



April 2019

Issue 4

Welcome to Central Ohio Fiction Writers Newsletter

Contents

1. COFW Basics: Contact and Meeting Info. Dues. Media Connections
2. 2019 COFW Program: Judging Contests
3. COFW Fiction Plotters
4. Minutes for April 13th
5. WIP/Attendance for April 13th
6. New Releases
7. Ignite the Flame Contest
8. COFW Goal Sheets
9. Updating Your RWA Profile
10. The Danger of Labels by Patty Blount

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.

2019 Leadership

President, Jeanne Estridge

Secretary, Sandra J. Kachurek

Treasurer, Stacy McKitrick

Program Chair, Aleta Dodson

Newsletter Editor, Rachel Dye

Membership Chair, Linda Rice

Social Media Chair, Andrea McConnell

Incentives, Julia Blaine

Meetings

First "Teen" Saturday of the Month. Social: Noon to 12:30. Business: 12:30. Guest Presentation: 1:30. Location Norwich Township Building 5181 Northwest Parkway. Hilliard, OH 43026

Dues

Renewal before January 31: \$25. After January 31: \$30.

- Membership with Romance Writers of America required.

Follow COFW

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

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

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

Central Ohio Fiction Writers

P.O. Box 24254 Dayton, OH 45424

Next Meeting: May 18th

Come Learn to Contest Judge

If you are so inclined, please bring a few opening pages from one of your early first drafts. These can help us learn to give feedback and see that we all start in similar places!

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.

To verify members are meeting and to stay in touch in between, we use this email:

cofwplot@yahoogroups.com

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

Minutes, April 13th

Minutes of the Central Ohio Fiction Writers
Norwich Township Fire Station, Hilliard
March 16th, 2019

I. Welcome. WIP.

II. Minutes, Sandy Kachurek, Secretary.

The minutes of the March meeting were accepted as posted.

III. Reports:

A. President, Jeanne Estridge.

1. Treasurer Stacy McKitrick read the report from the absent President Jeanne, who has submitted Chapter Affiliation paperwork.

B. Treasurer, Stacy McKitrick.

1. Cash on Hand: Checking: \$6710.65. PayPal: \$951.37. Financial Assistance: \$1519.66.

C. Programs, Aleta Dodson.

1. Aleta was absent. Members were encouraged to bring friends to the meeting in June to pitch to Tule Publishing.

2. Robin Gianna also encouraged members to submit to Inroads. In the past, five authors have had their work sold to the Hallmark Channel.

D. Ignite the Flame, Linda Rice.

1. Biggest concern currently is for judges. If interested, go to Contest on the COFW site; at the bottom of the page, see the link for Judges. To encourage volunteers to be judges, drawings for gift cards will be held for each manuscript successfully completed. May 1-May 31: entries accepted. June 21: scores from judges expected to be completed.

E. Education, Erin Novotny.

1. In Erin's absence, the following report was shared: Our April class with Linnea Sinclair has 25 students (9 COFW members, 12 RWA members, 4 non-RWA members), bringing the total receipts for the class to \$725 of which COFW receives \$362.50. The next class will also be taught by Linnea Sinclair, "Pitches and Blurbs and Tags, Oh My," running in June for the same cost for participants: COFW \$25; RWA \$30; Non-RWA \$35.

F. Incentives, Julia Blaine.

1. Julia was absent. The membership congratulated Shari Heinrich for making it to Round 2 of the NYC Midnight Short Story Challenge; to Stacy McKitrick for being a finalist in Maine Romance Writers' Strut Your Stuff; and to Rachel Dye who was asked to submit a full to Harlequin Medical.

2. Carina Press will be open for proposals for "Fated Mates/Witches" beginning May 1.

G. Social Media, Andrea McConnell.

1. Andrea gave out COFW bookmarks to those who wished to distribute them. Rachel Dye and Gina Smith will help post events, such as the Damon Suede workshop and ITF, on Twitter.

H. Newsletter, Rachel Dye.

1. Shari agreed to write the recap.

I. Proliteracy Fundraising Challenge.

1. Shari reminded us to bring nearly new, top-selling books and items to the meeting in May. Sales will go to RWA's Proliteracy Challenge. In June, baskets will be raffled.

IV. Unfinished Business.

None.

V. New Business.

1. Joseph-Beth Booksellers: no one got back with Jeanne about individual author signings or providing graphics for social media postings.

2. New Banner: On Tuesday, April 9, the Board voted to buy a banner created with the new logo and Rachel Dye's tagline, "Professionals, Writers and Friends Perfecting the Happily Ever After."

3. Speakers Bureau: the National RWA site used to have a Speakers Bureau that contained a list of members who were willing to talk/provide training on various topics relating to craft and marketing. It disappeared when the new website went up. In the Chapter Leadership Resources discussion forum, someone asked if any of the local chapters had something equivalent for their chapter. We don't, but we could. If we set up a COFW Speakers Bureau, if anyone would like to be listed as available to do training for other chapters, please email Jeanne with a list of topics you'd be prepared to present.

4. Updating P&PM: Stacy is applying COFW P&PM material to the RWA P&PM template.

5. Other Business: Jenessa is updating COFW website into the RWA website and struggling with RWA's limited offerings for local chapters. The concern is that the new COFW on the RWA will not be able to handle the quality of the present COFW site. The hope to limit a user having to click on multiple links to accomplish tasks, such as PayPal, will not be changing.

Introductions.

Adjournment: 12:50.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy
Sandy Kachurek

Secretary

Works in Progress/Attendance for April 13th

Attendance/WIP for April 13th, 2019

1. Stacy McKittrick: working on *Finding the Perfect Mate*.
2. Jill Kemerer (guest speaker): *The Cowboy's Little Secret*, proposal.
3. Linda Rice: working on Ignite the Flame contest.
4. Rachel Dye: *The Doctor's Star*.
5. Rochelle Bradley: editing book 3 & 4 of *The Fortuna, TX*.
6. David Meyers (guest): in nonfiction, Ohio's Historic Series, Black Communities; in fiction, sequel to soon-to-be released novel.
7. Robin Gianna: revising *Second Chance for the Surgeon*.
8. Shari Heinrich: still trying to get YA *Queen of Wands* to beta readers.
9. Donna MacMeans: working on *Christmas in the Castle* and *How to Bait a Dangerous Rake*.
10. Saralee Etter: working on "Granny Quest," a weird western and a new podcast, "Older and Bolder."
11. Jenessa McRoy: fantasy and paranormal.
12. Sandy Kachurek: dragon fantasy.

Meeting Recap for April 13, 2019

Exquisite Planning: Ditch the Guilt and Get More Done with Jill Kemerer

Jill Kemerer is a Publishers Weekly bestselling romance novelist. From her home in the Toledo area she writes for Harlequin Love Inspired. She serves as president of Maumee Valley Romance Writers, Inc. Beginning her writing career in 2007, she published her first novel in 2014. All writers present for the talk received Kemerer's ninth novel, *His Wyoming Baby Blessing*, which doesn't drop until three days after our meeting. Thank you! She loves writing as well as sharing her passion for writing.

The idea behind this workshop is this: how great would you feel if you planned your week to get all the writing and related tasks done, and then you'd have the rest of the week or evening to not feel guilty about those writing tasks that haven't been done?

Keep in mind that we're all different for our schedules, from whether we work outside the home or are full-time writers, as she is. One size doesn't fit all. Tailor this activity to meet your writing needs. If you know your best time to write, then protect that time for writing. Charting it out is a step in that direction.

Roughly a year ago, Kemerer hit that magic moment she'd been dreaming of, the time when she'd be able to get it all done, because her youngest son had his driver's license and a car. Her "someday" had finally arrived! Gone were those expectations to drive someone to the mall, to baseball. She could write. Then after 6 weeks of magic, she looked at her planner, had a word goal, a lot, but felt she could do it. Then she remembered—she had promised a blog post, and that was due; then she realized she hadn't done her own blog post in ages, either. Then there was that craft book on inner conflict she'd meant to re-read and hadn't. And didn't she have time to work on those earlier books she had written but not published.

She found herself stuck in a negative feedback loop of all these things she hadn't done. The truth slapped her across the face: she had all the time in the world, so why wasn't she getting any of it done? If she couldn't do it now, in this magic time, she would never get it done. She didn't have a time problem, she had a scheduling/organization problem. It depressed and relieved her at the same time.

All her effort went to the high level, but not yet meeting what she wanted of her writing life. She stepped back to figure a schedule. She realized:

1. She wasted too much time in the morning—not being a morning person, she nursed one coffee into two, and lost time to social media.... So she'd be late getting to her office down the hall.
2. She spent too much time in the deep work, the high concentration tasks, without taking breaks. She'd spend three to five hours on writing, plotting revising, and be so exhausted.
3. So she'd call it quits early, not having the energy to get back to it later.

Next, she looked at the things she wanted to do—the posts; study craft now and then; have coffee with a writer friend, write a short story. She wrote 'em all down. Next, because it wouldn't be practical to write an article half an hour at a time, she decided on a general plan. She brought all her items together and made categories. Time—when would she do? Once/month/over six weeks? She settled on four categories for her tasks. Then she looked at her schedule of time and day, and then figured out what fit where—around her husband's job so she could still have time with him.

She set an initial goal of three months that she'd follow this method. Then she'd evaluate, change, or totally quit if it wasn't working. After a few days, that endless loop of guilt ended.

She got tasks done, and she was getting more writing done.

Summer derailed her when she needed to take time off. January hit, then she felt she had things to do, no time for this exquisite planning. She was right back in the guilt loop. That's when she paused, made herself plan. And guess what? After a few days, she was again done with that guilt feedback loop. She firmly believes, "You'll stay motivated when you find a process you trust and commit to working that process for as little as a week." –Jeff Haden, *The Motivation Myth: How High Achievers Really Set Themselves Up to Win*.

Exquisite planning is about finding the plan that'll meet your needs.

- **Step 1, Evaluate Your Schedule**

- Put yourself in a happy place to kick off this process. Is it coffee, chocolate, whatever? Get yourself comfortable. Now, think about your current schedule. When are you getting stuff done best? As you plan, keep this in mind: We all overestimate the time we can devote to writing. The process starts by crossing off all those times you cannot write. Whether it's the day job, cooking, watching a favorite TV show.
- When you cross out the time not available for writing, consider all those tasks that take time. Do you have a day job? Kids with their schedules? Recurring appointments? Exercise? Ex-em out!
- Then x out when you should be sleeping! Do you commute to a job? Cross it off.
- She finds it easiest to treat everything in these half-hour chunks. Make a life that works well with the writing. If you've got TV shows you love, don't feel guilty x-ing off that time as well. Or a hobby. Give yourself permission to mark those. All those things you do not want to give up, x it off. You want a well-rounded life plus your writing time.
- Now you've got a grid with white areas. This is where your writing and those other "writing-related want to do tasks" fit in.
 - A month down the road, if things go well, you might also decide to carve out more time by giving up that TV show. You will find the times that were previously non-negotiable.

- **Step 2, Clarify Your Desired Tasks**

- What do you want in your writing life? Stop putting burdens on yourself if you don't really want to do it. If you really do want a website, but haven't been finding time for it, put it on your list of tasks.
- You can use more than one page. And if you don't have a lot? That's okay. Write what you want to do. Maybe you want to carve out reading time. If it's not in your writing life, and you want it, list it.

- **Step 3, Categorize Tasks**

- She likes to have Writing, then 1-4 other categories, which makes it simpler to plot out time. For example, maybe you want "Promo" as a category. That would include any of the tasks for promoting yourself as a writer.
- Create 1-4 categories in addition to Writing. Don't set a specific item, like a specific short story, because you'll get it done, and then what? So think about concepts, like short stories in general. She uses things like "Admin/Promo" for that host of tasks building your platform, doing your business expenses for taxes, making graphics; "Creative" (which includes meeting up with writer friends for coffee), or taking field trips; "Misc" covers a lot of ground for her. Take time to think through when you want

to do things. Consider—that your writing should take the most time of your writing-related topics. If you have six blocks, four should be writing and two would be your other topics. Don't let yourself off the hook by procrastination. Look for the sneaky little blocks between task. Maybe Sat. 9-9:30, if you like to write in bigger chunks than that, then use this for promo. Maybe you even combine your breakfast block with a little Promo. If you're the type who has a love/hate relationship with writing, she recommends waiting until you're on an up-cycle to do your Exquisite Planning. The goal is to keep us jazzed about our writing.

- **Step 4, Assign Categories to Blocks**

- Once you've blocked off all the times you cannot write, it's time to fill in the blocks with those categories. Put them in where they make most sense, and don't worry about trying to do the same thing every day. That's the point—customize your plan to what makes sense for you. For example, Tues., 7-8 WRITE; Mon., 10-11:30, PROMO.

She does her plan every three months based on the cycle of her family, such as baseball season, gardening. Recognize that you have commitments, so be prepared to adjust. Make your weekly commitments. Jill asked us how we plan. A lot of hands went up, with writers showing their planners. So, if we do the exquisite planner, then add those writing blocks to our favorite planner. Or use the stand-alone sheet she provided so that you are looking at only the blocks for your writing tasks. Maybe you like your phone for planning, so make sure you add a notification.

We get it done if we commit to it, but it becomes easier if we ALSO assign a time to accomplish it. We put off what's not important to us.

The Four Tendencies Quiz has 10-15 questions she finds valuable, available at <https://quiz.gretchenrubin.com/>. She also highly recommends the book by the same name, by Gretchen Rubin. That writer divides us into four task types:

- The Upholder: we meet other's expectations and ours;
The Questioner, they only do stuff that meet their own expectations. To do for another, it has to make sense to them. They constantly question.
- The Obliger—I'll do it for others, but I don't carve out time for me.
- The Rebel—doesn't meet anyone's expectations. Unique. Their own personality works against them.

How Kemerer Transformed Her Morning:

Get up at 6:30, make breakfast, make son lunch, Bible study, exercise. Yet somehow, not into her home office until 11. Then she'd do her intensive writing until 4 or 4:30, taking a super short lunch. She was surviving her writing. That is tiring and not conducive for sustaining. So she'd quit earlier than she meant to.

Now she gives herself a window for breakfast, exercise by 8 AM to 8:30. Shower. In office by 9. Admin. :30. From 9:30 to noon, that is her writing time. She'll break for a full hour. Then from 1-4, writes again. She's learned, taking off that full hour gave her more energy, so 4-6 she's even able to do more writing. She feels like, "hey, I get to do my writing." She's also an afternoon person, which is why her 1-4 block is that long one. If you know when you're most productive, give yourself permission to do your writing in those blocks.

Part-way in, she did switch up her mornings because they felt too busy. She adjusted by thirty minutes to enjoy her coffee. It's working for her. She's writing more and feeling energized without the guilt. When you put what's in your head on paper, you have a plan. It makes your life better. And if the family knows you have this schedule, then ask them to respect it. If Wed. from 7 to 9 is your writing time, then you are not helping your kids with homework.

Another key she has found is not to be envious, sad, about what other writers are doing, the time they have. Be realistic with what you have available. Resist that urge to compare yourself with where other writers are in their careers. Get a handle on what you can control. You may think you're working hard, but are you working smart? That's what Exquisite Planning has taught her—to work smart while she's working hard.

We ended the workshop by creating an imaginary schedule for our writer, “Julie.” During that time, we talked about the Pomodoro technique—so maybe you do pick a thirty-minute block to write. Create the schedule that makes sense for you and leave that guilt behind!

Handout 1: Big Picture Weekly Schedule Shari 4/15-21
Exquisite Planning by Jill Kemerer

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
5:00 AM							
5:30 AM							
6:00 AM	UP						
6:30 AM	Go to work						
7:00 AM	Work						
7:30 AM							
8:00 AM						Write (Write...)	
8:30 AM							
9:00 AM							
9:30 AM							
10:00 AM							
10:30 AM							
11:00 AM							
11:30 AM	Write						
12:00 PM	Write					Write	
12:30 PM							
1:00 PM							
1:30 PM							
2:00 PM							
2:30 PM							
3:00 PM							
3:30 PM							
4:00 PM							
4:30 PM							
5:00 PM	COFW	COFW	Dinner		Hand Pla		
5:30 PM	COFW	COFW	COFW		Hand Pla		
6:00 PM	COFW	COFW	COFW		Hand Pla		
6:30 PM	COFW	COFW	COFW		Hand Pla		
7:00 PM	Write	Write	Write	Write	Write		
7:30 PM	Write	Write	Write	Write	Write		
8:00 PM	Write	Write	Write	Write	Write		
8:30 PM	Write	Write	Write	Write	Write		
9:00 PM	Write	Write	Write	Write	Write		
9:30 PM	Read	Read	Read	Read	Read		

Photo Credit: Sharie Heinrich

Sharie Heinrich's Big Picture Handout Example



Shari Heinrich writes young adult fantasy populated by characters full of sass and heart. She's hard at work on *Queen of Wands*, where teen thief Angela makes the unforgivable mistake of falling for her mark and activating the family's curse to the ancient Egyptian goddess of retribution. Contact Shari: www.ShariHeinrich.com.

☆☆☆ New Releases ☆☆☆

Rescued by Her Rival, by Amalie Berlin



From fighting fires... *To fighting attraction*

Firefighter medic Lauren Autry was devastated when she lost out on her dream job as a smoke jumper to golden boy Beck Ellison. Two years later she's trying again and surprised to see her nemesis with the rookies on probation. Beck is more brooding than ever, but still as maddeningly handsome. A wildfire forces them to work together, but it's the flaming attraction raging between them that Lauren is desperately trying to put out...

Available April 30th!

☆☆☆ Ignite the Flame ☆☆☆

2019 Annual Ignite the Flame Contest



A rewarding contest for ANY writer!

We call our contest Ignite the Flame for a reason. We want to see the scene where your couple meets—whether it's for the first time or a reunion after a time apart—and that unforgettable spark of attraction sizzles between them. Whether your characters are ancient nobility or modern-day entrepreneurs, LGBTQ or straight, super stars or high school students—or even not-quite-human—tease us with the moment their romance ignites.

Submit 15 pages of an **unpublished and uncontracted** novel-length manuscript (minimum of 40,000 words) starting **May 1, 2019 through May 31, 2019, 11:59 EDT.**

All writers are welcome, whether unpublished or published!

First prize is a copy edit of your full manuscript, up to 150,000 words, by Enterprise Book Services - a \$300 value.

Go to [cofwevents.org/contest](http://www.cofwevents.org/contest) for details.

***Please note, we are looking for judges. If you are available to judge please go to <http://www.cofwevents.org/contest> and sign up!**

COFW now has goal sheets!!!

Thanks to Erin Novotny & Arianna James for setting this up.

Want to track a daily word count and compete with your fellow COFW members for the highest point total? Add your name and goals to our Magic Spreadsheet here:

<https://bit.ly/2Wprwt0>

Looking for a way to hit those goals: Did you know that studies have shown you're up to 66% more likely to achieve a goal if you write it down and up to 95%(!!) more likely to achieve a goal if you tell someone else what it is and have a deadline by which you need to meet it. List your goals here and

Arianna will check in to see if you've hit them: <http://bit.ly/2HJoDNq>

Updating Your RWA Profile Information:

The new RWA website (rwa.org) is two different software packages. One is for communicating information about what's going on at RWA. (aka the RWA website). The other is used for chapter portals (We have one of these: cofw.rwa.org) and microsites (We don't yet have one of these). Each of these sites has a spot for profile information for members.

You can update your profile at: www.rwa.org and the forum profiles at: <https://community.rwa.org/update-profile>.

You can also access the profile update page by logging in to rwa.org and selecting "Update Profile" at the top of the page.

1. First update your RWA membership profile.
 - a. Click on the pencil beside the little silhouette.
 - b. In the "change picture" dialogue box, click Select.
 - i. From your computer, choose a picture with a file extension of one of the following:
 - .GIF
 - .JPG
 - .PNG
 - .BMP
 - Check the picture file's properties and ensure that it's less than 48.83 MB.
 - ii. Click Open
 - iii. Click Save & Close
2. Click on the "About Me" tab and then click on the little pencils to update each section. Save each section after completing.
3. Click on the Preferences tab to update your communication preferences. Be sure to save your changes.
4. Review the other tabs to ensure the information is correct. If it's something you don't have access to change, click on Contact RWA at the bottom of the page to send Donna Mathoslah an email.
5. Update your RWA Community Profile (You should still have the original tab with the links to both profiles open)
 - a. Click on the little silhouette and upload your picture.

- i. On this page, you have the option of pulling in a picture from your computer or Facebook or Instagram or Dropbox or a host of other places. Load your picture and save it.
6. Update your My Profile information:
 - a. Click on the little pencil next to Bio and share a little about yourself.
 - b. If you've been a finalist or winner in any contests, enter that under Honors and Awards.
 - c. If you belong to other professional organizations, enter the information under Professional Associations.
 - d. Add or update your social media links.
7. Some information was loaded from the old website. Verify everything is correct and up-to-date.
8. Click on Communities and then choose My Communities. You should see an entry for Chapter: Central Ohio Fiction Writers (along with any other communities you belong to, such as PAN).
 - a. Click on Central Ohio Fiction Writers.
 - b. Click on Settings and set up your preferences for the discussion forum.

As of January 1, 2019, Treasurer's Reports, Meeting Minutes and presentation documentation will be posted in our COFW community on the RWA site.

Reminder: On June 1, the Board will stop posting to the Yahoo loop and we will stop monitoring the Yahoo loop. Please have yourself set up on RWA COFW discussion loop prior to that date.

The Danger of Labels

by Patty Blount

Note from COFW Editor, Rachel Dye. This was a major topic of discussion on Twitter in March and I think it is an important topic to look at, but please note that there are discussions, not graphic, of nonconsensual sex, rape, self-harm and violence in Patty's books. If that may be upsetting, please skip this article.

The following article first appeared in the April 1st 2019 issue of ShoreLines, the monthly newsletter of Chapter 160- Long Island Romance Writers. Permission granted to reprint or forward to sister RWA chapters with proper credit to author and chapter.

There's a quote I see represented in memes from time to time: "Once you label me, you negate me." (I believe it's Kierkegaard.) I went on a Twitter rant this week about labeling novels *clean* or *sweet*. This debate rears its ugly head periodically and because I was once uninvited to a school the day before I was scheduled to present after the principal discovered I used profanity in my novels, I feel uniquely qualified to speak to the issue.

I write in several genres, but I am known mostly for my Rita finalist, *SOME BOYS*, a novel about the aftermath of rape. In all six of my young adult novels, I use profanity up to and including the F-word. Why? Because teens use it. Certainly, you may argue that not all teens cuss. And you'd be right. But it's been my experience that profanity resonates with teen audiences, so I use it because I want my stories to matter to them, first and foremost.

In none of my six published young adult novels do I show on-page sex. I opted to close the door on a sex scene in *SEND* because the sex itself was not important to the story, but the guilt the hero experienced after having sex was. So that was when I re-opened the bedroom door. The rapes in *SOME BOYS* as well as in its companion book, *SOMEONE I USED TO KNOW*, happen before the stories open and are discussed and described in flashbacks throughout both books.

As for teen issues, I included cutting in *SEND*, discussed suicide in *SOME BOYS* and *NOTHING LEFT TO BURN*, showed underage drinking in both *SOME BOYS* and *SEND*, mentioned drug use in *SEND*, and mental health issues in both *SEND* and in *THE WAY IT HURTS*.

Finally, let's talk about violence. In her Bookriot post about this same issue, Sarah Nicolas said no one cares about violence. That hasn't been my experience. My publisher, Sourcebooks Fire, never asked me to delete a single F-bomb but did ask me to tone down the violence in three different books. There is a school shooting plan in *SEND* that is thwarted as well as an actual shooting at the end. There are also several fist fights in that book. The publisher asked me to change a character death I'd planned to a minor injury, to remove many of the punches, and to change my hero's last name because it could remind readers of a university student who committed suicide shortly before the book was released. I was happy to make all of those changes. If I'd removed every instance of profanity, some might then consider *SEND* to be a *clean* read and would

likely be shocked by the violence still included. So not only are labels like *clean* or *dirty* judgmental, they don't do a good enough job at describing content that may be objectionable to some readers.

If we call books with explicit sex scenes *dirty*, are we not also implying that those who enjoy such books are also dirty? I make no apologies for this statement: I do not think ANYBODY has the right to tell teens who get drunk, curse, or have sex that they're not *sweet* or *clean*.

I have a philosophical objection to book-banning. However, I do respect that parents have a right to know what their teens are reading about and believe all readers should know how explicit a book is before they buy it. As RWA members, we should be setting the example used throughout the industry. Words matter and since they are our stock and trade, surely, we can find ones that help readers achieve that goal without judging?

On my website, I list the same categories I just described for each of my books and use non-judgmental language for each category. For example, for sexual content, I may use terms like Mild, Some, Implied, Realistic, or Explicit. For violence, I use terms like Realistic or Graphic, and indicate whether a character's death is featured. For teen issues, I list which ones: Drug and Alcohol Use, Suicide, etc. I sometimes provide a bit more detail. For example, under Profanity, I indicate what terms I use because some readers object to using God's name in vain. I believe this system works because I have not been uninvited to any schools since I adopted it. I don't pretend it's perfect. I'd love to hear what others are doing so please feel free to find me online and comment.

Let's work together to find alternatives for *clean* and *dirty*. Let's agree to stop looking down our noses at content we don't specifically write and make readers who like those stories feel ashamed. As Sarah Nicolas also said in that same Bookriot post, "...no one should ever be shamed for enjoying consensual sexual activity, especially within the pages of a book...This is the kind of talk that contributes to rape culture."

On that, I am in complete and vociferous agreement.

Patty Blount is the author of contemporary "Internet Issues" novels for teens including the 2015 Firecracker Award winning SOME BOYS, which is also a Bookseller's Best and RITA awards finalist! A new novel, SOMEONE I USED TO KNOW, dropped in August 2018. She is also the author of Contemporary romances. A MATCH MADE AT CHRISTMAS is book four in the multi-author Christmas in New York series. Patty wrote a sequel called THE PARAMEDIC'S RESCUE, part of the Heroes of New York series. In August she released NOBODY SAID IT'D BE EASY, a second chance love story. She is the current President of Long Island Romance Writers Chapter of RWA



COFW

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