



COFW

*Professionals, Writers & Friends Perfecting the
Happily Ever After*

August 2021

Issue 8

Welcome to Central Ohio Fiction Writers Newsletter

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Newsletter Editor: Rachel Dye

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.

2021 Leadership

Board

President: Bernie Miller

Secretary: Shari Heinrich

Treasurer: Michelle Orloff

Non-Board Positions

Newsletter Editor: Rachel Dye

Programs Chair: Vacant

Education Chair: Vacant

Social Media Chair: Vacant

Incentives Coordinator: Vacant

Ignite the Flame Contest Chair: Vacant

Monthly Meetings Facility Coordinator: Vacant

Equipment Inventory Coordinator: Vacant

Meetings

First "Teen" Saturday of the Month. Social: Noon to 12:30. Business: 12:30. Guest Presentation: 1:30. Location: Check www.cofwevents.org

Dues

New Members: \$35

Renewal before January 31: \$30. After January 31: \$35.

- Dues run January to December
- Membership with Romance Writers of America required.

Follow COFW

Twitter <https://twitter.com/COFWRiters>

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/COFWRiters>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/cofwriters/>

Closed Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/177462723049177/>

Central Ohio Fiction Writers

P.O. Box 24254 Dayton, OH 45424

Next Meeting: September 18th, 2021; Trope Your Way to a First Draft

In genre fiction tropes are marketing devices. Everyone has their favorite! But as writers you can use these tropes to build your characters, and conflicts - basically your first draft! Even better, your initial marketing blocks are baked into the earliest parts of the draft. Let Juliette Hyland show you how she uses tropes to figure out how to torture her characters before delivering their happily ever after!

Juliette Hyland believes in strong coffee, hot drinks and happily ever afters! She lives in Ohio, USA, with her prince charming, who has patiently listened to many rants regarding characters failing to follow the outline. When not working on fun and flirty happily ever afters, Juliette can be found spending time with her beautiful daughters, giant dogs or sewing uneven stitches with her sewing machine.

Business meeting at 12:30 pm, Discussion at 1:30 pm
Hope Hotel: 10823 Chidlaw Rd, Dayton, OH

Please Note: To get to the Hope Hotel, you will turn off 235 towards the entrance to Gate 12A and IMMEDIATELY turn right. The Hope Hotel is not on Wright-Patt do not attempt to enter the base gate.

Our meeting will also be held via Zoom for those unable to attend in person. The password will be posted on the Central Ohio Fiction Writers Group page which can be accessed via the Romance Writers of America website under the Forums tab.

COFW Fiction Plotters Meet Monthly - East

Need a boost with a story idea that has yet to see words on a page? Can't get your protagonist out of a hole you've written her into? Not sure whether the antagonist is antag-ging enough? Consider stopping by the COFW Fiction Plotters group. We meet the first Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. at the Panera Bread in Taylor Square in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, 43068.

If you have questions, contact:

Andrea McConnell: fyrefly93@gmail.com
Saralee Etter: saralee_etter@yahoo.com

COFW Fiction Plotters Meet Monthly - West

All the same fun as above but located in Huber Heights. We meet the second Monday of the month at 6:30 pm at the Panera Bread off I-70 exit 36.

If you have questions contact:

Jeanne Estridge: jeanneestridge@gmail.com
Rachel Dye: juliette.r.hyland@gmail.com

Central Ohio Fiction Writers

The mission of the Central Ohio Fiction Writers is to promote excellence in romantic fiction, help writers become published, and establish careers in the writing field.

Agenda

August 14, 2021 12:30 PM

**On Zoom &
Live at Forge Tavern
(1375 Bethel Rd, Columbus, OH 43220)**

12:00 Networking

12:30 Call Business Meeting to Order

Feel free to adjust your names on Zoom so we know what to call you all. Remember to silence your phones to reduce interruptions.

I.Welcome Visitors & Round Table: introduction of members and visitors.

II.Attendance/Works in Progress

- Rachel—vet story
- Erin—novella for reader magnet, old cozy mystery characters and a new cozy location
- Shari—Betwixt competition & Chihuahua Tales
- Julia—monster story
- Sandy—thrift shop story, it's women's fiction, but now the statues are talking!

III. Reports

1. **President Bernie Miller**—Next two months, forge has events at ren fest, so Bernie looking for a Dayton location. He'll let Shari know so she can work with webmaster to update the website as soon as we know.
2. **Secretary Shari Heinrich**—July minutes are accepted as posted in the newsletter.
3. **Treasurer Michelle Orloff**—

At the end of the July our current assets were as follows:

- Checking = \$5,596.08
- PayPal = \$627.52
- Available cash = \$6,223.60 (less the \$1,541.28 we owe RWA upon disaffiliation = \$4,682.32)
- Balance in the Perseverance Fund = \$1,519.94

Changes to account balances this month:

Expenses of about \$50 for new filings related to disaffiliation and \$200 to our July program speaker, Beth Barany.

Income of \$320 from our August online workshop (we'll owe half to the instructor).

Membership for July remained at 33 members.

4. Programs Chair Jeanne Estridge

- August— The Case for Diversity and Inclusion, Jordyn Blanson (this is a presentation on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access)
- September—Trope Your Way to a First Draft, Rachel Dye.
- October— Sexual Tensions, Jeffe Kennedy (and for online is +How to write unforgettable weddings by Lauri sue Lachlan)

- November— Storyteller's Toolkit, by Patricia Sargeant: The presentation will diagram premise, high concept, and conflict in a movie to demonstrate how the three elements work together to make a compelling story.
- January 2021— Priscilla Oliveras, potentially, and to be confirmed, topic still TBD based on the Facebook poll.

5. **Ignite the Flame**—contest not being held this year.

6. **Education Chair**—position vacant. (Laurie from PubCraft is filling it for us)

7. **Newsletter Editor Rachel Dye:** recap is by Sandy. Buy links for the newsletter, what does the chapter think? We're in favor of it, but is there any issue because of our non-profit status? One person thought that was why RWA prohibited it.

As Secretary, Shari takes the action item to look into Ohio non-profit requirements to see if there's a reason we *cannot* do a buy link. She will report back at next meeting if not sooner.

8. **Incentives**—Shari walked the basket around with chocolate, stickers, and soap samples. Since Shari was doing the incentives, she was not able to record what the in-room folks said, but great job everyone! Online, the following incentives were recognized:

- Tobi has started the novella; lovely wedding anniversary; husband gave her great suggestions for places to hide the body.
- Becky has finished her last book destined for the audio books, and it's in production.

IV. Unfinished Business

Things that the board has been talking about that we would like input from the whole organization on:

- How do members join now that they don't flow through RWA? Paypal on our website? And do we make them AGREE to something to do with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA)?

Since we already do Paypal via website for the classes, that's the route to go for now at least.

Shari will work with our webmaster before the next meeting regarding best way to collect details of the folks joining. She thought of setting up a google doc, but will coordinate with webmaster first.

- Maybe put something in the signup, if you join and then do not adhere to the organization's stated DEIA, that's grounds for expulsion without a refund of your dues.
- Policies and Procedures manual would then say how that all works, e.g., Board needs to put a committee together to handle a situation, so that the board itself isn't the one making the decision, was the thought.
- Make dues annually? Can we prorate for folks who join late? Then, in January, everyone renews. And would prefer membership push in January.
- Paypal could be the tricky part--we'd have to set up tiering system for that prorating. Will members get a discount on workshops? We like that model in the room and zoom. AND, then when we push our membership campaign, we promote that members get a discount on the workshops

1. Returning Member Campaign--those we have lost and we'd like to get back.

- First round—we each pick someone we ask back, like Shari and Rachael for Donna and Gina;. Bernie asked if there's any issue USING the old membership. No, because we'll do one contact, we won't sign them UP automatically. We'll reach out to them and give them info on how to re-join.
- And, can we NOT charge them to rejoin us? At least not until January? Agreed, since we're very in flux ourselves getting the things set up for membership.
- How about any other new members? Maybe the decision is NO dues UNTIL January.
- AND can we keep the meetings hybrid, so that people can still come to meetings, even if not comfortable being in a room. Yes, that is the intention.
- And blanket social media WITH our decisions, like fees/no fees; since a lot of writers have social media accounts
- And we need positions filled again—social media chair, for example.
- And maybe at holidays, it's a combination of “welcome back” and holiday party.

2. New Member Campaign—How are we going to bring in new members? All the same ways we focus on the returning members.

- OFW folks would be a good place to advertise for new members—reminding our focus is romance.
- COFW Facebook group. And the drama when you violate DEIA, as we saw in OFW when a member was not behaving well, we would not WANT to see that happen in COFW, so, yes, keep members and prospective members aware we are firm in DEIA.
- Erin, WV and KY residents, ok to advertise to them about joining, since we're doing hybrid? Sure, let them know; however, emphasize, we are a romance writing organization and we do NOT want to see that atmosphere change—we want this to be a safe space.

3. DUES--what will the cost be going forward; Michelle will look at year end budget statement and make ongoing costs visible.

- Price could go up because now you are NOT required to be part of RWA. Needs to be more than 35.
- Opinions: \$40-50 is appropriate, for free programming once a month. It's free to members, but it is NOT free to the organization. We spend approx. \$3,000 a year in ongoing expenses, and at current level of membership (33), that's \$100 each. IF we have more members, we could have a lower fee.
- AND we have the perseverance fund—though we'd have to modify our P&P manual.
- STUDENTS discount, multiple writers say. INVEST in them.
- BEING romance. There's a lot of things that get taught that are NOT specific to GMC. But if they want to write genre fiction, this COULD be a place for them.
- IF we had folks pay \$5/meeting, then that would be \$55/year (since Dec. is the holiday party).

- Age—up until now, we've said 18. Liability, and conversations we will have, keep it at that.
- Maybe we should allow the high school students to some meetings—and reach out to English depts. in the local high schools so that there's someone in an adult position who could reach out to a student who would be a good candidate for writing.
- Could we SPONSOR a high school writers contest? Grades 7-12 9-12? A writing contest? (But, we'd have to judge!)
- And colleges—more than one person in the room said genre was frowned upon. Maybe it has changed? Heads shook no.
- Ohioana, we'd have a panel of YA writers (or MG) to speak about their writing, and THAT could be a way to recruit members. (And get the state school library association involved).
- DUES stays open for amount, but decision (without vote) was to make this re-org remainder of a year free, as above.

V. New Business

1. Discuss the Vivian award controversy. A member wasn't aware of what went on, so we gave a quick recap: the Vivian award went in the worst possible way of handling the award. What a shame. (First we give the award, then we write some bad promo, and then we yank it back). Category was Inspiration, main hero had participated in violence against children and Native Americans. Genocide—the massacre at wounded knee. And full-on white gaze, blaming the Native Americans for the violence the army committed against them, murdering everyone there. The first comm from RWA was a letter defending it, “that’s the genre.” Then, a little time passes, and they rescind the award.
2. Discuss the news that the RWA has been talking to bankruptcy lawyer. That's it, that they're discussing a resettlement bankruptcy.

Meeting adjourned approximately 1:26 for our presentation, The Case for Diversity and Inclusion by Jordyn Blanson.

**Practicing Mindfulness as a Solution:
Jordyn Blanson on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
in Our Daily Lives and in Our Writing
by Sandy Kachurek**

One of the more serious issues in writing, as it is in life, is using stereotypes that reflect our biases. Through social conditioning and other factors, we tend to create expectations of people based on their ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, etc. Attaching our biases to fictional characters often perpetuates a misrepresentation of people in real life.

Jordyn Blanson was the guest speaker for our August meeting. The title of her presentation, “Let’s Talk: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and How it Relates to Everyday,” reflected her experiences as a woman of color with a degree in Industrial Psychology who works as a member of a management team for General Motors.

She addressed issues of biases academically and personally.

The toxicity from others toward her as a black woman was high when she was in college. “I was told my articulation was so good for being black.” Growing up in one part of the country and attending college in another, she was attacked for “being so direct” on her basketball and track teams.

Jordyn saw some of the same inequity in business, giving an example of the times when she sat around a table at a board meeting and was over-talked by the men in the room.

“Understanding why people do what they do led me to study psychology,” Jordyn said. Her work in industrial psychology focused on “how to create a healthy environment at work and in other spaces.”

Her experiences and studies have brought her to where she is today. She not only works in the corporate world but also advocates for social justice and representation, non-gendered text, and is a k-12 sensitivity reader for educational materials.

Her podcast, “Wait, Say What?” came out of a phone conversation with her mother. “We were discussing working while black and corporate tips and tricks when it hit [me]. Maybe other people could benefit from these real life conversations, too?” Each episode offers moments for learning and laughing.

Updating Our Thinking

Jordyn espouses an alternative way of thinking called Mental Thoughts Update. “Your first thought is what you were conditioned to think. Your next thought defines who you are.”

Another way of realizing that we can update our thinking is to imagine a cell phone and how we continue to receive and download updates to better its performance. The same can be said for us

as each day we learn more about others around us and can update our thoughts and behaviors to match ones with more diversity, equity and inclusion.

Definitions for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI)

Definitions are important and Jordyn applied them throughout her presentation, differentiating between the dictionary usage and usage in our society.

Diversity means “a range of different things” according to a dictionary, but in real life, diversity is a representation of people, encompassing the numerous ways people can be different.
“Diversity is not limited to ethnicity.”

The dictionary meaning of *equity* is “impartial, fair.” In our culture, equity is equality through the removal of barriers. Jordyn gave an illustration of equity in action in three steps asking us to envision a person in a wheelchair facing a set of stairs to enter a building.

In step one, everyone is given the same playing field of those stairs. Most people enter with no problem but the wheelchair person can not move up the stairs thus cannot enter the building on their own.

In step two, an alternative path is created for the wheelchair person to get into the building, but it involves going up a winding ramp instead of the more direct stairs, or by going around to the back of the building and entering via a delivery door.

In step three, as the building is being planned and built, one accessible entry way for all people is made.

The last ideal step is equity, achieved by “looking at things from the start and ensuring the pathway from the very beginning is not a problem.”

Inclusion is defined in the dictionary as “a state of being included.” In society, inclusion is creating an environment where people are made to feel welcome, feel accepted for who they are.

Invisible Worlds

Each member of a group reflects their culture, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, religion, able-bodiedness, social class, etc. These identities, Jordyn said, shape our “common sense.”

Members of different groups know different “truths” about the world. Here, Jordyn recalled again her experience in corporate life where she and another are the only women on the board. When she was talked over by the men, she may have rolled her eyes at the other woman, acknowledging, in a way, the invisible world that they both inhabit and that the men don’t see.

“We’re all navigating the world. We all have portals to others’ worlds. But, as we’re navigating, we’re not always sharing because we don’t know other portals exist or we see them but they don’t impact us,” Jordyn explained.

Seeing into others’ worlds is done through “having conversations with those who are different from us, who provide a glimpse into the invisible worlds of others.”

“It would be great,” said Jordyn, “if we treated teaching diversity, equity and inclusion like we treat teaching safety procedures, such as CPR and EMT. We practice physical safety methods to feel better. Teaching DEI Safety practices would train people how to be better able to react and act.”

“DEI Safety attributes to our mental health. It helps us become more empathic. It lets us see the world in its many different elements and perspectives,” added Jordyn.

She believes in what Oliver Wendell Holmes stated: “One’s mind, once stretched by a new idea, never again regains its original dimension.”

Mindfulness

Mindfulness maintains a moment-by-moment awareness of our feelings, bodily sensations and surrounding environment through a gentle, nurturing lens.

Mindfulness is empathy.

Studies have found that practicing mindfulness, even for a few weeks, can bring a variety of physical, psychological and social benefits and can have an impact on others’ spaces besides our own.

“Not recognizing yourself means you can’t see how others impact us and us them.”

Thousands of studies from Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs, first launched in 1979, have shown the physical and mental health benefits of mindfulness (Greater Good Magazine. greatergood.berkeley.edu).

“Even a few weeks of mindfulness practice can increase your positivity, brain control, handle trauma, self-worth, confidence, immune system and creativity. And it reduces biases,” said Jordyn.

Addressing Discomfort and Mindfulness

Cognitive dissonance is the psychological stress that occurs when a person holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas or values and participates in an action that they freely choose to perform that goes against a belief, idea or value

[An example of cognitive dissonance used on the website Simply Psychology (simplypsychology.org): when people smoke (behavior) and they know that smoking causes cancer (cognition), they are in a state of cognitive dissonance.]

Jordyn related a 1950s study when subjects were paid \$20 to move pegs around on a board. Another group of subjects moved pegs around and were paid nothing. Afterward, each were asked for their reaction to the experience. Those who were not paid said they thought the experience was fun. Those who were paid the money had a more negative experience.

Why?

Jordyn said, “When you have psychological stress and you’re a person who values your time, you see the pegs as a waste of time for the money. You see it as work. When you have psychological stress and you’re a person moving pegs without getting paid, you rationalize it. ‘It wasn’t that bad, after all.’”

“We all believe we’re the main character of our story. We believe we are kind and smart. We wouldn’t go out and waste our time moving pegs around. So we rationalize. We’re not getting paid; we’re having fun.”

We are driven to maintain a consistent internal narrative that aligns with how we perceive ourselves. With mindfulness, our minds instinctually attempt to protect us from critique or negative feelings.

For example, you’re a dog person and yet you give up your dog to the animal shelter. Why do it? When we look at other people, it’s easier to pass judgment on them. It’s harder to ask ourselves that question.

Bias and Mindfulness

Bias is a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person or group compared to another.

Biases are not inherently bad. They help us make sense of vast amounts of information quickly. Having biases is human nature and doesn’t make anyone a bad person. We even have negative biases about ourselves and our own identities.

To address our biases, it’s helpful to know the different types.

Priming Bias: relying on information from someone else to influence your judgments about others.

Affinity Bias: navigating toward people who are similar to you in terms of circumstances and experience.

Confirmation Bias: allowing someone’s actions to support an unconscious stereotype, thereby confirming the stereotype in your mind.

Jordyn repeated her statement from earlier: “Your first thought is what you’re conditioned to think; what you think next defines who you are.”

Microaggression and Mindfulness

Microaggressions are common, everyday verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative attitudes that relate to various intersections of one’s identity. They occur on a regular basis and often involve stereotypes and biases.

Example: A four-foot tall person gets told a lot, “You are so short!” or a person refuses to use someone’s name at all or uses it inaccurately. The question is: at what point is the microaggression called hostile?

Imagine a pyramid called Pyramid of Hate. The tiers build from Biased Attitudes at the bottom to Acts of Bias, Discrimination, Bias-Motivated Violence and at the top, Genocide.

[Hypothetically, consider the bottom tier of the Hate Pyramid, Biased Attitude, as the belief that Black men are scary/dangerous. Next level, Acts of Bias, a white person sees a Black man on the sidewalk and crosses the street to avoid him. The Discrimination level of the pyramid is not hiring the Black man, thus impacting his ability to provide for himself and his family. Bias-Motivated Violence may be seen in the case of Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old, unarmed Black man, who was pursued and fatally shot by white men while he was jogging in Brunswick, Georgia. The top tier, Genocide, may be seen as the mass incarceration of Black men for minor crimes when knowing how lethal prisons are.]

Jordyn said if people or institutions treat behaviors on the lower levels as being acceptable or “normal,” it results in the behaviors at the next level becoming more accepted, eventually escalating to the top.

Imagine a pyramid called Pyramid of Peace. The same acceptance to escalation occurs as well. The bottom level is Impartial Attitudes, then Acts of Goodwill, Inclusion, Justice, and at the top, Peace.

Privilege and Social Inequality

Privilege focuses on how power structures aid societally privileged people as opposed to how those structures oppress others.

Social Inequality is the lack of equality of access to opportunity. It occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly.

Jordyn illustrated these terms with an activity given at the beginning of her presentation.

She had asked us to record a plus \$100 or minus \$100 to a long list of situations applied to our personal lives. For example, if English is your first language, give yourself +\$100. If you have a disability, subtract -\$100.

A few of us shared our final results, which helped Jordyn point out that each of us has varying levels of privilege and by understanding the impact of the lack of equality (for example, when someone is food poor, it impacts their lives greatly), we can better determine ways to help bring up others with us.

Being More Mindful of Our Words and Our Writing

“One thing we can all do,” said Jordyn, “is pay attention.” Pay attention not only to the words we use but also to the meanings our words convey.

Adding layers to our fictional characters is when representation problems can happen. It happens when we’re writing a world where we don’t know fully the rules of the world.

An example is using Black language. African American Vernacular English (AAVE) has rules and a grammatical flow, said Jordyn. It’s part of the Invisible World that is common sense to those in the world using AAVE but not to those outside of it.

“Messing up some of the rules comes across loudly. Ask questions. Have conversations. Ask, ‘Is it worth the trouble?’ If the story has a Black woman in it just to have a black woman in it with no relation or connection to being Black, what is the point?”

Jordyn further explained using an example of someone saying, “I don’t see color.” What does that mean? That the person doesn’t see her, Jordyn, as a Black woman?

Words have impact.

Better to say, “I see you’re brown. I may not understand you as a brown person but I respect you.”

Not “You don’t look disabled” as if there’s an underlying look required in order to be disabled. In our society, one-in-four people are disabled.

Using Other’s experiences for inspiration. “They did it. I can, too.” What is the underlying meaning here?

[Hypothetically, let’s say, Bob is blind but has adapted his handicap and has become a good boss. Someone might say, “Well, if blind Bob can be a good boss, than I or anyone else who isn’t blind can be a good boss, too.” This comment can be interpreted or misinterpreted as a slam against Bob, as if his accomplishment creates a standard low enough that any seeing person should do as well or better than he.

Mindfulness is Recognition

Mindfulness is the impact our thoughts, feelings, and actions have on those around us. It's recognizing which thoughts are coming from conditioning and which are our chosen thought.

Mindfulness is recognizing when our minds are instinctually attempting to protect us from critique or negative feelings. It's recognizing we each approach the same situation from different places. Mindfulness is recognizing that though something may seem inconsequential to us, it could have a large impact on another.

Mindfulness, reminded Jordyn, is empathy.

Jordyn ended her presentation with a Q&A session. She also provided the following resources:

Webinar Series One Pagers- Public.pptx

D&I Webinar Series Sources.docx

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

COFW RWA Disaffiliation News

The vote on whether our chapter would disaffiliate from the RWA national organization finished the night of the 25th of June at 11:59PM after seven days of activity. Your board got together the following morning to verify the votes and to count totals. The motion to disaffiliate was carried. The board is currently beginning the process to separate the COFW from the RWA national organization starting this coming week. We would like to thank everyone for taking the time to vote, we know how hard the question on whether to disaffiliate was for a lot of our membership and we appreciate the professional way everyone has handled what could have been a very fraught topic. If anyone has any questions you can email me directly and I will do my best to answer them.

Bernie Miller
w/a Jordan Riley Swan

COFWPresident@gmail.com

C OFW has a goal sheet!



Want to track a daily word count and compete with your fellow C OFW members for the highest point total? Add your name and goals to our Magic Spreadsheet here:
<https://bit.ly/2Wprwt0>

August Winner: Rachel Dye
The winner gets Eddie!

