

June 1, 2017

Volume XXIX. Issue 5

Welcome to Central Ohio Fiction Writers

COFW welcomed Lorie Langdon, co-author of the best-selling series *Doon*, who shared her tips on how to hook a reader using emotionally descriptive language throughout the story. With pauses in the presentation for members to write their own words, Lorie demonstrated the power of heightened reader engagement through such techniques as vivid emotional imagery and sequencing the character's reactions.

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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.

Volume XXIX. Issue 5/1

Lorie Langdon: Hooking Your Reader with Emotional Description

Recap By Saralee Etter

COFW's speaker for May was Lorie Langdon, author of the bestselling *Doon* series (a modern YA re-telling of *Brigadoon* co-authored with Carey Corp), YA thriller *Gilt Hollow*, and an upcoming retelling of *Oliver Twist* featuring a female protagonist Olivia Twist, who must disguise herself as a boy to survive in Victorian London's mean streets.

Lorie shared with us her tips and techniques on how to hook a reader using emotionally descriptive language throughout the story.

There are different types of ways to hook a reader: The High Concept hook, the Inciting Incident hook, and the Emotional Description hook. These hooks are used in different parts of a story to lure a reader in and keep them engaged in the story.

We've all heard of **High Concept** hooks—the punchy one-line summary of a story that excites a reader's interest right from the start. These hooks are what book sellers use to pique a reader's interest in the story to begin with.

Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* series has a high-concept hook: "A WWII British combat nurse walks through mysterious standing stones and finds herself in a Scotland torn apart by war and rival clans in the year 1743."

The Hunger Games has a high-concept hook: "To earn needed food and resources for their communities, teens must fight to the death in the Hunger Games."

The **Inciting Incident** hook is the moment near the beginning of the story when everything is about to change for the main character—he or she is propelled into action by some choice or circumstance that sets them on their transformational journey.

In *Outlander*, the inciting incident is when Claire steps through the standing stones and finds herself thrown 200 years into the past. In *The Hunger Games*, it happens when Katniss volunteers as tribute in Prue's place.

A third type of hook, and the subject of Lorie's presentation, is the **Emotional Description** hook. A good example of this is *Twilight*. Stephenie Meyers book doesn't have a high concept hook or a clear inciting incident, yet readers are drawn into the story because they can imagine themselves as the main character Bella. The connection is an emotional one because, as Lorie pointed out, "Every girl who feels average longs for the extraordinary."

Making this emotional connection with a reader involves writing the story so that the reader is not seeing words on the page but images in her head. This is accomplished through immersive description, putting your character into the action, using vivid imagery, specific language, and showing rather than telling the character's emotion.

Immersive description allows the reader to feel the reality of the story's events by showing everything from the unique perspective of the point of view character. You must be precise, use concrete details and show the scene the way the character would see it.



Lorie Langdon presents her techniques on enhancing a story's emotions.

Lori shared a passage from one of her stories, the first version describing a town as having houses crammed together and regularly buffeted by storms that kept most people away. The second, more emotional description describes “clapboard structures nestled together like birds huddled against the wind. Tempests blow through with enough frequency that only the heartiest souls—or perhaps the dimmest—settled there.”

Putting your character into the action means that you evoke sensation or emotion in the reader. Although you must not stop or slow the pace of the storytelling to describe the setting, a well-chosen detail can build tension, add emotion and heighten awareness of the conflict in the moment. When the character is walking alone at night and afraid she is being followed, she won't notice the purple shutters on a house.

But she will notice a coyote howling in the distance or the prickle on the back of her neck that tells her she is being watched.

Vivid emotional imagery will draw a reader into the character's feelings. Although writers often describe the way things look, other sensory descriptions are often ignored. Remember to use sounds, smells, touch, taste and other senses in describing a scene. Include physical reactions like chills running up and down the spine, the feeling of eyes drilling into one's back, and other details that can only be interpreted by a reader when the sensation is recalled.

As you're editing your scenes, ask yourself questions like where the scene is taking place, at what time of day, what are the light sources, what is the character doing with their body, how the ground feels under their feet, what sounds do they hear, what is in their hands, and what do they hope will happen or fear will happen? Although including these elements will make the description longer, it's worth it to enrich the reader's experience.

Choose vivid words and phrases and eliminate qualifiers like *very*, *nearly*, *sort of* and other similar expressions. It's all right to over-write during the rough draft, but prune out that purple prose in the editing phase.

We all know that we should **show rather than tell** what our characters' emotions are. It's best to avoid naming the emotion wherever possible. Use subtext to suggest emotions right under the surface. Avoid "telling" verbs like *wondered, felt, realized, saw* and so on. When you're in that character's point of view, you can simply eliminate that phrase to draw the reader in closer to the emotion.

Another important aspect of storytelling is to correctly **sequence the character's reactions**. (This is very similar to American writer Dwight Swain's approach to the subject.) The correct sequence includes:

1. Physical (or involuntary) reaction;
2. Thought;
3. Dialogue (internal or external); and
4. Purposeful action.

Although it's not necessary to include all four steps, it's important to get them in the right order. For example, if the bad guy bursts through the door into the room where the heroine is hiding, her first reaction would be to freeze in fear, her second would be to think she needs to run, her third reaction would be to say (or think) "Not today, you monster," and then she'd jump out the window.

Combining or leaving out a step is fine, but if the order is reversed then the moment won't have the same realistic resonance with readers.

Throughout the presentation, Lorie included exercises for the audience to complete, so we could practice the emotional description techniques she went over in her presentation. At the end, she answered questions from the audience, discussing the need for pre-writing to establish details in world-building, describing setting even in a contemporary story to bring it alive, and building scenes so that the action progresses from the character having a wide range of choices to only having one choice.

Focusing on emotional description throughout the story is an excellent way to keep readers engaged on every page. Have you used emotions and settings to their fullest effect in your stories? Check and see!

RECAP WRITER: **Saralee Etter** is the author of three traditional Regency romances. Her next book, coming later this summer, is *A Short Sharp Shock*, the first book in a Victorian-set mystery series featuring sleuth Lucy Turner and her friends, William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. You can visit her on the web at www.saraleeetter.com.



Minutes for May 13, Norwich Township Building, Hilliard

By Jeanne Estridge, Secretary

At 12:30, President Jenessa McRoy welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

Works in Progress notebook was passed around the room for everyone to sign.

Stacy McKitrick, treasurer, moved to accept the minutes from April, which was seconded by Darcy Gafera, and approved by all.

Now with tax season over, Jenessa will schedule a financial audit with Donna MacMeans, Jeanne Estridge and herself serving as the audit committee.

The treasurer's summary for April included: \$8,266.22 in checking, \$2,315.26 in PayPal and \$1,564.43 available to the chapter in the financial assistance fund. The purpose of the financial assistance fund is to help those who request monetary support for any COFW event but not the Romance Writers of America® Conference. A member must be a member for one full calendar year before requesting support and may receive help once every three years. In addition, RWA has a fund to assist members with its dues and offers many scholarships to attend its conference.

Robin Gianna gave an overview of upcoming COFW programs, including:

Today's presentation by Lorie Langdon, co-author of the *Doon* series;

In June, Lori Foster, former COFW member and NYT best-selling author;

For July, Laurie Schnebly's presentation, "Plotting, Building Conflict, The Hero's Ladder," at the Columbus Metro Library Downtown Columbus;

The 2017 Annual Conference recap in August;

In September, Lita Lawson and Kat Sheridan on self-publishing; and

All-day workshop with Larry Brooks in October.

Linda Rice reported that an advertisement in *Romance Writers Report* for the all-day October workshop with Larry Brooks will begin in July, and information was on the COFW website. Linda asked that everyone promote it on their social media sites.

Julia Blaine presented incentives to members, including Sandy Kachurek who pitched her novel to an agent in Louisville who requested 50 pages; Robin Gianna and Darcy Gafera w/a Amalie Berlin for co-authoring a book coming out in November, as well as each had a book accepted by Harlequin; Shari Heinrich, who was given a referral to an agent from another writer for *River Daughter* and who signed up for her first workshop; Saralee Etter w/a Rose Maybud announced *Something in the Coffee* was currently for free on Amazon; and Julia Blaine said Deb Gilbert from SoulMate Publishing had returned her MS with revisions, which were completed and resubmitted.



*Incentive receiver, Rose
Maybud's *Something in the
Coffee* is on Amazon.*

Sandy Kachurek gave a newsletter update. She said it was going well, and she was learning MailChimp. Saralee offered to recap today's presentation. Karen Harper offered a craft article for the newsletter, which will be in the June issue. Saralee suggested Linda Rice do a recap of the recent 2017 RT Booklovers Convention in Atlanta.

Further business included an update of the COFW Ignite the Flame contest, chaired by Nancy White and Jane Conner. Nancy reminded us that the entry period opened May 1 and will close on May 31. Margaret Crowley and Andrea McConnell, social media chair, were sending out tweets.

Everyone was encouraged to tweet the event. Nancy was in need of first round judges for June.

Two new guests attended the meeting. Brian Crenshaw who writes science fiction and fantasy, and Barb Riley who writes YA and Middle Grade and works at Savvyauthors.com. Barb encouraged everyone to pitch in SavvyAuthors upcoming PitchWars.

The business meeting was adjourned at 1 p.m.

COFW Meeting Location

(unless otherwise stated)

Location: Norwich Twp Safety & Services Building. 5181
Northwest Parkway. Hilliard, OH 43026

Networking: Noon

Business Meeting: 12:30 p.m.

Guest Presentation: 1:30 p.m

Meeting Days

First "Teen" Saturday of the Month
(except in December)



COFW members with Lorie Langdon. (photo by Shari Heinrich)

Works in Progress and Attendance for May 13

1. Jenessa McRoy: outlining new project, no title yet.
2. Jeanne Estridge: finishing up revisions to contemporary.
3. Stacy McKittrick: going through pre-edits on *Ghostly Interlude*.
4. Sandy Kachurek: WIP with beta reader.
5. Nancy White: doing first draft of WIP.
6. Julia Blaine: cutting out COMMAS! for SoulMate editor, working on a basement problem and a sick cat.
7. Shari Heinrich: 10K into a paranormal romance *The Queen's Ward* and plotting a YA ghost-centered story.
8. Brian Crenshaw: seeking an agent for *Hunter's Moon*, a horror-thriller at 94K, submitting science fiction short stories, and working on a graphic novel script, *Ghosts in a Jar*.
9. Darcy Gafera-Dare: submitting and science fiction romance trilogy.
10. Robin Gianna: starting a new medical romance.
11. Saralee Etter: still plugging away at a Victorian mystery and taking an online course "Launch a Bestseller" led by Tim Grahl.
12. Linda Rice: attended RT Booklovers convention in Atlanta.
13. [Barb] Riley Darkes: finished an MBA and is working on a YA romance.



♥ Publisher HarperCollins is sending **Karen Harper**, longtime COFW member, to Chicago to speak at the American Library Association Conference and Exhibition, June 23-24. She'll serve on a panel, read from her books and autograph *The Royal Nanny* and *South Shore* from her romance suspense series. She'll be sharing the spotlight with other stars, including Sarah Jessica Parker, Bill Nye and Hillary Rodham Clinton. ♥

Ten Top Tips for Writing Romance Suspense

by Karen Harper

I've written over 25 romantic suspense novels, so over the years I've learned there are some good guidelines for writing successfully in that genre. Here are ten suggestions, not necessarily in the order of importance—it all matters.

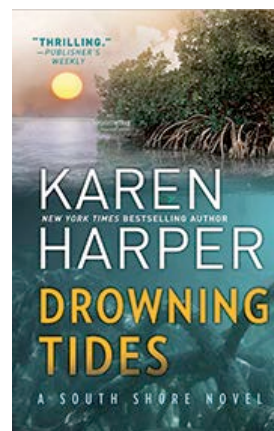
And, as ever, it's what you want to write that matters, even if you do occasionally take advice from other authors.

HAVE A HOOK FOR THE BOOK: Think of this as having something really intriguing about your book to attract an editor or reader in just a sentence or two. An Amish woman and a police chief are forced to work together? The heroine is a forensic psychologist? (Hmm. That's my hook for my new *South Shores* series in which she is a forensic psych and he's a criminal lawyer.) The hero/heroine careers can be the hook—or not.

WRITE A GRABBER BEGINNING: I've noticed that my novels which do the best do have a grabber, if not in the first sentence, then very early. People do check out those first few lines if they have the book in their hands and can't decide whether to buy.

On-line excerpts often use the story's first pages. One of my books that did so much better than I had hopes for (*Below the Surface*, a *NYTimes* bestseller, was re-released with a Heather Graham novel in October 2016.) read, "When she surfaced, her dive boat was gone."

Another favorite of mine is the first two sentences of *Drowning Tides*, out this last February: "I'll get her back, Claire. I swear to you, I'll get your daughter back."



HE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A SEAL OR A COP (Or a billionaire): Many excellent romantic suspense novels have a hero with these “sexy” careers, but it’s not necessary. Granted, for some readers, that’s a hook for the book, but don’t follow the crowd.

Be creative. Arson investigator? Scuba diver? Scientist? Granted, you have to do whatever works for you.

SETTING MATTERS: One thing that lifts a romantic suspense or any novel over others is an intriguing and well done setting; hopefully, one so real it becomes another character in your story. Is your setting well described and not just painted on the background? Does your setting change and “interact” with the characters?

An obvious example is *Titanic*, which starts out as a glamorous haven and ends up as a killer. Think of how Tara changes and “interacts” with Scarlett in *Gone With the Wind*. I used Alaska in a romantic suspense once as a frightening enemy which later became the heroine’s friend and (along with the hero—who was a lawyer) her salvation.

THEY DON'T HAVE TO HATE EACH OTHER: Of course this set up for the hero/heroine of a novel works well, but don’t think it’s a golden rule. Yes, there does have to be tension between them, but they can’t keep bickering and fighting. The outside danger they face, their “mission” will pull them together in more ways than one.

WATCH THAT SAGGING MIDDLE: No, we’re not talking weight gain. The middle (I call it the muddle.) of books is where most stories bog down. The author is juggling many characters and probably subplots at this point. The opening was a grabber and you know your bang-up ending, but don’t let the story sag midway.

Another murder? A real twist in the romance or in the plot here? Study this in romantic suspense books you really love and don’t let up partway through your own story.

DON'T HAVE TOO MANY POSSIBLE PERPS: I got this advice from the famous British mystery author P.D. James when we were on the faculty of a writer’s conference in Florida about 15 years ago. She told me that the tendency is to make lots of people look guilty, but then you don’t have enough space to do justice to each person. You might end up ignoring a possible suspect for a while.

I try to stick to this advice, but I love to give at least three or four possible guilty parties a motive. Of course, your villain could be known from the beginning, and it’s a chase and escape plot.

KEEP UP THE TENSION: I admit this sounds like a no brainer when writing in this genre, but you must remain aware of this. In a way it overlaps with avoiding a sagging middle. This can be sexual tension between the hero/heroine, of course, but also from outside forces they are facing.

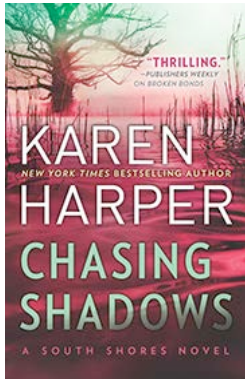
Once they really begin to fall in love and start working together, the tendency is to lighten up on the tension. You don't want to do that until the very end when they have escaped or conquered their problem or the danger.

SHE CAN SAVE HERSELF—MAYBE BOTH OF THEM. When I was first published in 1982, it was very common for the hero to be the one who saves the day. Well, we've come a long way, baby. It can be both of them on an equal basis solving and saving or it can be the woman who really comes through at the end.

Unless you're writing historical novels (which I do, but I still don't let the "knight in shining armor" always come to her rescue) the heroine needs to be strong at the end.

WORK HARD ON THE TITLE: This also sounds obvious but, especially if you're building a career as an author, it's huge. I've seen titles on romantic suspense novels that should have been on a charming English mystery or a straight romance.

Can you get that hook, that tension in your title too? My next romantic suspense books took a lot of back-and-forthing between me and my editor, and she ran titles through marketing minds. We came up with *Chasing Shadows*, *Drowning Tides* and *Falling Darkness*.



And it doesn't hurt to have the same basic pattern for titles (the "-ing" words here) to hold titles together. Nora Roberts' many *In Death* titles are a great example of that.

Happy, romantic and suspenseful writing!

Karen Harper is the *USA Today* and *NYTimes* best-selling author of romantic suspense and historical novels. She is a founding member of Central Ohio Fiction Writers. Visit her website at www.KarenHarperAuthor.com or her FB page at

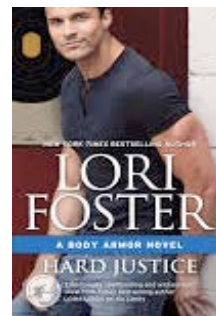
www.facebook.com/KarenHarperAuthor.



COFW Meeting for June 17

Lori Foster

NYT Best-selling Author



Founder of RAGT

Reader & Author Get Together

"A Friendly Gathering of Romance Lovers"

West Chester, Ohio

Lori Foster will share her personal experiences with the current industry and its changes along with her recent struggles with issues such as an insane schedule. Questions and Answers, too.

Since first publishing in January 1996, Lori Foster has become a *USA Today*, *Publisher's Weekly* and *New York Times* best-selling author of over 80 novellas and novels. Her newest release, *Hard Justice*, came out in March 2017. <http://lorifoster.com/>

Lori's RAGT is in its 13th year as a "fan-friendly event meant for readers and open to everyone, readers, authors and industry alike, in different ratios!" The event also raises funds for many local causes by offering incredible raffles, benefit books and an anthology put out by Lori with proceeds earmarked for donation.

The weekend offers everything a romance lover desires: eight boardrooms of breakout workshops and presentations, socializing giant tea party style during the day and sponsored parties at night. In addition, two multi-author book fairs and book signings take place.

Attendance cap is 500.

readerauthorgettogether.com

Coming July 15 to COFW: A Full Day with Laurie Schnebly

Different Location and Time

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Columbus Metropolitan Library, Main Branch

96 S. Grant Avenue, Columbus 43215

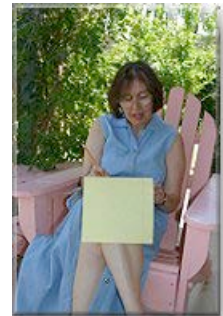
614-645-2275

COFW Members: Free

Non-Members: \$10 Donation

Morning Session:

Plotting vs Motivation: Any one of us could write a book in which characters set out for a three-hour tour and get shipwrecked on an uncharted desert isle. But if you nail down the characters' motivation, it doesn't matter whether the ship capsizes or lands safely three hours later. Your characters will create a plot from WHATEVER happens because you've got their motivation built in from the very beginning...and here's how to do it.



From Plot to Finish: Once a writer knows the elements that belong in her characters and her plot, she's all set...right? Well, not always. Making the move from a few basic answers to a manuscript which is ready to type involves a series of steps that people have called "incredible...a plotting system which truly RESPECTS that I'm a pantser" and "the easiest way I've ever seen of getting from Basic Idea to Finished Book."

Afternoon Session:

Building Conflict from the Head Down: They're perfect for each other, right? So why can't things ever seem to go as smoothly for these people as they deserve? Well, you know why--it's because nobody wants the happy ending to arrive five minutes into the book. Which means we need to stir up conflict for these characters, and no matter what kind of conflict is happening around them it'll be even more dramatic when you get the conflict happening inside each one.

Laurie Schnebly also writes and produces videos, brochures and commercials for a Phoenix advertising agency. She'd written six books for Special Edition before turning to non-fiction, using her research into the nine personality types to help writers create plausible, likable people with realistic flaws.

<http://booklaurie.com/>

On September 16, COFW Presents

A Talk About Self-Publishing

with

Lita Lawson and Kat Sheridan

Lita Lawson, self-published, contemporary author and COFW member, will discuss how to hire an editor and format your work, along with other handy tips regarding publishing your own work.
www.litalawson.net.



A **COFW member** off and on for over 15 years, Lita says, "I love COFW as we have so many great speakers at our monthly meetings, annual conference or workshop. COFW has an amazing group of authors willing to share their experience in writing romance. COFW rocks!"

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

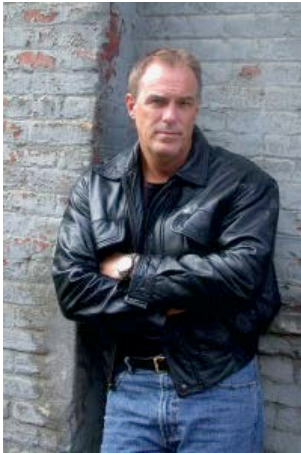
Kat Sheridan, self-published historical author, will discuss how to write a back cover blurb for your book.



Kat is addicted to historical, gothic novels and any romance that includes storms, castles, bat-shit crazy villains and a high body count. Heroes and heroines must be larger than life. She's excessively fond of shiny things and bourbon and is non-functioning until she's had her coffee.

Her latest release is a Victorian Gothic Romance *Echoes in Stone*.

www.facebook.com/Kat-Sheridan



Saturday, October 21, 2017

All-day Workshop. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

with

Larry Brooks

Author of Story Fix and Story Engineering

Location: The Courtyard Marriott 2350 Westbest Drive, Columbus.

Fee: COFW Members: \$55. Non-members: \$75 (includes continental breakfast, lunch, raffle).

To Register and Pay: COFW Website: <http://www.cofwevents.org/workshop>.

Workshop Topics:

- ☆ The Hidden Secrets of Story Structure.
- ☆ The Beautiful Collision of Concept and Premise.
- ☆ Dramatic Arc as the Key to Everything (Including Character).
- ☆ When Every Month is NanoWriMo.

Larry Brooks is a career writer from the corporate sector who had nourished a fiction-writing dream the entire time. He's published six novels and two best-selling books on writing, *Story Engineering* and *Story Physics* and the 2015 release *Story Fix*, all through *Writer's Digest*.

For Questions: Linda Rice: lindarice05@gmail.com.



On the Craft and Business of Writing

♥ Fiction Plotting with COFW Members

- ~First Wednesdays, 10 a.m.
- ~Panera Bread, 2374 Taylor Square Drive, Reynoldsburg, 43068.
- ~Sharing and discussing plots. Giving constructive advice on improvements.
- ~Between meetings, attendees stay in touch and ask questions via cofwplot@yahoogroups.com

♥ Live Q & A on Facebook with Author Assistant, Melissa Jolly

- ~Every Wednesday, 2:30 p.m. Eastern
- ~Request to be her Friend on Facebook. Click on it when it pops up in your feed. Or go to her page and click on the "play" icon hovering over her picture.
- ~She takes questions for 30 minutes or until people stop asking.
- ~To ask your question, simply type.
- ~If you can't make it during that time, email her at [melissa\(at\)authorrx\(dot\)com](mailto:melissa(at)authorrx(dot)com) -- melissa@authorrx.com. She'll try to answer your question during one of her weekly chats.

Melissa has spoken at COFW meetings and regularly presents workshops at RWA Conferences. She's been an author's assistant for many years and would love to share what she knows.

♥ Want More of Laurie Schnebly? See Her on Sunday, July 16 in West Chester.

- ~Laurie Schnebly Campbell will be giving a free class (or two) at the West Chester Library.
- ~Sunday July 16.
- ~1 p.m.
- ~Free.
- ~Confirm attendance: email Stacy McKittrick. semckitrick@aol.com
- ~This class is the day after the July COFW meeting with Laurie as special presenter. Different topics.

♥ Susan Jensen's New Release in COFW Newsletter for July

- ~*Emotional Rescue (Set in Stone)* by Lily Vega. Read more about it in the next issue.

2017 COFW Leadership

Executive Board

President: [Jenessa McRoy](mailto:jenessah@gmail.com) (jenessah@gmail.com)
Secretary: [Jeanne Estridge](mailto:jeanne.estridge.author@gmail.com) (jeanne.estridge.author@gmail.com)
Treasurer: [Stacy McKitrick](mailto:semckitrick@aol.com) (semckitrick@aol.com)



Committees

Programs Chair: [Sheri Adkins](mailto:sherirenaeadkins@gmail.com) (sherirenaeadkins@gmail.com)
Newsletter Editor: [Sandy Kachurek](mailto:sandrajkachurek@gmail.com) (sandrajkachurek@gmail.com)
Membership Chair: [Linda Rice](mailto:lindarice05@gmail.com) (lindarice05@gmail.com)
Social Media Chair: [Andrea McConnell](mailto:fyrefly93@gmail.com) (fyrefly93@gmail.com)
Incentives: [Julia Blaine](mailto:julmassie@aol.com) (julmassie@aol.com)

Ignite the Flame Contest Coordinators

[Nancy White](mailto:nancywhite0529@gmail.com) (nancywhite0529@gmail.com)
and
[Jane Conner](mailto:djconner@earthlink.net) (djconner@earthlink.net)



Central Ohio Fiction Writers

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Dayton, OH 45424

<https://twitter.com/COFWriters>
<https://www.facebook.com/COFWriters>

Meeting Days:

The first "teen" Saturday of the month.