

OUR APRIL 12TH MEETING

Journeys of Discovery

Multiple International award-winning Radio Personality, Photographer, Travel Columnist and Author Tom Wilmer will share stories, tales, and insights from his three decades of exploring the world. His journeys have taken him from the Arctic Circle to Zimbabwe. He'll share humorous and some scary stories, including when he was almost shot by a madman in Morocco to the time he put a Belfast, Ireland policeman at mortal risk during the "Troubles", and riding in an Australian Outback cattle drive.

Wilmer has spent much of the past five years making monthly trips to destinations around America for his ongoing audio travel series, *In Search of Americana*. He'll share insights and touching tales about cool places close to home and around the country, and the memorable people met along the way. He'll share recollections of a touching visit with Fannie Flagg of Fried Green Tomatoes fame, joining an environmental "campaign" aboard the Greenpeace Rainbow Warrior II in the Canadian Gulf Islands, visits with senators, congressmen and Native American elders, and flying a micro-light aircraft over Victoria Falls.

Wilmer will talk about the ways he's transmuted his journeys on to the printed page, utilized photography to garner awards, and how he's crafted in-depth audio travel features for



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the past 25 years airing over NPR affiliate KCBX—receiving numerous awards. His Lowell Thomas Award-winning podcast travel show is featured on NPR, the NPR One app, and more than 12 digital media channels around the world, including Player.fm in the U.K., where his show was selected as a “Best Travel Podcast”.

Website: www.thomascwilmer.com

Twitter: @TomCWilmer

NIGHTWRITERS “ROUND TABLES”

Join Terry Sanville and Mark Arnold at the Critique Table as they give feedback on pieces brought to the table. Please **keep your submission to two pages, typed, 12-point font, double spaced**. This is a great—and safe—way to see what the critiquing process is all about, get valuable feedback from two fantastic writers, and practice reading your work to a small audience. Round Tables start at 5:15 pm.

Susan Tuttle's Instruction Round Table will focus on **Story Ideas**. Story ideas surround us, but do you know how to find them? Come learn the 12 areas where stories lurk, waiting for writers. Then learn how to craft a story statement that will keep you on track as you write, how to brainstorm story events and directions, how to use personality types to kick-start your stories and how to evaluate the staying power of your story ideas before you begin to write. Come at 5:15 to the **Story Round Table** and learn how to make all your story ideas truly memorable.

See you at the Round Tables on Tuesday, March 12th at 5:15 pm.

Also, please see VP Andrea Chmelik's update on the Round Tables on page 6.

Fellow Writers!

Is a writing partner sick? Need encouragement?

Getting married or having a baby?

Suffering from the loss of a loved one?

Email me at jandkvolkov@att.net and I'll send them a card from their SLO NightWriters family.

Kalila





Dennis Eamon Young

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: MINE THE UNEXPECTED

It seemed like a perfect night for my after dinner constitutional. As usual, I strode past the big houses, then along the cliff walk by the ocean. I stopped for a moment to savor the furious roar of the ocean as a backdrop to the vast peacefulness of the stars, and inhaled the tang of salty air. My solitary jaunt resumed to where the road ended at

houses perched on the cliff edge. Here I turned up the last street to the main road, breath coming harder, legs straining a bit as my pace slowed.

At the top of the street, I stepped onto the sidewalk, same as hundreds of times before. As I began to resume a brisk pace, my right foot came down on a portion of cracked sidewalk and slipped on the loose cement and gravel. It was a swift descent; head first. I hit hard, barely able to get my hands in front of my face, but still smacked the stonework with the left side of my face.

Luck was with me, as I was momentarily stunned, but did not black out while I lay in a pool of blood. It took a painful few minutes to gauge my situation as best I could. I rose unsteadily, gained my feet, vision murky with only the right eye working. I stumbled forward, twelve blocks from home, streets poorly lit and blood all over me.

I stopped at a Chinese restaurant that had just closed, a young girl locking up. I tapped on the door. I felt terrible that she had to behold me in that state, as she put her hands to her face and screamed for her co-worker. A young man came from the counter bringing napkins for me and graciously offered to walk me home. I thanked him, but declined. With the aid of the napkins, I was able to clear the blood from my left eye, as I made my way home.

My wife drove me to the hospital, where the necessary cleanup, stitching and shots were taken care of, along with a few wisecracks with the nurses and doctor. Nice to know my sense of humor was still intact.

Now, days later, I am on the mend. I refer to myself in this moment as an understudy for *The Phantom of the Opera*, but this will fade to nothing more than a distant memory to be put away with other misadventures.

Before I allow this episode to sink into a blurry memory, I want to examine it as a writer. What can I mine from this possible disaster? I need to study the various facets of the experience in vivid detail to see what may be of use for a story, or even a part of one.

The part that stands alone for me is that poor young lady at the Chinese restaurant. I feel such regret that I needed to subject her to that experience. My normal evening walk had

been shattered. Her normal evening had also been upended. How easily two lives might reach an unexpected intersection and bring unknown repercussions, either large or small.

Do not allow the unexpected to pass you by without exploring and mining it for all that it may bring.

Excelsior,

Dennis

NW MEMBER AUTHORS, SELL YOUR BOOKS!

Sell your books at our general monthly meetings! If you are a member of the SLO NightWriters, we encourage you to take part. We will have a table set up for you to display, discuss and sell your books.

Please note—SLO NightWriters holds no liability in this process. All authors participating are responsible for their own money exchanges and for the security of their own funds and books. Your dues with the SLO NightWriters must be current in order to participate.

We hope that you will welcome this opportunity. For more information about our meeting, please visit our website.

Award Winner!

The Brown Paper Bag, by NightWriter **Destry Ramey**, has garnered honorable mention in the 2016 Los Angeles Book Festival Winners List for Children’s Books. Destry and Feather are “majorly honored and plan on attending the 36th Annual Awards Ceremony on April 9th. Feather is not letting it go to her head and remains, as always, the Little Celebrity that she is.”



Community Outreach!

Dear NightWriters,

As a non-profit organization in a relatively small and tight-knit community, we are making an effort to participate in projects that can bring us closer together and spark interest in reading and in writing.

We have reached out to **Righetti High School in Santa Maria** and we are partnering in a project that is near and dear to our hearts. **The Warrior Writers** is a group of local high school students with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds who promote reading, writing and healing through writing to others. The students expressed an interest in visiting a local elementary school—Liberty Elementary in Santa Maria—to read excerpts from their writings, and to donate books to the 6th grade classes.

This is where the SLO NightWriters comes in. **We would like to help the Warrior Writers bring books for their 6th grade friends.** The field trip will take place on May 25th. We will be donating \$100 towards the purchase of the books.

This is where you come in—if you are authors of books that suit 11-14 year olds, and would like to donate your book(s) for this cause, please contact me at:

chmelik.andrea@gmail.com.

In a few days, we will have a list of books that the Warrior Writers put together—books that made impact on their lives and that they would like to give to the elementary school students. We will be sharing that list with you and you will be able to purchase them for the kids if you do not write for that age group but would like to help the Warriors.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Otherwise—stay tuned for more info to come in the next few weeks!

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Andrea Chmelik
SLONW Vice President

FREELANCE OPPORTUNITY

Casey Schreiner, editor & founder of Modern Hiker (www.modernhiker.com), solicits work from freelance writers about hiking, trails, sports, etc. Check out their website for details.

ROUND TABLES UPDATE

When we started with our roundtables at the general meetings a couple of years ago, we were certainly hoping to spark some interest, but the ever-expanding attendance has surpassed our expectations. We are so pleased that you enjoy them!

In order to accommodate the growing demand, we have to make certain adjustments.

Starting with our May 10th meeting, our critique round table will prioritize the SLO NightWriters members' work, at no charge. This is a service that we are happy to offer as a perk that comes with the membership. If time permits, non-members can have their work critiqued for \$5.

Also, the instruction round table will welcome the SLO NightWriters members free of charge, and accommodate non-members for \$5.

Our main program that starts at 6:30pm and features a guest speaker is still free of charge and open to public!

We hope that this arrangement will allow us to provide the best services to our members. Thank you for your continuous support and we look forward to seeing you at our future meetings!

Sincerely,

Andrea Chmelik
SLONW Vice President

Editors Needed

We are looking to expand our pool of editors for the SLO NightWriters organization. The mission of our organization is to advance quality writing, promote publication, and expand author recognition in a forum that nurtures a spirit of community for all its members. In order to continue carrying out this mission successfully, we are looking for members who either have professional editorial experience, or who have been heavily involved in critique groups and peer line exchanges.

If you are available to volunteer a little bit of your time, you can help your peers to become better writers and you can help our organization to provide better services. We are happy to work with you and your busy schedules to avoid overload and burn-out. Please, contact me at chmelik.andrea@gmail.com if you are interested, or have any questions.

KUDOS... KUDOS... KUDOS...

“The Undertaker’s Daughter”, a story of historical fiction by **Terry Sanville**, will appear in the upcoming print edition of The White Ash Literary Magazine. Check them out at www.whiteashmag.com/.

Terry Sanville’s short story, “Johnny Five Diamonds”, will appear in the upcoming online and print edition of Black Elephant. Check them out at www.blackelephantlit.org/. The graphics of elephants on their site are beautiful.

SLO County Poet Laureate **Marguerite Costigan**’s newly-released book of poems, *Rock & Fire*, will be available for purchase at the NightWriter’s April 12th meeting. Terry Sanville writes, “Bring your checkbooks; cash is also good... heh, heh.”

Judith Bernstein’s article, “Farewell to Foam”—on the ban on styrofoam in Morro Bay, Arroyo Grande and San Luis Obispo City—appears in the Spring edition of Edible San Luis Obispo. It features interviews with three restaurants and how they are adjusting to the new styrofoam-free world. Click on “read the digital version” at the bottom right and go to page 23 at: www.ediblesanluisobispo.ediblefeast.com

As part of AAUW, **Judith Bernstein** dressed as Amelia Earhart and went into classrooms in Grover Beach and Shell Beach for Women’s History Month, a truly fun experience exposing kids to a truly adventuresome, courageous woman.

“Blowing Smoke”, a long story written by **Terry Sanville**, will appear in the September 2016 edition of Ink Stains Anthology, a print publication put out by Vagabondage Press, based in Apollo Beach, Florida.

Judith Bernstein has been asked to write a regular column for Edible San Luis Obispo, articles that deal with some aspect of wine and grape production. Despite the plethora of wineries in the area, Judith writes that it will be a challenge to make that information lively and engrossing. Can’t wait to read the articles, Judith!

Nine NightWriters have had stories selected for inclusion in the upcoming Sisters in Crime (SinC) Central Coast Chapter anthology, *Deadlines: Murder and Mayhem on the California Coast*. It is slated for launch in early June. Watch for some terrific, and terrifying, stories by: **Rolynn Anderson, Ruth Cowne, Paul Alan Fahey, Judythe Guarnera, Janice Konstantinidis, Jo Anne Lucas, Sue McGinty, Tony Piazza and Susan Tuttle.**

FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

Dear NightWriters,

WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES

As part of community outreach, SLO NightWriters is organizing a team for Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, an event to raise awareness about sexual assault and gender-based violence. The 14th Annual San Luis Obispo Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event

will be held on Saturday, April 30th, in Mission Plaza from 11 AM - 1 PM. The family-friendly event will feature live music by The Kicks, a vendor fair, awareness activities, and a mile walk through downtown where supporters can carry signs and men can sport high-heeled shoes as a symbol of their support. Team members can also opt to instead walk at the Paso Robles event on April 16th, which will feature live music by The JD Project.

Both events benefit RISE, a non-profit organization which provides free services to survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence throughout San Luis Obispo County, including a 24-hour crisis line, counseling, legal help and shelter services.

Each SLO NightWriters team member will be asked to pay a \$20 registration fee (which will be reimbursed by SLO NightWriters) and/or raise a minimum of \$20 in pledges. If you'd like to join the SLO NightWriters team, or if you have questions, please contact Andrea Chmelik at chmelik.andrea@gmail.com.

Let's get out there and walk!

Sincerely,

Andrea Chmelik

Vice President & Social Media Coordinator



Andrea Chmelik



TOLOSA PRESS

YOUR COMMUNITY IN YOUR HANDS

Congratulations to SLO NightWriters Carroll McKibbin and Darryl Armstrong!

Tolosa Press • March 24-April 6, 2016 • 23

NIGHTWRITERS **central coast life**



Heidenreich House

By Darryl Armstrong

Gossip was that murder occurred in this house. The two-story Victorian had been a show place in the late 1800's. Mrs. Heidenreich played piano at church. The upturned piano, fallen chandeliers, and articles of clothing strewn inside, bode of rapid departure.

I wanted to know more about the old place so I sat with our neighbor, Mr. Pfilog. He was in his seventies, a childless widower and a kind man.

"Ya, dat house is not good place for be playing boys," Pfilog pointed to the Heidenreichs. "You get hurt n' cused of doin dat destroyings."

"But what happened? Who killed who?" My eleven-year old mind conjured ghastly scenes.

"Well, when they was hit, they been fightin' lot." He settled back in his rocker rubbing his knee. "I'm thinkin she wantin more than he gonna gift her. Her screamin and hollerin heard over town. She a'threatnin him, 'If'n you don't gift me money, I'ma goin stoney's shop and d'vorcin'! He just wave his hand, say 'Bah!' to her."

Old newspapers said that Heidenreich had kept a large amount of cash from the sale of his parent's farm. Not trusting Ada, his wife, he stashed the money somewhere on the property. The night Ada attacked him with a fireplace poker he was able to shoot her with his Gewehr 88. They both fell in a pool of blood in the living room. Neither recovered from their wounds. Funerals were on the same day at different cemeteries.

"I guesses money hid on dat property, even now," Pfilog said. "Nobody find. Dat Heidenreich was smart one. I look once. Saw blood marker on dat floor. Not want stay dere, den."

I had to go to the house. Sitting on the floor of the Heidenreichs I saw glass shards and powder from broken plaster framing footprints from countless invasions. Weathered and broken light fixtures, pieces of destroyed furniture and crumpled sheet music surrounded me.

The summer air changed to in the room, still and too quiet. A thin strip of light from a floorboard to the fireplace. An surrounded me. I pain in my left te where Heiden had been hit. must have right-handed. sense of int kept me in I My heart pounded, my breath came in quick shallow gulps. I felt softness of a woman's hand push against my back propelling me the room. I tried to turn and run I was enveloped. The force was but relentless. I crabbed toward fireplace.

The floorboard molding had tampered with. I found a spot we could slide a finger behind the molding and peed it back. The section dusty area behind the boards was



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NIGHTWRITERS **central coast life**

Graying and Straying

By Carroll McKibbin

Homer removed his hard hat, leaned up against a tree, and opened his lunch pail. Another "What's happenin'?" Jake asked, plopping on the grass beside his pal.

"Same old thing," Homer replied. "Sure could use a change of pace. How 'bout you?"

"Ya know, when Phyllis left me last year, I thought it was the end of the world. But I've survived, and then some."

"How so?" Homer asked.

Jake grinned and chugged from his thermos. "She called me a loser and almost made me believe it. But then I joined Jolly Match-Makers."

"What's that?" Homer asked.

"It's on my computer. It matches up lonely singles. I've already looked up with three chicks."

"You're sixty, Jake. Dya still call 'em chicks?"

"Okay, let's say hens. But I've had some mighty good times. How 'bout you? Ya don't all right in the romance department?"

"Battin' zero. Dolores does crossword puzzles in bed while I

daydream of yesteryear. If I was single, I'd sign up with your Jolly group."

"Haven't ya heard of 'Date Bait'? It's been in all the papers."

"Nah. I only read the funny pages. What's it about?"

"It's like Jolly Match-Makers, but for married folks looking for action."

"Who wants a gray-haired guy with a bald spot and 46-inch waistline? Besides, I've been latched to Dolores for 36 years. We've got grandkids for cryin' out loud."

"I'll bet things at home are pretty edgy, Right?"

"You can say that in spades. She's more of a roommate than a wife. I'm downstairs watchin' 'The Doggers on the boob tube and she's upstairs soaking up 'The Young and the Restless.' Dolores has the passion of a log and no interest in me whatsoever."

"You'd be doin' her a favor if you looked elsewhere. She'd be relieved."

"Dya really think so?"

"No doubt. But you're gonna need a make-over."

"Like what?"

"I'd start with a new name. Homer Snodgrass don't cut it."

"It's worked for sixty years. What d'ya have in mind?"

"I'm thinking Luigi Capri."

"You're crazy. I ain't no Italian."

"Think Casanova and Valentino."

"Gotta. What else?"

"The bib overalls gotta go. We'll cover your bald spot with a bevet and hide your paunch under a billowy shirt. You add a touch of woman-killer cologne, and you're in business."

"What if Dolores finds out?"

"She won't. This is hush-hush stuff. And if she does, she won't give a hoot. After the change, women just don't care anymore. Check out 'Date Bait' on your computer and let me know how it goes."

The next day Homer, a.k.a. Luigi, strolled into Joe's Bar with a notable swagger. "How'd it go?" Jake asked.

"You wouldn't believe it. I got five hits in an hour. I'm meeting a gal named

Cleo Patrick at the Holiday Inn later tonight. From her description, she's some diab."

"How'd you clear the evening with Dolores?"

"No problem. She's playing bridge at Ethel's. I told her you and I are off to a ball game. Can I use your apartment to change clothes?"

"Sure thing."

An hour later the new Romeo, robes in hand, entered an unlocked #314 at the Holiday Inn. Flames of scented candles provided a sensuous aroma in the dim glow of enchantment. Champagne cooled in an ice bucket. A slice of light from the closed bathroom door revealed the silhouette of a female form in a filmy negligee. She turned toward her lover.

"Dolores! What the Dickens are you doing here!"

Carroll McKibbin is a retired Cal Poly professor. His articles have appeared in magazines and newspapers from coast-to-coast. He is a member of SLO NightWriters, for writers at all levels in all genres, find them online at slonightwriters.org.

We are accepting story submissions now!

Find Tolosa submission guidelines at www.slonightwriters.org

Submit your 500-600 word short fiction to meaganfriberg@gmail.com

Pick up copies of SLO City News, Bay News and Coast News at local stores and kiosks.

Visit the Tolosa on-line archives to read other NW stories published in the CC Life section of Tolosa Press.

at www.tolosapressnews.com

MEMBERSHIP MINUTE

Will return in full next month. But don't forget, even though we designated March as Bring A Friend Month, you can bring a friend every month. Do you have a friend who confided in you that he/she writes poetry but never shows it to anyone? Someone who has been writing short stories since grade school and has kept them all? Do you know someone who journals daily; has a fantasy of writing the great American Novel; or aspires to be a travel writer, journalist, writer of self-help books, or a blogger? Or just a family member who's curious about what it takes to be a writer?

Bring them with you to the April meeting!

We look forward to sharing what we have to offer your friends and/or family members. We hope that they like our program and our round tables. We hope they enjoy having the opportunity to network with other writers and finding out about contests and critique groups and other writing events and activities.

Bring a friend to our meeting on April 12th!

Hanje



Hanje Richards

Hospitality Needs You

Our Hospitality Committee is doing a fantastic job of making sure we have scrumptious goodies for every meeting. But Leanne Phillips, Baxter Trautman and Brian Schwartz could use some help. If a few more NW members pitch in, then each committee member would be responsible for only one or two meetings a year!

It's a fun job. All it takes is some shopping for goodies the day before/day of the meeting, spreading the treats out on the table to entice attendees, and cleanup after the meeting ends. All money outlaid is reimbursed at the meeting.

Contact Leanne if this sounds like something you'd like to help with. What better way to get what you'd like to snack on than being part of the committee?

Leanne Phillips: lphillips715@gmail.com

NEW CRITIQUE GROUP FORMING

Judith Bernstein is looking to start a critique group centered around creative non-fiction, articles, op-ed pieces and memoir. Focus is on being published. Skill level intermediate to advanced. Time and place to be determined. If interested, contact the moderator for more information. Contact: Judith Bernstein @ ryewit@live.com or call 805-904-6365.

New Facebook Group

Dear NightWriters,

For those of you who would like to socialize and get to know each other better, but can't attend our monthly meetings, we have created a Facebook group.

Facebook groups are dedicated spaces where you can share updates, photos or documents and message other group members. Just click on the link below and hit "join group" in the top right corner. Once our administrator approves your request, you are in!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1701340913423099/>

Invite other NightWriters and get going. Swap ideas, encourage each other, share your events and so on.

We hope that you will find a group of writing peers beneficial!

Sincerely,

Andrea Chmelik
SLONW Social Media Coordinator



“You have to read widely, constantly refining (and redefining) your own work as you do so. If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time (or the tools) to write.”

~Stephen King



by: Mike Price

GETTING TO KNOW NIGHTWRITER MEMBERS

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Rolynn Anderson

This month's Spotlight is on Rolynn Anderson. She has been a SLO NightWriter member since 2011.

NW: "Who are you?"

RA: Rolynn Anderson is my married name. Shellum (Skjellum is the Norwegian spelling) is my maiden name. I was raised an Army brat and then attended St. Olaf college –Lutheran/Minnesota and the University of Washington. I became a high school English Teacher, a Principal, and then an education consultant in Washington State. I moved to Arroyo Grande in 2000 and started my writing career. I was first published in 2011 and my 6th book was published in 2015. I'm a hybrid: Small press published and self-published.

NW: "Who is your greatest inspiration?"

RA: For me it's the 'Where?' Give me a great setting like Petersburg, Alaska, a small town PACKED with Norwegians that look like me, and a novel begins to write itself—*Lie Catchers*. Last summer, I spent a month in the southern French city of Aix en Provence, and it became the birthplace of my next mystery/crime novel, *Cezanne's Ghost*. Put me in a new location and a story blooms out of the place. For me, it's all about location.

NW: "Do you have a blog?"

RA: Yes, I do. It's not fully functioning, but I enjoy blogging regularly on Roses of Prose, occasionally on Kiss and Thrill and sporadically on other venues. I've made several friends by blogging, so I do believe in the medium!

NW: "What genre do you like to write?"

RA: I began as a suspense/romance writer, but my latest novels have morphed to the mystery/crime category, with the hero/heroine developing a relationship along the way. I truly believe there's as much mystery in a relationship as there is in a complex plot. I try to make both build suspense for the reader.

NW: "Tell us about your favorite story / article / essay that you have written."

RA: *Lie Catchers* is a mystery / suspense / romance novel set in Petersburg, Alaska, where Norwegians predominate. I enjoyed visiting this 'Little Norway' on my boat on two occasions...the first time deciding to use the setting for a novel; the second time, to sell my book there. My heroine has a quirky memory skill; my hero is a U.S. Treasury agent. They're out to solve a 1932 cold case and a recent death, which allowed me to talk about the history of the town along with present-day Petersburg.

NW: "Tell us about your latest project."

RA: I am writing a mystery / suspense / romance novel, *Cezanne's Ghost*, about the disappearance of three American tourists in Aix en Provence, France. Four American tour guides are suspects; the FBI's Victims Assistance Program (VAP), the American consulate, and the French police struggle to solve the mystery before the European tourist industry collapses.

NW: "Do you have a day job?"

RA: Yes. I am a writer. I work about eight hours every day on this career.

NW: "How does your family support you in your writing?"

RA: My husband is my best cheerleader, with my sister a close second. Though some of my family wishes I were writing literary fiction (men, in particular, seem less interested in stories about relationships), I know my family and friends are proud of my efforts to publish and market my six novels.

NW: "How does NightWriters help you?"

RA: I joined SLO NightWriters in 2011. I like learning from other authors, for sure, especially about the self-publishing business. I also want to sign up for book-selling opportunities paired with other writers. Now that I have sold my boat, we'll be spending more time in CA and I'll use NightWriters to learn about my community and make friends!

NW: "How do you handle rejection letters?"

RA: Rejection letters prompted me to find a 'way in.' I learned that the best way to be accepted was to find someone to 'sponsor' me with a small press. I found a mentor (an author with a track record) who loved her small press and she let me use her name in my query letter. I had three books accepted by the small press after that; I'm also self-pubbed.

NW: "Tell us something surprising about yourself."

RA: I am Robo-woman. After my double knee replacement in 2014, I improved my golf index by two strokes!

NW: Besides writing, what are your other hobbies?"

RA: I'm an inveterate golfer, working at the game seriously when I moved to CA in 2000. I am active in the Cypress Ridge women's golf club. I enjoy gardening-nine fruit trees and 80 species of plants in my half acre yard keep me busy. I love to read, travel, and go to movies and restaurants. I enjoy cooking and keeping my house ready for entertaining. Life is definitely good for my husband (of 45 years) and me!

NW: Thank you Rolynn, for sharing your story. I for one, found it fun to google "Petersburg" and "Aix en Provence." I learned a couple of new things.

If you'd like to be spotlighted, contact Mike at: drjakespa@sbcglobal.net



by: Liz Roderick

A WRITER'S PROCESS

Liz loves to talk about authors and their books and how they write them. If you'd like to be featured in Liz's column, drop her a line: elizabethroderick@att.net. All she needs is a copy of your book, and your emailed answers to her questions.

"Critique Group Connections"

NW Members—Please, email critique requests to: Janice Konstantinidis (jkon50@gmail.com) We'll print your specific request in this **Critique Group Connections** section of the newsletter for all NW members to view, increasing opportunities for NW critiquing. Use this information to find a match for your needs, make contacts, or to start a new group or critique partnership. Contact Janice for assistance if needed and she'll get you to the right people. And, if you form a group, please let Janice know so she can list it on the website. She can also forward your group's information to the newsletter. Critique Group Guidelines are available on the website at www.slouthernwriters.org.

***SLO NW cannot guarantee critique group formation or availability but do we strive to facilitate connections between writers so they can initiate and develop their own writing affiliations. While we cannot be, and are not, responsible for any outcomes from these associations, we hope they lead to great creative magic and magnificent literary works!

CRITIQUE GROUP REQUESTS

Laura Emerson is seeking a critique group for researching and writing California Historical Fiction. Preferred skill level—intermediate/advanced. Preferred location is SLO, Morro Bay, Pismo. Contact Laura at noturavg@sbcglobal.net.

Holly Thibodeaux works in fiction, non-fiction, screenwriting, memoir and experimental fiction. She is seeking a critique group or peer edit exchange with writers in a more structured environment with accountability to boost productivity. Intermediate level preferred; no location restrictions. She would also like to find others interested in exploring the philosophy of writing and the psychology of storytelling. Contact her at:

Katie is seeking a critique group for YA and FICTION. She is interested in either a critique group, or 1:1 electronic peer exchange. She has some writing experience and prefers SLO City location. Contact Katie at: dreamsofcitylights@gmail.com.

Tony Taylor is seeking a critique group for FICTION, YA, CHILDREN'S MIDDLE GRADE or VARIED GENRES, preferred skill level is advanced/experienced writers. Preferred location is SLO City area. Contact Tony at 805-704-3528 or by email: tony@anthonyjtaylor.com

Rolynn Anderson wishes to organize a **NEW PLOTTING GROUP** for LITERARY FICTION with elements of suspense and mystery. Preferred skill level is advanced. Preferred location is Arroyo Grande/Los Osos/SLO area. Contact Rolynn at 805-473-5847 or by email rolynna@earthlink.net

Critique Group Connections, Continued

Griselda Rivera is seeking multiple critique groups: MEMOIRS, TEEN & CHILDREN'S, ACADEMIC/EDUCATION/LINGUISTICS.

Contact Griselda at grissilvarivera58@yahoo.com

Colin McKay is seeking a critique group or peer edit exchange for COMMERCIAL FICTION – CRIME, YA, or SCREENWRITING. Preferred skill level is advanced. No location restrictions for meetings but would prefer Los Osos, Morro Bay, Cambria. Contact Colin by email: mckay01@gmail.com

David Flamm is seeking a critique group or peer edit exchange or 1:1 writing mentor/partner or editing fee for service, for COMMERCIAL FICTION. Preferred Skill Level is Intermediate to Advanced. Preferred locations for meetings are SLO City, South County/Santa Maria, Orcutt. Contact David at 805-868-3779 or by email: david.flamm@yahoo.com

Christina Grimm is seeking a critique group or peer edit exchange for VARIED NO GENRE RESTRICTIONS. No skill restrictions. Preferred location for meetings is SLO City, Los Osos, Morro Bay, Cambria, but can travel to other locations.

Contact Christina at 805-459-4923 or by email: grimmpsych@gmail.com

Jill Stegman is seeking a critique group or peer edit exchange for LITERARY FICTION or LITERARY HYBRIDS WITH THRILLER, SUSPENSE, MYSTERY. Preferred skill level is advanced. Preferred location for meetings is SLO City, Los Osos, Morro Bay, Cambria or North County.

Contact Jill at 805-466-1956 or by email: jastegman@gmail.com

Deborah Brasket is seeking a critique group, online peer edit exchange, or 1:1 writing partner for ADULT LITERARY FICTION, NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES, AND FOR CHILDREN'S MIDDLE GRADE NOVEL. Preferred experience level is intermediate to advanced. North County is preferred.

Contact Deborah at 221-5405 or by email: dbrasket51@gmail.com

Alycia Kiley is seeking a critique group for VARIED GENRES but primarily POETRY, NON FICTION and ARTICLES; skill level is intermediate. SLO City location is preferred.

Contact Alycia at 602-7075 or by email, alyciakiley@gmail.com

George Klein is seeking a critique group or 1:1 writing mentor/partner for COMMERCIAL FICTION; No particular skill level or meeting location restrictions.

Contact George at 712-3378 or by email, fangio@charter.net

Steve Bowder is seeking a critique group that concentrates on true stories embellished to make them interesting, but that stay true to the facts that are known.

Contact Steve at: sbowder@live.com

Quote of the Month

“The freelance writer is a man who is paid per piece or per word or perhaps.”

~Robert Benchley

Word of the Month “Derogate”

Definition: (V, L. *de*, from + *rogare*, to ask, propose a law) to disparage or belittle; to detract from (authority, value, etc); to deviate from.

Synonyms: denigrate, minimize, disparage, go astray, decry, discount, run down

Usage: He had no cause the derogate the plan I was proposing, as I had thought it out thoroughly.

SLO NW e↔Line Edit Exchange

Can't find a critique group? Don't have time for meetings? Have specific needs for feedback on your work? Our Electronic Peer Review Line Edit Exchange is perfect for out-of-town members, or those with restricted time schedules.

All E-Exchange Partners are SLO NW members.

- Exchange views with other writers
- No fees charged, no credit expected or required.
- Participants contact each other, set their own rules and time frames.
- Use your own style of editing/commenting.
- If you don't find value in the feedback, try someone else on the list.

To be added, **contact Sharyl Heber** (sheber@charter.net) with: Your Name, Email, Genre (if you desire a specific one), Skill Level (if you require a specific level). She will add you to the list. Then you can reach out on a one-to-one basis and find the right writing partner for you.

Book Signing Party

Join NightWriters **Evelyn Cole** and **Susan Tuttle** for a book signing party at Nan's Bookstore at 1328 West Grand Avenue in Grover Beach on Thursday, April 14 from 5:00 - 7:00 pm. Good books, good conversation and wine—what more could a writer, or reader, want?

WRITER BEE: THE BUZZ ON THE WRITING LIFE



by Leanne Phillips

Tax Deductions for Writers



As we discussed last month, if you are actively seeking to make a living as a writer, and you make a profit for at least one out of three years, the IRS considers your writing career a business rather than a hobby.

Writers, like other business owners, are entitled to deduct “ordinary and necessary” business expenses from their business income. To do this, simply list your business income and expenses on Schedule C and attach it to your Form 1040 federal tax return.

Here are just some of the business expenses writers can deduct:

Home Office: If you use a space in your home exclusively for writing, you can deduct expenses for the percentage used as your home office as long as it is your principal place of business. For example, if you rent a 2000 sq. ft. home and use 200 sq. ft. as a writing space, you can deduct 10% of your rent. Under this scenario, you can also deduct 10% of some other household expenses, such as utilities, repairs and maintenance.

To qualify as your principal place of business, your home office doesn’t have to be the *only* place you conduct business, just the main place. You can still work in other places, too, like writing in coffee shops or meeting your editor at a restaurant to discuss revisions over lunch.

If you use a detached building as a home office, such as a garage or shed, it doesn’t even have to meet the principal place of business requirement.

Marketing: The IRS allows businesses to deduct expenses associated with advertising their products or services. For writers, this might include website design and development, a domain name and website hosting. Along with more traditional advertising efforts like business cards or promotional bookmarks or pens, writers might also claim the costs associated with book giveaway contests or providing complimentary copies of their books to reviewers.

Publishing Costs: Writers can deduct the costs associated with getting their books to print, including paying an editor, a book cover designer, or an on-demand printing company. For example, if you hire SLO NightWriter Brian Schwartz to format your book and market it on Amazon.com for you, you can deduct that expense, too. If you are paying an agent to shop your book to publishers, your agent's fees are also tax deductible.

Memberships and Subscriptions: Good news for all you career writers out there - your SLO NightWriters membership is tax deductible! So are other professional memberships, such as annual dues paid to VIDA or the Independent Book Publishers Association. You can also deduct the cost of subscriptions to professional publications, like Writers Digest or Publishers Weekly.

Supplies: Along with my love of the written word, I also have a pretty unhealthy addiction to office supplies, so writing is the perfect career choice for me in more ways than one. As a writer, I can indulge my passion at Office Max, and then deduct the cost of my writing supplies, including pens, paper, printer ink and Post-Its!

Travel: Here is just one of the many reasons you should write what you love. You may not always make a lot of money writing, but if the cost of doing what you love becomes a tax deductible expense, then you can afford to make a little less!

American journalist Katya Cengel spoke at a recent SLO NightWriters meeting about making a living as a travel writer. During her presentation, Katya mentioned that one of the reasons she chooses to write about the subjects she does is because it allows her to indulge her love of international travel. Katya has traveled to London to write about Jack the Ripper for the San Diego Union-Tribune, to Burma to write about travel off the beaten path for the Daily Beast, and to India to cover the sport of roll ball for Roads & Kingdoms. Travel expenses: Tax deductible. Travel experience: Priceless.

You can also deduct the costs of travel for your national book tour, including lodging, mileage, airfare, and 50% of the cost of meals!

Classes and Education:

Business owners can deduct some of the costs of education related to their business. If your business happens to be writing, you can deduct certain costs associated with career development, such as writing courses or educational materials. For example, if you purchase SLO NightWriter Susan Tuttle's *Write it Right!* series in order to hone your writing skills, you may be able to deduct the cost of the books.

I paid something like \$55 in 2015 to attend SLO NightWriter member Brian Schwartz's Cuesta College Community Programs course on *Launching an Amazon Bestseller*. I learned a lot about self-publishing—the class was definitely a gold mine of information which I will use in my business for many years to come. Not only was the tuition money well spent, I can also deduct the cost of the class from my non-existent writing income. It's almost like I was able to take the class for free! (Unfortunately, I can't deduct the \$38 parking ticket I got when I was running late for class one night and didn't purchase a parking permit.)

Attending Conferences: Are you planning to attend the Central Coast Writers Conference this year? The dates for the conference have been set for September 29th – October 1st. The conference is an opportunity to attend workshops, learn your craft, network and meet industry professionals. Your conference registration fee (and travel, meals, etc., if you're attending from out of the area) are all tax deductible.

Whatever your writing-associated costs, the best tip I can give you is to keep an expense log or journal and keep receipts for *everything*, so you can justify the deduction if the IRS ever asks you to do so. Most of the IRS business deduction information out there is in the form of guidelines rather than hard-and-fast rules, so be prepared to argue your case.

NEXT MONTH: Making the Most of Your SLO NightWriters Membership

DISCLAIMER: The information presented in this article is offered for opinion, reference and general informational purposes only. The author is not an investment advisor, financial planner, attorney or tax professional. Please obtain professional advice regarding your individual circumstances.

Writing Challenge for Women

Registration is still open for the **2016 Wicked Women Writer's Challenge**. This year's theme is "Twisted Urban Legends." Twist the legend, record it with sound effects, music and two or more voices and upload the text and mm3 audio by June 4 at 11:59 pm PST. Upon registration, the hostess will assign each entrant an urban legend, a setting and an obscure item that must be used in the drama. Text limit is 3,000 words in either story or screenplay format. Audio limit is 10 minutes (1,000 words = 10 minutes; 2,000 words are for stage directions).

Full details and registration here: www.surveymonkey.com/s/FPFPZ6D

REVIEW OF MARCH MEETING

Terry Sanville and Mark Arnold critiqued four original pieces written by fellow NightWriters at Round Table One. Two of the pieces were memoirs.

Memoir writing is a highly personal and self-oriented process. If you want to write your personal stories in a way that others will want to read, make sure you remember to (Adapted from an article by Bronwyn Hemus, August 25, 2014):



By Jan Alarcon

1. Write for a specific audience, not just for yourself. Your audience might not be interested in reading your long-winded journal entries (which does not take away from the therapeutic value you received from writing them for yourself);
2. Not write your memoir as if it is an autobiography. Write about specific snippets, specific turning points in your life, and specific memories that profoundly affected you;
3. Avoid meaningless details that have no relation to your overarching theme. Overarching themes could include: resilience, triumph over adversity, love, faith, courage;
4. Avoid chronology. Unlike novels, short stories, and autobiographies, the memoir genre is distinct in that it underplays chronological times and dates;
5. Never lie. If you present your weaknesses and shortcomings together with your strengths and triumphs, your voice will be much more relatable and engaging;
6. Never lose your voice. Powerful memoir narrators convey precisely how and what they think and feel at a precise moment in time, and convey how this exact situation has shaped their lives and who they are today.

Susan Tuttle taught us how to create settings at Round Table Two. The *setting* is the environment or surroundings in which your story takes place. You should be aware of the wider geographic area of your setting: the buildings and other structures; the activities and occupations of the populations; the plants and animals of the area; the weather and the local customs. Settings should depict all five senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, taste. A good setting will ground your reader, evoke a unique atmosphere, and deepen your story and theme.

Give the reader details about your setting in a way that does not interfere with the flow of the story. Weave the setting descriptions into the action; give only the information that is



needed to understand what is going on right then; and avoid large swaths of descriptive narration. (Susan Tuttle: March 08, 2016)

Patty Blue Hayes spoke at our general meeting. Patty is the award-winning author of *Wine, Sex and Suicide—My Near-Death Divorce* and *My Heart is Broken. Now What?*

Patty gave us an overview of her self-publishing experience. She taught us how to create an inexpensive, professional-looking cover design and told us what to include in on our back cover.

Patty is also a life coach; she works with clients one-on-one on a number of life issues. She also coaches writers to help them banish the fear, take action and accomplish their dream.

“My greatest wish is that someone who is going through the dark night of the soul will read my story and be lifted from the hell of feeling alone, abandoned and ashamed,” Patty Blue Hayes said.



Speaking of suicide, I met a woman this month who believes her mother committed suicide because she lied all the time so not to hurt anyone's feelings, even in her own personal journal.

This woman believes that "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you."—*Gospel of Thomas*.

I want this to be my mantra as well.

Until next month,
Jan Alarcon



WHAT DO YOU WRITE?

A Brief Look at the Evolution of Genre in English Literature

Part II

Charles Dickens and Beyond.



Janice Konstantinidis

Charles John Huffam Dickens was an English writer and social critic. He created some of the world's best-known fictional characters and is regarded as the greatest novelist of the Victorian era. Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Born: February 7, 1812, [Landport, Portsmouth, United Kingdom](#)

Dickens' characters are some of the most memorable in fiction. Often these characters were based on people that he knew: for instance, [Wilkins Micawber](#) and [William Dorrit](#) were based on his father, and [Mrs. Nickleby](#) was based on his mother. In a few instances Dickens based the character too closely on the original and got into trouble, as in the case of [Harold Skimpole](#) in *Bleak House*, based on Leigh Hunt, and [Miss Mowcher](#) in *David Copperfield*, based on his wife's dwarf chiropodist.

Dickens' characters such as [Scrooge](#) (miserly) and [Pecksniff](#) (hypocritically affecting benevolence) became defining terms in everyday vernacular.

Dickens' friend and biographer, [John Forster](#), said that Dickens made "characters real existences, not by describing them but by letting them describe themselves."

Names of Dickens' characters are some of the most unique in fiction. Characters such as [Sweedlepipe](#), [Honeythunder](#), [Bumble](#), [Pumblechook](#), and [M'Choakumchild](#) are recognizable as Dickensian even by those unfamiliar with the stories.

According to John R. Greenfield, in his [Dictionary of British Literary Characters](#), Dickens created 989 named characters during his career. The list above represents only a portion of the characters in Dickens' works and is not meant to be all-inclusive.

It has been argued that Dickens' characters were not fully rounded, that they were "cardboard stereotypes", created to show us what Dickens wanted to demonstrate in society. The meanness, the squalor, poverty, and upper-class snobbery. Furthermore, some critics think that we don't get to see these characters as real people.

Critics have argued that the reader is not given an objective view of people or the world when authors are not able or prepared to create characters who can be more fluid and realistic.

Bearing in mind that the art of fictional writing was still in its early days when Dickens was working, we look at some of Dickens' critiques.

Although [Charles Dickens](#) is best known as a writer of coming-of-age novels about children and adolescents, and as a champion of the downtrodden poor, it has sometimes been noted that both in his journalism and fiction he expresses attitudes that can be interpreted as racist and xenophobic, as was true of many eminent writers of his time. While it cannot be said that he opposed fundamental freedoms of minorities in British society or supported legal segregation or employment discrimination, he defended the privileges of Europeans in colonies and was highly xenophobic of primitive cultures. He opposed slavery, but defended colonialists against their native attackers. Dickens is sometimes thought of as a champion of the oppressed, but his humanitarian impulse often seems to extend to only other Europeans.

Questions have been raised as to whether Dickens believed in biological determinism or was instead a cultural chauvinist. Ledger and Ferneaux do not believe he advocated any form of "scientific racism" regarding heredity—he had no concept at all of a superior "master race" and could not be described as either a white supremacist or segregationist— but still had the highest possible antipathy for the lifestyles of native peoples in British colonies; he believed that the sooner they were civilized, the better. The Oxford Dictionary of English Literature describes Dickens as nationalistic often both stigmatizing foreign European cultures and taking his attitude to "colonized people" to "genocidal extremes", albeit based mainly on a vision of British virtue, not on any concept of heredity.

One of the best known instances of this is Dickens' portrait of Fagin in one of his most widely read early novels *Oliver Twist*. It has been seen by some as deeply anti-Semitic, though others such as Dickens' biographer [G.K. Chesterton](#) have argued against this notion.

The novel refers to Fagin 257 times in the first 38 chapters as "the Jew", while the ethnicity or religion of the other characters is rarely mentioned. The role of Fagin in *Oliver Twist* continues to be a challenge for actors who struggle with questions as to how to interpret the role in a post-Nazi era. Various Jewish writers, directors, and actors have searched for ways to "salvage" Fagin.

The Historical Encyclopedia of Anti-Semitism notes the paradox of Dickens both being a "champion of causes of the oppressed" who abhorred slavery and supported the European liberal revolutions of the 1840s, and his creation of the anti-Semitic caricature of the character of Fagin. The authors note that a Jewish reader wrote to Dickens about this precisely because of Dickens'



overall liberal politics. Dickens' protested that he was being factual about the realities of street crime, showing criminals in their "squalid misery", yet the image of Fagin is "drawn from stage melodrama and medieval images". Fagin is also seen as one who seduces young children into a life of crime, and is seen as one who can "disorder representational boundaries".

Fagin wasn't the only example of Dickens' racism and xenophobia. Dickens attacked [John Rae's](#) report on the fate of the [Franklin Expedition](#), which was based on Inuit testimonies. Dickens called the Inuit evidence unreliable, and attacked their character as covetous and cruel. He co-authored the play [The Frozen Deep](#), as an allegorical attack on Rae.

In response to the [Indian Rebellion of 1857](#), Dickens advocated genocide against the Indian race, writing the allegorical [The Perils of Certain English Prisoners](#). In [Perils](#) Dickens describes the "native [Sambo](#)"—a paradigm of the Indian mutineers— as a "double-dyed traitor, and a most infernal villain" who takes part in a massacre of women and children (an allusion to the [Cawnpore Massacre](#)). Dickens was much incensed by the massacre in which over a hundred English prisoners, most of them women and children, were killed, and on 4 October 1857 wrote in a private letter to Baroness [Burdett-Coutts](#): "I wish I were the Commander in Chief in India. ... I should do my utmost to exterminate the Race upon whom the stain of the late cruelties rested ...".

In his essay [The Noble Savage](#), Dickens' attitude towards Native Americans is one of condescending pity, tempered (in the interpretation of Grace Moore) by a counterbalancing concern with the arrogance of European colonialism. This essay was Dickens' rejection of painter [George Catlin's](#) positive portrayal of Native Americans. The term "Noble Savage" was in circulation since the 17th century, but Dickens regards it as an absurd oxymoron. He advocated that savages be civilized "off the face of the earth".

Dickens scholar Grace Moore sees Dickens' racism as having abated in his later years, while cultural historian Patrick Brantlinger and journalist William Oddie see it as having intensified. Moore contends that, while Dickens later in life became far more sensitive to the unethical character of British colonialism and came to plead mitigation of cruelties to natives, he never lost his distaste for those whose lifestyle he regarded as "primitive".

Late in life, Dickens developed close friendships with Jews and unambiguously retracted his earlier anti-Semitic views. He went so far as to create a sympathetic Jewish character "Riah" (meaning "friend" in Hebrew) in his novel [Our Mutual Friend](#), whose goodness is almost as complete as Fagin's evil in [Oliver Twist](#). Riah says in the novel: "Men say, 'This is a bad Greek, but there are good Greeks. This is a bad Turk, but there are good Turks.' Not so with the Jews ... they take the worst of us as samples of the best ...".

However, Dickens' expressions of revulsion at non-European peoples and his advocacy of civilizing savages remains a subject of discussion.

Biographer [Peter Ackroyd](#) in his 1990 biography of Dickens (the 2nd of four books on

Dickens) duly notes Dickens' sympathy for the poor, opposition to child labor, campaigns for sanitation reform, opposition to capital punishment. He also asserts that, "In modern terminology Dickens was a 'racist' of the most egregious kind, a fact that ought to give pause to those who persist in believing that he was necessarily the epitome of all that was decent and benign in the previous century." Ackroyd notes that Dickens did not believe that the North in the American Civil War was genuinely interested in the abolition of slavery, and he nearly publicly supported the South for that reason. Ackroyd twice notes that Dickens' major objection to missionaries was that they were more concerned with natives abroad than with the poor at home.

Dickens did not join other liberals in condemning Jamaica's Governor Eyre's declaration of martial law after an attack on the capital's court house. In speaking on the controversy, Dickens attacked "that platform sympathy with the black or the native or the Devil."

For authors [Sally Ledger](#) and Holly Furneaux, it is a puzzle as to how one can square away Dickens' racialism with concern with the poor and the downcast. One example of this juxtaposition, they cite *Bleak House* in which Dickens mocks Mrs. Jellyby who neglects her children for the natives of a fictional African country. In their book *Dickens in Context*, they argue that Dickens was a nativist and "cultural chauvinist" in the sense of being highly ethnocentric and ready to justify British imperialism, but not a racist in the sense of being a "biological determinist" as was the anthropologist Robert Knox. That is Dickens did not regard the behavior of races to be "fixed"; rather his appeal to "civilization" suggests not biological fixity but the possibility of alteration. However, "Dickens views of racial others, most fully developed in his short fiction, indicate that for him 'savages' functioned as a handy foil against which British national identity could emerge."

The disjunction between Dickens' criticism of slavery and his crude caricatures of other races has also been noted by Patrick Brantlinger in his *A companion to the Victorian novel*. He cites Dickens' description of an Irish colony in America's Catskill mountains as "a mess of pigs, pots, and dunghills." Dickens viewed them as a "racially repellent" group. Jane Smiley, writing in *The Penguin Lives Biography of Dickens* writes, "We should not interpret him as the kind of left-liberal we know today—he was racist, imperialist, sometimes anti-Semitic, a believer in harsh prison conditions, and distrustful of trade unions."

An anthology of Dickens' essays from *Household Words* warns the reader in its introduction that in these essays, "Women, the Irish, Chinese and Aborigines are described in biased, racist, stereotypical or otherwise less than flattering terms....We encourage you to work towards a more positive understanding of the different groups that make up our community."

William Oddie argues that Dickens' racism "grew progressively more illiberal over the course of his career," particularly after the Indian rebellion. Grace Moore, on the other hand,

argues that Dickens, a staunch abolitionist and opponent of imperialism, had views on racial matters that were a good deal more complex than previous critics have suggested in her work *Dickens and Empire*, she suggests that overemphasizing Dickens' racism obscures his continued commitment to the abolition of slavery. Laurence Mazzeno has characterized Moore's approach as depicting Dickens' attitude to race as highly complex, "struggling to differentiate between ideas of race and class in his fiction...sometimes in step with his age, sometimes its fiercest critic." Others have observed that Dickens also denied suffrage to blacks, writing in a letter, "Free of course he must be; but the stupendous absurdity of making him a voter glares out of every roll of his eye." Bernard Porter suggests that Dickens' race prejudice caused him to actually oppose imperialism rather than promote it, citing the character of Mrs. Jellyby in *Bleak House* and the essay *The Noble Savage* as evidence.

In an essay on [George Eliot](#), K.M. Newton notes:

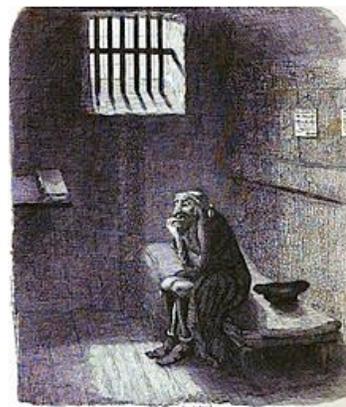
Most of the major writers in the Victorian period can be seen as racist to a greater or lesser degree. According to Edward Said, even Marx and Mill are not immune: both of them seemed to have believed that such ideas as liberty, representative government, and individual happiness must not be applied to the Orient for reasons that today we would call racist.

In many of these writers antisemitism was the most obvious form of racism, and this continued beyond the Victorian period, as is evident in such figures as T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf.

While the neutrality of what has been written above is certainly up for argument, I think it's fair to argue that the early characters we are seeing here in fiction are indeed created as ways for the author to express an opinion, and are not evolved characters as we see in some modern literature.

To be continued.

Comments...jkon50@gmail.com



Middle-Grade/YA Revision Workshop

Join Sherry Shahan, author of 40 children's and YA books, for a workshop on revision techniques that will help you assess your writing the way an editor would. Bring a highlighter and hard copy of the first 3 chapters of a work-in-progress (middle-grade or YA novels). Registration opens March 1, 2016: www.cencal.scbwi.org

When: Saturday, April 30, 2015: 1:00-4:00 pm

Where: SLO Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St. and Monterey. For parking, check their website: www.sloma.org.

Give Other Authors Your Advice

Do you have some tips, or have you learned a strategy that could help those just starting out on their writing career? Send in 300-400 words to the Great Beginnings column and you can be a contributor to both the WordSmiths Newsletter and your fellow writers. It's a great way to help others hone their skills, and a great publishing kudo for your resume. Time to put that thinking cap on and then write: What advice would you give a beginning writer? Send to: aim2write@yahoo.com, with NW Newsletter in the subject line.

GREAT BEGINNINGS

...INFORMATION FOR BEGINNING WRITERS (AND EVERYONE ELSE TOO)

6 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN THE FIRST DRAFT IS FINISHED

1. **Sensory Details:** Will the reader see, taste, smell, feel and hear the story, or is too much left to the imagination? Add the sensory details needed to place the reader into the settings.
2. **Beta Readers:** The writer is the worst person to decide if the book is good. Find some trusted readers in your target audience (not you mother or spouse!) and ask for their honest opinions. You might be surprised at what they reveal to you.
3. **Read the Manuscript Out Loud:** Sentences can look amazing on the page, but fall apart when read out loud. They may be tongue-twisty, or have too much alliteration, or even unintentional rhymes that disturb the flow of the story. **Always read dialogue out loud**—it's the only way to make sure it sounds realistic.
4. **Read a Novel (or Two, or Three) in Your Genre:** See what the competition is doing. Study how the writer sets up chapter endings, suspense, action/dramatic scenes, etc. Note the use of devices such as metaphors, similes, personification, etc.
5. **Edit, Edit, Edit:** Block out time for editing and work on a chapter at a time, focusing on mechanicals like commas, run-on sentences, ambiguity, over-use of words or phrases. When you're done, do a full read-through for concept oriented matters to make sure characters are consistent, POV stays consistent, and believable twists keep readers reading.
6. **Read and Re-read the Beginning and the Ending:** These are the two most important parts of the book. The opening has to hook readers on the characters and make them have to read on to see what will happen to them. The ending has to wrap up the story in a way that is satisfying to the reader. The ending has to be consistent with the action, and arise out of the desires and needs of the characters.

We Need Your Help!

The success of non-profit organizations like NightWriters depends on its members. We all have talents other than writing that any organization could make use of.

NightWriters has many special opportunities for members to get involved, working "behind the scenes." If you'd like to assist in any capacity, email: slonightwriters@yahoo.com

President: Dennis Eamon Young
 Vice-President: Andrea Chmelik
 Secretary: Leanne Phillips
 Treasurer: Susan Tuttle
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 Contest Committee Chair: Tia Araminta
 Publicity Director: Andrea Chmelik
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 Critique Group Coordinator: Rebecca Heath
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About Our Monthly Meetings

NightWriters' Evening Meetings: the second Tuesday of every month, year round. We encourage interested visitors to join us at 6:30 pm. Admission free; refreshments served.

Next Meeting: April 12th, at United Church of Christ, 11245 Los Osos Valley Road, San Luis Obispo 93405. General meeting begins at 6:30 pm. Round Table presentations start at 5:15 pm.

Writers' Critique Groups: For paid members only. These groups read and critique each other's work and discuss the business of writing. Visitors welcome; phone ahead to make arrangements. See details below, or visit our website: www.slonightwriters.org

Notify NW of any change in address or email:

slonightwriters@yahoo.com. Join NW and send dues or renewal checks (payable to SLO NightWriters) to: SLO NightWriters, PO Box 6241, Los Osos, CA 93412-6241. Or join/renew online through our website:

www.slonightwriters.org and pay with credit card.

Email all correspondence to: slonightwriters@yahoo.com or snail mail to: SLO NightWriters PO Box 6241 Los Osos, CA 93412-6241. We must have your **current email address** in order to send the Newsletter and other important NW announcements.

Newsletter Submissions: Send by the 15th of the current month for next month's publication. Send in kudos, writing articles, quotes, facts and tidbits, etc. Mark email "for newsletter" and send to: slonightwriters@yahoo.com

Have You Checked Out Our Website Lately? Control Your Own Information!

Post your bio, picture, book covers and ordering links! Contribute a writing blog post! Free publicity!

MEMBER SITE LINKS!

List your website(s) and blog(s) with live links — makes it easier for the public to find you and helps build your platform!

BOOK REVIEWS!

Get your book reviewed. Write a review—it's a valid publishing credit!

WRITERS SERVICES!

Do you have a writing or professional skill? Get listed on our new Services Page.

FACEBOOK!

Become a "Fan" of NightWriters! Visit NW's Facebook page and sign up today! Also, link your Facebook page and your websites and blogs to NW sites!

LinkedIn!

New! Connect with NW on LinkedIn! Help build your author platform with writing professional connections.

CRITIQUE GROUPS LISTING

NW Critique Groups are a wonderful benefit of NW Membership. Some groups are full, but many welcome visitors. Always contact the group leader listed for specific information regarding group availability and visiting options. SLO NW cannot guarantee critique group formation or availability but we do strive to facilitate connections between writers so they can initiate and develop their own writing affiliations. While we cannot be, and are not, responsible for any outcomes from these associations, we hope they lead to great creative magic and magnificent literary works! Contact our webmaster and the newsletter editor at slonightwriter@yahoo.com to list your critique group and critique needs in the NW Newsletter and on the NW Web site.

Can't find an existing group? START ONE. It's easy! If you're new at this, don't be intimidated. It's fun and there are no lofty requisites. All it takes is two or more folks committed to reading/hearing the work of others and providing honest, constructive feedback. Critique groups are not teaching sessions. They are writers learning from reading and critiquing each others' works. Effective formats may include exchanging the review/editing service by mail or electronically, or meeting face-to-face and reading aloud to each other, or any combination that works for the group. One of our groups takes a lesson/learning approach and does practice writing exercises every meeting. Some groups focus on a particular genre; others accept all kinds of writing. Each group is different depending on their needs and interests. **Group members set their own times, dates, meeting locations, and parameters.** We have **Critique Group Guidelines** on our website to help get you started and we can provide a mentor to attend a few sessions if needed. www.slonightwriter.org. Contact slonightwriter@yahoo.com with your critique needs and genres and we'll do our best to assist you.

CRITIQUE GROUPS FORMING

POETRY CRITIQUE GROUP

Poetry Critique Group Emerging! Any poet can join. Any poet can benefit from input of a group, regardless of experience. Call and together we can set time and place to meet.

CURRENTLY OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS

Contact: Irene Chadwick, 481-3824
irenekooi@gmail.com

PISMO SATURDAY GROUP

New group starts Saturday May 10. All levels and genres, short stories, poetry, novels and memoirs. Work is exchanged one week prior to group meetings. 1500 word limit on submissions. Meets the 2nd and 4th Saturdays from 9:00-11:00 am. Contact moderator for location.

CURRENTLY OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS

Moderator: Tom Snow
coinerbop@gmail.com

MEMOIR AND NON-FICTION

Judith Bernstein is looking for writers interested in creative non-fiction, articles, op-ed pieces and memoir. Focus is on being published. Skill level intermediate to advanced. Time and place to be determined. If interested, contact the moderator for more information.

CURRENTLY OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS

Contact: Judith Bernstein
ryewit@live.com
805-904-6365

CRITIQUE GROUPS LISTING

CRITIQUE GROUPS WITH OPENINGS

HI HOPES

This group was invented to fill a need for a Los Osos/San Luis Obispo group that incorporates writers who generate stories, essays, novels, poetry—you get the picture—writers of any description. Whether or not you wish to publish, we'll help you with ideas to improve your writing. Led by Sharon Sutliff, we meet on the **2nd and 4th Mondays at 9 AM and usually wrap up in time for lunch.** We meet in various locations. Call one of the moderators to arrange a visit, or get more information. **CURRENTLY OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS**

Moderators: Sharon Sutliff, 544-4034
Audrey Yanes, 748-8600

North County Storytellers

This group focuses primarily on novel length works, though we often mix it up with flash fiction and short stories. Members may agree to read larger chunks of material at a time to allow for developmental critique. Items must be electronically distributed at least one week prior to the meeting. Beginning in the Fall, the group will meet the first **Tuesday of each month from 7-9 pm in Atascadero**, and the **third Tuesday of each month from noon to 2 pm in Templeton.** Summer schedule varies.

CURRENTLY OPEN TO 2 NEW MEMBERS.

Contact: Tina Clark
theclarkfour@sbcglobal.net

SOUTH COUNTY WRITERS

Meets on the **second and fourth Saturdays from 9:30 AM to noon in Grover Beach.** This group thrives on variety, writing short stories, articles, poetry and novels, all genres from fiction to biography and memoirs. Members exchange work by email at least one week before the meeting in order to receive in-depth critiques

aimed at eliminating weaknesses and increasing strengths in everything from plot and character development to grammar and proper manuscript preparation. Intermediate to advanced writers are welcome. We meet in a casual and fun atmosphere and are serious about fully developing each member's writing talent, whether for publication or self-satisfaction. Visitors are always welcome.

CURRENTLY OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS

Moderator: Judy Guarnera, 474-9598
j.guarnera@sbcglobal.net

WRITE IT RIGHT WRITING GROUP I (Wed. a.m. Group)

Meets **every Wednesday morning in 5 Cities area from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm.** Not a traditional NightWriter critique group. Work is produced in each session, then analyzed according to the objective of the day's goal. Based on writing exercises designed to jump-start the creative process (based on the lessons and exercises in the Write It Right Series), these sessions take writers through the process of writing fiction from inception of idea to the final resolution. This group is for all writers who want to learn the process of crafting a well-told story while developing their own voice and style. We explore such topics as ideas, character, story arc, tone, voice, POV, tension, dialogue, resolution, writing mechanics, etc. There is a small monthly fee involved for this class to cover materials.

CURRENTLY OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS.

Contact: Susan Tuttle: 458-5234
aim2write@yahoo.com

CRITIQUE GROUPS LISTING

FULL CRITIQUE GROUPS: CALL TO VISIT

THE THURSDAY GROUP

This group meets at 9:00 am every other Thursday at The Coffee Bean in Pismo Beach. Anyone interested in joining them can email the moderator for full details.

CURRENTLY FULL—NOT OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS, but visitors are always welcome. Contact the moderator for details.

Moderator: Mark Ruszczyszky
zsur@aol.com

PISMO WEDNESDAY GROUP

New group began Meeting on May 1. All levels and genres: short stories, novels, poetry, memoir. Work is exchanged one week prior to each meeting; 1,500 word limit on submissions. Meets the 1st and 3rd Wednesday from 9:00-11:00 am in Pismo Beach.

CURRENTLY FULL—NOT OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS. Visitors welcome. Contact moderator for location.

Moderator Tom Snow
coinerbop@gmail.com

LO PROSE

Meets in Los Osos on the first and third Wednesdays at 7pm till usually 10pm. Charlie Perryess and Anne Allen share hosting responsibilities, running a tight ship so that everyone can read. No cross talk permitted. At the beginning and at our break we socialize. We're all serious but fun-loving. Presently the writing covers several genres: YA novels; short stories; short stories woven into a novel; fantasy; humorous mystery novel; political satire novel; and personal essays. We write just about everything except poetry. **CURRENTLY FULL – NOT OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS** but

guests are welcome. It may happen that space could be made for a compatible writer.

Moderators: Charlie Perryess, 528-4090
Anne Allen, 528-1006

LONG STORY SHORT

Flash Fiction/Nonfiction only meets the 2nd & 4th Fridays every month, from 10 am to 12 noon in Arroyo Grande. Bring paper and pencil, or your laptop if you are so inclined—flash pieces, 1000 word strict maximum.

CURRENTLY FULL – NOT OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS – call or email Diane to be placed on a waiting list.

Moderator: Diane Smith 858-414-0070
mdcomposes@yahoo.com

NOVEL IDEA

Meets twice monthly on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays in San Luis Obispo, dealing with book-length works. The group is fully committed to helping one another craft material in the chosen genres with helpful critiques and encouragement. Marketing techniques are part of the on-going exchange. We are currently full but welcome one-time guests to observe how our group functions in the hope of encouraging establishment of new groups. **CURRENTLY FULL – NOT OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS**

Moderator: Barbara Wolcott, 543-5240

FICTION/NONFICTION

Meets on 1st and 3rd Mondays from 9:00 am to noon in San Luis. Members bring original work to each session and read aloud to the group. The group provides constructive suggestions for improving the writing and the structure of the

CRITIQUE GROUPS LISTING

FULL CRITIQUE GROUPS: CALL TO VISIT

stories. Prose forms of literature—short stories, novels, memoirs, essays, newspaper and magazine articles, travel—are this group’s forte. It welcomes writers who are serious about producing work for publication. Those interested in attending or who need more information should telephone. **CURRENTLY FULL — NOT OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS**
Moderators: Terry Sanville, 541-0492
Gloria Pautz, 543-2049

NORTH COUNTY GROUP

Meets every other Thursday from 10:00 am-12:00 noon at the Atascadero Library, preceded by “a bit of socializing, for those so inclined” at the Starbucks by Vons. Fiction, creative non-fiction, short and book length writers of moderate to advanced level comprise the group. **CURRENTLY FULL —NOT OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS**

Moderator: Lillian Brown, 215-6107
lilliofslo@aol.com

WRITE IT RIGHT WRITING GROUP II (Wed. p.m. Group)

For all writers of fiction and creative non-fiction. See full description under Wed. a.m. Group. Meets **every Wednesday in Los Osos from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm**. Not a traditional NightWriter critique group. See full description above.

CURRENTLY FULL—NOT OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS

Contact: Susan Tuttle, 458-5234
aim2write@yahoo.com