



October 2020

Issue 9

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.

2020 Leadership

Board

President: Janice Beckett.

Secretary: Sandy Kachurek

Treasurer: Stacy McKittrick

Non-Board Positions

Newsletter Editor: Rachel Dye

Programs Chair: Vacant

Education Chair: Erin Novotny

Social Media Chair: Gina Smith

Incentives Coordinator: Julia Blaine

Ignite the Flame Contest Chair: Shari Heinrich

Monthly Meetings Facility Coordinator: Vacant

Equipment Inventory Coordinator: Robin Gianna

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/>

**Next Meeting: November, 14 2020; Building Better Scenes Using Beats
With Jeanne Oates Estridge**

This class will offer a technique for prodding reluctant scenes forward, even when you're not feeling inspired.

Business meeting at 12:30 pm, Discussion at 1:30 pm

Our meeting will be held via Zoom. 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. If anyone has any questions, email authorkimberlybeckett@yahoo.com

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

Minutes of the COFW Meeting via Zoom

October 17, 2020

I. Welcome.

II. Attendance/WIP:

Approximately nine members in attendance.

WIP Highlights:

Shari Heinrich is on target with her chapter rewrites; Janice Beckett/Kimberly Beckett's fourth book, Her Forever Love, is in its first draft in audio format; Rachel Dye/Juliette Hyland is involved in meeting her editing deadline for her current, The Pediatrician's Twin Bombshell.

III. Minutes from September were accepted as posted and approved by all.

IV. Reports:

1. President Janice Beckett:

A. COFW Chapter Affiliation Agreement was submitted to RWA on September 28.

B. The new RWA Bylaws for chapters should have been seen by everyone in COFW. Highlights include the ability for Associate members to now serve on their local chapter's board and are able to vote on issues relating to the local board; however, Associate members cannot vote on any other issues or RWA issues or serve on the RWA board. Donna MacMeans related some history as to why Associates have been limited in voting matters, mainly being due to many Associate members not being romance writers. Whether or not individual COFW members agree with the new Bylaws, COFW will remain an RWA-affiliated chapter.

The Vote: Secretary Sandy Kachurek made a motion to accept the RWA Bylaws as our own.

Donna MacMeans seconded. Motion passed.

2. Treasurer's Report for September (Stack McKitrick not in attendance; report posted):

Thank you to Michelle Orloff, who not only served on the audit committee but also accepted the position as COFW treasurer for 2021.

3. Programs Chair Jeanne Estridge:

Today: "Sustaining Creativity" by guest author Grace Burrowes.

November: "Building Stronger Scenes Using Beats" by member Jeanne Estridge.

4. Ignite the Flame:

Current chair Shari Heinrich has agreed to be COFW secretary for 2021. After discussion, those present believed that suspending the ITF Contest for 2021 was best. The 2021 COFW board may provide a fresh look into the contest. Shari said she has all the paper files for it.

5. Education Chair Erin Novotny: absent

January 1-30, 2021: "The Book Writing Checklist" with Linnea Sinclair and Stacey Kade.

Linda Rice questioned the tendency for digital class students to spend more time talking than the instructor does. Input for the reasons included: instructors encouraging student participation; the instructor determining the pace and how she/he will handle the questions; and whether instructors know when student communication is positive and where to draw the line when it isn't.

6. Incentives:

Linda Rice encouraged others to check out "One Stop for Writers" because it is a remarkable site for anything on writing. Shari Heinrich once again entered the NYC Midnight Challenge but didn't succeed as far into the rounds as she did the previous year.

Magic Spreadsheet results: Jeanne Estridge won in September. As of October 16, Jeanne Estridge and Shari Heinrich were head to head. Linda Rice has written over 12,000 words in one month, due, in most part, to "Book in a Week" project offered by Kiss of Death.

M-W-F Writing Sprints on FB continue. Four to five members have been attending Plotters West each second Monday. Everyone is welcome since it is via Zoom.

7. Newsletter Editor Rachel Dye:

Anyone with new releases, please send pertinent info to Rachel. Donna MacMeans said she could do a summary and/or Shari Heinrich said she could write a recap for today's program with Grace Burrowes.

V. Unfinished Business

A. Holiday Party: with many members reporting health concerns for themselves and their loved ones, the COFW Holiday Party will be on Saturday, December 5 and held via Zoom. More details to come, including voting for Member of the Year and First Published awards.

B. 2021 Board Slate: Vote to be official in November.

*President: Bernie Miller w/a Jordan Riley Swan.

*Secretary: Shari Heinrich.

*Treasurer: Michelle Orloff.

With no items for new business and no other concerns, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandy Kachurek

Secretary

Sustaining Creativity, Presented to COFW by Grace Burrowes on 10/17/20

Recap by Shari Heinrich

About our speaker: Grace Burrowes loves to write. She's a recovering foster care attorney who read happily ever afters voraciously as an antidote to courtroom drama. Grace turned to writing romance about ten years ago, and has more than sixty novels published. She's a *USA Today* and *NYT* bestseller, published both traditionally and independently, and loves to hang out with writin' buddies.

You can find Burrowes at <https://graceburrowes.com/> and twitter, [@GraceBurrowes](https://twitter.com/GraceBurrowes)

Disclaimer: If something Burrowes offers hits us as dead wrong, IGNORE it. Throw it over your left shoulder, and then try it on the book that isn't working. Her way is but one. "When in doubt, trust your gut."

Burrowes shared 10 ways to sustain creativity

1. Get your Brain out of Predictive Text Mode

Talking about creativity, but she's not a neurolinguist, she's a burned out lawyer. But she needs to know about creativity, because she's making a living at this. She has made her reading into her happy place, her profession. In her earlier days she had no TV in house, and spent her time at the keyboard. Ideas fell down like rain.

Eventually, however, ideas run out. She feels she's written across most of tropes except Amnesia and Secret Twin. Her process is that she writes herself into book from Premise. Does NOT outline.

Liking attraction, pulling together people, and then something substantial breaks them apart. How hard is it? Well, when you've gotten thru your ideas, and that next idea, crud, you just saw it on Netflix, what are you gonna do? You cannot keep writing the same story over and over—at least, that's not her process.

Sometimes, even in the middle of the book, the ideas peter out. WHAT do you do?

She's focused on this idea of launching and then sustaining creativity. Don't we want every book to be a good book? One that no one else could have written? And there's not a lot about sustaining our juice when we go to conferences. We want 15th and 50th book to be as good (and to happen).

Fundamental understanding of how our brain works, that's what she needed to know. Our brain likes to be efficient. It is in "predictive text" mode. She gives the pizza story—walking to your car thinking about the pizza you ordered, and will it be all pepperoni, or half pepperoni? And you get to your white car parked under the light, and the key fob won't give you the "door open." But you get close to it see it is a spotless interior. Oops, that isn't my car, which has a pair of pantyhose on the front seat, and a water bottle. *Then* you look 3 cars down the line and SEE your car is there, under a different light, trying to get your attention. Your eyes didn't see it because your brain was in predictive text mode, saw a match, and stopped at it while you processed that other problem.

You have got to get out of predictive text mode if you want to write good books. You need to GET OUT of the rut. Go new places. Give it material it's not familiar with. Could even be a brownie you've never had. Go for that Takeout, but do NOT get your usual meal. Whenever you have a chance, introduce novelty into your routine.

Her example, a Christmas book she was stuck on. Louisa was hiding something, she didn't know yet what it was. Sensible character, articulate, intelligent, WHAT was that secret? Days, then weeks passed, and the book wouldn't give her an answer.

She went off to New Orleans to speak at a Librarians conference. She had been raised in area with black and white cows, and here she was in a city, summertime, and tens of thousands of members, so they needed a BIG convention city. STILL, she didn't have ideas. Gave her talk. Went to bed, Staring at ceiling next morning, what if Louisa wrote a book of dirty poems??? It took those days for her brain to gnosh on that, to get her brain out of predictive text mode.

READ outside of your genre

Go to workshops outside of your genre

Change up crit partners

Change your route to work

Eat somewhere different

2. Throw out the 10,000 rule

K. Anders Ericsson had that rule from looking at pianists. They did one thing and kept doing it until they could do it phenomenally well. He came up with the 10,000-hour rule.

Then along came Malcom Gladwell, with athletes, and sure, he knew the Tiger Woods, and other golfers, who were all about Golf from the time they were tykes. But he also knew athletes who bounced from one to another to another, and Arthur Ashe, he came to tennis late, and then had an enduring career.

That brought up the question, *do* all areas require 10,000 to master? No, because not all tasks have that same basis as a piano, which will always have the number of keys. That is mostly a motor skill, and you progress with time.

But writing is not like that. It is “you cannot step into the same river twice.” To become good, you need to frolic and zig-zag.

3. Zigzag

We learn better when we learn *intermittently*. Rather than cramming it in in 3 weeks, take a full semester—where you bounce across French, English literature, math, and so on. You have a better recall from those who had multiple courses, versus the ones who crammed it into 3 weeks.

So, writers, whether you are late bloomers or a part-timer, if you wander, try horror, then children’s, then women’s fiction, you are going to end up with a bigger bag of trips, and more creativity.

Writers are not golf stars. The more different things you know, the more connections you can make, putting it together. Burrowes loved music, but couldn’t perform. She then decided on music history for her major. But now, when writing, she can throw in musical analogies any time she wants—if she has a musically inclined character.

USE your diverse interests to mine that creativity.

4. The Medici effect—to interact well with strangers.

If you are an introvert? Well, try to get away from your in crowd. Meet up with those folks who are NOT like you.

The Medici family wanted the best—they got the best of painters, sculptors, bakers, physicians, and so on, together. Well, they spring-boarded off of each other, and rapid advancements occurred.

During the English monarch breakup, Queen Elizabeth died without heir, and in that period, Scotland’s monarch ruled, and you had British ideas walking over to Scotland, and anyone sitting next to you in the pub, and bingo, Enlightenment (that’s one theory of how the Enlightenment occurred).

The Shakers: We won’t have kids, but we’ll accept anyone to our religion. The result? Apple corer (put an apple on a lathe, comes from a cook and a carpenter coming together) along with other advancements.

In other words, talk to strangers.

Her example, a trip where she sat next to a banking fraud investigator, and that woman had story after story that infused the book.

Break out of the silos of social media that causes chaos. Go talk over the back fence, talk to uncle bob, even if his views are diametrically opposed. Look for the commonalities that you have with him. Start the convo there.

One of her books set in Wales, both the hero and villain had distinct ideas on family; on security; on greed; what are you willing to DO for family?

Courage and honor—hero; fear

Jeanne talked about *Hamilton*; And Aaron Burr, someone asked Lin-Manuel Miranda if he was the villain. Miranda's response—if you were judged by your worst day, who would ANY of us be?

Chapter started discussing: Where do you draw the line in history and “revising” it? Shari jumped in to talk about who the voices are who were *not* allowed to tell their stories. And do some research, and see when the majority of Civil War Statues were erected, and by whom, during the Jim Crow era. (post meeting, supplying this link: <https://www.history.com/news/how-the-u-s-got-so-many-confederate-monuments>)

You can write to those hot buttons, and deconstruct them. In Jane Austen, Mrs. Bennett, who was the fool character, *she* is one of the characters who got to jump in about the foolishness of only men inheriting.

David Epstein's book—two books; Sports Gene is his second book

WHEN by Daniel Pink is another book she referenced.

5. Mind-Wandering

Very different from mindfulness.

When we sleep, body rests, but *brain* is busy, but in different places from when we are waking. Turns out, you need to sleep because that's when we move material from short term memory to long term memory. It was not a coincidence that Burrowes was lying in bed when she had the idea of the book of dirty poetry. Her brain had been working. It took time to synthesize the inputs from the convention.

Two brain modes:

- Executive Mode, Conscious
- Default mode, when we're unplugged—daydreaming, in the shower, and an idea pops into your head.

Stephen King calls default mode “the boys in the basement.” It can happen in microbytes.

Example of the power of default mode: Exercise, think of “as many uses for a shoebox as you can.”

- Group 1 had 5 minutes to think.
- Group 2 played 5 min. of mind sweeper, then given the shoebox exercise.
- Group 3, told them of challenge, then told them to play mind sweeper, THEN answer. Well, this 3rd group had the most ideas, and the most creative ideas.

Think about how we can tie this to our creative writing process. Fine, those who can write 6 weeks straight. But if we don't have that dedicated time, we have time to THINK between the half scene we write today, then another half scene tomorrow.

Recommended Reading: Bored and Brilliant: How Spacing Out Can Unlock Your Most Productive & Creative Self, by Manoush Zomorodi. She also has a podcast by the same name. She did this when she went from board room to being a new mom. FIRST it drove her nuts. THEN she realized the benefits of that stroller mind.

Exercise: Read your pages before bed, think about your problem you're trying to solve, like what could I do? Think of it in the time of going to bed. Maybe ask yourself, is this scene necessary? Hypnopic and Hypnocampic zones, I think she called these.

Go for a walk. Talk to someone during that walk (medici effect).

Go on a technology fast, given this next study of 3 places the phone could be while you write:

1. Phone is up and running.
2. Phone is in your pocket.
3. Have phone off, in another room.

The people who have no access to technology do best on their challenge when solving a problem.

STAY OFF SOCIAL MEDIA LATE in day and early in day. It tends to be angst-inducing. You want to take advantage of that creative state your brain is in, in the mornings.

Mindfulness is building your ability to focus. It is actually COUNTER to mind-wandering—180 degrees apart.

Shari gave the example of NOT running with music, that running friends who went between running with and without realized they were more in tune with the workout without music; that they felt more relaxed on the run without the music.

Janet said, Jennifer Crusie would talk about “the Girls in the Basement” well, she got that from Stephen King.

Stephen King's craft/memoir book—he started it before a bad accident, got hit by a car while walking. And when he got back, he decided that talking about emotional survival was just as important as the craft. That's why the book is the way it is.

Is it talent or luck that makes us good writers? Let's take a frolicking Detour. (Richard Vock, he wrote his fantasy, didn't do well, just wrote with the same voice as Stephen King; but sales DID go up when King said that was him). Doesn't that tell us that talent is not the only thing that defines us as a writer?

Linda talked about Stephen King interviewing Lee Childs. Lee wrote later in life, said he started because he had to experience life, and learn, before he was ready to write.

Burrowes started in mid-40s. She was a single working mom—did not have time until kid moved out, then had emotional privacy she needed to write. Got her contract at 50. And had 20 manuscripts under her bed at that point. Acquiring editors like to hear that.

6. Circadian Rhythm

Daniel Pink's book *When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing*

1. Night Owls—come to life when sun goes down. Full of energy until 2 or 3 am. Fall asleep when sun is rising.
2. Lark's—up before the sun, early, early morning is their best time. They very young and very old.
3. 3rd birds, sunrise or later we get up, and morning hours are good for us. We sag in mid day. We perk up after dinner. Zenith, sag, a little revival—that occurs in all 3 rhythms.

If you are a writer, checking email first thing in the morning is a BAD idea. USE that 7:30-1:30 window to WRITE. Do the more business things in the afternoon—your research, your edits, your social media. And MAYBE crack off another scene in the evening. In that afternoon timeslot, go on those detours and investigate.

Balzac was a Night Owl. So was Dickens (well, he wrote at all times—that's what happens when you have 10 kids).

Trollop was a Lark.

7. Conventional Wisdom is a non-sequitur

Expertise can HURT your creativity. Sometimes, though, the rules break you. Dr. Lloyd Old came up with Tumor necrosis factor. He was not an oncologist (burn, poison, cut, that's how an oncologist treats cancer), he was a surgeon. But Dr. Lloyd, as a surgeon, had seen the cancer. He had firsthand experience with how tumor thrives, and takes over the neighborhood, creates blood flow, and so he was the one who thought, if we had a way to sicken the tumor, understand why it thrives, he studied it. Recruited grad students. Everyone said he was nuts. Why study tumors when your job is to cut them out? Well, he wanted to know how to stop their blood supply. They took his lab space, reduced him to basement with 2 grad students. But THEN, the building flooded—not his part, but another. He couldn't check his samples. He had been giving trial drugs 72 hours before he aborted. Well, this time, he couldn't check for another 3 days. When he returned to see the 6-day samples, the tumors were dying. Tumor necrosis factor was born.

Look at the Wright Brothers, they were not aeronautical engineers. But they came up with the design that put them in the air first.

Spanx—inventor had a sales career. Her toes hurt, blistered from the pantyhose seam. Florida. She thought, “why have feet” and thus, Spanx. And even whoever came up with Leggings, that's the same concept.

Elon Musk—When you go into space, you throw away 2/3 of the rocket. How is that efficient or cost-effective? Thus, SpaceX was born, working outside of areas of expertise. This gets the “we've always done it this way” out of the trees.

Problem solvers, often:

1. Working outside of the discipline, or joining two disciplines
2. New to the Trade

So if you are coming to writing with this as a side hustle, *that* gives you an edge. You still have the eyes of an outsider.

Why don't we market romances to men? Men are one of the tent poles—are the good folks you want to be like, and prevails, so why don't we market romance to men?

8. Get off your Asch

We don't come up with creative, great books because we are built to conform to the judgment of the rest of our tribe. Go along, get along. If you get tossed out, you have to make it on your own in the

jungle. Thus, we are wired to conform. After WWII, psychologists asked, “how could so many good-hearted Germans turn a blind eye to the atrocities? They knew the Jews did not cause the collapse of the Weimar Republic.”

Well, his experiments,

3 lines *a*, *b*, *c*, pick out the one that is the same length as *d*. 95% of the time we get it right. It’s not a trick question.

Then, set up with 12 subjects and asked which one matches, and some of them were plants. 1-11 were setups, and they’d get it wrong. So when it got to 12 person, that person KNEW it was the wrong answer, but 2/3 of the time he/she went with the ones before them. Then when asked why they made that choice, they gave all sorts of reasons other than saying “I knew it was wrong and thought I must be nuts.”

If, 10 answered wrong, but 1 other gave right answer, then the majority of time, 12 *did* give the correct answer. All it takes is 1 person telling you that you are not nuts to be able to stick to our ideas. (hence, the reason to have more than one crit partner. If there is one person who believes, go for it)

Janice added, check out The Bromance Book Club. <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07XHQFLDW/>

9. If You’re Rage-y and You Know It

Anger often sits on top of a lot of other complicated emotions—fear, betrayal, insecurity, others she noted I couldn’t keep up with. *Study* it. It leads into conflict and ambiguity and the stuff of story.

Burrowes feels the darkest books she has written are her best—even if she is limited to writing as trilogy so that she then gets back to the kittens and butterflies.

Well, don’t we often hold the return from war soldier as a hero? To be lauded. Tthey have been in trauma)

Women in domestic abuse are often seen as fragile, damaged, ever so subtly as having *put* herself in the situation where bad things could happen to her.

She thought about how society treats these two survivors so differently. And how inflicting violence on others is traumatizing.

They are not her best-selling books, but she feels those are her best books. But that does take a lot out of her to write.

Think about the peas under our mattress. Maybe we can’t fix it in real life. Can we work it out on paper?

10. What we do is hard

Creativity is PRECIOUS to what we do. If you are struggling this year, remember, our society does not truly value creativity. Teachers rarely say they like the creative kids best. They like the ones who perform as expected. Managers and CIOs, who do you want on your team—they say, those who think outside of the box; and then who do they give promotions to? The ones who conform.

As writers, we need to turn the trope upside down, but in pandemic we cannot travel; we cannot have those coffee convos; AND we have extreme political turmoil. Necessity is the mother of invention, but creativity needs room to daydream. To get adequate rest. To daydream. Right now, we writers are in a compression phase. If you are struggling, that's understandable.

Studies showing that men get more positive rejection letters, more offers of representation. So change your name from Katheryn to Charles.

From our Chat: re men reading romance: From Janet Ciccone

I published historical romance some years ago and got several fan letters from men who liked the adventure of my books. I took a real historical event, gave the heroine a special skill, and she and the hero had a believable way of helping the historical event turn out the way it did (positive).

It was creative and unusual, but my books didn't sell well.

Thank you, everyone, for attending. Thank you, Grace Burrowes, for this writing seminar.

Bibliography, as supplied by Burrowes:

- *The Net and the Butterfly*, by Olivia Fox Cabane and Judah Pollack
<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/316054/the-net-and-the-butterfly-by-olivia-fox-cabane-and-judah-pollack>
- *Range, Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World*, by David Epstein
<https://davidepstein.com/the-range/>
- *When*, by Daniel Pink <https://www.danpink.com/books/when/>
- *How to Fly a Horse—The Secret to Creativity, Invention, and Discovery*, by Kevin Ashton
<https://www.penguin.co.nz/books/how-to-fly-a-horse-9780099591771>
- *Originals*, by Adam Grant <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/318648/originals-by-adam-grant-foreword-by-sheryl-sandberg/>

Workshops:

Erin has put together a google doc to poll COFW members for ideas for next year's workshops. Please find it here:
<https://forms.gle/oJXsPjiJNRbrLVED6>

New Releases:



Her Forever Love By Kimberly Beckett

She thought she'd never see him again.

High school sweethearts Liz Randall and Jason Merrick were deeply in love, but when Liz rejected his marriage proposal to fulfill her dream of riding international level dressage, Jason joined the Army and broke off all contact. Fifteen years later, they're both back home, and Liz must find a way to tell Jason they have a daughter.

Available Now!

