

*Living Your Writing Life!*

*Sharing the  
Dream!*

*2023  
Virginia  
Writers Club  
Symposium*



# Living Your Writing Life! Sharing the Dream!

**Virginia Writers Club 13th Annual  
Symposium, August 5, 2023, at  
Randolph-Macon College**

**Keynote Address by Bishop O'Connell  
Breakout Sessions from 10 - 4:05**

**Gathering location: Copley Science Center**

**Breakout sessions: next door in Payne Hall**

**(See map on pg. 8 for directions to Copley Science Center.)**

**For hotel information, see page 7**

# 2023 VIRGINIA WRITERS CLUB SYMPOSIUM COMMITTEE

Harry Heckel, Chairperson

Dawn Brotherton

Joanne Liggan

Karen Paley

Charles Tabb

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A huge shout out to our sponsors! Our deepest gratitude goes out to all of you. We also wish to thank our corporate and individual sponsors, whose logos are on page 10. Thank you!

# VIRGINIA WRITERS CLUB

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

*President: Charles Tabb*

*First Vice President: Harry Heckel*

*Second Vice President: Warren Groeger*

*Treasurer: Betsy Ashton*

*Acting Secretary: Jason Maddox*

*Past President: Leslie Truex*

## VWC CHAPTER PRESIDENTS

*Appalachian Authors Guild: Victoria Fletcher*

*Blue Ridge Writers: Alden Bigelow*

*Chesapeake Bay Writers: Sonja McGiboney*

*Hampton Roads: J. Dennis Bounds*

*Hanover Writers: Charles Tabb*

*Northern Virginia Writers Club: Michelle McBeth*

*Richmond: Mary Mobley*

*Riverside Writers: Steven Pody*

*Valley Writers: Office of chapter president in transition*

*Write by the Rails: Katherine Gotthardt and Maryel Stone*



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*The Virginia Writers Club, Inc.*

P. O. Box 94  
Somerset, VA 22972  
[www.virginiawritersclub.org](http://www.virginiawritersclub.org)

August 5, 2023

Dear Symposium Attendee:

Welcome to the 13th annual Living Your Writing Life Symposium! This year's symposium theme is "Your Writing Journey: Sharing the Dream!" and is designed to cover all phases of the writing process. We have worked hard for months trying to make this the best Symposium possible.

This year, we have speakers presenting on a wide variety of topics in several areas of writing - business and marketing, craft, and memoir/research. We think you will find these presentations enjoyable and enlightening.

We also have an excellent Keynote speaker, Bishop O'Connell, who will talk about his journey to becoming a published author and what we can learn from his experiences. I am sure you will enjoy listening to him. He is informative and entertaining.

The future of The Virginia Writers Club looks bright. Your 1st vice-president, Harry Heckel, and I will be promoting VWC on October 24 on the *Virginia This Morning* program in Richmond, at the CBS affiliate, WTVR Channel 6. We anticipate an even better Symposium next year while planning for the annual meeting, set for November 4 at Maggiano's at Short Pump Town Center in Richmond. This is the same location as last year's annual meeting.

We are so happy you are here! Please relax and soak up the wonder and joy of being among fellow writers!

Keep the Muses working!

Chuck Tabb  
VWC President

# **So Where Does Everything Happen?**

**That's a good question. Page 9 has the event schedule, which will also be posted in multiple locations. All of the sessions take place on the 3rd floor of Payne Hall. We have people to escort you there and show you where to go. However, not everything happens there. We also have a detailed campus map on page 8.**

**We will meet initially in the Copley Science Center (see map and directions on page 8.) People will be available to show you where you can park. College classes will not be in session, so the campus will be more or less empty of students...and their vehicles. Our volunteers can show you where to enter the building. (There are various entrances, so you will want to ask if not told.)**

**Lunch and the Keynote address will also be in Copley Science Center. We will explain all of that in our welcome, which begins at 9:30. Gathering and social time is from 9:00 to 9:30.**

**Not only will classes be in Payne Hall, but the bookseller will also be there, just outside the classrooms where the sessions are held. The book signing after the sessions will be near the bookseller's table.**

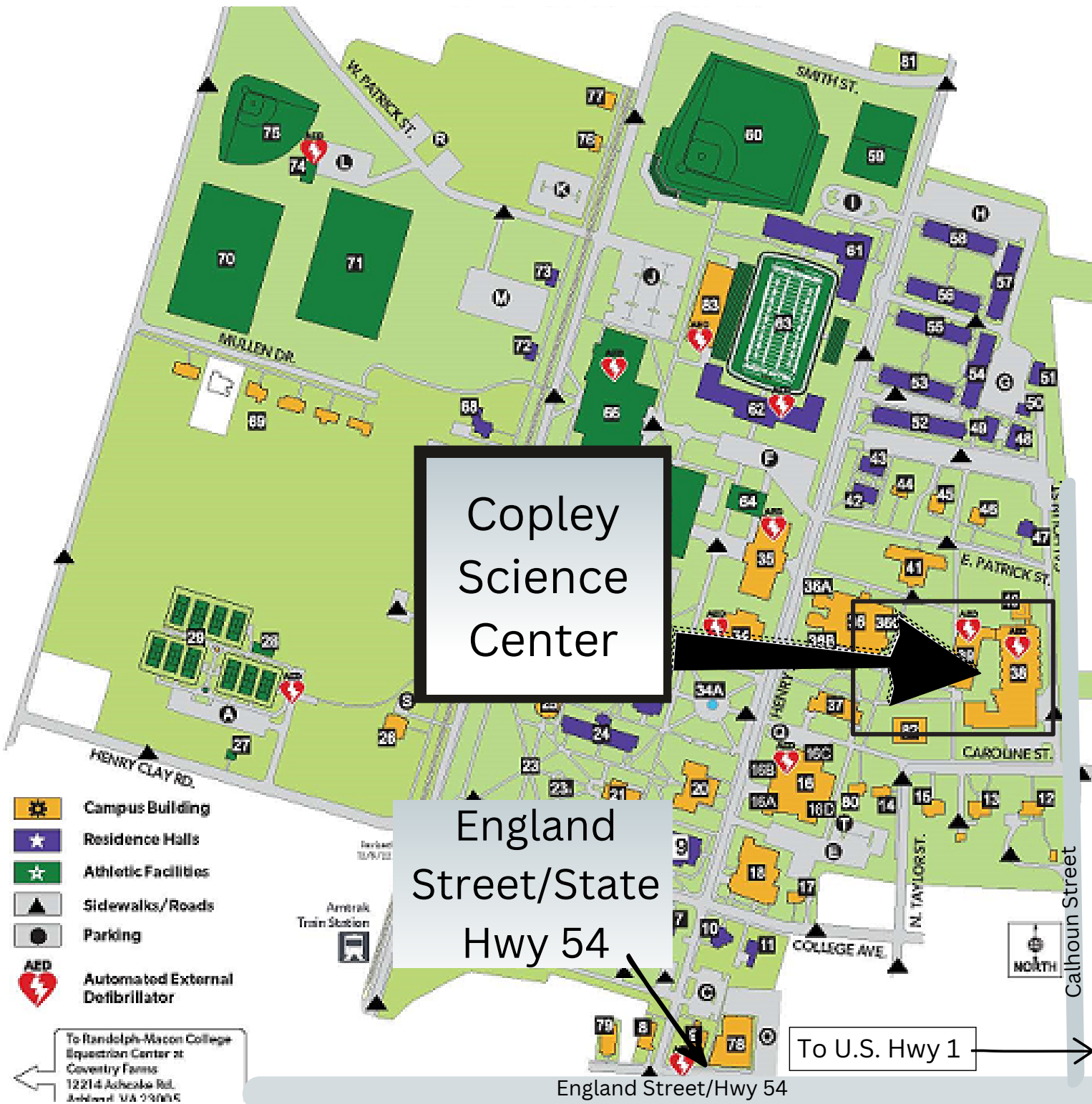
**Bathrooms are just outside the elevators on each floor of Payne Hall, so if the one on the 3rd floor gets too busy, it's an easy trip down to another one.**

**If you have any questions the day of the event, please don't hesitate to ask. If that person can't answer your question, they will know someone who can.**

# A Link to Hotels in the Area

Randolph-Macon College has supplied the following link to a list of hotel links near the campus. It is my understanding that using these links can get you a discount.




<https://campustravel.com/university/randolph-macon-college/>



Copley  
Science  
Center

England  
Street/State  
Hwy 54

To U.S. Hwy 1

-  Campus Building
-  Residence Halls
-  Athletic Facilities
-  Sidewalks/Roads
-  Parking
-  Automated External Defibrillator

To Randolph-Macon College  
Equestrian Center at  
Coventry Farms  
12214 Ashoka Rd.  
Ashland, VA 23005

From I-95: Take exit 92 B to Ashland (State Hwy 54/England Street). Continue straight past US 1. Go through that light and take the 2nd right onto Calhoun Street. Take the second left onto Caroline Street. Assistants will help direct you to parking.

Entering Ashland from the west: Take State Hwy 54 East/England St. (connects with US. Hwy 33 in Montpelier) toward Ashland. When you cross the railroad tracks (see "Amtrak" on map), continue straight. Take the 3rd street to the left, Calhoun Street. Take the second left onto Caroline Street. Assistants will help direct you to parking.



# LIVING YOUR WRITING LIFE

## SHARING THE DREAM!

### SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

**All sessions take place in Payne Hall**

9:00 - 9:30: Gather and mingle

9:30 - 9:50: Welcome in auditorium classroom (all attendees)

**Session 1 (10:00 - 11:00):** Karen Jones - Herding Cats: Turning ideas into Structured Work - Rm. 316

Sharon Pajka- Grave Inspirations: Stories arising from cemeteries - Rm. 318

Patti Procopi, Joan Gaustad - Writing Your Story: Fact of Fiction - Rm. 317

Chuck Tabb - Canva, a free graphic arts program - Rm. 306

**Session 2 (11:10 -12:10):** Dawn Brotherton - Publishing Options and Pointers - Rm 306

Dr. Cynthia Tara Ferguson, PhD - The Art of the Interview - Rm. 318

David Godwin - Worldbuilding; How and When - Rm. 317

Deidra Lovegren - The Importance of Comic Relief - Rm. 316

### **Lunch 12:10 - 12:55**

**1:00 - 1:45: Keynote Speaker, Bishop O'Connell**

**Session 3 (1:55 - 2:55):** Betsy Ashton - Managing Multiple Story Arcs and Characters - Rm. 317

Kathy Kasunich - Writing Historical Fiction: Research and accuracy - Rm. 318

Joanne Liggan - Grand Openings to Hook Your Reader - Rm. 316

Leslie Truex - How to Get a Literary Agent - Rm. 306

**Session 4 (3:05 - 4:05):** Kristen Overman - How to Write Satisfying Endings - Rm. 317

Susan Williamson - Writing Family Stories - Rm. 318

Sylvia Hoehns Wright - Market Share: Make it work for you - Rm. 306

**BOOK SIGNINGS WILL TAKE PLACE FROM 4:10 - 4:30 IN PAYNE HALL**

**BOOKS ARE ON SALE ALL DAY AT THE BOOK TABLE IN PAYNE HALL.**

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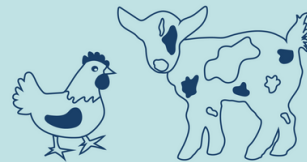


KRISTIE SMELTZER

*Let's tell stories*



**SPECKLEBELLY BARN**



# KEYNOTE SPEAKER



# Bishop O'Connell

**1:00 - 1:45 Auditorium Classroom**

Bishop O'Connell is author of the *American Faerie Tale* series and *Two-Gun Witch*, as well as a consultant, writer, blogger, lover of kilts and beer, as well as a member of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America. Born in Naples, Italy, while his father was in the Navy, Bishop grew up in San Diego, where he fell in love with the ocean and fish tacos. After wandering the country for work and school (absolutely not evading mind controlling bunnies), he settled in Richmond, VA, where he writes, collects swords, revels in his immortality as a "visionary" of the urban fantasy genre, and is regularly chastised for making up things for his bio. He can also be found online at A Quiet Pint ([aquietpint.com](http://aquietpint.com)), where he muses philosophical on life, the universe, and everything, as well as various aspects of writing and the road to getting published.

# More About Bishop O'Connell

## "Your Baby is Ugly"

Rejection as an author is inevitable, but it's not always bad. There are times when authors can use rejections to improve their craft, and there are times those rejections can be ignored. Bishop O'Connell knows a thing or two about rejections. He has been rejected by 118 agents, none of them only once, before being published by Harper-Voyager.

Where Bishop can be found online:

Blog - <https://aquietpint.com/>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/AuthorBishopOConnell>

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/BishopMOConnell>

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/bishopmoconnell/>

Amazon Author Page - <http://www.amazon.com/-/e/B00L74LE4Y>

# Writing is hard. Need a little help?



Finding a partner to guide your writing journey can make all the difference.  
Kristie Smeltzer loves helping others tell their stories.

## Services

- Developmental editing
- Line editing & copyediting
- Writing coaching
- Teaching classes & seminars

## Client Feedback

“Every interaction with Kristie is a lesson for me in craft and the writing life.” —Cindy S., writing coaching client

“Kristie Smeltzer is a delight to work with. She'll give you the feedback 'medicine' you need to improve your writing, while at the same time giving encouragement to keep going.” —Peter S., developmental editing client

“Kristie understood what lay below the surface of what I wrote and put a good deal of thought into her commentary. I can heartily recommend her services.” —J.T.B., developmental editing client

“If Kristie doesn't make you want to be a better writer, no one will.” —Anonymous student on course evaluation



Kristie Smeltzer is a writer, editor, writing coach, and teacher. Her fiction has been published by *MonkeyBicycle*, *Atticus Review*, *pioneertown*, *101 Words*, and others. Kristie earned her MFA in creative writing at the University of Central Florida. She resides in Charlottesville, Virginia, and teaches at WriterHouse and elsewhere. She loves helping others tell their stories.

[www.kristiesmeltzer.com](http://www.kristiesmeltzer.com)



KRISTIE SMELTZER

*Let's tell stories*



# Joan Loren Gaustad

**Session 1 10:00 - 11:00**  
**Room 317**

Sisters Joan Loren Gaustad and Patti Gaustad Procopi started writing around the same time. Joan chose to write a memoir about losing her husband to early onset dementia. Patti wrote a novel about two sisters and the tragedy that bonded them. Joan's memoir is fact. Patti's novel is biographical narrative, blending facts with fiction. Some of the same stories appear in both works, but are told differently.

Joan Loren Gaustad is an artist living and working in Richmond, Virginia, near the VCU campus where the students are a constant source of inspiration. She is the author of the visual memoir, *Someone's Missing...and I Think It's Me* (VCU Libraries Publishing, 2021). The book tells the story of her marriage to the painter and beloved professor, Jerry Donato, as they tried to navigate the mysteries and terrors of early-onset dementia. Gaustad originally intended to write a guide sharing what she learned in the eight years of his illness; the book, however, became a story of love and loss and how art helped her find beauty and joy in what remained. *Someone's Missing...and I Think It's Me* was nominated for The Library of Virginia 2022 Literary Prize in Nonfiction. Gaustad has previously published the photo-memoir *House Hold* with photographer, Michael Lease and *RVA ART*, a small zine about the healing protest art on Richmond's Monument Avenue.

## Writing Your Story - Fact or Fiction

The basics of memoir writing will be covered – how it differs from an autobiography. The types of memoirs. How to decide on your theme. What pivotal moments need to be included, or excluded? How should you do an outline? Joan will then discuss why she felt compelled to write a memoir about her husband. And Patti will talk about taking the stories from your life and turning them into a novel.



# Patti Gaustad Procopi

**Session 1 10:00 - 11:00**

**Room 317**

Patti knew she wanted to be a writer after she learned the magic of reading at the age of five. She took numerous writing courses in high school and college and always had a story in her head but life intervened and she didn't have time to actually write anything down. She and her husband were busy raising three daughters and numerous cats and dogs. Finally after thirty-two years of working at two area history museums, Patti retired and she finally had time to put pen to paper. It was a learning experience. After much work, her first novel *Please...Tell Me More* was published by Blue Fortune Enterprises in 2020. Her second *I'll Get By* came out last October. The sequel to her first book will be published later this year. Patti calls her work biographical fiction. Her novels are about families – the good, the bad and the ugly. Stories of heartbreak and joy. Patti's won two writing awards and had a short story published in a literary journal.

Where Joan and Patti can be found online:

JOAN

[joanlgaustad.com](http://joanlgaustad.com)

Instagram- @joan\_gaustad

[joanlgaustad@gmail.com](mailto:joanlgaustad@gmail.com)

Facebook- Joan Gaustad

PATTI

[pattiproauthor.com](http://pattiproauthor.com)

Facebook - Patti Gaustad Procopi

[patti.pro@cox.net](mailto:patti.pro@cox.net)

Twitter- @PattiProcopi



# Sharon Pajka

**Session 1 10:00 - 11:00**  
**Room 318**

Sharon Pajka, PhD, is a professor of English at Gallaudet University. She is the author of *Women Writers Buried in Virginia* (2021) and *The Souls Close to Edgar Allan Poe: Graves of His Family, Friends and Foes* (August 21, 2023). On the weekends, find her in the cemetery giving history tours or volunteering, as well as running the Virginia Chapter of the Association for Gravestone Studies.

## **Grave Inspiration: Stories that arise from cemeteries and grave markers**

Cemeteries hold a wealth of stories. Mary Shelley used her mother's grave for reading, writing, and lovemaking. Nathaniel Hawthorne frequently used references to gravestones and burial grounds in his writing as did Edgar Allan Poe. This presentation shares how cemeteries and grave markers led to my books and how death could liven up yours.

Whatever your genre, visiting cemeteries can help your writing. For fiction writers, cemeteries are an invaluable resource for character generation and world-building. For nonfiction writers, they hold a wealth of real stories. Time spent in a cemetery soaking up the peace and beauty of nature can boost your writing by creating mental space. Walking through the cemetery among the graves can bring your creativity to life.

Where Sharon can be found online:

<https://www.instagram.com/sharonpajka/>

<https://remembrancetrail.blogspot.com/>





# Karen Jones

**Session 1 10:00 - 11:00**  
**Room 316**

Author, broadcast journalist and freelance writer Karen Jones is the author of the nonfiction *Up the Bestseller Lists!* and *Death for Beginners*, and the novels *The Highland Witch* and *The Summer of Grace*. Jones has fifteen years' experience in television news as anchor and a feature reporter. She has co-directed regional writing conferences, taught writing seminars at the University of Richmond, CNU and LSU, and is a member of National League of American Pen Women, and the Authors Guild.

Currently she holds intensive writing camps on Ocracoke Island, NC, and The Blue Ridge Mountains, VA. Contact her at [kjwriter.com](http://kjwriter.com).

## Herding Cats: Turning Ideas into Structured Work

This seminar will focus on how to gather all of those ideas, scraps of paper, tossed aside index cards, and jottings from dream journals and structure them into a cohesive work. There will be tips on how to start the process which will include The Hero's Journey structure and how to choose what fits and what does not. Exhibits will include a large butcher paper with the Hero's Journey and index cards representing the character arc and plot arc, poster boards with various methods of information grouping, and a handout explaining the techniques. Writers will leave with the tools necessary to gather their ideas into a narrative structure for their work - be it fiction or nonfiction.

Where Karen can be found online:

<https://kjwriter.com>

<https://www.instagram.com/thesummerofgrace1951/>

<https://www.facebook.com/kjwriterbooks>

Twitter: @kjbkwriter



# Charles Tabb

**Session 1 10:00 - 11:00**  
**Room 306**

Charles Tabb is an award-winning author whose works include the popular Twigs series, which has sold well over 100,000 copies, as well as his Detective Tony Pantera series. His stories have been published in online literary journals and have won awards for short fiction. Charles lives with his wife, her two horses and a donkey, and their two rescued dogs near Ashland, Virginia. Charles is the current president of both Hanover Writers Club and The Virginia Writers Club, as well as an active member of James River Writers. He was recently featured at the Authors and Appetizers event in Alexandria, Virginia, and is scheduled to appear on *Virginia This Morning* on Richmond's CBS affiliate, WTVR, in October. Charles is available for public appearances. You may contact him through his website, linked below.

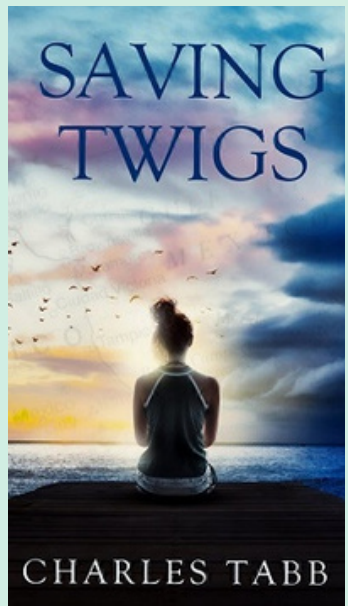
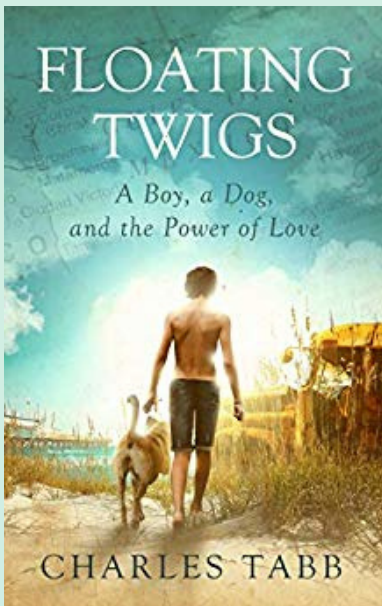
## **Canva: The first Easy-to-learn Graphic Arts Program**

Learn the basics of a graphic arts program that is actually easy-to-learn and use. Need to design your own book cover? Easy! Need to create a new website? Not that hard, either. Canva is great for creating professional documents, flyers, programs, social media ads, book covers, and any graphic art that authors and others can use! Once you learn the basics, you can explore other facets of the program to become an expert in no time. The Basic version is free. The Pro version, which includes even more graphics, can be purchased for only \$10 per month.

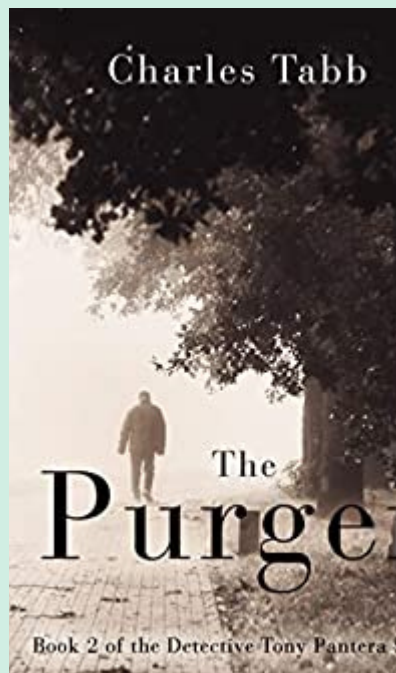
Where Charles can be found online:

<https://charlestabb.com>

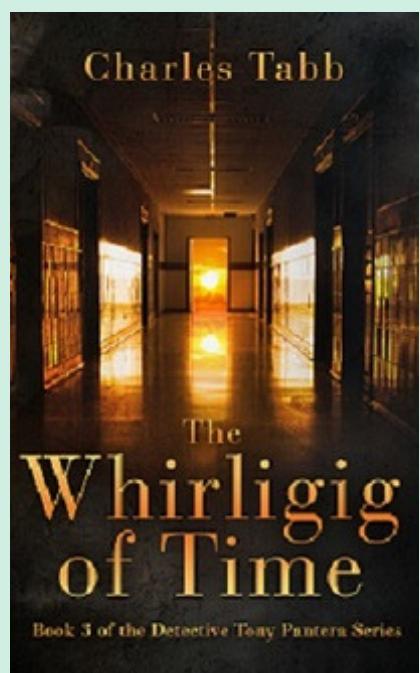
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# Dawn Brotherton

**Session 2 11:10 - 12:10**  
**Room 306**

US Air Force Colonel (retired) Dawn Brotherton is an award-winning author and featured speaker at writing and publishing seminars. As the president of Blue Dragon Publishing, LLC, Dawn mentors writers to help their dream become a reality.

## **Publishing Options and Pointers**

In today's digital age, there are many options to be published, from self-publishing to hybrid to traditional. We will discuss the pros and cons of each and help you come up with the answer that is right for you as an author. Setting realistic goals is important for any venture. What should you expect whether you are self-publishing or going traditional?

Where Dawn can be found online:

<https://www.dawnbrothertonauthor.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/DawnBrothertonAuthor>

<https://www.instagram.com/dawnbrothertonauthor/>

<https://www.bookbub.com/authors/dawn-brotherton>

[https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/7867237.Dawn\\_Brotherton](https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/7867237.Dawn_Brotherton)



# Cynthia Tara Ferguson

**Session 2 11:10 - 12:10**  
**Room 318**

Cin Ferguson is a multi-genre author and poet with a M.F.A. in Writing Popular Fiction from Seton Hill University, a Ph.D. in Public Health from Walden University, a master's degree in public health from George Washington University and a master's in nursing from Case Western Reserve University. Her studies have focused on using qualitative research techniques, understanding medical anthropology and community anthropology, and practicing the art of interviewing people for her work. Cin is a retired military veteran, and served as a U.S. Public Health Service, Indian Health Service midwife, then U.S. Navy nurse-midwife and forensic nurse for 28 years combined. She is an author, editor and publisher, and lives in the forest by the banks of the James River where the world of Iron Shores is only a page turn away. You may happen upon some of her work written by her alter-ego, Querus Abuttu (Dr. Q.).

## FINDING VOICES

How do you find an authentic voice for your work when you launch into your prose? How do you write a convincing non-fiction article that requires first-hand knowledge and experience? The answer lies in accessing information beyond what you can find on the Internet. Taking time to interview experts in the field provides you with valuable information you will get nowhere else. This presentation will take you on a journey through the interview process and beyond. Learn to use information you gather to develop characters, create new environments, and describe emotions and sensations that you may not have experienced yet in your life. Catapult your next project forward by learning some methods to help you find your voice!

Where Cyn can be found online:

Twitter: @Querus\_Abuttu

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DrQAbuttu/>



# David Godwin

**Session 2 11:10 - 12:10**  
**Room 317**

David A. Godwin is an independent author of fantasy fiction, writing from his home in eastern Virginia. His richly detailed Guardian's Prophecy series debuted in 2018 and has gone on to spend months in the Amazon top 20 for its category, including receiving multiple #1 New Release awards. He prefers to spend his time exploring made-up worlds filled with magical creatures and endless possibilities, and is often observed in deep conversation with his imaginary friends.

## Worldbuilding: How and When

You've spent months hunched over ancient tomes and Wikipedia articles, imagining, refining, and painstakingly cataloging everything from the weave of your hero's tunic to the intricate gestures at the heart of your magic system. Now, you have finally begun to write! But HOW are you to place those glorious details into your story and WHEN should you be doing so? Join us as we discover the techniques employed by the masters of storytelling, and explore practical methods you can use to convey the richness and depth of your world without burying your readers beneath a mountain of unnecessary detail.

Where David can be found online:

Website: <https://dagodwin.com>

Instagram: [@da\\_godwin](https://www.instagram.com/da_godwin)

Goodreads: <https://www.goodreads.com/dagodwin>

Facebook: [@authordagodwin](https://www.facebook.com/authordagodwin)

Twitter: [@d\\_a\\_godwin](https://twitter.com/d_a_godwin)



# Deidra Lovegren

**Session 2 11:10 - 12:10**  
**Room 316**

Deidra has written and published over one hundred short stories. Her novel *The Medicine Girl* debuted in July 2022 with the sequel *The Medicine Woman* expected in Fall 2023. Deidra co-hosts “Read Lots Write Lots,” a podcast featuring writers from around the world with her Australian co-host, Russell Norman. In addition, she is a judge for Reedsy Prompts and competes regularly in domestic and international writing competitions. She has been a teacher for decades, teaching scores of English and writing classes to students from preschool to college. After being exiled to Florida for far too long, she has returned to live in her home state of Virginia, where she resides with her husband of 30 years, her three children, and her black cat, Van Halen.

## **The Importance of Comic Relief**

Comic relief is a plot device used to lighten the mood and keep the reader engaged. Commonly used in dialogue and description, comic relief is essential in diffusing tension before, during, or after a difficult scene. Executed properly, comic relief can underscore themes in all genres—including nonfiction! Join us for a rollicking discussion on how we can best use humor in helping our readers both think and feel more deeply when reading our texts. We will also examine comic relief in classical literature; investigate the elements of satire, irony, wit, and sarcasm; determine what makes a scene humorous or contrived; and learn how to avoid breaking a reader’s willingness to suspend disbelief.

Where Deidra can be found online:

<https://deidrawhittlovegren.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/deidra.lovegren>

Twitter: @LovegrenDeidra

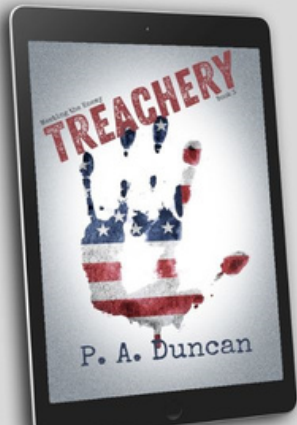


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If you have questions or need help with the publishing process, Blue Dragon Publishing, LLC, offers one-on-one coaching for \$1/minute.

Self-Publishing  
Prep for Traditional  
Copyediting  
inDesign layout





# Betsy Ashton

**Session 3 1:55 - 2:55**  
**Room 317**

Born in Washington, DC, Betsy Ashton claims she was raised in Southern California where she ran wild with coyotes in the hills above Malibu, even though her mother challenged her memory. She writes in multiple genres: mysteries, including the Mad Max Mystery series, *Unintended Consequences*, *Uncharted Territory*, and *Unsafe Haven* (all republished in 2021); serial killer psychological suspense, *Eyes Without a Face*, published in 2017; and literary or women's fiction, *Out of the Desert*, August 2019, the closest thing to a memoir she'll write. Her latest, a suspense novel, *Betrayal*, published in 2021, has won two prizes, Firebird Book Award Winner, 2023, for suspense, and Silver Distinguished Favorite Certificate in the suspense category from Independent Press Award 2023. Her short stories and poetry have appeared in several anthologies including *Murder By the Glass*, *50 Shades of Cabernet*, *Candles of Hope*, and *Reflections on Smith Mountain Lake*. She is the past president of the commonwealth-wide Virginia Writers Club and remains active in the literary communities in Roanoke and at Smith Mountain Lake. Her closest friends know her as Buckshot Betsy. Email her at [betsy\\_ashton2005@yahoo.com](mailto:betsy_ashton2005@yahoo.com) if you want the full story.

Too many story arcs? Too many characters? Tools for plotters and pantsers to keep their stories moving forward

Betsy's workshop focuses on using two simple Excel tools: a character index and a shot or scene index. To help writers get inside the heads of their characters, the character index outlines a series of traits for each named character: tics, physical looks, hobbies, speech patterns (standard vs. substandard English), relationships. The scene or shot index lays out the people, location, timeline, movement within scene, reason for the scene to exist, and questions to be answered in the scene or in later scenes. By returning to these tools frequently, writers can avoid problems with names, places, and timeframes.

Where to find Betsy online:  
[www.betsy-ashton.com](http://www.betsy-ashton.com)



# Kathy Kasunich

**Session 3 1:55 - 2:55**  
**Room 318**

Originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Steeler Country), Kathy Kasunich traded her snow boots for sandals and now lives in Williamsburg, Virginia, with her husband. When she is not writing, you can find her in the great outdoors, listening to music, volunteering, or capturing moments in time with her camera. At times, she does all of them together. As a reader, she is an enthusiastic fan of historical novels and enjoys books that draw her in and make her part of the scene while teaching her something new about the past. After writing articles for local newspapers, she took a leap and wrote her first historical fiction novel, *Always Remembering*, which takes place during World War II. She is researching material for her next book, which is set during the 1700s in Williamsburg.

## **Writing Historical Fiction—Research, Accuracy, and Relevance**

During this interactive talk, Kathy will summarize the research she conducted for her book and her resources. She will also discuss how to conduct research and incorporate facts into your manuscript that apply to the narrative and the time. Kathy will also explore the importance of details, such as customs, facts, and language to give your story credibility and interest. If you are working on a historical novel, please bring an excerpt to share, along with questions and suggestions for others.

Where to find Kathy online:

[kathykasunich.com](http://kathykasunich.com)



# Joanne Liggan

**Session 3 1:55 - 2:55**  
**Room 316**

Joanne Liggan is an award-winning writer of fiction and nonfiction, public speaker, writing instructor, and founder of the Hanover Writers Club and the Hanover Book Festival. Her novels include a family saga trilogy covering three generations: *Heir of Deception*, *Air of Truth*, and *Err At Sea*. Her nonfiction works include the first four of a seven book series, *F.A.C.T.S. New Testament Bible Study Guides*. As an instructor, Liggan has taught writing courses for the Glen Allen Cultural Arts Center, Hanover Parks & Rec., King William Parks & Rec., the Windemere Art Gallery, the VHSL at VCU, the VWC's Annual Writing Symposiums, as well as area writers' groups. She has been an active member of the Virginia Writers Club since 1997.

## **Grand Openings**

Your opening lines are vital to your manuscript. First impressions sincerely do matter. How often have you started reading a book but failed to get past the first few pages? The opening pages of a story, memoir, or novel must hook the reader. We will discuss the essential elements of the first pages needed to motivate readers to continue reading.

To assist with our workshop and make it more interactive, we are asking you to email your first page(s), no more than 2 typewritten pages, using Word doc or docx, double-spaced for ease of reading, using 12 pt Times New Roman or Cambria font, with 1-inch margins all around. These pages will be added to the PowerPoint presentation as examples. Author's names will not be on the PowerPoint or mentioned, remaining anonymous unless the author wants to speak up. This is a terrific way to get feedback on your work without embarrassment. E-mail your pages to [joliggan@gmail.com](mailto:joliggan@gmail.com) no later than July 20th.

**Where Joanne can be found online:**

[www.liggan.net](http://www.liggan.net)

<https://www.facebook.com/jliggan>

[www.biblestudyfacts.info](http://www.biblestudyfacts.info)

*E-mail: [joliggan@gmail.com](mailto:joliggan@gmail.com)*



# Leslie

# Truex

**Session 3 1:55 - 2:55**

**Room 306**

Leslie Truex is a literary agent with Blue Ridge Literary Agency and an author coach. She began her writing career by accident after starting a career website in 1998 that resulted in a freelance writing career and two traditionally published nonfiction books. However, Leslie's passion lies in writing fiction. She is the author of a dozen romance and mystery novels using a pen name. Leslie enjoys sharing her insights and experiences to help emerging authors get their books published. She also supports authors through her online community for romance writers and coaching to both fiction and nonfiction authors. Leslie has spoken and provided workshops as an author and agent at a host of events, including The Virginia Festival of the Book, Malice Domestic, Maryland Writers Association, The Virginia Writers Club, as an adjunct at Piedmont Virginia Community College, and more. She is the former president of The Virginia Writers Club.

## **Setting Your Submission Apart**

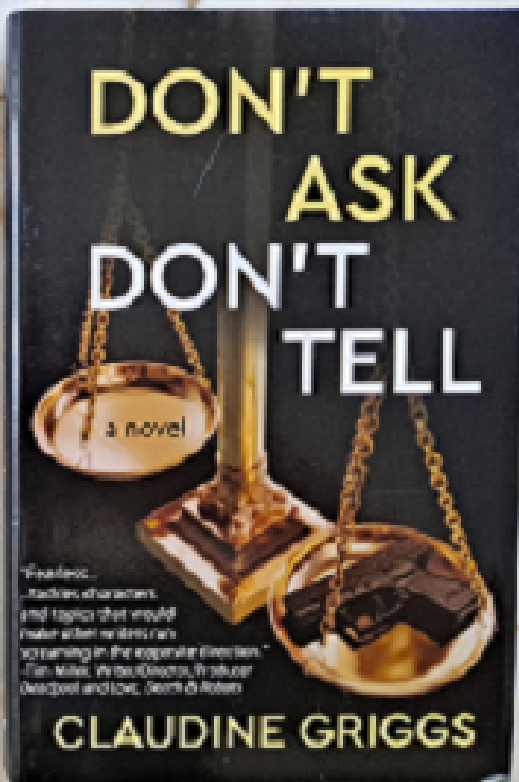
*Learn how to set your book submission apart from the hundreds . . . even thousands . . . agents receive a year. In this workshop you'll learn:*

- *How to get your manuscript ready for submission*
- *Additional materials you need to prepare for submission*
- *Where to find and choose agents to submit to*
- *Pet peeves of agents and how to avoid them*
- *What to expect when working with an agent*

Where Leslie can be found online:

[LeslieTruex.com](http://LeslieTruex.com)

[Blueridgeagency.com](http://Blueridgeagency.com)



Claudine Griggs' publications include three nonfiction books about transsexuals along with her novel, *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*, published in June 2020, and *Firestorm*, a collection of twenty-three speculative stories, released by Ananke Press in March 2022. Be sure to watch her episode "Helping Hand" in season one of the Netflix series *Love, Death & Robots*.



**Just in time for the gift-giving season!**

Looking for something to do on Veteran's Day, Nov. 11? Be sure to come to the Hanover Writers Club Book Expo at the VFW located at 7168 Flag Lane in Mechanicsville. Open to the public from 10 - 3. [hanoverbookfesitval.com](http://hanoverbookfesitval.com)



# Kristen Overman

**Session 4 3:05 - 4:05**  
**Room 317**

Kristen Overman is an editor and book coach for Good Story Editing. She edits all genres of novels, memoirs, outlines, and picture books, and coaches clients through all phases of their writing journey, from outline to drafts to submission. She also teaches Story Mastermind classes in Novel/Memoir and Outline (both online intensive workshops) with Good Story founder Mary Kole. Her BA is in English and Political Science, and post-grad she took classes in Advanced Memoir and Writing the Novel at Harvard. A member of Chesapeake Bay Writers, Virginia Writers Club, James River Writers, and formerly of SCBWI and the Writers Loft (MA), Kristen began her journey writing for kids and young adults, and has since pivoted to clean romance and collaborative projects. When not editing, reading, or writing, Kristen can be found watching her sons play baseball and soccer. She lives in Williamsburg with her family.

## How to Write Satisfying Endings

If the opening of the story has a hook, the ending has a release—the feeling the reader has as they put the book down and look around, seeing the world a bit differently, like coming out of a dream. How do we create that sensation, making the reader want to hold the story world in their minds a little longer? In this workshop, we'll look at different types of endings, what has worked in classic and contemporary fiction (no spoilers!), and then outline a process for writing endings to novels and memoirs that surpass reader expectations.

## Where Kristen can be found online:

Website: <https://www.goodstoryediting.com/kristen>

Twitter: [@Kris10edits](#)

Instagram: [@Kristen\\_Overman](#)

LinkedIn: [Kristen Overman](#)



# Susan Williamson

**Session 4 3:05 - 4:05**  
**Room 318**

Holding degrees from the University of Kentucky and the University of California, Davis, Susan Williamson is a former newspaper editor, college adjunct and extension agent. A native of Pennsylvania, she currently lives in Williamsburg, Virginia, and works as a freelance writer, editor, novelist, and riding instructor.

## Writing Family Stories, Innovative Ways to Share Your Family History

Are you the reservoir of family stories? Are you afraid your family history will be lost if you don't write it? In this presentation, Susan Williamson talks about different reasons to write about your family as well as creative ways and means to research and write family stories and pass them along to others. This will be an interactive program incorporating ideas from the audience as well as the presenter on how to research and shape the story of one's heritage. No one way works for everyone. Consider your audience and what you feel is important. Different approaches may be effective for different audiences. Consider the memories and feelings of those involved—your truth may not be theirs.

Where Susan can be found online:

Website: [susanwilliamsonauthor.com](http://susanwilliamsonauthor.com)

Facebook: Susan Williamson author



# Sylvia Hoehns Wright

**Session 4 3:05 - 4:05**  
**Room 316**

Wright, consultant, lecturer & wordsmith, specializes in eco biz, communications and environmental theories.

## **Market Share: Make it work for you**

Marketing is part of every author's life. Through sharing wordsmith tips and strategies, Wright enables an opportunity for others to identify their organic voice and become recognized as unique Industry presences and brands. Attend a workshop designed to share Industry tips and strategies proven to grow market share.

Where Sylvia can be found online:

[www.TheWrightScoop.com](http://www.TheWrightScoop.com)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/84324851168>

Twitter: @WrightScoop



**The following pages contain handouts that the presenters have supplied. Hard copies, if needed, will be available at the Symposium.**

# Session 1

# Karen Jones Handout 1

## *Thirteenth Annual VWC Symposium* *Herding Cats: Turning Ideas into Structured Work* *Karen Jones - kjwriter.com*

### **Protect Your Ideas from the Inner Critic**

That voice inside of you that says you will not succeed and is fed by fear of rejection, failure, ridicule, exposure, change, & success.

Write a letter to your Inner Critic.

Make a list of rules that your Inner Critic must follow.

Practice control of Inner Critic

### **Errant Ideas – Basic Gathering** – index cards – lots of them!!!

Begin with relaxing techniques – this is indeed a writing session.

Look at scraps of paper – jot down one main idea/action/character/setting per card.

Place them all around on floor / table / bed and give them a long look.

Sort the cards / similar groups / outliers / further exploration / what works.

In addition, you can sit and jot down one idea per card as it arises and add to groupings.

### **Turn Index Cards into Working Information Charts** – poster boards.

Look sort thorough index cards and fill in the charts.

Characters physical attributes – name, age, height, eyes, hair, body type, distinctive features?

Characters psychological attributes – type of person, emotional state, interactions, issues

Setting basic elements – atmosphere, impact, set pieces, physical & surrounding elements,

Setting basic usage – as a character, mood enhancer dramatic device, illuminator, plot advancer

Connectedness chart – who gave birth to whom, who hates/loves each other.

Genealogy chart – use for characters – can even throw in events.

Timeline chart – use for plot – how started – what happened – when & where

### **Turn Cards into Working Plot & Character Arcs** – index cards & butcher paper.

Divide butcher paper into 12 sections for each step of the journey.

Divide each square into half, one for plot arc & one for character arc.

Place your index cards – see what is missing, what does not fit – etc.

Or, you can make a string of cards for arcs and hang info cards below each one.

\***Story:** is a series of events recorded in their chronological order. **Plot:** is a series of events deliberately arranged so as to reveal their dramatic, thematic, and emotional significance.

### *The Summer of Grace*



#### **Recommended Reading**

*The Writer's Journey - Mythic Structure for Writers,*  
Christopher Vogler

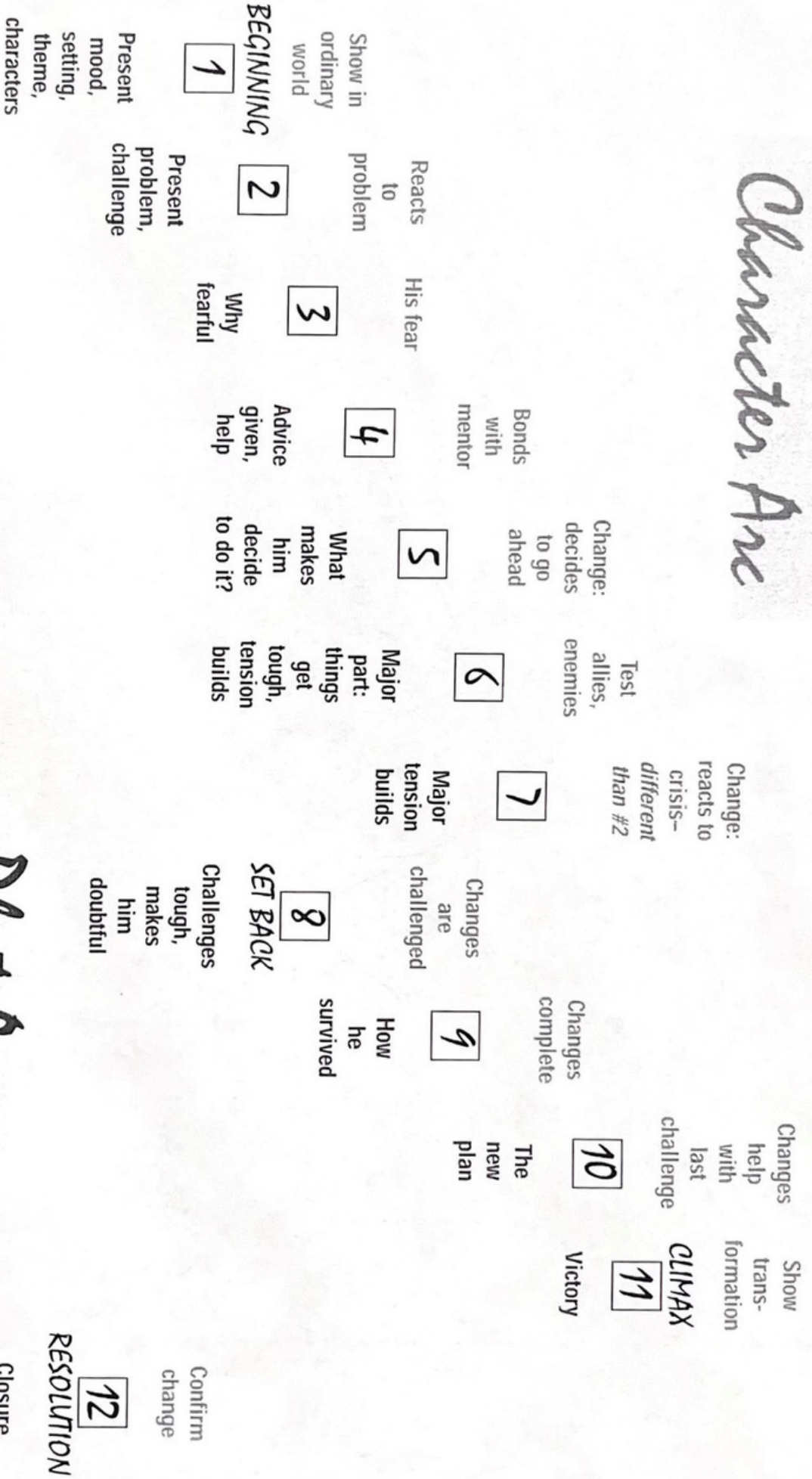
*Writing Fiction, A Guide to Narrative Craft,* Janet Burroway

*On Writing: A Memoir Of The Craft,* Stephen King

*Wild Mind: Living the Writer's Life,* Natalie Goldberg

# Karen Jones Handout 2

*Character Arc*



*Plot Arc*

Plot Structure: *The Writer's Journey 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition: Mythic Structure For Writers*,  
 Christopher Vogler, 1998, Michael Wise Productions, Studio City, CA

# Sharon Pajka Handout 1

## Grave Inspiration: Stories that arise from cemeteries and grave markers. Sharon Pajka

Cemeteries hold a wealth of stories. This presentation will share how cemeteries and grave markers led to my first book and how death could liven up your book's plot.

For writers, I put together some tips to get some grave inspiration.

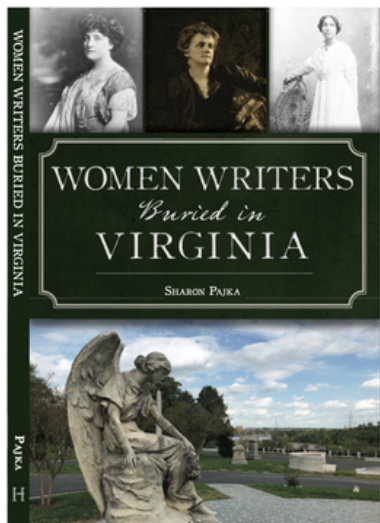
### Consider:

1. The human side of cemeteries—we make up stories about people based on the placement of and the types of grave markers they have.
2. The connection that some writers feel toward their heroes.
3. The names on the epitaphs and how they can inspire character creation.

### Going further:

4. Research
  - a. Take a cemetery tour.
  - b. Take a cemetery map or brochure and go with a buddy. For safety but also because there are more eyes looking around.
  - c. Pick up a general book such as *The Family Tree Cemetery Field Guide: How to Find, Record, and Preserve Your Ancestors' Graves* 2017 by Joy Neighbors or an AGS guide to learn about cemetery symbols. There are resources about the language of gravestones, flowers, and cemetery landscapes as well as religious symbols and military symbols. There are fraternal orders that are fun to find.
  - d. Look for cemetery-focused books from The History Press.
  - e. Newspapers.com and Ancestry.com and Find-A-Grave.

Sharon Pajka, PhD, is a professor of English at Gallaudet University. She is the author of *Women Writers Buried in Virginia* (2021) and the forthcoming *The Souls Close to Edgar Allan Poe: Graves of His Family, Friends and Foes* (2023). On weekends, you can find her in the cemetery helping run the Virginia Chapter of the Association for Gravestone Studies.



Arcadia Publishing/ The History Press  
<https://www.arcadiapublishing.com/>

Virginia Chapter of the Association for Gravestone Studies  
<https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaChapterAGS>

Contact:  
[Sharon.pajka@gallaudet.edu](mailto:Sharon.pajka@gallaudet.edu)

# Sharon Pajka Handout 2

## Guided Cemetery Visit Observation Worksheet

Describe one grave marker, recording the shapes, sizes, colors, and plant life nearby. Can you identify if the plants are native to the area or were they added to the gravesite?

Select a favorite epitaph. Write it below. What does the inscription mean to you?

Epitaph:

Meaning:

In the style of Canadian poet Rupi Kaur, write a short poem and sketch an image you might find in your favorite cemetery.

# Procopi/Gaustad Handout 1, pg. 1

## WRITING A MEMOIR

### Autobiography vs. Memoir

They are not the same.

Types of memoirs –

#### TRANSFORMATIONAL

- Great challenge and how the narrator overcame them, or even tried and failed
- A theme of redemption – this is what happened and what I learned

#### CONFESSIONAL

- In this memoir the narrator shares painful and difficult secrets about their self or their family.

#### CELEBRITY

- Important moments in the narrator's life that lead to success. A bit of a self-help feel

#### TRAVEL

- These memoirs allow the reader to escape with the narrator and learn about a particular time or place through their eyes.

### FOCUS ON THE READER

A memoir is a contract between you and the reader.

You need to tell the truth.

Who is your reader? Who are you writing for?

### 5 THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Settle on your theme.
2. Select the pivotal event/events
3. Outline your book
4. Write it like a novel not a college text book.

## Procopi/Gaustad Handout 1, pg. 2

5. Avoid throwing people under the bus.

### THEME

1. The Underlying theme is a message to your reader.
2. All people share certain needs and fears.
3. Don't preach. Let your experiences make the point.

### PIVOTAL MOMENTS

1. If you're afraid to tell the whole truth, you're not ready to write your memoir.
2. Choose the events that support your theme no matter how painful.
3. Create a list of the events that deeply affected you.
4. Bring up the unforgettable people in your life.
5. Talk to members of your family for different perspectives.

### OUTLINE YOUR MEMOIR

For people who tend to be pantsers vs. plotters – this might seem like a lot to ask. But bear with me.

1. When you're looking over your whole life you might want to include everything. You can't.
2. Your outline might change. That's fine.
3. A guide will keep you on track.
4. The outline is a road map to organize your story.
5. You can't make things up. The outline helps with that too.
6. An outline will help you drill down and decide on the story you most want to tell.

### WRITE IT LIKE A NOVEL

In brief-

Plunge your main character (you) into a terrible situation or dilemma  
Things get worse  
Appears hopeless



## Procopi/Gaustad Handout 1, pg. 3

But in the end the main character (you) has grown and learned from all this

### THROWING PEOPLE UNDER THE BUS

1. You need to be brave enough to all your weaknesses, mistakes, and failures to the world.
2. But what about your friends, enemies, relatives, co-workers – should you expose them?
3. Should you?

### THINGS TO AVOID!

1. Only include details that matter
2. Don't brag.
3. Don't gloss over the truth
4. Avoid preaching.
5. Don't be flippant

### SUMMATION

In brief –

A memoir is –

1. A journey through a part of your life.
2. It can give comfort and encouragement and inspiration to the reader.
3. It should be engaging and capture the reader's interest.

### SO NOW YOU'RE READY!

1. First read a lot of memoirs, especially those that relate to your theme.
2. Reading "comps" will help you see how others approached their story.

### NOW!

YOU DECIDE ON YOUR THEME

WRITE YOUR OUTLINE

START PICKING OUT THE STORIES YOU WANT TO INCLUDE

## Procopi/Gaustad Handout 1, pg. 4

OR IF THAT IS TOO LONG....

Writing a Memoir – Fact or Fiction

Types of memoirs – which one are you?

Focus on the reader – tell a good compelling, relatable story.

Choose your theme

Pick your pivotal moments

Do an Outline

You're almost ready – do research – read "comps".

If you aren't ready to "bare" all – you can fictionalize your story

# Session 2

# Lovegren Presentation, pg. 1

The Importance of

## COMIC RELIEF



**COMIC RELIEF**  
IS A HUMOROUS SCENE  
INTENDED TO PROVIDE AN  
**EMOTIONAL RELEASE**  
TO CONTRAST THE  
SERIOUSNESS OF THE WORK.

— Murfin & Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical & Literary Terms*



WE'RE GOING TO  
TALK ABOUT...



### History

- The Graeco-Roman Period
- The Medieval Period
- The Renaissance
- The Enlightenment
- Romanticism & The Victorian Era
- Modernism and Postmodernism

### Techniques

- Irony
- Wit
- Satire
- Sarcasm



### Elements

- Timing
- Characters
- Diction
- Dialogue

COMEDY AS A GENRE



Farce



Romantic  
Comedy



Satirical/Black  
Comedy



**"A HAPPY ENDING"**  
IS ALL THAT'S REQUIRED TO  
QUALIFY AS A **COMEDY**—  
THE RISE IN FORTUNE OF A  
SYMPATHETIC CENTRAL  
CHARACTER.

— Murfin & Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical & Literary Terms*



**ARCHETYPES**  
ARE IMAGES, FIGURES,  
CHARACTERS, SETTINGS, AND  
STORY PATTERNS UNIVERSALLY  
SHARED BY PEOPLE ACROSS  
CULTURES.

— Murfin & Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical & Literary Terms*



# Lovegren Presentation 1, pg. 2



**ARCHETYPE**  
"The Role"  
The Universal Human  
Character Type



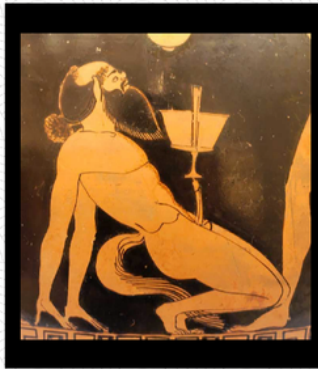
**TROPE**  
"The Personality"  
Commonly Used Story  
Element



**CLICHÉ**  
Overused element that  
makes writing boring and  
predictable.



## THE HISTORY Of Comic Relief



### COMUS (KOMOS)



In Greek mythology, Comus is the god of festivity, revels, and nocturnal dalliances.

**Comedy** = kōmos ("revel, carousing") +  
ōidē ("song")

## THE GRAECO-ROMAN PERIOD

1200 BCE - 455 CE

### Homer's *The Iliad*

**Zeus:** "Come, let us go to bed and love there, so that we may give sleep to the race of mortals."

**Hera:** "Remember how once before I hung you up, aloft from the earth, and put two anvils at your feet? From that time on you were not able to stir me."



## THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

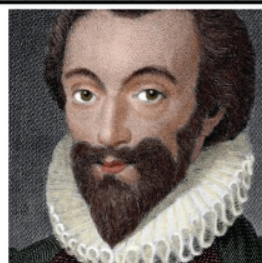
455 - 1485 CE

NOW IN THE OLDEN days of King Arthur,  
Of whom the Britons speak with great honour,  
All this wide land was land of faery.  
But now no man can see the elves, you know.  
Holy friars infest each land and every stream  
Women may now go safely up and down,  
In every copse or under every tree;  
There is no other incubus than he,  
And would do them naught but dishonour.



## THE RENAISSANCE

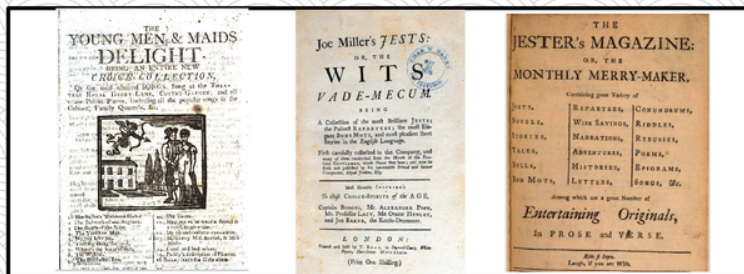
1485 - 1660 CE



(From John Donne's "Death Be Not Proud")  
 From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
 Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,  
 And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
 Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
 Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
 And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
 And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well  
 And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?

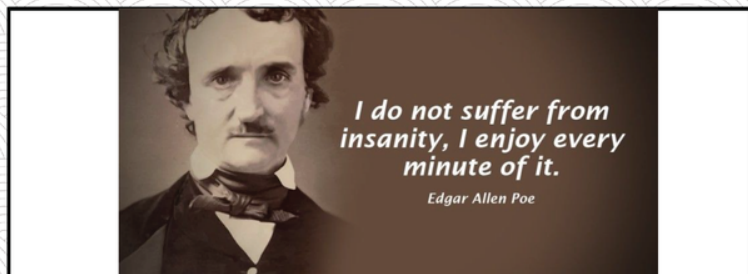
## THE ENLIGHTENMENT

1660 - 1790 CE



## ROMANTICISM

1790 - 1830 CE

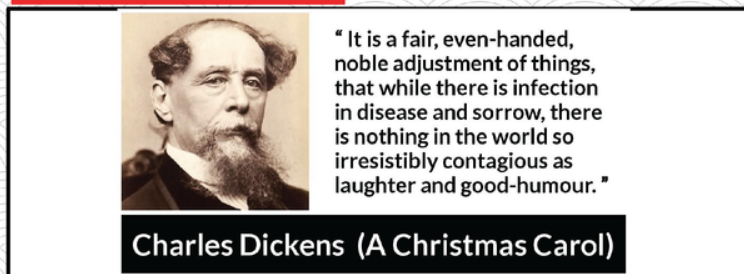


*I do not suffer from  
 insanity, I enjoy every  
 minute of it.*

Edgar Allan Poe

## THE VICTORIAN ERA

1832 - 1901 CE

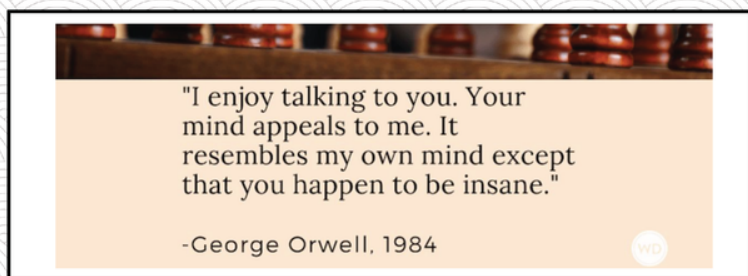


*"It is a fair, even-handed,  
 noble adjustment of things,  
 that while there is infection  
 in disease and sorrow, there  
 is nothing in the world so  
 irresistibly contagious as  
 laughter and good-humour."*

Charles Dickens (A Christmas Carol)

## MODERNISM & POSTMODERNISM

1901 CE < Present Day



*"I enjoy talking to you. Your  
 mind appeals to me. It  
 resembles my own mind except  
 that you happen to be insane."*

-George Orwell, 1984




### TECHNIQUES

Of Comic Relief



WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE IN  
WRITING  
COMIC RELIEF?



C

COMEDY

- To amuse
- To entertain

I

IRONY

- To contrast reader's expectations vs. reality

S



SATIRE

- To improve society

T

SARCASM

- To hurt
- 



A SERIOUS AND GOOD  
PHILOSOPHICAL  
WORK COULD BE  
WRITTEN  
CONSISTING  
ENTIRELY OF JOKES.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

HOW TO WRITE A JOKE



Setup

- Establish premise
- Clarify context



Punchline

- Have an ironic twist
- Reverse expectations



Tag

- Employ "Toppers"
- Use the "Rule of 3"



IRONY

Expectations and Reality



**IRONY**  
IS A CONTRADICTION BETWEEN  
**APPEARANCE** OR **EXPECTATION**. AS  
THE SUBTLEST COMIC FORM,  
**UNDERSTATEMENT** AND  
**HYPERBOLE** CREATE COMIC RELIEF.

— Murfin & Ray, The Bedford Glossary of Critical & Literary Terms





## WIT

The Intellectual Form of Humor



**WIT**  
IS AN EPIGRAMMATIC, CLEVER  
EXPRESSION, OFTEN VIEWED AS  
THE **INTELLECTUAL** FORM OF  
HUMOR.

— Murfin & Ray, The Bedford Glossary of Critical & Literary Terms



## SATIRE

Exposing humanity's vices



**SATIRE**  
EXPOSES HUMANITY'S VICIOUS  
AND DEMANDS CHANGE OR  
REFORM THROUGH RIDICULE.  
IT HAS A MORAL PURPOSE.

— Murfin & Ray, The Bedford Glossary of Critical & Literary Terms



## SARCASM

Greek: "to tear flesh like dogs"



**SARCASM**  
IS COMPRISED OF INTENTIONAL  
**DERISION** USUALLY DIRECTED  
AT ANOTHER PERSON AND  
INTENDED TO HURT.

— Murfin & Ray, The Bedford Glossary of Critical & Literary Terms







## ELEMENTS

Essential Component of Prose



## TIMING

"Kairos" - the opportune occasion



## CHARACTERS

All need personality & purpose



**COMIC RELIEF CHARACTERS**  
OFTEN TAKE THE SHAPE OF A  
BUMBLING FOOL OR  
WISECRACKING COMPANION  
TO RELIEVE AUDIENCES FROM  
THE SERIOUS OVERARCHING PLOT.



## DICTION

Word Choice



## COMEDIC DEVICES:

- REPETITION
- DOUBLE ENTENDRE
- PUN
- JUXTAPOSITION
- MISTAKEN IDENTITY
- TABOO
- MISDIRECTION





## DIALOGUE

Conversation = Connection



### THE RULES FOR COMEDIC DIALOGUE:

- CREATE FUNNY CHARACTERS
- DON'T MAKE THE JOKE OBVIOUS
- PUT THE FUNNY PART AT THE END
- CRAFT THE RHYTHM OF THE LINE THAT LEADS TO THE TRIGGER (WATCH COMMAS - DON'T SLOW IT DOWN!)
- LEAVE SPACE FOR THE LAUGH



# Brotherton Handout



# Blue Dragon Publishing

## *Publishing Options and Pointers*

Dawn Brotherton

Why write?

Expert

Gifts

Donations

Creative

~~Vanity~~

Traditional

<9% royalties

Slow to print

Wider market reach

Self (It's not free!)

Learn everything

Make all the decisions

Warehousing/distro is hard

KDP; IngramSpark; Draft2Digital

Hybrid (Outsourcing)

At LEAST 60% royalties, but payment upfront

Easier, but not guaranteed

Established

Perceived legitimacy

Writing is also a business

- Track receipts
- Mileage
- Legal status
- Insurance
- PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

NO MATTER WHAT

- Business license
- Marketing
- Plan / execute book launch
- Sell your book

# Session 3

# How to Get a Literary Agent

## What does an agent do?


### Preparing for submission

- € Finish your book
- € Edit your book
- € Determine the genre/topic and category of your book
- € Prepare your book for submission

### Quick Query Tutorial

- Address the agent by name, e.g. Dear Ms. Smith
- Hook Agent Immediately
- Provide book genre/topic, word count, and a BRIEF plot or book Summary
- Indicate the target market
- Tell the agent about You
- Offer brief overview on how you'll market the book
- Let the agent know what you've attached
- End with a thank you and closing
- Read and re-read before hitting send

### Finding an Agent

- € Research agents who represent your genre/topic AND subgenre/subtopic of your book
-  € **FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES!!!**
- € Submission tips
- € What to do while waiting...

### Working with an Agent

### Questions?

Leslie Truex | Blue Ridge Literary Agency, LLC | [Blueridgeagency.com](http://Blueridgeagency.com) | [LeslieTruex.com](http://LeslieTruex.com)

## Managing Multiple Story Arcs and Characters

### SAMPLE CAST INDEX

Chapter First Appeared	Name	Role	Physical Description	Importance to Story	Questions to be answered	When/How Resolved?
1	Names of all characters appearing in each chapter	What is their primary role?	What do they look like?	Should explain or hint at the main reason each character is in the chapter. What is their overall importance to the plot?	The chapter should end with a question or hint at future actions in the following chapter.	In which chapters are the questions resolved?

## Ashton Handout 1, pg. 1

Chapter First Appeared	Name	Role	Physical Description	Importance to Story	Questions to be answered	When/How Resolved?
1	Sa-ti Ma, Daisy, Maggie Rose and the Judge			Introduced through letter from the judge suggesting a conspiracy of public officials running drugs	Can Ma believe what's in the letter since he doesn't know the judge well?	After Ma discovers secret room. Chpt 5
2	Sa-ti Ma	Main Character	6'2" tall Chinese American man. Black and black; thick hair parted on side.	He carries the novel; single father to Maggie Rose; widower to Daisy Lee; head of multijurisdictional taskforce; feeds out of place at beginning. Not stereotypical stoic Asian or badass Federal agent.	When will he confront loss of wife and mourn? How will raising his daughter free him from being upright? How will he balance professional and private life?	
	Harry Akers Overstreet	Advisor to Ma	Round faced, 5'6". Hazel eyes; male-pattern baldness	Attorney handling Ma's estate; knows most of the characters found on "wall of questions."	Will he help Ma decipher the judge's clues?	
	Judge Thomas Poff Lee	Daisy's grandfather		He's dead at the beginning of the novel, but he is a guiding presence throughout through clues he left in letters for Ma.	Is he feeble-minded, or has he truly uncovered a corruption that impacts Ma's taskforce?	After Ma discovers secret room. Chpt 5
2	Maggie Rose	Ma's Daughter	Short, black and black, lithe, runs and leaps like a gazelle; very bright child; nicknamed Button	She's the strongest woman in the story. Her relationship with her father is central, along with the task force. She humanizes Ma, breaks through his shell	Why does Maggie Rose think her room is haunted? She begins having nightmares shortly after she begins sleeping in her mother's old room.	
	Mei-xing	Ma's sister (Name means Beautiful star)	Short, thin, black and black	Tries to come between Ma and Maggie Rose to keep child in San Francisco. Ma stops fighting her when he realizes she's afraid to lose contact with Maggie Rose	Does Mei-xing really want to move to VA or is she afraid to leave SF?	
4	KWNT	Neighborhood watch	Looks like a homeless man; rides a rickety ball-on-tire bike; has no teeth	He's always around when Ma needs help, guidance. Ma learns to lean on Keith with no teeth.	What is KWNT's background? Why did the judge trust him?	
	Darryl	Uniformed cop	Shorter than Ma; quick to threaten	Ma will learn he's one of the people the judge warns about; people you can't trust	Is he a bully or is he part of the greater cabal?	
	Grace Overstreet	Harry's wife	Athletic, dark hair. Maybe in late 50s, early 60s	Will help Maggie Rose assimilate	Will she be part of the village helping to raise Maggie Rose?	
	Rasta	Goldendoodle	3 yo pup	Will encourage Ma to buy dog from Maggie Rose		
6	Emmitt	Bad State Trooper		Darryl's brother		
	Charles "Uncle Griz" Griswell	FBI agent	6'5". Well-muscled, shaved black head. Coffee w/o cream	Daisy's FBI partner; best friend for Ma; Maggie Rose's protector; married to Eleanor; 2 boys, 1 girl. RICO expert	How will Griz and the rest of the taskforce stop the criminals?	
7	Oscar	Belgian Malinois	Black and tan	Griz's partner; suffers from PTSD; Maggie Rose loves him	Will Oscar be able to go back to work?	

Continued on next page

### Managing Multiple Story Arcs and Characters

8	Sheriff George Wells	Retired Bedford County sheriff	Mocha-colored; graying hair. Lean build from working around his farm	One of three people Ma can trust, along with KWNT and Harry Overstreet	How will George help Ma unravel the wall of questions?	
	Cassie Wells	Sheriff's wife	Pliates build athletic; short; Cappachino colored	Daisy's riding teacher; will teach Maggie Rose to ride; will become close friends w/ Ma and Griz	How much does Cassie know about the conspiracy? Knows George has a "meditation" room in barn similar to wall of questions	
9	Sequoia McMillan,	ATF agent	Tall, tanned surfer girl. Parents were hippies in Oregon	Expert in firearms, gun running, sniper		
	Kjell Bysstahl	FBI agent	Red-headed, freckled, blue eyes; Norwegian American from Maine	RICO expert; also cyber sleuth		
	Nadine Percario	FBI agent	Barbie with a purple Mohawk	Drugs and human trafficking expert.		
10						

## Managing Multiple Story Arcs and Characters

SAMPLE SCENE INDEX							
Chapter	Calendar Date / Time Frame	Place	Characters	Location - Movement in Scene	Primary Action	Questions to be answered	When/How Resolved?
Chapter number	What is the date/time frame for action in the chapter?	Where does the action take place?	Name the main characters and their relationships (if relevant)	Does the action move from one part of the scene to another?	Briefly describe the primary action and why this is important to move the story forward.	Ask relevant questions to move the story forward.	

GRANDPA'S KEYS SCENE INDEX							
Chapter	Calendar Date / Time Frame	Place	Characters	Location - Movement in Scene	Primary Action	Questions to be answered	When/How Resolved?
1	Early spring, pre-pandemic. Monday, Day One	Roanoke	Ma, Harry Overstreet, Maggie Rose, Judge Thomas Poff Lee, Daisy	Attorney's office, Judge's home	Ma reads letter on bottom of Grandpa's Keys box. He's left with more questions than answers. He explores the second floor of the house and calls his daughter in SF. Argues w/ sister about her moving.	What do the keys open? Where are the letters and why are they important? Why does the attorney think he needs to clean his house? When will he mourn?	
2	Evening of first day; Monday	Roanoke	Ma, Maggie Rose, Mei-xing (Ma's sister)	Judge's home	Ma reads letter on bottom of Grandpa's Keys box. He's left with more questions than answers. He explores the second floor of the house and calls his daughter in SF. Argues w/ sister about her moving.	Ma finds four pages in the box letter hinting at people he can trust and not trust. He has to deal with his sister's influence on his daughter.	
3	2nd day; Tuesday	Roanoke	Ma, Overstreet	Judge's home, Parkway	Finds GTV. Goes for ride with Overstreet and questions him about the judge's suspicions. Is warned again to sweep the house. He does and finds multiple bugs.	Whobugged judge's house? Sophisticated setup couldn't have been installed in a couple of days. Ma still not onboard about conspiracy.	
4	Wednesday, 3rd day	Roanoke	Ma, Overstreet, Darryl, KWNT	In and around Grandin Village	Registers car and gets new DL. Harassed by Darryl, uniformed cop. Overstreet warns Ma to keep an eye on Darryl and his brother, Morris. Meets KWNT. Ma paints office and blinds one camera, one bug.	Why was Darryl harassing Ma? How does KWNT fit into narrative? Ma when 6 students OD and die, is this part of the cabal or happenstance?	
5	Thursday, 4th day	Roanoke	Ma, the judge thru letters	Judge/Ma's home	Ma finds secret room in basement w/ its wall of questions; reads all letters to understand the scope of the conspiracy.	Researcher finds 23 deaths. Thinks there are more. Wall of questions full of hints about the conspiracy.	
6	Friday, 5th day	Roanoke	Ma, Harry Overstreet, Grace Overstreet, Rasha, Sheriff Wells, Mei-xing, Maggie Rose	Ma's house, flight to SF, arrival at apt in Marina district	Ma plays chess with Harry, speaks with Wells on the phone. Agrees to drive out to farm to meet him when he returns from SF. Arrives in SF to find Mei-xing angry and Maggie Rose with a broken wrist.	How did Maggie Rose break her wrist? When will Ma tell Mei-xing she's not welcome to move? What does Wells know? Judge said he is trustworthy. Is he?	
7	Saturday, 6th day	San Francisco	Ma, Maggie Rose, Mei-xing (Ma's sister), Griz and Oscar	Ma's apt in Pacific Heights district	Ma surveys damaged car, has talk with Mei-xing. He and Maggie Rose finish packing and return to Roanoke. Griz and Oscar meet them at the airport.	How will Ma handle being a single father and balance it with his new job?	

# Ashton Handout 2





## ***YOUR IMPORTANT FIRST PAGES***

Presented by Joanne Liggan, Author/Instructor

### **Airport Test:**

- **First impressions matter—The opening page of a story, memoir, or novel must not only hook the reader, but it should also ground the reader in place, time, and character.**

### **Points of discussion:**

- **Introduce the overall conflict of the story**
  - The problem embodying much of the story should be quickly introduced
  - The problem must be story-worthy
- **Hook the readers**
  - A suspenseful event connected to the overall conflict should be introduced in the beginning
  - This event should present a problem for the main character to overcome
- **Create a believable world with established rules**
  - The rules must remain consistent and not change conveniently as the story progresses
- **Forecast the ending – but first the writer must know the ending—complete the rough draft first**
  - Foreshadowing, without allowing the reader to know exactly how the story will end, allows the reader to feel the story has completed a circle.
  - The reader should have an idea where the story is heading so the story doesn't simply end without feeling complete.
  - By writing the opening of the story last, the writer knows how it ends and can carefully forecast the ending of the story.
  - With all the elements in place, create your best opening

**Examples of opening sentences and paragraphs from popular, and not-so-popular, books will be shared during the session:**

**Participants have been asked to email the first page of their story if they wish.**

- **These will be read aloud and discussed during the session.**
- **This is a critiquing exercise, so please accept the comments as constructive criticism.**
- **Authors will not be identified so they may remain anonymous if they so desire.**

# Session 4

**To find out more about The Virginia Writers Club, please see the following pages, where you'll find information about where you can find a local chapter and how to join the second oldest state writers club in the nation.**



A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization  
Federal ID# 54-1370703

*The Virginia Writers Club, Inc.*

P. O. Box 94  
Somerset, VA 22972  
[www.virginiawritersclub.org](http://www.virginiawritersclub.org)

The Virginia Writers Club, Inc, established in 1918, is the Commonwealth's oldest organization of published and aspiring writers and poets, screenwriters and playwrights, journalists and essayists, and other publishing professionals. Our purpose is to support and stimulate the art, craft, and business of writing, as well as advocated the literary arts in the broader Virginia community. Among its members are award-winning authors, including the Pulitzer Prize.

Membership in The Virginia Writers Club is open to all, regardless of race, gender, national origin, age, religion, sexual orientation, or disability. Membership, however, does not constitute or imply endorsement by The Virginia Writers Club or its members of any member's body of work.

**MEETINGS:** The Board of Governors meets quarterly and their meetings are open to the public. The fourth quarter meeting is also the annual membership meeting with elections, awards, a luncheon, and a keynote speaker. VWC chapters meet more frequently and offer workshops, critique sessions, guest speakers, contests, and local literary events.

**WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA:** On the members only portion of our website, we encourage members to post a profile, where you can list your publications to the "Members in Print" marketing page. We also have a Facebook page for VWC

**WRITING CONTEST:** The VWC conducts two contests each year, The Golden Nib and Teen Nib. First place entries from each chapter are eligible for the state contest, which awards money to first, second, and third place winners in each category. Winning entries, including each chapter's first, second, and third place winners, are printed in our annual Golden Nib and Teen Nib Journal, with author approval of inclusion.

**PUBLICATIONS:** The VWC publishes two journals each year. Submission dates are publicized through regular emails to the membership of VWC. Submissions are limited to VWC members only.

**SPEAKERS' BUREAU:** VWC members available for speaking engagements can join our Speakers' Bureau, used by our chapters when planning meetings, workshops, and literary gatherings. Organizations outside VWC also select speakers from this listing for their events. The entire list is available to the public on the VWC website.

**ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM:** Each year, VWC hosts a one-day Symposium, held in various locations throughout Virginia. We feature panels and craft workshops conducted by writing and publishing experts. We also offer a keynote speaker, provide a catered lunch, a book fair, and a booklet with information from the presenters. VWC members receive a discount on the registration fee.

**OTHER LITERARY EVENTS:** VWC is an advocate for literary events across the Commonwealth, and we offer mini-grants to our chapters for their local events. We provide volunteers or participate in other statewide literary arts events.

**YOUNG VIRGINIA WRITERS CLUB:** The YVWC is an outreach program for teen writers in middle and high school. Activities include the Symposium (with discounts for students and teachers), writing contests, and a scholarship opportunity. VWC members can serve as guest speakers for school writing clubs.



# The Virginia Writers Club

*History the art, craft, business, and advocacy of the literary arts throughout the Commonwealth.*

For more information contact Leslie Truex at [leslietruex@gmail.com](mailto:leslietruex@gmail.com)  
[virginiawritersclub.org](http://virginiawritersclub.org)

## Regional Chapters

There are currently TEN regional chapters of the Virginia Writers Club and TWO sub-chapters. Chapter involvement allows opportunities for individuals to get together on a more frequent basis with other local writers to exchange critiques, encourage each other, and network. Chapter meetings are typically held monthly with activities including writing workshops, critique sessions, guest speakers, contests, and sponsorship or involvement in literary events.

**Northern Virginia Chapter VWC** -  
Serving Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun & Prince  
William Counties. [NorthernVirginiaWriters.org](http://NorthernVirginiaWriters.org)

**Write by the Rails, the Prince  
William VWC Chapter**. Serving Prince  
William, Manassas, Manassas Park  
Contact: [writebytherails@gmail.com](mailto:writebytherails@gmail.com)

**Skyline Writers Circle** - Luray, VA  
A subchapter of Blue Ridge Writers

**Riverside Writers Chapter VWC** - Serving City  
of Fredericksburg, Counties of Caroline, King George,  
Lancaster, Stafford, Stafford & surrounding areas.  
[riversidewriters.org/](http://riversidewriters.org/)

**Blue Ridge Writers Chapter VWC**  
- Serving City of Charlottesville; Counties  
of Albemarle, Augusta, Buckingham,  
Fluvanna, Greene, Madison, Nelson, &  
Orange. [BlueRidgeWriters.org](http://BlueRidgeWriters.org)

**Hanover Writers Chapter VWC** -  
Serving Hanover, King William & Henric  
Counties. [HanoverWriters.org](http://HanoverWriters.org)

**SWAG** - Staunton, Waynesboro, Augusta Group  
A Subchapter of Blue Ridge Writers

**Richmond Chapter VWC**  
- Currently re-establishing.  
Hanover is closest. Contact  
[virginiawritersclub.org](http://virginiawritersclub.org)

**Chesapeake Bay Writers  
Chapter VWC** - Serving  
the Eastern Chesapeake Bay  
area.  
[chesapeakebaywriters.org/](http://chesapeakebaywriters.org/)

**Hampton Roads Chapter  
VWC** - Serving Chesapeake,  
Norfolk, Suffolk & Virginia  
Beach.  
Contact: [jah@chsewirroads.com](mailto:jah@chsewirroads.com)

**Valley Writers Chapter VWC** -  
Serving Roanoke, Bedford, Franklin,  
Perryman & Campbell Counties.  
Contact: [ValleyWritersGroup@gmail.com](mailto:ValleyWritersGroup@gmail.com)

**South Central Chapter VWC**  
- Petras Development.

**Appalachian Authors Guild - Chapter  
VWC** - Serving the city of Norton; counties of  
Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell,  
Washington, & Wise.  
[AppalachianWriters.com](http://AppalachianWriters.com)

If you are interested in joining a local chapter, please go to the website indicated for each for contact information. Areas served by each chapter are listed as a guide, but you are free to contact and join any chapter that is convenient for you. We hope to see you soon!

**\$15 NEW Member**  
Introductory Rate  
Renewals at regular rate.

# The Virginia Writers Club, Inc.

Established in 1918 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION  *New*  *Renewal*

*Membership is open to all regardless of race, gender, national origin, age, religion or disability.  
Membership in the VWC does not constitute or imply endorsement, by the Club or its members, of a writer's body of work.*

To pay by Credit Card,  
join via our website  
virginiawritersclub.org

Mail completed application with appropriate dues contribution payable to:  
**The Virginia Writers Club • P. O. Box 94 • Somerset, VA 22972**

MEMBERSHIP CALENDAR YEAR: *January 1 - December 31*

**ACTIVE**  \$15 NEW (First year only)  \$30 Renewal  \$100 Supporting  \$500 Lifetime Member

Those who have a) written a book, play, movie, or other script which has been published, produced, or broadcast; b) edited a published anthology, literary journal, magazine, or newspaper; c) written and sold to a magazine, newspaper, book publisher, or other communication media, two poems, one short story, or an article; or d) who aspire or wish to achieve the aforementioned. Eligibility for this category is also open to individuals, organizations, associations, institutions, foundations, and other groups with a vested interest in and goals in common with the VWC.

**CORPORATE**  \$15 NEW (First year only)  \$30 Renewal  \$100 Supporting  \$500 Sponsor  \$500 Lifetime  
Businesses and philanthropic organizations that support the mission and objectives of the Club.

**STUDENT (COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY)**  \$15/Annually Full-time students or part-time students

Name of College or University \_\_\_\_\_

*Additional Tax-Deductible Contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ enclosed for the VWC Educational Fund.*

(Circle one) Miss Ms. Mrs. Mr. Dr. (or specify) \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Pen Name \_\_\_\_\_

Company Name (If Applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Website \_\_\_\_\_

BLOG \_\_\_\_\_ FACEBOOK \_\_\_\_\_ TWITTER \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

PRODUCTS OR SERVICES YOU PROVIDE WRITERS \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBER OF THE \_\_\_\_\_ CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA WRITERS CLUB, INC.

INDICATE THE VWC ACTIVITIES YOU WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN:

*(Please be sure to read the E-Nunciator Newsgram for meeting announcements and information on new and current activities!)*

- Advertising in the E-Nunciator
- Chapter Meetings *(Check only if you are not involved with a VWC Chapter and would like to be contacted by your regional Chapter representative.)*
- Distributing VWC information in your area
- Marketing & Promotions on the VWC Website or other similar opportunities
- Speakers' Bureau

- Virginia Festival of the Book
- Attending Workshops (indicate specific area of need) \_\_\_\_\_
- Conducting Writer's Workshops (indicate specialties) \_\_\_\_\_
- Writing Contests
- Young Virginia Writers Club (middle & high school teens)
- Conference Planning