



A Proud Chapter of
Romance Writers of America®

October 7, 2016

Volume XXIX, Issue 9

WELCOME TO CENTRAL OHIO FICTION WRITERS

COFW's September meeting was a workshop by writing teacher Alicia Rasley — a terrific in depth half-day exploration into the Heroic Journey and how to write with emotion rather than melodrama.

For more great articles and news about your fellow COFWers, see inside.

CONTENTS

1. Minutes of the COFW Business Meeting September 17, 2016
2. Recap: Alicia Rasley Half-Day Workshop
3. New Releases by COFW Members
4. Article: 5 Time Management Tips for Productive Writers
5. Article: Backstory: Putting Your World in Context
6. Article: The Mystery of Process
7. Works in Progress
8. COFW Leadership Contact List

Central Ohio Fiction Writers (COFW) <http://cofwevents.org> is a non-profit professional association for romance writers and a local chapter of the Romance Writers of America (RWA) organization that offers monthly meetings. Since 1987, COFW has promoted excellence in fiction writing, encouraging writers to grow and gain knowledge in their craft. Members provide a networking system to share knowledge and support the goal of becoming published.

MINUTES OF THE COFW BUSINESS MEETING 9-17-2016

by Julia Blaine



President Jane Conner brought the meeting to order at 12 noon. She reminded members to turn off cell phones, make a nametag, and sign Works in Progress.

Members introduced themselves. Present were, Jane Conner, Robin Gianakopoulos, Stacy McKittrick, Julia Blaine, Saralee Etter. Amanda Aquino, Susan Gee Heino, Linda Rice, Jeanne Estridge, Tanja Fazzari, Jodi Brohard, Jenessa McRoy, Sheri Adkins, Kris Branch, Karin Shah, Teresa Devlin, Eva Siedler, Nancy White, Amalie Berlin, Margaret Crowley, and Sandy Wickersham-McWhorter.

The Minutes of the August meeting and Treasurer's Report were accepted.

Julia Blaine volunteered to write the recap.

Incentives: Ireanne Chambers had a rejection from Wild Rose Press and a request from the Knight Agency. Saralee Etter won second place in the Ignite the Flame Contest. Robin has a new release September 1, "Reunited with His Runaway Bride," and her ninth book, coming out in March, "Baby Surprise for the Doctor Prince," was accepted by her editor (Robin did not choose this title). Jodi Brohard had a rejection by an agent for a Picture Book. Julia Blaine has a Children's Picture Book at Createspace, hoping soon to have it available on Amazon. Nancy White got a contract offer for one of her memoir short stories called, "True Love Never Dies." It will be published in an anthology entitled, "The Narcissist's Playbook" January 2017. Jane promises chocolate for the next meeting since those worthy of incentives have been deprived in August and September.

Linda reported on her progress on the **Fall 2017 event**. She welcomes suggestions for a speaker. She has contacted James Scott Bell. Sheri suggested Dr. Valerie Young who spoke at RWA.

Robin reported that the **October meeting** will be at the Upper Arlington Library which is hosting a writer's workshop. Several writing programs are featured. It begins at 10:30am. Driving directions and other information are available at the UA Library website: www.ualibrary.org People are asked to register ahead of time if they plan to attend. This can be done online. COFW will have a short business meeting at 10:00.

In **November**, we will meet again at the Norwich Township Safety and Services Center.

December will be our Holiday Party. At that time we will announce the Member of the Year. Nancy White volunteered to host the event which will be in Gahanna. It will be either December 3rd or 10th, depending on the availability of the venue.

COFW MEETING MINUTES (CONT'D)

Julia Blaine mentioned that a new bookstore is opening in Circleville; Keystone Books and Gifts, 138 W. Main St.

Nominations for Member of the Year are now open. Please go to the **COFW Yahoo loop -> Files -> Forms** to find nomination forms. Voting will be at the November meeting.

Jane reported on proposed changes to the COFW By-Laws. These changes are to bring COFW into compliance with RWA's Uniform Chapter By-Laws. Mainly this involves reducing the number of Board Officers to three—President, Treasurer and Secretary—instead of five. The other two positions will still be welcome at Board Meetings, as are any members in good-standing.

Several RWA Chapters are quite small and do not have enough members to comply with previous Chapter By-Law standards for governing Boards so these changes have been made. COFW Board Members spent many, many hours going over our Policy and Procedure Manual to make sure it aligns with the Uniform By-Laws as well as the chapter's needs. For more information speak with Jane. Members present at the September COFW meeting voted unanimously to pass the Uniform Chapter By-Law revisions.

Our **Nominating Committee** for next year's officers consists of Jane, Robin, Sheri Adkins and Shawn Dickerson. They met in August.

Nominations for the 2016-17 year are:

President: Jenessa McRoy

Treasurer: Stacy McKitrick

Secretary: Jeanne Estridge

Newsletter Editor: Sandy Kachurek

Programs Chair: Sheri Atkins

ITF Co-Chairs: Nancy White and Jane Conner

Positions still to be filled are:

Incentives

Critique Group Coordinator and Powerdraft Coordinator, if someone wants to restart the efforts

Susan Heino will continue to be Pan Coordinator

Linda Rice is coordinating our fall 2017 Event

Kris Branch has volunteered to coordinate our 2017 Writer's Retreat

Members will vote on Officers at the November meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

RECAP: ALICIA RASLEY WORKSHOP

by Julia Blaine

Alicia brought us two presentations.

(1) The Heroic Journey

We may very well have our character in our head but we must present our person in a way so that the reader will see the same person we do. We can't control our reader's response, but we do know that they like, and expect to find, flaws. Too much perfection will put them off.

Don't reveal everything right away. Begin with a simple flaw. He or she is heroic, after all. We want readers to learn why the hero is heroic as they follow the story with you. But an imperfect protagonist makes the 3-dimensional story possible.

Where is your character in the beginning? What is his major characteristic? Saving money, for example. This is a flaw if you turn it about to make him parsimonious. The protagonist's greatest strength is what brings him down. Doesn't the form a plot? He has to let go of what is most important to gain something else. (You don't want him or her to give up what is best about them, just change – and that can be very, very difficult.)

Alicia lists ways to add dimension to your plot:

1. Identify a central strength and show this strength in action in the early stages of the plot.
2. Define the problems and issues—or the heroic flaw that come along with this strength.
3. Show some problem of this flaw in an early scene. (She's independent, so she refuses help in boarding up her windows before the hurricane).
4. Generate conflict from these issues arising in events (especially in the middle of the story). The heroic flaw can get in the way of solving the external conflict or achieving the goal.
5. Show the protagonist changing in response to the rising conflict and developing a new strength to supplement the old strength. (The dark moment is a good place to force this change.)
6. In the ending, show how the protagonist has integrated the strength and overcome the weakness that comes with it.
7. Use the process to chart a journey of psychological or emotional or life change for the protagonist.



ALICIA RASLEY(CONT'D)

In choosing your flaw, remember that what can be a strength in a man can be a flaw in a woman. A man can be “determined,” but the same characteristic in a woman may be regarded as “stubborn.”



Your plot will be on two levels—action and emotion; a secret level or subtext. The levels should parallel each other, but don't leave out either one.

Alicia used the movie “Casablanca” to illustrate her points. (Did you know Rick in Casablanca represents the United States? Other characters are also symbolic.) Not only does Casablanca move as a love story in time of war but it also functioned as propaganda when it was made in the early days of WWII. Like Rick, America chooses to fight the Nazis although they at first tried not to become involved.

In her handout, Alicia listed some Protagonist Journeys:

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mystery to truth | Deception to truth | Power to tyranny |
| Fear to courage | Innocence to corruption | Guilt to amends |
| Revenge to justice | Delusion to realization | Sin to redemption |
| Obsession to balance | Alienation to reconciliation | Doubt to decision |

Other questions to ask:

Where is your hero at the beginning and where will he end up?

What internal resonance does your change have—how does it affect the character?
List a few steps your protagonist will take to complete this journey.

Thinking about your own story brings focus. This has been a generic “deception to truth” journey.



After a short break, we continued on with Alicia's second workshop presentation.

ALICIA RASLEY(CONT'D)

(2) Emotion Without Sentiment or Purple Prose: Underwriting for Tearjerking.

Concentrate on the reader's experience. The reader resists emotion. Set it up, but don't force it.

1. Create a context for the emotion. Every choice you make about setting, characters in the scene, choice of conversation topics, actions, events—should create a context of why this is emotional. After the big event, the emotion might be more important than the event itself.

2. Set up the scene/situation carefully. Postpone. Think of the emotion as the punch line of a joke.

3. Create opposition, not sympathy, in other characters. Let the reader be sympathetic.

4. Let the body feel and show the emotion. But be subtle. Use props for example.

5. Put in all the emotion-laden words and then take them out. Is the emotion still there? It should be in the structure.

6. Withhold emotion. It is hard to speak it. No long, "spill his guts," scenes.

7. Show the character holding back emotion. He is trying not to feel. Show the physical.

8. Punctuation, word choice, sentence structure show emotion. Know the rules then break them. Use rhythm or repetition.

9. Don't make the scene about the emotion. Emotion is the background. After the funeral, for example.

10. Show emotion in understated interaction between characters. Have the conversation about something relevant but minor and have it veer into dangerous territory. Change of subject, conversation fading away. Talk about something besides the upcoming bad event.

11. Self-pity won't work. If the character cries, the reader does not have to. Show the character struggling but being strong. Use a more distant observer POV. We are more likely to cry for someone else than ourselves.

12. If you are mostly subtle and understated, this means every once in a while, let loose with a powerful emotional thing like La Marseillaise from "Casablanca."



ALICIA RASLEY (CONT'D)

The more complicated the emotion, the more it needs to be explained later in the book. Don't have a very emotional scene at the beginning.

Do put the emotional moment—despair, disaster—at the end of the scene.

Use the magic rule of three for emotion in a scene-structure whatever in a series of three: Three arguments; three attempts; three reasons; three bad things happen; three obstacles.

Put the three in escalating order with the worst or least acceptable last. That's the one that is chosen or acted upon. It is the situation with the most emotional risk, the most likely to fail, the most dangerous.

1. He will never change—easy solution

2. He offers her some shelter and support—it might work

3. He might kill you or hurt your children—Good grief!! (Chose this one to move the story.)

Don't invent a scene around #3.
Take what you already have and



incorporate it into your scene design for some scenes—not all. You are in charge of invention and structure, and you can revise if it does not work. Make up a reason to put the family in danger.

Keep the reader in suspense so they will keep reading.

Alicia pointed out the use of “three” in “Casablanca.” Watch for it as you look at the film. Hint: Elsa tries to persuade Rick to help her escape, finally pulling out a gun.

Characters are not just physical bodies to move about like chess men. Use the hero or heroine's body to express emotions. Particularly make a man's body express his emotions since he is less likely to articulate what he feels.

There are three ways to deal with emotion; repress (avoid it), suppress (block it), or express (say or show it). Of the three, the first two are always failures.

Julia Blaine comes from a long line of storytellers. As a child, she sat fascinated as her father, six uncles and grandfather sat on the hillside after a big family dinner to spin yarns; tall tales and strange occurrences they claimed to have lived through themselves.

Julia could not keep from telling stories herself. She writes mostly historical romances – sometimes with the touch of fantasy. But she does own cats...

NEW RELEASES BY COFW MEMBERS!

RACE THE DARKNESS

by Abbie Roads

Cursed with a terrible gift...

Criminal investigator Xander Stone doesn't have to question you—he can hear your thoughts. Scarred by lightning, burdened with a power that gives him no peace, Xander struggles to maintain his sanity against the voice that haunts him day and night—the voice of a woman begging him to save her.

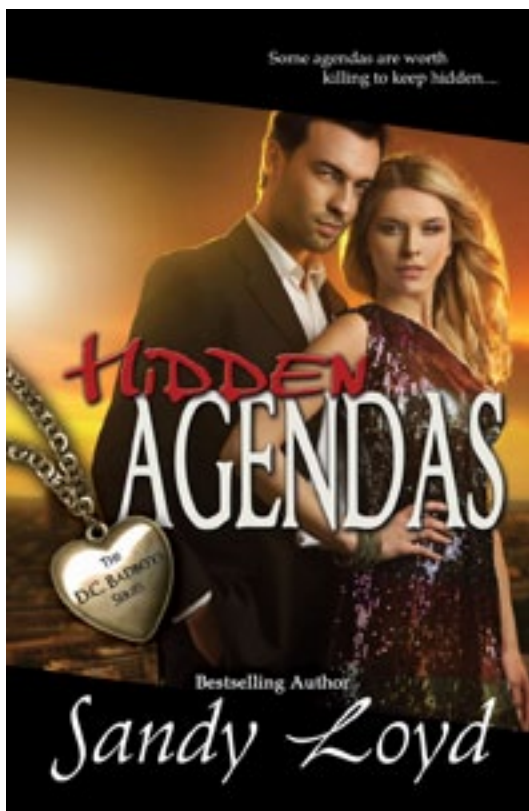
A gift that threatens to engulf them

Isleen Walker has long since given up hope of escape from the nightmare of captivity and torture that is draining her life, her mind, and her soul. Except...there is the man in her feverish dreams, the strangely beautiful man who beckons her to freedom and wholeness. And when he comes, if he comes, it will take all their combined fury and faith to overcome a madman bent on fulfilling a deadly prophecy.



HIDDEN AGENDAS

by Sandy Loyd



She stomped on his heart once. Only a fool would let her do it again. Yet, a lady in need is irresistible, even to someone as jaded as Eric Coleman, the sexiest and most charming of the DC BADBOYS.

This time around he's more than cautious about getting involved with Simone Harris. Considering his darkest secret, he doesn't see how she'll view him any differently than she did back in high school—not good enough to date.

Single mom, Simone, has a different vantage point after twelve years of going it alone. Harboring her own secrets, she also has a sense of unworthiness. Eric is definitely deserving of a second chance, especially after he protects her and her daughter when a suspected stalker threatens their peace of mind.

As the stalker closes in, Simone looks to her own past to discover not only his motive, but his deadly intent.

NEW RELEASES BY COFW MEMBERS!

SPICY CHRISTMAS KISSES #2

including a novella by Marcia James

Readers loved last year's set so much, we decided to do it again and bring you NINE spicy romances set around the holidays.

From bestselling, award-winning and multi-published authors come romances that feature friends to lovers, doggie matchmakers, single dads, hero-in-hiding, maybe baby, reunited lovers and more!

This set includes Marcia James' novella, "Heating Up the Holidays."



THREE LITTLE CATS — A TRICK-OR-TREAT STORY

by Julia Blaine



As responsible as most children, these forgetful kittens not only lost their mittens some time ago but now, at Halloween, they have lost their hats! Once more, Mother Cat is there to urge them to be more dependable, offering Pumpkin Pie as a reward. Can their search be successful once more on such a spooky night?

Available September 29!

"Three Little Cats"
is adapted from the
Nursery Rhyme

*by Eliza Lee Cabot
Follen, 1843*

THE SOUTHERN COMFORT CHRISTMAS

by Barbara Lohr



A Christmas wedding threatens to become Civil War II when the parents of Harper and Cameron enter the planning.

The Southern Comfort Christmas releases on November 15.

Fun FB Bridal Shower on November 16.

FIVE TIME-MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR PRODUCTIVE WRITERS

By Saralee Etter

Except for a very lucky few writers, we all struggle to be more productive in our writing careers and in our lives.

Gone are the days when publishers and readers expected an author to put out one single book a year. Now it seems that authors are faced with the task of producing two, three, or even more books in twelve months in order to hold the readers' interest and generate enough revenue to ensure their financial stability.

So what steps can we take to improve our productivity? A main aspect of productivity is time management. Here are five tips to help you set up your time and your day so that you can avoid procrastination and get right down to the work that matters.



1. Mindset—Remember your “why”

What are all the reasons you wanted to be a writer in the first place? Write them down. When you find yourself reluctant to open up that document or start writing that scene remember what motivated you to write in the first place. Remind yourself of those big long-term goals when your short-term discouragement gets you down.

Rome wasn't built in a day and books can't be written in a day, either (not usually).

“Most people overestimate what they can do in one year and underestimate what they can do in ten years.” – Bill Gates

For more help in fighting “resistance” to doing your creative work, read *The War of Art* by Steven Pressfield <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B007A4SDCG/>

2. Habits—Build new habits to keep yourself on track.

We all know how our bad habits—those automatic behaviors—keep us doing what we shouldn't do. But it takes so much willpower to repeat a good behavior long enough for it to become a habit! If you're anything like me, you know that willpower is a limited resource. If I have to use my willpower to avoid eating some yummy treat, suddenly I have less willpower to resist watching that cute cat video when I should be writing.

Even President Obama fights “decision fatigue” by putting some daily decisions on autopilot so he doesn't have to use up his willpower on unimportant questions. That's why he always wears either blue or gray suits. Boom, dressing for the day is a done deal! Then he can go on to more important questions...



FIVE TIPS (CONT'D)

So how can we develop good habits without using our precious willpower every day? B.J. Fogg has an answer for you: Tiny Habits. In this TED talk, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdKUJxjn-R8> he discusses how to make it easy to add a new habit by making small changes in one's daily routine—find an “anchor,” which is something you already do, and then add one simple little step toward the new habit.

In the video he explains how to start regularly flossing all your teeth by starting by just flossing one tooth. It's so easy you can't help but do it.

What's a tiny habit for a writer? Maybe it's just making a plan that every day, right after you get your morning coffee, you'll sit down and open your manuscript, read the last thing you wrote and make one change. Then close the document and do something else.

Try it! What tiny habits can you add?



3. Rituals—Get in the zone

Building rituals can also help you stay on track. Rituals are a way to establish a routine that will make it easier for you to dive into your work.

Rituals have three elements, says Mark McGuinness, author of **Productivity for Creative People** (free right now) <https://www.amazon.com/Productivity-Creative-People-Always-World-ebook/dp/B01LXUKMQ2/>



Distinctiveness: Choose an anchor that isn't something that is a part of the rest of your life – a special piece of music, a particular scent, wearing a tiara.

Emotional intensity: Whatever the anchor is, let it be something that has special emotional meaning for you.

Repetition: Do it over and over to reinforce the message to your subconscious mind, that this moment is special.

An additional resource for getting yourself set up for success is Hal Elrod's **Miracle Morning for Writers** <https://www.amazon.com/Miracle-Morning-Writers-Writing-Increases-ebook/dp/B01FWGH4GO/>

FIVE TIPS (CONT'D)

4. Schedule—protect your time

Many times, we just don't honor our commitments to ourselves and to our own self-imposed schedules. Our days get consumed with things that are urgent but not important, and ignore those things which are important but not urgent.

Mark McGuinness (see above) says to put "hard edges" in your day—establish a firm schedule. One of the benefits of this scheduling is that it allows you a start and a stop time. Schedule in lunch time. One of the main causes of burnout and guilt is when you don't know when to quit. Don't be always on duty. When you work, you work. When you don't, you don't.

This blogger provided some great ideas: <http://lifehacker.com/how-can-i-keep-my-family-from-disturbing-me-when-i-work-518375734>



Don't fritter away your time on the job, either. Some tips:

- Batch process emails—treat emails like mail, not like conversation. Don't expect an immediate response, and don't give an immediate response.
- Turn off your notifications for FB and for other internet things.
- Use your calendar! Schedule in your writing time like an appointment.
- Also try apps like Jerry Seinfeld's "Don't Break the Chain" app: <https://chains.cc/>

5. Get Your To-Do list out of your head—put it on paper.

Many writers like the free Evernote app, <https://evernote.com/>

But there are others that swear by Mark Forster's Autofocus system, <http://markforster.squarespace.com/autofocus-system/>, which simply requires a pen and a notebook. However, the basics are these:

- Don't try to remember your stuff
- Write the stuff down and then focus completely on the task in front of you.

I hope you'll try out one or more of these ideas. Here's to your productivity!

After years of writing newspaper articles, public relations releases and legal briefs, Saralee Etter published three sweet Regency romances with the Cotillion line. As Rose Maybud she published the sexy contemporary, "[Something in the Coffee](#)"

*Now she is working on a Victorian murder mystery series featuring Lucy Turner, who eventually marries William S. Gilbert of Gilbert & Sullivan fame. The first book, "A Short Sharp Shock," will be coming soon. You can find Saralee at www.saraleeetter.com and at her blog, **A Fine Mystery Indeed**, www.saraleeetter.com/blog1*

BACKSTORY: PUTTING YOUR WORLD IN CONTEXT

by Donna Maloy

The following article first appeared in the September 2016 issue of In Print!, the monthly newsletter of Houston Bay Area RWA.

Context gives us clues to the meaning of an unfamiliar word, the emotion behind a friend's reaction, the point of a political slogan.

The word "flag" can call several images to mind. But even if we've never used it this way ourselves, we can sense the meaning through context of a sentence like, "My energy level flags at the end of the day."

When everyone else cheers for your child's successful stage debut, you completely understand the context of your friend's tears –her budding actress daughter just died of leukemia.

Without context, you might be confused by a cartoon I saw recently that put a Stephen King byline on ***The Path to Prosperity*** (the congressional budget).

World-building, or context, makes a plot richer, characters more complex, and setting more accessible. It makes the fictional story world believable.

Common sources for story context

Your characters' backgrounds (backstory that often explains motivations and desires)

Their social setting (friends or the lack of them, marriage, courtship, and the activities associated with sustaining relationships).

The work/school part of their lives (jobs, classes, employers, coworkers, competitors, worry/anxiety).

The sociopolitical milieu (what's happening in the world, near and far, that impacts your characters).

How to use these sources to create rich story context

Look around you, this very minute. Is there a photo of a family member or friend visible? Do you love or hate the room you're in? Do you enjoy/fear/anticipate/

loathe the activity you are supposed to be doing right now? Are you comfortable, hot, or cold? Is the lighting too bright or too dim? Have you just learned that people you know are in danger somewhere in the world? Are you ill or in pain? Have you just won the lottery or learned you're pregnant?

This is your immediate context, the background that gives meaning to the next thing you do or say. Now you absolutely don't want to write a scene in which the reader knows the answer to every one of those questions, but you do want the reader to know enough to understand the emotional and physical state you are in when you say or do that next thing.



BACKSTORY (CONT'D)

A main character who gets surly after a couple of drinks and pours a beer on another man at a bar may be assumed to be uncouth, a drunk, or a bully. But a main character who is fearful and anxious about being sent off to fight a war is understandably unsympathetic to a bar patron who complains his beer isn't cold enough. How do you "show" the character's fear and anxiety so the reader isn't turned off by the character's scorn? You reveal the context of the immediate situation. Look around the character; look around his world. Is he wearing fatigues? Does he fidget with dog tags? Is he glued to a TV in the bar showing scenes of the war? Does he have three empty bottles in front of him already? Does he fail to notice someone bump into him, or call his name? Does he drum on the table incessantly?

Take this same care to reveal context whenever you want your reader to understand a character's actions. You don't always have to use description, though. Conversation and interior thoughts can be just as revealing. Does the guy at the bar mutter curses at what he sees on the TV? Does he answer abruptly, or with a grunt, when someone asks if he's in the army? While he watches the screen, is he thinking about his fiancée? Is he remembering a friend who returned home with only one leg?



Many writers who are just learning the craft will create detailed biographies of their characters, and then write a story that doesn't use any of that material. Others cram pages of backstory into their early chapters, slowing the story down to a crawl. Character backgrounds are invaluable sources of context, helping readers understand the actions/reactions of characters. But an info-dump isn't entertaining. Ease into context by leaving clues. Not too many, just enough.

How to ease into context

Mentioning, once, that a character's bedroom is lined with shelves of shabby, second-hand books speaks volumes (no pun intended) about the character's intellectual life and economic status. You don't have to beat the subject to death by having the character wish they could afford new bestsellers, and gaze longingly in the window of a bookstore, and sigh about the lack of money for luxuries... dribbling the context into chapter after chapter. If you provide the context, and then always have the character act consistently within that context, your reader will understand the motivations that arise from it.

BACKSTORY (CONT'D)

Historical context requires a bit more frequent maintenance. The reader needs to stay firmly in the period, so most scenes will need to have some reminder of the milieu. This could be as simple as a phrase that is period-specific, a description of a hairdo or ornament, a reference to a familiar person living during that time, or a social custom. But you don't want to slow the pace of the story with lengthy descriptions of room contents, architecture, or obscure language. If the hero is fighting the villain, a quick sentence about ripping off a cravat might do to remind the reader he shouldn't expect a modern forensics team to clean up the scene.

Fantasy and science fiction share a common perception that their worlds are "made up." But within the context of both, the world needs to have consistency and familiarity. Creating worlds in which nothing is familiar will slow down the reader who has to adapt to every single new thing. Again, look around your "made up" world and really see it, feel it, taste and smell it. What is the same? What is almost the same? What has the same function but a different name, and what has the same name but an enhanced function?



You can ground (pun intended this time) a weightless or flying scene by having a familiar stationary landscape, or characters who are as clumsy in the air as they are on the ground, or a feeling of nausea that is similar to what a character experienced after eating bad fish. The reader who can identify with part of the scene can be carried along to the unfamiliar parts.

*Donna Maloy is a published author of fiction and plays for adults, teens, tweens and young adults. Her first book for middle grade, **Celia and The Wolf** won the Lyra Award for best juvenile fiction in 2014. She has been teaching writing at the college and community level for more than ten years.*



THE MYSTERY OF PROCESS

By Heather Heyford

The following article appeared in the October 2016 issue of Penn and Passion, the newsletter of the Central Pennsylvania Romance Writers, Sara Walter Ellwood, editor.

In **Year of Yes**, Shonda Rhimes describes the process of getting ready to write as a hard, five-mile run lined with desserts and good movies and great books she's dying to read before she can get to that place she calls "the hum of laying track."

When I taught high school art, observing the ways my students settled down to work was a lesson in itself. Some dove right in. Others had elaborate rituals, such as the girl who could only draw using her chewed up, inch-long pink pencil ending in a worn down eraser. Even when I offered her a fresh yellow one, she refused to trade.

Recently my husband was planning a trip to the opposite coast to run a half-marathon. Anticipating a long weekend free of cooking, I pictured a great swath of time stretching out before me like an empty page, just waiting to be populated with characters and brought alive in scenes. I planned on rising early and staying up late, setting my own personal best in terms of word count.

When the long-awaited day finally arrived? Here's what I did: made sun tea, fed cats, made bed, made bacon. Ate bacon, felt guilty; mitigated guilt with yogurt. I also went to the bank, had a medical lab test, posted a facebook video and made a lunch appointment with a friend. By the time I put fingers to keyboard, it was eleven a.m. But instead of working on my novel against a looming deadline, I wrote a random blog post! (The bank and the doctor were non-negotiable, but not the bacon. Definitely not the bacon.)



I know writers who have no problem tuning out crying kids, dirty dishes and their partner's horrible 80s music. Not me. Even given the gift of extra time, I'm still compelled to waste precious minutes frittering, sweeping away the mundane things cluttering my brain and my environment before I can dig down deep to where the good stuff hides. I have to make the bed and scoop the litter and shut the door before my muse, like an aircraft signalman waving an orange flag, gives me the all clear.

The hum of laying track. That's why we write—to get inside that imaginary world where our fingers are flying and we lose all sense of time. For me, that flow state even trumps the satisfaction of being able to point to a finished book.

And then, inevitably, someone sticks his head in the door to say "hi" or "bye" and you have to run that five miles all over again . . .

*Heather Heyford writes contemporary romance novels set in the wine country. Her latest book, **The Crush**, is published by Kensington.*

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Amanda Aquino: Working on my Contemporary Romance. (My first novel ever!)

Sheri Atkins: Hoping to get back to writing soon.

Amalie Berlin: Medical Romance -- Harlequin

Julia Blaine: Trying to get Children's book finished.

Kris Branch: Working on third chapter of WIP.

Jodi Brohard: Revising YA novel.

Janet Circone: Present

Jane Conner: Chapter business.

Margaret Crowley: Starting new Contemporary Romance.

Tara/Teresia Devlin: Regency WIP.

Jeanne Estridge: Contemporary "Girl's Best Friend".

Saralee Etter: Editing another writer's work. Taking online course on productivity. Working on Historical Mystery.

Tanja Fazzari: Paranormal shapeshifter.

Robin Gianna: Starting Romantic Suspense Story.

Susan Gee Heino: Finishing proposal for Harlequin Medical; Preparing workshop for Greater Detroit RWA next week.

Sandy Kachurek: Working on a new novel.

Janessa McRoy: Historical Revision – Paranormal WIP.

Stacy McKittrick: Still revising "Ghostly Interlude."

Linda Rice: Plotting.

Sandy Wickersham-McWhorter: Working on getting "Poems of a Weird Kid," together and edited and ready to submit as a book before January – waiting for the edits of the poems that won the contest.

Karin Shaw: Finishing third edits on "Lion's Prey."

Eva Siedler: Contemporary/NA "Facing After."

Nancy White: Historical Western.

COFW 2016 LEADERSHIP

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