to fuel your brain, and clarity work to inspire your writing spirit. Visit her website to get a freebie guide: *How to Overcome Writer's Block in 10 Minutes*. And if you visit her [Creative Breath for Writers](#) Facebook page, you'll see current Calls for Submissions and other interesting, inspiring posts.

Upcoming Events

- Saturday March 25, 1-3pm: Writers Roundup. Nancy Middleton will be talking about Landing an Agent. (She has one – and ideas as to how the rest of us might follow suit!) Location: Little House in Jewell Park, next to the PG Library.
- Sunday March 26, 1-3pm: Sunday Salon. Location: Juice n Java in Pacific Grove.

The End of our Hybrid Meetings

It took a lot of discussion over several weeks to land on this decision, but the Executive Committee has decided to end our hybrid sessions. From now on, we will meet face to face, without the Zoom option. There were many reasons behind this decision — we want all of you to come back to the in-person meetings, it's horribly painful for the speaker to have to face a sea of empty chairs, and we lack a tech-savvy person to oversee the Zoom feed and solve problems on the spot. And there have been problems that you might not be aware of, but those of us scrambling to fix them are painfully aware. We know this will be disappointing news to our long-time Zoomers. We get that. Those needs have been a part of every discussion about when to sunset the Zoom option. But the reasons for doing so simply outweighed the reasons for not doing so. We hope to see you in person at our next meeting!

Free Ticket Winners

The California Writers Club offered two free tickets to each of its branches. One was for the summit on screenwriting, and the other was for poetry. Central Coast Writers had two members take advantage of this offer. JT Rethke attended the Hollywood Summit, and Janet Tezak, the Poetry Summit. These summits were part of the San Francisco Writers Conference.

CCW Member Contact List

Just a reminder that Scotty Cornfield is still compiling the voluntary CCW members contact list. If you'd like to be included on it so others can see how best to reach you (and vice versa), please email Scotty (scotty@scottycornfield.com) with the following info:

LAST NAME:

FIRST NAME:

PHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

WEBSITE: (if you have one)

ONE SOCIAL MEDIA SITE (with the link on how people can find you there)

You may include all or some of the above info—whatever you're comfortable sharing with the other people who have also agreed to share their info. Please remember that this is not a marketing tool so you can market to club members. It's just a way of reaching out to specific members. Only people who share their information will have access to the list. Please send your info to: scotty@scottycornfield.com and feel free to reach out to him if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, etc.

Announcements (Cont.)

Despite Global Protests, the CCW Returns to PG's Good Old Days Event

by Scotty Cornfield

Returning to the Good Old Days event last year (after that pesky pandemic that some of you may remember) was so much fun (the street fair—not the viral apocalypse) that we decided to do it again.

This annual street festival takes place May 6 and 7 on Lighthouse Avenue in downtown Pacific Grove. Hours are 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday; 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sunday.

CCW's booth is designed primarily to raise awareness of an organization for writers in Pacific Grove, and to showcase you, our members. We'll be scheduling members to staff the booth in two-hour shifts with the goal of having two members present at all times. You are welcome to sell your books and/or display related materials such as bookmarks or postcards during your shift. But please do keep in mind that the primary purpose is informational, to promote the club and the literary arts in our community.

If this sounds like something you'd like to do, (and why wouldn't it?) send an email to scotty@scottycornfield.com. As the time draws closer, I'll be getting in touch with details. Right now, I'm simply compiling a list of members who are interested in doing this. And no, you do not need to have a book to promote in order to staff the booth. This is still a great way to put yourself right in the thick of a fun community tradition, to help spread the word about our club, and to feel a part of a major local event drawing some 220 fellow vendors and 30,000 visitors.

A shout-out to Laurie and John Sheehan for making our presence at this year's Good Old Days possible.

Full House at February Meeting!





“A Soul Laid Bare”

Michael Beck

Michael Beck has had a lifelong interest in education and writing, starting with grade school when “sectors of [his] soul were laid bare” in his journals. Reading and writing opened new worlds to him, and his high school English teacher further sparked his interest in writing.

“If stories have clichés, mine would be that my high school English teacher lit the torch in me,” says Michael who went on to earn a B.A. in Humanities with a minor in English from St. Patrick’s College in Los Altos Hills. In 1978, he obtained a postgraduate certificate in Physician Assistant Studies from Northeastern University in Boston and was employed with Doctors on Duty, Mee Memorial Hospital, and WorkWell Medical Clinic. Michael practiced as a P.A. for 40 years, working in the Central Valley until 2003 when he remarried and moved to Salinas.

In 2014, now semi-retired, Michael earned a certificate in Creative Writing from Henry Marchand’s Creative Writing Program at Monterey Peninsula College (MPC). He was one of a handful of students who, mentored by Alex Hulanicki, attempted to resurrect MPC’s school newspaper *El Yanqui*. He joined CCW five years ago as one of several in a wave of MPC creative club writers to do so.

Michael writes most days on an iMac in his man cave where he creates short stories of lore. “At night, I’m in my cocoon, focusing on a screen that demands active response so that I can record my story,” he says. Currently enrolled in Gentrain (General Education Train of Courses) at MPC and OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) at California State University Monterey Bay, Michael considers himself a “lifer” when it comes to education. “Every town I live in, I attend a college,” he says. “I’ll never stop learning.”

Though his short story titled “A Casualty of War” appeared in issue 5 of *Scheherazade*, MPC’s literary anthology, Michael questions whether this qualifies as being published. Presently, he’s seeking a developmental editor for the first book of his historical drama trilogy (*The Cardinal Snare*) set in Italy at the turn of the first millennium, a segment of which has been submitted for issue 10.

Though a memoir “still rattles his brain,” Michael is eager to complete the trilogy and has plenty of impetus to do so. “My wife wants to meet George Clooney at his Lake Como home when he signs on for a part in the serial,” he says. “I better get writing!”

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





CONTESTS

The 13th Annual Robert Frost Prize for Metrical Poetry

Deadline: March 31, 2023, 11:59 pm EST

Entry Fee: \$6.00 per poem

Website: <https://www.frostfarmpoetry.org/prize>

Prizes: 1st Prize: The winner receives \$1,000 and an invitation, with honorarium, to read in the next The Hyla Brook Reading Series at the Robert Frost Farm (or virtual, depending). The reading usually opens the Frost Farm Poetry Conference, which is devoted to metrical poetry. The winner also receives a scholarship to attend the conference.

Judge: Alfred Nichol. The judge will read every entry.

Guidelines: See website for Complete Guidelines. Poems must be original, unpublished and *metrical* (any metrical form). No translations. There is no limit to the number of poems entered by an individual, but an entry fee must accompany the submission. Poets are welcome to submit a poem sequence (a crown of sonnets, for example) but each poem must be entered as a separate file and will be judged individually.

Open Submission Call: Samjoko Magazine Spring Issue II 2023

Submission Period: February 10 - April 10, 2023

Entry Fee: Free

Website: <https://www.samjokomagazine.com/submission-guidelines>

Payment: \$20.00 plus publication for original, unpublished work, no reprints.

Judge: The editorial staff of [Samjoko Magazine](#)

Guidelines: See website for complete guidelines. Poems and short stories of any theme allowed. See previous issues for samples of types of work accepted. Only submit once per reading cycle. If accepted, wait 24 months before submitting again.

The 7th Wavelengths Chapbook Contest sponsored by Thirty West Publishing House

Deadline: April 2, 2023

Entry Fee: \$12.00 reading fee per chapbook entry

Website: <https://www.thirtywestph.com/contest>

Prizes: 1st Prize \$750.00 cash, 10 author copies, and a publishing contract

Judge: Guest Judge: John Compton

Guidelines: See website for complete guidelines. They are open to many literary themes, poetic forms & styles. Never really pigeonholed ourselves to one market. They enjoy the succinct, the startling, and the sublime. **Make sure they won't forget your name.**

WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES

The Chanticleer Authors Conference 2023

Event Date: April 27-30, 2023

Website: <https://www.chantireviews.com/chanticleer-conference/>

Location: Hotel Bellwether, 1 Bellwether Way, Bellingham WA

Fees: \$695.00, All inclusive 3-day pass, book room, Chanticleer International Book Awards ceremony and banquet.

Details: See website for complete details, speakers and calendar of events.



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 *Marlene Bumgarner*.

Birds of a Feather, Jacqueline Winspear, 2004, 2015, Soho Press

I found this book on a sale table at my favorite bookstore, not realizing it was the second in a series. So I began without Maisie Dobbs' (the main character's) backstory. Fortunately, the author filled it in over the first couple of chapters.

The book is set between World War I and II, and the content often alludes to that, referring to soldiers injured both in body and mind, food and gasoline shortages, and that great lie: "All will be well once we win the Great War." Instead, there is unemployment, continued shortages, and civilian lives impacted in a variety of ways by the suffering of returned soldiers.

This is not light reading, as I supposed it to be when I first bought the book. A nice cozy mystery, I thought. But no – this is literature, and well-researched literature at that. The plot moves slowly at first, but more quickly after a few chapters. The characters are well developed, the conditions in London between the wars described and explained, and the mystery stretched out for 300 pages. What I like most about *Birds of a Feather* are the characters, the setting, and the historical notes scattered through the book. Solving the mystery became less important to me the further along I read. One of the members of my book group, which recently discussed the book, commented that "The author tells you a thousand things you don't need to know, but doesn't share important clues." He gave the example of a man whose only role in the book is to open a gate – his clothing was described in detail, then he never appeared again.

I do agree that the main character kept facts to herself, not sharing them with the reader and therefore making it impossible for the reader to solve the mystery. For example, what questions did she ask during investigations, and what were the suspect or witness' answers? What evidence was she finding at each of the crime scenes, that she remarked about but did not divulge? However, that is a technique used in other mystery novels, especially older ones, and so I accepted it as part of the package. Since I'd already decided solving the mystery was less important than the journey, it didn't affect my enjoyment. If you can be patient with Maisie as she details her unusual methods for solving crimes and takes the reader on some side trips, and if you can accept the notion that she is just a little bit psychic, I think you will enjoy this read.

In So Many Words

Nicki Ehrlich



This year I decided to take spring cleaning literally. I'm talking about my writing space. I'll get to the rest of the house later. I purchased a bigger desk, and started pitching junk and putting the rest in boxes to be stored for the next spring cleaning.

I'm not generally a bad housekeeper, but I must admit I was surprised at the dust, living up to its typical dust bunny moniker. If anyone has a secret for keeping books dust-free, please share.

I've enjoyed many writing spaces over the years, beyond the typical bedrooms and kitchens. I wrote in a camper trailer parked outside a house, in an upstairs office of a two-story log home, in a garage office self-built and finished with a friend, and in the loft of a storage unit. One of my favorites was the cockpit and cabin (depending on weather), of a thirty-foot sailboat.

Many years past, when I purchased a book, it was a life-long adoption. That was pre-liveaboard days. When you decide to live on a boat, you also decide to either store or let go of most of your book collection. Now that my live-aboard days are well behind me, I'm collecting again.

I have accumulated a whole shelf of "how to" books on writing, another shelf and a half of books I read as research for my first novel, and an additional shelf of books that will lend themselves to the novels to come. And it's hard for me to let go of books I've simply enjoyed. I keep thinking I'll come back to them—reread them. I will.

It's also hard to let go of my roll-top desk. It was getting too cramped for my writing/research style, but it was my happy place for creating for quite a while. I want it to go to a good home where it will be appreciated for its steadfastness and support. I bought it second hand fifteen years ago and I remember when I picked it up, the little girl who lived in the house cried as I was leaving. I don't know what her relationship with the desk was, but I think I understand how she felt. Its charming oak facade shows only a couple nicks and scratches for character, and it pretty much keeps its opinions to itself. Any takers?

Though I do a lot of note-taking by hand, I do prefer writing on a laptop. It's versatile. You can sit at a desk with it. (A small desk at that.) Or you can make sure it's charged up and eager to accompany you to the couch, bed, library, coffee shop, or backyard.

The laptop keyboard is the best at keeping up with my thoughts. Now if I could only get it to dust and vacuum, perhaps I'd have the perfect writing space.



Prompts assist and encourage hesitant speakers to say something. A prompt lets writers give voice to their inner selves and to share their twist on a subject.

In January 2023, when CCW moved to its newest “home,” I shared a thought with CCW President Sara Pruitt about challenging members to write on the theme of the speaker at CCW meetings. That month, John Byrne Barry spoke about the power of “setting.” As a journalist, I reported on the audience asking the speaker how he would describe its new setting.

CCW presented its newest setting for the gathering of its like-minded, yet diverse people who believe in a process, have found success, and continue to pass on their skills. The Center for Inspirational Awakening offered a gathering space that provided a muted dignity and adoption into the lore of Pacific Grove, the home of CCW. Feeling safe and dry, pizza and water available out of the facility’s kitchen, there were no intrusions in the large, well-lit room. People saw each other; acquaintances chatted, and friends caught up. The only tension in the room—the speaker facing a live audience for the first time in three years. He opened with a joke and the room’s tension deflated. Boomers all, Zoom slowed the start. His theme: ‘Setting.’ John Byrne Barry got that right! M. Beck 01.17.23

The piece is not elegant. Maybe with a few revisions it could be. 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. **Please share your one or two paragraph responses to prompts for upcoming speakers’ topics. This column and Scribbles will gladly share them.**

Jack Erickson recalls spending time in Milan’s main railroad station and wondering what would happen if struck by a terrorist attack. From that prompt sprung his four-book series “Milan Thriller Books,” written both in English and Italian. I’ve learned the power of prompt.

I knew Jack Erickson through GENTRAIN classes at MPC. One afternoon, he strolled into Monterey Peninsula College’s Creative Writing Club and participated in the Writing Prompt of the day. In the ten minutes allowed, Jack spun a tale of a boy going to a park and observing a man with no legs sitting on a park bench. The boy went home to ask his mother why such a man was sitting at the park with no legs. When admonished to go ask the man, the boy did so and heard the tale of a war injury, that the man was not stranded in the park but had a prosthesis and crutches nearby. The man thanked the boy for asking, igniting a friendship between the boy and the vet—all coming from the simple prompt: “How many legs do you need?”

My email: pregnev001@gmail.com Michael Beck 2.20.23

The Last Word Christine Sleeter



Brit Bennett

I am taking an OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute) class through CSUMB. Actually, I'm taking four of them this spring. But one of them pertains to our work at CCW. This is a class focusing on two novels by the 33-year-old writer [Brit Bennett](#).

Bennett began working on her first novel, *The Mothers*, when she was a 17-year-old high schooler. Set in the Black community of Oceanside, California, the novel probes complexities of abortion. She discusses the genesis of the novel, and her growth as a writer, in [this interview](#).

What I found very interesting was learning that she worked out much of the storyline when she was in high school. The novel still has the same opening sentence it had when she started it back then. But she recognized that she didn't yet have the maturity to develop the novel the way she believed it could be, and when she went to graduate school in Michigan, the distance gave her more perspective about life in Oceanside.

She worked on the novel over a ten-year period, and as she matured, she was able to probe the protagonist's experiences in more depth, and add another main character she would not have been able to develop when she was still in high school. Hers is an amazing story of persistence, patience, and personal insight.

Christine

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Centralcoastwriters.org

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