

**From:** James River Writers membership@jamesriverwriters.org  
**Subject:** Members-Only Newsletter- August Master Class, Conference Updates, Getting Scientists Right in Fiction  
**Date:** July 25, 2017 at 4:41 PM  
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## Welcome

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Tomorrow is the last Wednesday of the month, which means **The Writing Show** at Firehouse Theatre. This month's show, **The Art of the Start: Finding the Entry-point to Your Story**, will have a unique format, which you can learn more about by scrolling down.

Of course, planning for **August's Writing Show, Playing with Language: Tools & Techniques for Creative Play**, is underway and developing quickly. In fact, details have just solidified for a Master Class from one of next month's speakers.

On August 31, from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, award-winning author and teacher **Marita Golden** will be presenting a Master Class titled **The Naked Truth: Writing a Memoir That Moves Readers**.

Writing memoir is a way to find meaning in our lives, make art of our experiences with pain, trauma, coming of age, and struggles with identity--all the "stuff" of life. But how does one dig deep, chip away at the walls of self-censorship and the rules against speaking the "unspeakable"? How does one discover the voice that is demanding release and write with beauty and--the primary requirement of memoir--courage? In this workshop, we will explore writing techniques that will allow participants to write with transformative power. Class time will consist of in-class writing, discussion of work in progress, and examination of published

memoirists.

If you are interested in Ms. Golden's Master Class, you can [register on our website](#).



The schedule for the conference's breakout sessions and panels has been posted on [the JRW website](#). So you can now see what topics our panelists will be discussing this year.

Also, don't forget about the First Pages panel, one of the most popular events at the JRW conference. If you're attending the conference, you can have the opportunity to get the first page of your manuscript anonymously read aloud to the entire audience. After which our agents-on-hand will give live, instant feedback for everyone's illumination. Submit your first page by September 15. [Learn more on the website](#).

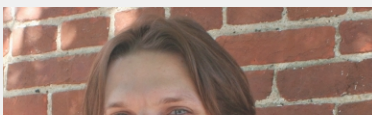
**Early bird pricing ends on in a few days, on July 31.** On August 1, the price increases by \$50.

Nominations for this year's [Emyl Jenkins Award](#) also end on July 31. If you know someone who nurtures Virginia's literary community, nominate them today.

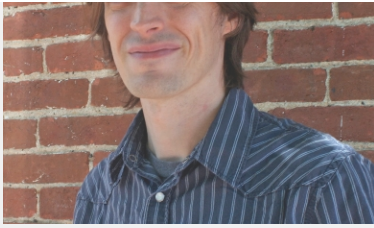
Also, don't forget about **JRW's monthly Spotlight Member**. It's a great opportunity to promote your work. The [Spotlight Member submission form](#) is in the members section of the JRW website.

Scroll down to read **Five Ways to Get the Scientist Right in Your Story** by Dr. Angela Hilliker, biology professor and research scientist at University of Richmond. A few astute readers may recognize a similarity between this month's contributor and myself because, she is, in fact, my wife. After living with a scientist for many years and seeing how often writers get science and its practitioners wrong, I suggested she could help out the entire world by sharing her expertise. Her contribution is below.

Thank you again for your support. We do everything possible to bring you exceptional programming at reasonable prices, and your membership helps us accomplish that. We could not sustain this community without you!



Phillip Hilliker  
Membership Coordinator



For July's Writing Show, we will be hosting **The Art of the Start: Finding the Entry-point to Your Story**. This mini master class with four talented wordsmiths dives into a problem that can trouble any writer: where to begin. Each of our panelists—including a fiction writer, a nonfiction writer and editor, a playwright, and a journalist—will take the stage for eight minutes each to share their strategies and tactics for finding the entry-point for a written project. Not all narratives are linear, and beginning *in medias res* is always a possibility—but what makes the most sense for your creative work? Attend tomorrow night to help discover your answers.

This month's presenters include award-winning playwright, actress, and founder of The Whistle Stop Theatre Company, [Louise Ricks](#); editor of *Encyclopedia Virginia* and author of *Finding Bix: The Life and Afterlife of a Jazz Legend*, [Brendan Wolfe](#); author of *What the Zhang Boys Know*, winner of the 2013 Library of Virginia Award for Fiction, [Clifford Garstang](#); and freelance journalist for such publications as *Harper's Magazine*, *WIRED*, and *The New York Times Magazine*, [Shahan Mufti](#).

The doors for the Firehouse Theatre (located at 1609 West Broad Street) open at 6 pm, and the show starts at 6:45 pm. For more information or to register early, visit the [JRW website](#).

## Five Ways to Get the Scientist Right in Your Story

by Dr. Angela Hilliker

1. **Scientists aren't all socially awkward, rude nerds (thanks, Sheldon Cooper).** Ok, we are all nerds about something. And yes, of course, some are socially awkward or rude. But there are also odd bankers, painfully shy lawyers, and brusque hair dressers. Our personalities are as varied as any other profession.
2. **Scientists aren't experts in every field.** I'm a molecular biologist. I'm not going to be able to invent a shrink ray, re-program a robot, or identify the type of metals in an asteroid by sight. Shoot, I won't be that helpful in other areas of biology. If we are stranded on an island together, I am not going to be able to tell you which berries are poisonous. (Hey, don't judge me... are you an expert in Picaresque novels?) As we build on centuries of knowledge, it is impossible to be an expert in all of it. For better or worse, most of us are specialists.
3. **Related to the points above, scientists don't work alone.** We work in interdisciplinary teams, so we can learn from each other and make more progress. Yeah, that's right. We are like the Avengers or the Justice League, but with more practical clothing.
4. **Scientists aren't all old white dudes with crazy hair (or distinguished salt and pepper hair, depending on your preferred trope).** While it is painfully true that women, people of color, and other traditionally marginalized social identities are still under-represented in science, many fields are changing. So, unless you are consciously commenting on the lack of diversity in science, please consider expanding your view of what a scientist looks like. The young woman reading about your rule-breaking, world-saving physicist might not see herself represented by her teachers or coworkers, but could see herself represented in your book.
5. **Science is slow!** Sorry, the forensic lab tech cannot do DNA fingerprinting in 20 minutes. There will be no new vaccine to block your pandemic flu in two weeks.
6. **Scientists aren't soulless automatons without a moral compass.** Sure, that type of scientist is an easy way to start a post-apocalyptic narrative (arrogant scientist unleashes virus that turns people into zombies!). However, most scientists are motivated by curiosity, not greed, fame, or Nobel Prizes. We will go to a conference and listen to eight hours of science talks, tweet about a mind blowing new study, and then keep discussing our science over beer after beer. We will wake up in the middle of the night with a new idea for an experiment that we have to jot down. We will go down a rabbit hole of research, chasing down an idea, and get distracted by the interesting work of others. Come to think of it, my guess is that this resonates with you, because:
7. **Scientists and writers have a lot in common.**
  - A. Writers look for an untold/under-told story, or apply a new twist to a well-worn idea. While some scientists see an interesting phenomenon and wonder, "How does that happen in this new context?" others look at a problem differently and subsequently shift a paradigm or transform a field.

B. Writers and scientists are both persistent. You write your first draft and then you revise, revise, revise. I try an experiment (it fails) and I troubleshoot, troubleshoot, troubleshoot. You show your story to a few colleagues, and they point out what you didn't see, so you can revise again. I share my work with my colleagues, hoping they will find the flaws. And then I go back to the bench and work again. You may have stories that never see the light of day. I have experiments that didn't work. Are those failures or are they a way to hone our craft?

C. Scientists are analytical, while writers are creative, right? Not so fast. I don't know how a writer can keep a complex world and a myriad of unique characters consistent without logical thinking. Scientists are trying to understand the unknown. You don't accomplish that without a bit of invention, creative thinking, and problem solving.

D. Scientists and writers aren't born, they are made. I'm not naturally gifted at biology, any more than a writer can pen a masterpiece on their first try. We work at our craft. We put in hours of research, work, and practice. We fail, but we learn from that failure, and dust ourselves off and get ready to fail again. Hopefully, we enjoy the process (most of the time). We become successful, through a lot of hard work.

E. Writers create new stories. Scientists create new knowledge. If either creative process was easy, everyone would do it.

What is always true about scientists? As my five point (er... how did I get to seven, plus sub-points?) list demonstrates, scientists always have a lot to say about the topics we care about.



*Dr. Angela Hilliker is a biology professor and research scientist at the University of Richmond, where she is dedicated to training the next generation of scientific thinkers while doing a bunch of fun scientific thinking herself. Her research and publications focus on gen regulation and how cells decide what to make and when. She has a PhD in Molecular Genetics and Cell Biology from the University of Chicago. When she isn't in the lab or the classroom, she spends time making pottery and galavanting about with her husband and son.*





## Member News & Opportunities

**Scarlet Leaf Review** will publish a short story by JRW member [J Thomas Brown](#) in the September 15th issue. Breaking Them with Words is the story of two kindred spirits caught up in the chaos and insanity of war during the Finnish Wars of Continuation.

[Howard Owen](#)'s 15th novel and sixth Willie Black mystery, *The Devil's Triangle*, came out June 30 and received a starred review in Publishers Weekly. A Richmond signing will be held at Fountain Bookstore on Thursday, August 3 at 6:30 pm.

JRW member **Mary Riley** recently had two poems (Magellan, In The Center of the Parish Hall) accepted for publication in the upcoming (Fall 2017) issue of From The Depths (Haunted Waters Press). The announcement post is at the Haunted Waters Press Facebook page online at <https://www.facebook.com/HauntedWatersPress/>.

Congratulations to **Martin L. Wilson** whose debut novel, [To Jekyll and Hide](#), was published in May by Shotwell Publishing as their premiere Southern Mystery. "In the tradition of James Lee Burke, Martin Wilson tells a ripping good mystery along with an intense examination of the life of an unusual area of the South."

*Nine Lives: A Life in 10 Minutes Anthology*, edited by Sarah Allen-Short and **Valley Haggard**, was recently published by Chop Suey Books. The anthology, based on Valley's [Life in 10 method](#), includes entries from many JRW members and other writers. Order your copy [here](#).

### **RICHMOND Magazine Freelance Submissions**

Are you a talented freelance writer with a long list of story ideas you are eager to see published? [Richmond magazine](#) is looking for new writers with fresh ideas and strong

voices who have a working knowledge of AP Style and are familiar with Richmond magazine's content and format.

You'll need to know the basics of news writing, but you should be comfortable with alternative storytelling methods and first-person writing, too. We're looking for talented writers with all kinds of expertise, from generalists and news hounds, to subject-matter experts with the inside scoop on Richmond's food, arts, entertainment, shopping and health scenes. We want writers who can look beyond the press release to get to the real story, bringing diverse populations and unexpected voices into their sourcing and writing. "Whether you can turn around a quick but informative story for the web or take the time to dive deep into a piece for our print content, we want to hear from you. Send your three best clips and three story ideas to [jessicah@richmag.com](mailto:jessicah@richmag.com).

### **Richmond Young Writers Summer Camps**

Summer with [RYW](#) is a mind-bending, paradigm-shifting, kindred spirit-finding blast. Young writers, from ages 9-17, come from all over the state (and sometimes beyond) to work on fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, screenplays, hybrid work and more - and our slew of guest authors and artists is pretty unbeatable. [Join us!](#)

### **River City Poets Anthology**

Local poetry group [River City Poets](#) will be compiling an anthology with an open call for submissions. Poets throughout Virginia and beyond are encouraged to submit to this anthology. A slight editorial advantage will be given, however, to poets who live and write in Richmond, VA. Send 1-3 poems no longer than one page each in length as an attached file. [Please see the website for full guidelines](#). To be considered, your poem(s) must be received no later than midnight July 31, 2017.

### **The Writer's Block**

The Writer's Block on 6/16 was such a success that another next live performance and taping has been scheduled for July. The Writer's Block will continue on July 28 at The Five Points Community Market from 7 pm - 9 pm. We will be combining local writers performing their work live with local musician Jerry Sowers. Think of it as a Moth Hour/Acoustic Highway mash up. Poetry, Spoken Word, and Short Stories needed! Local writers please submit your work to [kathy.martin@whro.org](mailto:kathy.martin@whro.org) for consideration. Include performance time and your name on the submission - also no profanity please. We are recording for future broadcast on 89.5 WHRV and podcast. Spread the word and mark your calendar for July 28 from 7 pm - 9 pm. This is a free event featuring local radio, local business, and local artists.

**Share your good news by filling out the [submission form](#) in the members' area of the JRW website.**

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