



The INKSLINGER

Sail On



HIGH DESERT BRANCH CWC

Inspiring a Community of Writers

FEBRUARY 2023



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dwight Norris

WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

Okay, it's been too long since I've done any creative writing, and I want to get back to it. But what should I write about? Here are some good things to consider.


First, write about what you know. If you don't know much about a topic, how will you hold a reader's interest? And how would you know what to write? And how would you be in a position to select the best and most effective vocabulary to demonstrate this subject matter? And how would you know if you're adequately covering the topic? Huh? Write what you know!

Usually, we get to know a topic pretty well based on our work and habitual behavior. We practice it frequently. But to know it really well, it is something on which we can do some research and find out a lot more. That adds the cherry on the top to give it a try and is what can really set a writer apart.

I believe a chosen topic should be something a writer really cares about. The writer should love it or hate it, but indifference doesn't cut it. The writer won't finish the piece, and the reader is unlikely to, either. How will you maintain a reader's interest if you don't care that much about it yourself? All of this seems to add up to an example that will be fun, result in an entertaining experience, help the reader learn something about fishing, and make him want to go fishing at the next opportunity. That little piece of writing has accomplished a lot.

So, let's take a look at an example. A ten-year old boy and his father went fishing at a Southern California lake. They had reservations to rent a small boat with an outboard motor and putter around until they found a good fishing hole. They launched and put their lines in the water. In about fifteen minutes, the ten-year-old was bummed out because he wanted immediate results—at least a lot faster. The two made it into deeper water where they hooked up with some juicy nightcrawlers and pattered across the lake.

The father and son came to what was apparently a deep hole full of hungry fish. They pulled in one after another—bluegill, the father said. Nice size bluegill. They were pulling them in one after another and it was pure fun. This was the kind of article that could very well entice a non-fisherman to give it a try. Your topic might easily be a different topic but with the same characteristics for you.

When you get back in the habit of regular writing, I believe you will quickly come back to yourself and settle in on topics that are familiar and comfortable for you. The genuine self will be revealed. 



FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

By Mike Apodaca



IF YOU'RE NOT GROWING, YOU'RE DYING

When I was a public school teacher, I was faced with an impossible job. First, I had to know and teach ancient history—Early Man, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome—five branches of mathematics, and all of language arts. I wrote my own curriculum (hundreds and hundreds of pages). On top of that, I had to know how to teach. This meant being aware of pedagogy and advancements in brain research. Then there was technology. It seemed that every year there were new tools and resources. I started my career with an overhead projector and ended with an interactive wall-sized smart board. I designed curriculum and assessments online and taught robotics. And last but not least, we teachers had to learn the needs and learning styles of each child put into our care, usually thirty-three or more. There was much more, but I think you get the point.

Each year I looked at this mountain and rolled up my sleeves. Each year I would tell my students that I would work harder and learn more than any of them. It was the truth.

I soon discovered that my approach was not the norm. Many teachers had the view that they would either be handed a prepackaged curriculum to teach or that they would collect their materials and one day say, "I'm finished." These teachers would do the same program year after year after year. I even had one teacher tell me that he was not using any of the amazing new technology tools because he didn't want to put in the effort to learn them.

Now, how does this apply to writing? Let me be clear—There is no such thing as a writer who has arrived. We are all people in process. Here are some of the things we all can grow in . . .

1. Basic Grammar—Some of our members continue to study and have a vast understanding of punctuation, spelling, use of metaphor and simile, and so on. These are the most elemental building blocks of our craft, and there are entire books on them. Two resources every writer would do well to have in their library are the *Chicago Manual of Style* and *The Elements of Style*, by Strunk and White. Greater competence in grammar is also gained in a good critique group where colleagues can look at your actual writing and the bad (and good) habits you have.
2. Story Elements—Consider all the parts of a great story—characters, conflict, twists, first lines, the hero's journey, archetypes, descriptions, and dialogue. Each of these is worth study.
3. Publishing—Whether you are going traditional (with an agent, publishing company, publicity campaign, and book tour) or self-publishing (using your own platform, designing your own covers, navigating the online resources, and doing your own promotion) this is a big project.
4. Social Media and Promotion—Books are promoted differently these days. In today's publishing world, authors need a platform. Building one takes a lot of work and many diverse skills. This may also entail developing our ability to do public speaking on our topic.


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IF YOU'RE NOT GROWING, YOU'RE DYING

Technology—New technologies have changed everything, including writing and publishing. Zoom, writing and editing tools, PowerPoint, Photoshop, and social media are becoming essential tools for writing. Along with this, there are new writing apps being added every day.

These are just some of the things involved in being a writer. This is why we need a writing club. It's why we need to hear from experts in our meetings. Why our club offers training and instruction in all aspects of writing (have you checked out the YouTube channel lately?). We are all on a journey where no one will become a know-it-all. Some have been on the path longer, but no one knows every pebble on the road, nor all the new pathways that are being embraced by the publishing world.

The mindset of a successful writer is one of continuous growth and learning. We never arrive. 

ENCHANTING

By fumi-tome ohta

Torrential Rain
Surprise! Made me smile – Big Time!
Four pretty faces



HDCWC FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

MIKE RAFF FEB 17
STEVE MARIN FEB 23

A GREAT 2023 START FOR HDCWC

By Mike Apodaca

Our first meeting of 2023 was challenging and enlightening. Rene de la Cruz, a passionate and well-informed speaker, brought us into his world and inspired us to achieve more in ours.

Rene's family has been in the High Desert since 1902. This is his community and he cares deeply for it. He loves his job because he sees it as a way to benefit his people—the people of the High Desert. Rene works sixty hours a week as a reporter and also pastors a church in Victorville.

Rene encouraged our members to submit stories to him for the newspaper, especially announcements about our writing. All stories must be related to the High Desert. People like quirky stories. The best story would be about a little kid stuck near a restaurant, saved by a dog, fed by the restaurant, on Friday the thirteenth.

The morning presentation focused on the future of journalism and writing in general. Rene walked us through the history of the presentation of music, from live music, to records, cassettes, 8-track, CDs, iPods, to our current streaming services. The same thing has happened with newspapers and with book publishing. Old ways have died and no longer exist. To be relevant, we need to embrace the new ways of publishing—on the internet.

Mr. de la Cruz walked us through the decline of our local paper, *The Daily Press*. Whereas it once employed fifty people who worked in many departments in a facility with their own presses, now there are only three reporters (sports, investigative, and Rene, the reporter at large) and five other workers. Rene works out of his house and the paper is published in Arizona and shipped here. There will come a day when the paper is only available online. Two newspapers go under each week. His philosophy can be summed up with the phrase, "The cat's gonna die." If a city had only two fire trucks for a large city and a cat was stuck in a tree while there was a large apartment fire and a five-car pile-up, then the cat is going to die. A lack of resources means setting priorities.


Now, that is not to say that the *Daily Press* itself is doing poorly. In 2020 it had over fifteen million hits online. It is being read on five continents and is sometimes referenced by celebrities. Rene said he is well known by all the network news people. They use *the Daily Press* to keep their finger on



the pulse of the High Desert. The paper still has 7,000 subscribers.

We were challenged at this meeting to develop an online presence (a webpage and a presence on social media). Podcasts and blogs are important ways to connect with people. Without this online presence, we are invisible to the world and disconnected from our audience.

Our meeting ended with a robust question and answer time. Rene handled every question with passion and insight.

This was a terrific meeting. If you missed it, check our YouTube channel for the recording. 

GOOD WRITING VERSUS GOOD STORYTELLING

By John Paul Garner



The day I realized I sucked as a storyteller was the day I decided to become a good writer. It was brutal the way I learned of my deficiency, and it was worse acknowledging it. In the years I had labored over various versions of the same memoir, writing each from the seat of my pants, without benefit of any outline and

relying entirely on a chronology of events, I had deceived myself into thinking I was telling a good story because the writing itself was good and because, at the backend of the effort, I self-published a book which I eagerly distributed to friends and family.

The key phrase here is that I published the book. Not Simon and Schuster, or Doubleday, or any of the traditional publishers out there. Just KDP, that I paid to print my book and stroke my ego. That transaction convinced me that I was a good writer.

But when friends who had kindly agreed to read my most recent version of the same memoir seemed reluctant to favor it with any laudatory comments, I was distressed. When asked why, they were at first kind with their opinions, which was troubling. There was no high praise, which befuddled me. Surely, it was a masterpiece, I thought, and they were simply unable to find the right words to accurately describe it. So when I pressed them for a truthful accounting, they stated that the writing was good but the story wasn't. The characters lacked depth, the story was linear and missing any highs and lows, and there were no hooks that would draw them deeper into the book. Essentially the story—the memoir—was flat and mildly interesting only because they knew me.

To say I was disappointed is an understatement. I was friggin' crushed! In the years following my decision to write a memoir, I struggled writing five different versions of it, obsessed with perfecting it. And each time I failed to see its major flaw until last spring when I was given the truth. It was an awakening. Perhaps an epiphany. And because of it, I had a choice to make: retire from writing altogether or become a storyteller.

I chose to become a storyteller.

But I didn't know how to tell a story. So I chose to start over. My first act was to unpublish all of the books I had published through KDP except for two books about football. Because I

was now aware of my shortcomings as a storyteller, I thought I'd try something radical and write a purely fictional story about a young white boy who, in 1961 Oklahoma, is befriended by an elderly black man. The concept had merit but it also posed several obstacles, chief of which was the simple fact that I wasn't writing about me.

I had to create characters and give them a history. I also had to develop an outline or storyboard the book because I could not adhere to the chronology of my life, which was the basis of my memoirs. I quickly learned that I didn't know what the hell I was doing, so I decided to learn from great storytellers. Not the classics. But contemporary storytellers like King and Grisham, who were attune to the habits and practices of modern readers. I also decided to study television shows.

Crazy, huh?

I thought so at first as well, but when you remove the commercials from an hour-long show, it's usually 40 minutes long. I realized that how the writing of a TV drama compacts an interesting, if not compelling story into that small block of time is good storytelling. So I set about studying three shows in particular: *The Good Doctor*, *New Amsterdam*, and old versions of *NCIS* starring Mark Harmon. I focused on these three because of how the stories and main characters were developed, how subordinate characters were introduced, how the magic of back stories and subplots were used, and what kind of hooks were deployed to bring the viewer back. I was especially enlightened by the sentimental ending often used in the shows, and most especially by the *NCIS* writers—something that tugged at the viewer's heart.

I then decided to make my memoir into a romance and fictionalize aspects of it to make it a good story. But I knew nothing about romances, so I joined Marilyn King's critique group—which consisted only of her and me—and in editing her work, I learned about the allure of a romance novel and how to structure a story. Marilyn is extremely competent at that and her writing is extraordinary. I was stunned and elated by how much fun and edifying it was to edit a book in that genre.

It is that romance novel I am now embarked upon that I pitched at the L.A. Writers Conference. What will come of that venture is yet to be determined, but what has come from the changes I made when presented with the truth about my writing has focused my efforts and redirected it toward good storytelling, which is what all of us strive to achieve.

I do not know that what I did to change lanes as a writer will work for you. I'm still wondering if it will work for me. But I'm fairly certain that good writing isn't always good storytelling, but good storytelling is always about good writing.



ACT II: SCREENPLAYS

By Mike Apodaca

Whenever we undertake a new format of writing, it is best to get clear advice from an expert.

Our Tuesday, January 24th, ACT II Zoom meeting was spent watching a video called, *Seducing the Studio Reader*, by Robert Flaxman. This video was from a Screenwriting Expo that our own Bob Isbill attended. He then got permission to share this presentation with our club.

The lecture was practical. Mr. Flaxman showed himself to be a no-nonsense script reader who was able to explain how to shed our work of vagueness and unnecessary verbiage.

Here are just a few of his many suggestions:

On the title page, write the title in the same font as the rest of the script and use the word, “by,” and then your name. Keep it as simple as possible.

Slugs (the short orientation designations that precede the scene) should be as dynamic as possible. There should be an unambiguous description under each slug.

Find the current accepted script writing form and use it. Don't let the form get in the way.

Every sentence in your script is a visual flash card. Don't mention anything that is not seen on the screen.

Don't write large blocks of text. All paragraphs should have no more than four lines.


Know the difference between a Spec Script (which is being read fast, to see if it makes the grade) and a Production Script (which is used to actually make a movie)

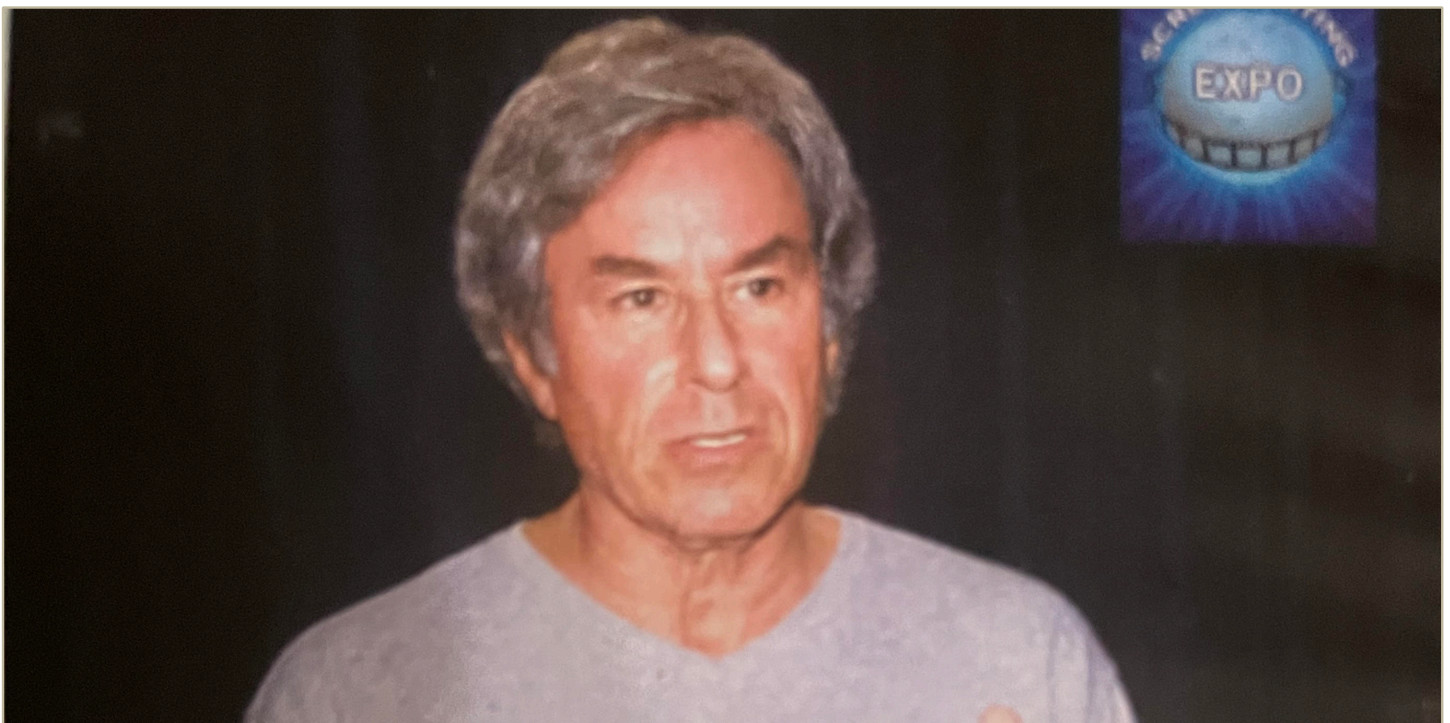
Make sure the names are not too similar in the script

Focus on one emotion at a time for your characters

Do not use the phrase, “We see . . .”

There were more things Mr. Flaxman taught, too many to write here.

There are only so many hours in a day, and each is precious. The hour I spent watching this video with friends across the state was one of the most productive of the week. Thanks, Bob, for sharing! 



WRITERS ARE READERS

BOOK REVIEWS *by Mary Langer Thompson*



THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

by Ernest Hemingway

To reread classics at different stages of our lives can give them new meaning. I first read Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* in college. So it's been a while. Previously, I didn't realize how profound this novella is and how talented a writer Hemingway was with his short words and phrases.

The old man in the story, Santiago, is a Cuban fisherman and widow. He lives by himself in a shack but has taught a young boy to fish at age five. The boy checks on him: "You'll not fish without eating while I'm alive," and they love each other. Santiago misses him when he is at sea. He is a teacher, wise father figure, friend and companion to the young boy. The boy's parents told him Santiago was "unlucky" and ordered him to work on another boat that caught good fish. The opening reads, "He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish."

Notice the description of Santiago: "Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated." This description makes us like and root for someone whom everyone else considers a loser. One might think Santiago is a lonely old man, but he is a skilled fisherman, a thinker, has a young friend whom he respects, and has his memories. Santiago as a main character is different, unique, and he knows it. Yet, he is humble, lives simply, and knows others in his community: "I am a strange old man," he tells the young boy when the boy tells him that the man whose fishing boat he works on now never went turtle-ing but is going blind. Santiago went turtle-ing off the Mosquito Coast for years, yet his eyes are good.

He has compassion for animals and identifies with turtles because a turtle's heart beats for hours after he's butchered. He feels sorry for birds, especially small ones who fly, look, and don't find. He thinks they have a harder life than we do. He knows the ocean can be both cruel and kind. He loves the sea, *La mar*, and thinks of her as a woman. About porpoises he says, "They play and make jokes and love one another." To the fish, the huge marlin he catches, he says, "I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends." Santiago may be old, but he is still physically strong although tired "inside," so he's going to love what's offered in the time left to him.

Although he says he is not religious, he promises ten Our Fathers and ten Hail Marys if he catches the fish. Plus, he promises to make a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Cobre. The fish, the stars are all his "brothers." He considers his prayers said and believes that to give up hope is to sin, although he doesn't understand sin. He was born to be a fisherman, so let others think about sin, he decides. Is Santiago a Christ figure? At one point he feels "the nail go through his hand and into the wood." He's asked all the big questions about sin, prayer, love. He doesn't have all the answers but he is content.

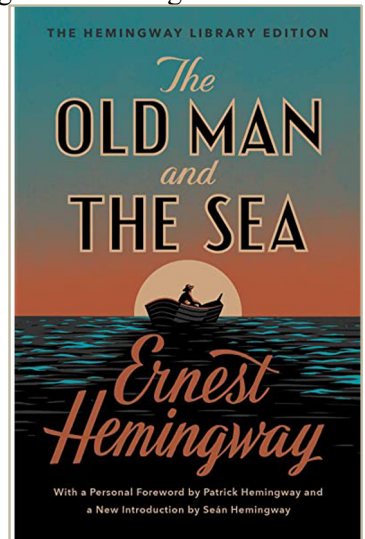
Santiago takes his suffering as it comes. He had caught big fish before, but now he's alone, out of sight of land and connected to the biggest fish he's every seen or heard of, and his left hand is cramped. He wishes he was the fish.

Santiago knows himself: "I may not be as strong as I think. But I know many tricks and I have resolution." To give himself strength he eats white eggs and drinks a cup of shark-liver oil daily. He understands his need for connection even in the middle of the ocean: "I wish I had the boy—to help me and to see this." "No one should be alone in their old age," he thought. "But it is unavoidable."

"The boy keeps me alive." Dreams are important to him. He doesn't dream anymore of storms, women, fish, fights, contests of strength or even his wife: "He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach." This dream makes him happy.

He believes he is out of luck but then thinks, maybe not, since "every day is a new day." He would rather be exact than lucky because then, when luck comes, you're ready." "My big fish must be somewhere." He talks out loud and knows he's not crazy for doing so.

One critic (Arvin R. Wells) sees the story as a study "in the endurance of pain and in the value of that endurance." Santiago is a hero because despite great loss and even his own impending death, he is not disillusioned. Earl Rovit says, "He (Santiago) is a man; he does what he is born to do; and in doing it, he achieves *being*."





Jenny Margotta

From an Editor's Desk

SCHOLASTIC ARTS AND WRITING AWARDS PROGRAM


This year, I again had the privilege of being the HDCWC project coordinator for the Scholastic Arts & Writing Awards program. For those of you who may not know, the Scholastic Awards program is the nation's longest-running, most prestigious recognition program for creative teenagers. The program is an annual competition open to seventh- through twelfth-grade students in the United States and Canada. Writing categories include Short Stories, Science Fiction/Fantasy, Poetry, Personal Essays/Memoirs, Novel Writing, Journalism, Humor, Flash Fiction, Dramatic Scripts, Critical Essays, and Writing Portfolios. In addition, there are seventeen Arts categories. Each year, well over 10,000 entries are submitted overall.

Various organizations across the country and Canada are asked to supply fifteen to twenty judges each year to determine those students worthy of consideration for awards. The Scholastic website states, "Entries are judged without knowledge of the student's gender, age, ethnicity, or hometown by some of the foremost leaders in the visual and literary arts." Awards consist of scholarships, cash prizes, or tuition assistance. Open only to graduating seniors, the Writing Portfolio category is the most extensive. It consists of six distinct works that demonstrate versatility as a writer and diversity in writing techniques and styles. The works can come from one category or any combination of multiple categories. It is the most complex of the categories and offers \$12,500 scholarships to Gold Medal winners and \$2,000 scholarships to Silver Medal with Distinction winners.

This is the sixth year that HDCWC has supplied judges. Returning judges were Dwight Norris, Mike Apodaca, Bob Isbill, Dawn Keiser, Denny Stanz, Freddi Gold, Jim Grayson, Mary Langer Thompson, Peg Ross-Pawlak, Richard Zone, Tom Foley, Aileen Rochester, and me. And we had seven first-time judges: Ann McDonald, Cynthia Frye, Diana Davidson Del-Toro, Karen Ohta, Richard Spencer, Scott Johnson, and Suzanne Meyers-Dalzell. Our twenty volunteers judged a total of eighty panels, some from each of the eleven writing categories. Each panel included anywhere from three to twenty-one entries. Twenty-five of our eighty panels were poetry, so almost every judge received at least one poetry category. And our resident poets received even more. Our judges spent an average of fifteen to twenty hours on the project.

We began the project with a training session via Zoom on November 29, 2022. Panels were assigned to judges on December 16, 2022, with a deadline of January 10, 2023, to complete all assignments. As the project coordinator, I especially enjoyed assigning the wide range of panels to individual judges, as well as judging my own set of panels. A get-together was held at Dwight's house on Monday, January 23, so judges could meet to share their impressions, experiences, and concerns. While not every judge was able to attend, those who did all said it was a positive experience and they would more than likely do it again next year. Several of the judges mentioned a particular submission that haunted them, brought tears to their eyes, made them laugh, or was memorable in some other way.

The club receives \$2,500 each year for our participation, which we use throughout the year to further CWC's mission statement. In the six years HDCWC has participated in the Scholastic Awards program, we have received a total of \$13,500, so it is easy to see why this is our most lucrative fund-raising venue.


My thanks for every one of our judges who participated this year, and I look forward to being the project coordinator for many years to come. 

WORD(S) OF THE MONTH

CONSPIRACY: (noun): an agreement among *conspirators*.

CONSPIRATOR: (noun): one who is *conspiring*.

CONSPIRING: (verb): to join in a secret agreement to do an unlawful or wrongful act or an act which becomes unlawful as a result of the secret agreement.

The transitive verb "conspiring" is from late-fourteenth-century Middle English: "aspire or plan maliciously, agree together to commit a criminal or reprehensible act," from Old French *conspirer*, from Latin *conspirare* "to agree, unite, plot," literally "to breathe together." From assimilated form of *com* ("with, together") + *spirare* ("to breathe"). 

KITE TAILS

By fumi-tome ohta



One day high atop the very tip of a tall pine tree sat Clarice, a majestic and beautiful red-tailed hawk. Being a hawk gave Clarice eyes that can see far and ears with such superb hearing that she is able to hear rabbits stand to sit on their haunches but this morning and other mornings as well, Clarice heard two broad-leaved leaves lamenting not being able to ride the air currents in the sky like the red-tailed hawks they see flying above each day.

“I want to fly up into the sky like the hawks and falcons!” said a broad leaf. Another broad leaf added, “I want to fly around the world!” Then a narrow leaf on a neighboring tree said, “I want to fly up in the sky too but I can’t.”

“Why is that?” a broad leaf asked.

“Because we’re long and narrow so we’d flutter down like a cork screw,” answered the narrow leaf.

Clarice heard the leaves’ conversations. “If I see you start to fall from the tree, I’ll catch you and fly you to the sky. If you were a kite, you could fly. I see the children flying kites and their kites have kite tails. Maybe kite tails will help you to fly,” she said.

A broad leaf said, “Let’s wish for kite tails!” Narrow leaf lamented, “Oh, I wish I could go too. I want to know what it feels like to be free.”

Days later they felt a strange sensation come over them.

Clarice yelled, “I think you’re getting ready to drop from the tree. Kite tails! Think of kite tails.”

The narrow leaf was feeling strange too, but she knew she would only be twirling down to the ground. As the leaves started to fall to the ground below, Clarice immediately flew from her pine tree to swoop one leaf after another. There the threesome flew in the grips of her talons. As they were riding Clarice’s talons, one broad leaf yelled out, “Let’s hold hands!” As they did, there was a fluttering sound—on their stems were kite tails!” Clarice smiled. “They remembered!” Clarice soared in the soft current of the sky, giving the leaves the flight of their lives. After a while, narrow leaf remembered. The broad leaves wanted to soar! “Hey! You two go ahead and fly. I’ll be okay.” Then, locking eyes with Clarice she mouthed a long and endearing, “Thank you,” then, with a catch in her throat, she said, “Let us go, Clarice!”

As Clarice released her grip, the three leaves flew away together, still holding hands. Then, narrow leaf looked to her left then to her right, kissing each hand in turn, “Thank you! I love you!” Then ... in the longest microsecond, they dropped away to their own destinies, soaring and gliding, a glorious and beautiful sight.

seeking the world

flying like hawks and falcons

flying free



Original collage by author



A NIGHT OF DEBRIEF AND BIRTHDAY CAKE

By Mike Apodaca

I think we filled all the chairs around Dwight's long, dark, hardwood table. We were the judges for the Scholastic Arts and Writing Contest, meeting at Dwight Norris' house to debrief. We had six new judges this year and wanted to hear everyone's experience and to gain new insights that would help us to prepare for next year.

Dwight began the meeting by sharing the CWC mission statement. It's a focused three paragraphs that provide the parameters of what we do as a club. The gist of it is that we are here to support writing. Dwight connected this to the Scholastic effort we do each year—a very good fit.

After this, Jenny Margotta, who supervised our program, spoke to some of the issues she saw this year. Mostly, she complimented everyone on a job well done.

Then each participant was able to share of their own experience. We recounted some of the excellent stories, articles, or poems that we read—and some that were real clunkers. The conversation was light and filled with laughter and insight. For the most part, we were happy to have insight into what young people are thinking today.

Everyone at the table agreed that this was a good experience, that they felt well-supported by Jenny, and that they would be happy to do it again next year.

We ended the meeting celebrating Dwight's birthday with cake and well wishes. 🚤





BORIS PASTERNAK (PART 2)

The first English translation of *Doctor Zhivago* was hastily manufactured due to the overwhelming demand. Released in 1958, it remained the only edition for 50 years. It spent 26 weeks at the top of *The New York Times* bestseller list.

Although no Soviet critics had read the banned novel, *Doctor Zhivago* was violently denounced. The attacks led to the Russian saying, "I haven't read Pasternak, but I condemn him."

On October 23, 1958, Pasternak won the Nobel Prize. The citation credited his contribution to Russian poetry and his role in "continuing the great Russian epic tradition." On October 25, Pasternak sent a telegram to the Swedish Academy: "Infinitely grateful, touched, proud, surprised, overwhelmed."

The anti-Pasternak crusade wrote denunciations in the state-owned newspapers and angry letters from "ordinary Soviet workers," who, of course, hadn't read the book. Pasternak was attacked in front of an audience of 14,000 that included Khrushchev and was called "a mangy sheep who pleased their enemies with his slanderous work."

Pasternak was told if he traveled to Stockholm to obtain his Nobel Medal, he would be refused re-entry. As a result, he sent a second telegram to the committee: "In view of the meaning given the award by the society in which I live, I must renounce this undeserved distinction."

Despite his decision, the Soviet Union of Writers continued to condemn Pasternak, and he was threatened with exile. In October 1958, they held a trial behind closed doors. Pasternak was denounced as an internal émigré and a fascist fifth columnist. Afterwards, they signed a petition, demanding that he be stripped of his citizenship.

The Nobel Prize probably prevented Pasternak's imprisonment due to the Soviet's fear of international outrage. Bill Mauldin drew a cartoon that won a Pulitzer Prize. It depicted Pasternak as an inmate saying to another inmate: "I won the Nobel Prize for Literature. What was your crime?"

Pasternak died of lung cancer in 1960. Thousands of admirers braved the KGB to attend his funeral. The last speaker at the graveside said, "God marks the path of the elect with thorns, and Pasternak was picked out and marked by God." As the spectators cheered, the bells of a church tolled. Pasternak's gravesite would become a shrine for various dissident movements.

Writer Ivan Tolstoy stated that the British MI6 and the American CIA helped to ensure *Doctor Zhivago* was submitted to the Nobel Committee. According to Tolstoy, this was done so Pasternak could win the Nobel Prize and hurt the credibility of the Soviet Union.

The Washington Post, wrote: "While the CIA hoped Pasternak's novel would draw global attention, including from the Swedish Academy, there was no indication that the agency's motive for printing a Russian-language edition was to help Pasternak win the prize."

After Pasternak's death, his mistress Olga Ivinskaya was accused of being Pasternak's link with Western publishers, and was arrested. All of Pasternak's letters to her and other manuscripts and documents were seized by the KGB. She served four years in retaliation for her role in *Doctor Zhivago's* publication. In 1978, her memoirs were smuggled abroad and published.

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

BORIS PASTERNAK

While in high school, I was assigned to read *Doctor Zhivago*. When I started, I feared I was in over my head. All the characters with long Russian names proved a challenge. Fortunately, I hung in there. *Zhivago* is a brilliant novel, revealing what it was like in Russia from the time of the Tsar to the mid-twentieth century. When I viewed the film version, I found it to be a phenomenon, visually and emotionally. To this day, I still love the novel and the movie. 🚢



FUN FACTS ABOUT BORIS PASTERNAK

The Pasternak family papers are stored at the Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University. They contain correspondence, drafts of *Doctor Zhivago* and other writings.

In 1990, the Pasternak Museum opened, and Russia and Sweden issued Pasternak stamps.

The novel was adapted as a television mini-series in 2002.

In 2003, *Doctor Zhivago* entered the Russian school curriculum.

In 2009, the first Russian monument to Pasternak was erected.

A small planet discovered by a Soviet astronomer was named “3508 Pasternak.”

The screen adaptation of *Doctor Zhivago*, directed by David Lean, was released in 1965 and became a worldwide blockbuster. But the Russian TV version is considered more faithful to the novel.

Until next month, keep reading, writing, and give *Doctor Zhivago* a try!

THE INS AND OUTS OF INTERNAL CONFLICT

By Michael Raff

At our last branch meeting on Jan. 14, it was announced that work has commenced on our 2023 anthology and that we would be seeking submissions. The committee has already been formed, consisting of Jenny Margotta, Steve Marin, and yours truly. Thus far, the title of the anthology is unknown. The maximum number of submissions for each member is three. There will be cash prizes for the most outstanding submissions in poetry and prose, as decided by our chosen judges. The most important news, however, is that this time all the submissions must deal with the theme of conflict, a vital component in writing.

I think we all know what conflict is: the problem or struggle that the protagonist faces within a story. Most often the problem is the antagonist. In this context, that situation would be classified as *external* conflict. But I would like to touch upon *internal* conflict, which by definition is a struggle that is *internalized*, giving rise to choices, consequences, or emotions. It's a conflict that can be described as the main character versus himself. The protagonist must defeat his *own* emotions or characteristics in order to prevail. One could call this type of story a *psychological drama or thriller*. When a character experiences an internal conflict, their struggle helps move the story forward.


Of course, there are a variety of internal conflicts such as opposing needs, desires, and values. They can also include relationships, ethics, careers, mental health, and society. Additionally, characters suffering from internal conflict can experience confusion, doubt, anxiety, and fear.

One internal conflict that most readers can relate to is *existential* conflict, when a character questions their purpose in the world, often conflicted about the meaning of life, or the nature of the universe. This is accomplished marvelously in William Somerset Maughan's classic novel, *The Razor's Edge*.

Grief, such as a loss of a loved one, and the emotion of guilt, have a way of creating conflict. Perhaps my favorite internal conflict is guilt. I dove into that emotion in "The Salvation of Edward Wilson." The protagonist suffers from survivors' guilt, a common occurrence in war veterans. It comes to a climax when he attends an anniversary event at Pearl Harbor.

Another example of a protagonist suffering from guilt comes from Dostoevsky's brilliant novel, *Crime and Punishment*. After murdering a pawnbroker, the protagonist, Raskolnikov, copes with confusion, paranoia, horror, and disgust. Because of his crime, he also struggles with guilt and ends up confronting the *internal* consequences of his action.

With all due respect for *external* conflict, I think *internal* is more challenging to pursue. Mostly because there are so many causes and types of emotions that can come into play, therefore the possibilities are seemingly endless.


Stay tuned next month when our esteemed treasurer, Jenny Margotta, delves into the remarkable realm of *external* conflict. 



T. FAYE GRIFFIN TO SPEAK ON COMEDY WRITING

By Bob Isbill

The High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club (HDCWC) is proud to announce the guest speaker for Saturday, February 11, 2023 will be T. Faye Griffin speaking on comedy writing.

With a career that spans more than 30 years in television, film, radio and theater, three-time NAACP Image Award - winner and bestselling author T. Faye Griffin has amassed an impressive list of credits which includes the Emmy Award-winning comedy series, *In Living Color*. Her past and present client list consists of A-List celebrities such as Steve Harvey, institutions of higher learning, religious organizations, and innovative entrepreneurs--all reflecting her diverse range. Ms. Griffin is a proud product of South Central Los Angeles and currently resides in Apple Valley, California. 



STRANGE BUT TRUE



Daniel Defoe once tried to sell a perfume made from the secretions of cats' bottoms!

The *Robinson Crusoe* author had some seriously unsuccessful business ventures before he became a novelist. His cat perfume might be the strangest.

HDCWC TO SPONSOR FIFTH ANNUAL AFRICAN AMERICAN READ-IN



Members of the High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club (HDCWC) will feature Black voices, current and classic, at the Hesperia Library Community Room, 9650 7 th Avenue in Hesperia, on Monday, February 20, from 5:00-7:00 p.m. For a fifth year, literary contributions from African Americans will be shared. The Read-In began thirty-three years ago by the Black Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English.

The event will be emceed by T. Faye Griffin, three-time NAACP Award winner, producer, best-selling author, visual artist, and board member of Arts Connection, the Arts Council of San Bernardino County.

HDCWC members and guests may read a 3–5-minute poem, passage, or even a condensed bio. They may also perform a song by an African American composer or read a short scene from a play or movie by an African American playwright or screenwriter. In the past, HDCWC has had readings of writers such as Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, and Toni Morrison.

The public can come early to sign up for any remaining spot.

For further information about HDCWC, visit www.hdcwc.com or call 760-221-6367.



Zora Neale Hurston



Langston Hughes



Richard Wright



Maya Angelou

**HIGH DESERT BRANCH OF THE
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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

By Michael Raff

The walls of books around me, dense with the past, formed a kind of insulation against the present world and its disasters.

-Ross Macdonald, novelist (13 Dec 1915-1983)

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Take advantage of your membership benefits

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SUBMITTING TO THE INKSLINGER

- We seek articles and stories of between **200 to 500** words.
- Poetry submissions are welcome as are photos and illustrations accompanying submissions.
- Please avoid sending items that are embedded in other media (like Word files). Simply attach items to email.
- Submit in Microsoft Word.
- Send submissions to Richard Zone:
retiredzone@gmail.com.

Call Richard if you would
like to discuss an article or idea

909-222-8812

