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*Second Place in Fiction, 2019 Golden Quill Contest*



# President's Letter

by Janice Konstantinidis

Dear Fellow NightWriters,

On a certain night this month, be careful of packages falling from the sky, dropped by a famous person in red and in a hurry. We know that this month the "fake news" suppresses stories of falling objects, rooftop damage and fractured chimneys. That microwave you want might be delivered *through* the roof rather than down the chimney! Just sayin'.

I hope you will join us at the Christmas party December 10. There is a rumor that Santa and Mrs. Claus will be there. If they do show up, I will ask the big red man to be careful when flying over populated areas.

Imagination is what keeps writers afloat, and I always enjoy this season of fairies and elves, *A Christmas Carol*, *Nutcracker*, gift giving and highly decorated Christmas trees. Whether you celebrate the religious events surrounding this holiday, or simply the passing of the winter solstice, there is no doubt that this season is one of good cheer and friendship.



We would like to continue our tradition of giving to the **Toys for Tots** program. Any unwrapped toys that you bring to the meeting will be collected and given to the Salvation Army for distribution to children in need. Although our local Marine Corp League has disbanded and no longer collects toys, we would like to continue the tradition of giving. So, if you can, please bring a toy to the meeting, and we will make sure that it is given to the proper local agency.

May your holiday season be full of love and joy! Keep writing!

*Janice Konstantinidis, President*

I'm looking at you on a fern,  
there's nothing amiss to discern.  
The world may be crazy  
with morals quite hazy;  
but nature would like us to learn

That the balance of goodness is seen  
in feathers, perfection in green.  
True balance of forces  
still reinforces  
the hope for the peace we all dream.

*Janice Konstantinidis*



Photo by Lorraine Flakemore

## Come to the Christmas Party at the December 10th General Meeting!

This month's General Meeting will be dedicated to spreading Christmas cheer! The meeting will feature storytelling by members, a raffle, a visit by Santa and Mrs. Claus. Refreshments will be served. The Round Tables Critique sessions will start at 5:15 pm and the General Meeting will start at 6:30 pm.

We hope you will attend to wish your fellow NightWriters Happy Holidays!



## Toys for Tots - A SLO NightWriter Tradition!



SLO NightWriters has supported the Toys for Tots program for many years. We ask you to help continue the tradition by bringing a new, unwrapped toy to the December 10 General Meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting and wish to make a donation, please refer to [toysfortots.org](https://toysfortots.org) for more information.

# A Message from Steven Mintz Program Director

I'm proud to share with you the presentations scheduled for the first six meetings in 2020. I believe you'll find the group of speakers have interesting journeys to share and lots of knowledge that can help you get published, enhance your writing skills and thrive as an author. Please share this with your friends who might be interested. All are welcome to be our guests at any of these meetings.

## **January 14, 2020**

**Liu Yu and Dawn Cerf**

### **Awakening the Sleeping Tiger: The True Story of a Professional Chinese Athlete**

Liu Yu and Dawn Cerf have collaborated on a moving story about the trials and tribulations of following one's dreams against all odds. Liu Yu, an eager-to-please Chinese girl, owned and raised as a professional *wushu* athlete by the unyielding Communist government, finds the courage to turn against the cultural tide in China to seek her own destiny. The inspiring message behind *Awakening the Sleeping Tiger: The True Story of a Professional Chinese Athlete* is never giving up on dreams carefully built with integrity.

## **February 11, 2020**

**Eldonna Edwards**

### **The Hook: Make a Promise to Your Readers (And Keep It!)**

Eldonna Edwards' award-winning debut novel, *This I Know*, sets the stage for her writings about a provincial upbringing. Her novels explore themes of otherness and belonging, and the true definition of home. She is the subject of the award-winning documentary "Perfect Strangers" that follows

one kidney patient and one potential kidney donor in their search for a perfect match. Eldonna believes you only have about twenty seconds between the time a reader picks up your book and decides whether to purchase. She will discuss how to hone your opening and deliver on the promise you made on that critical first page.

## **March 10, 2020**

**Brian Schwartz**

### **Book Marketing Triage – A Strategic Plan for Authors**

Brian Schwartz will discuss the concept of triage and book publishing. It is a process of determining the most important goals, problems, and marketing objectives among many possibilities. Brian has been labeled an "Authorpreneur" because of the multiple roles he fills as CEO, author, speaker, trainer, publisher, and consultant. Since 2009, he has worked with over 500 authors. Driven out of a need to provide authors access to the digital book market, Brian applies his knowledge in tech to be the 'Brew Master' for TechBrew, a technocentric group that meets in SLO.

## **April 14, 2020**

**Jordan Rosenfeld**

### **How to Write a Page Turner: Writing Tension**

Jordan Rosenfeld is a well known author who was a presenter at the Master Classes at the 2019 Central Coast Writers Conference. She is the author of the novels *Women in Red* and *Forged in Grace* and six books on the craft of writing, most recently *How to Write a*

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*Page-Turner*. This book contains tips to infuse page-turning tension into every aspect of your story or novel and even memoir. Jordan is also a freelance manuscript editor, writing coach and has online writing courses that are accessible on her website.

**May 12, 2020**

**LeeAnne Krusemark**

**Getting Paid to Write for Online Blogs, Magazines & Websites (Even if You're a Self-published Novelist!)**

LeeAnne Krusemark is an accomplished writer and speaker about online publishing opportunities. She provides advice about building your online platform and portfolio in a way that will benefit your future as a writer. LeAnne is a former journalist, editor and managing editor of newspapers, as well as an author of countless magazine articles and several self-published books including her most recent, *Scriptwriting A-Z*, that looks

at getting started in writing for television, stage and the movies. LeeAnne recently authored a screenplay and has started representing other writers as an editor and agent.

**June 9, 2020**

**Lili A. Sinclair**

**Should You Use Kickstarter to Publish Your Book?**

Lili A. Sinclair shares her experiences with a Kickstarter Campaign, the online crowd funding platform, that helped her to publish her hard-bound, full-cover book, *The Fork in the Path*. She will discuss how to start a campaign; the ways it can help you get published; and how to tell people about your Kickstarter. Her self-help books are about relationships. Lili has studied relationships and communication for about twenty years, working as a crisis phone counselor for The Parent Connection and for Stand Strong, formerly The Women's Shelter.

## Sunshine Corner

Need a Little Sunshine?

Into every life a little rain might fall, times when we long for sunshine, but no one notices.

NightWriters would like to send a card to any of its members who are ill, have lost a loved one, had surgery or an accident, but we don't always hear about it.

So, Fellow Writers, we need you!



Please email me, Judythe Guarnera: [judy.guarnera@gmail.com](mailto:judy.guarnera@gmail.com) and let me know when someone you know needs a little sunshine.

## T'were the Night Afore Christmas

(As witnessed by the dread pirate Rob Anybody)

T'were the night afore Christmas, when all through the ship  
Not a creature was stirrin', we'd had flask to lip.  
The booty was locked in the ship's hold with care,  
In case any swag should, by chance, disappear.

Each crewman were nestled all snug in their cot,  
With visions o' treasure and the share they'd each got.  
The Cap'n and First-mate shared a nightcap  
And then settled down with their guns in their lap.

When out in the riggin' there arose such a noise,  
At first I was thinkin', "Well, boys will be boys."  
Then I thought, "Wait a moment, maybe someone's aboard!"  
So I opened the door after donnin' me sword.

The moon, o'er the yardarm, was especially bright  
And its glow, it lit up an unusual sight.  
Skimmin' fast o'er the water as if fleein' a gale  
Was a wee ship with eight pirates, all hearty and hale.

With a little old captain, so lively and quick,  
It was Whitebeard I knew, alias Captain Nick.  
More rapid than dolphins, on its course it came,  
And he shouted `em orders and called `em by name:

"Now Slasher! Now One-eye!  
Now, Boot-strap and Spike!  
On, Lefty! On, Peg-leg!  
Daft Willy and Pike!  
To the top of the quarterdeck!  
To the top of the mast!  
Now sail away! Sail away!  
Sail away fast!"

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As whitecaps afore the wild hurricane fly,  
When they met with a blockade, they'd mount to the sky  
So up to our crow's nest, that wee ship it flew  
With its hold full of swag, and Captain Nick too.

And then, in a moment, with their ship safely docked  
Come the sound of swords drawn and of pistols cocked.  
As I drew me sword, the alarm I did sound,  
As down came Whitebeard and his crew in a bound.

He was dressed in a frock coat the color o' mud,  
And his clothes were all stained with gunpowder and blood.  
A bundle for swag he had flung on his back,  
He'd the look of a pirate about to attack!

His eyes--how they glared! And his scars, how eerie!  
His hair was all matted, bedraggled, and dreary!  
His tight little mouth was drawn up in a sneer,  
And his smolderin' beard had some white with fear.  
A razor-sharp dagger he held in his teeth,  
And his foul breath circled his head like a wreath.  
He had a lean face and that weren't all,  
His laugh was one to make your skin crawl.

He and his crew, weapons drawn, came ahead,  
And every man-jack of us feared we was dead.  
Then the Cap'n, God bless him, turned to us crew  
And yelled, "Draw your weapons for we're pirates too!"

And we spoke not a word, but went straight to our work.  
We fought back with cutlass and pistol and dirk.  
We soon had `em dead or trussed up in chains  
And we looted their ship of its ill-gotten gains.

The captives, in chains, soon walked a short plank.  
And to Davy Jones' locker, each scurvy dog sank.  
Whitebeard was last, and he leapt with a yell,  
"Happy Christmas ya bilge rats, and I'll see ya in hell!"

*Robert Kravets*

# WORD PLAY

by Morgann Tayllor

## JOY TO THE WORD

Friction makes better fiction. With only friction, we have a revolving door of events joggling in place. For the reader to travel through a story, good fiction has both conflict and resolution. Rather like yin and yang, but not necessarily in equal balance. And not always in the usual order. Pain before pleasure can flip from pleasure to pain or détente in the end. In any case, the story has moved to a different level.



So open the door to **joy**. It is a necessary component of the tug and pull of love, hate; work, play; war, peace; joy, sorrow...Taken singularly, the word **joy** is sometimes considered one-dimensional. But joy is so much more: first, **joy** is **awareness**, the opportunity to engage with the moment because that moment, written, felt, or spoken, will never happen again in exactly the same way or intensity. Except in our stories or perhaps our memories. **Joy** is the complex range of expressions from the **thrill** to **calm satisfaction**.



**Joy** is **connection** with all things. It's a newborn babe's tiny fist curled around Mom's index finger. It's a flutter of dragonflies hovering the backyard pond or fireflies pulsing the dark. It's the reflection of a golden sunset in a single rain droplet, the charge of electricity between two lovers, a belly laugh from the core of a joke.

**Joy** spreads **delight**. It is butter over hot bread from the oven. It is sugar, salt, spices and fat in any combination you know is bad for you because it tastes twice as good.

**Joy** is **visceral** and **visual**. It is the hello resurrected from hell. It is Dad returned from a foreign war, wrapped by Mom in a Christmas-decorated box, leaning on the wall next to the tree, soon to be opened by his astonished children. **Joy** is **jubilation**. Your favorite NFL team wins the Super Bowl or the horse you bet on wins the Kentucky Derby. **Joy** is the **exultation** of surviving that first parachute jump, safely landing the first solo flight, climbing Mt. Everest. **Joy** is **wonder** for the boy with compromised eyesight. He is presented his first pair of colorblind glasses and for the first time, he sees all colors in their natural spectrum.



**Joy** is the **experience** of home, a full fridge and the touch of a loved one in a warm comfortable bed on a cold night. An unsolicited gift of **joy** is a **warm hearth** for the lonely, the unwanted, the outlier without a "tribe". **Joy** is the **light bulb** in a teachable moment. **Joy** just **is**, because it's courted. It's a part of your story, real or imagined. It's created from conflict or tension, it's the quest for redemption, inspiration, hope, insight. Or a prod to move on to the next phase or completion of a story.

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Where to find joy in a story plot? It's throbbing under your fingertips at the keyboard, just waiting for the right moment to appear. Joy is **learning** as you write. Joy is **writing** the perfect word(s) or phrase(s) to fit the narrative. Joy is **publication** after grueling gestation and rewrites.

Joy is all of the above—and more—in prismatic contexts and concepts. Joy fosters **fulfillment, accomplishment, resolution**. Finally, **joy** is in the **journey**. Live it. Love it. Write it.

And have a **Merry Christmas!**

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## Writers on the Radio

NightWriter Jean Moelter is the host of Artsy People, the radio show that promotes local artists of all kinds, their work and events Thursdays at 2 p.m. with a rebroadcast Mondays at 5 p.m. It's heard on KYXZ Excellent Radio 107.9 FM out of Grover Beach.

Have you just published a book? Would you like to tell the community about it? Consider being a guest on Artsy People. Just send an email to Jean at [artsypeople@yahoo.com](mailto:artsypeople@yahoo.com). Or, if you have an event coming up, such as a book signing, email an announcement to Jean and she'll read it on the air.

Jean interviews a different artist, live, each week at the Excellent Radio station. Many NightWriters have been guests on the show. Jean has also interviewed musicians, storytellers, actors, and comedians.

To listen to past interviews, and to see the list of upcoming guests, go to Jean's website and click on Artsy People in the menu: <https://sites.google.com/view/jeanmoelter> Don't miss this great marketing opportunity for authors.

## Protuberance Unperturbed

*By Patricia Gimer*

Look at you, standing tall,  
so dignified, so noble  
after all you've endured—

scorched summer days,  
drought, famine,  
insects, vermin,

*and* the lifting of an  
old dog's left leg!

How haphazard your cultivation amidst  
the harshness, the trampling, the chaos  
of an adjacent patio being formed.

Three seasons of abuse and neglect and  
still you offer your December surprise—  
still you rise, perpendicular,

smiling, multiplied, squeezing  
up between old roots, clumps of  
concrete, jagged rocks,

*and* a thick layer  
of new redwood chips—

your pencil-straight spine with no  
leaves to hide behind, refusing to  
be diverted from its purpose—

returning each year when we  
most need your bright light,

*and* your perfumed winter  
breath to soothe us

Sweet Narcissus!



## TIPS AND TIDBITS

by Judythe Guarnera



### SPRUCE UP YOUR SHORT STORY by APPROACHING IT AS THOUGH IT WERE A THREE ACT PLAY

*A question for all you writers out there...*

*What's the difference between a writer and a pizza?*

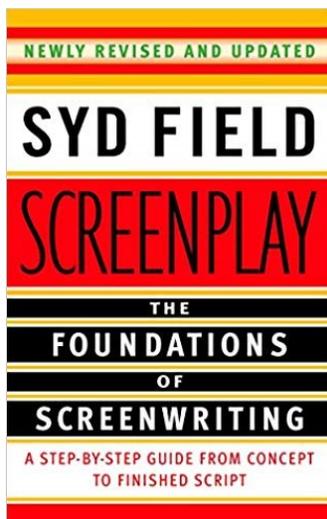
You must read this entire article, take a test, and if you pass, and only if you pass, will you find the answer to this riddle. (Hah! Just kidding, but the answer *is* at the end.)

For those of you who knew my good friend, Paul Alan Fahey, you're aware of what a good writer, teacher of writing, and a supporter of writers he was. Paul was a frequent contributor to *Byline*, a writing advice column/blog. Recently, I found a column he'd written in April 2008 and I'm reproducing it here.

Mr. Syd Field describes the importance of screenplay structure in his text, *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*. His paradigm consists of three acts and two major turning points called plot points that hold the structure in place.

Paul and I had many discussions on his adopted technique of using Field's paradigm of three acts when writing a short story. Hopefully you'll find some ideas and tricks in here that you can use in writing a short story or a screen play.

Paul died two years ago. I saw this article as a way to keep his writing talents alive.



Paul Alan Fahey 1944 - 2017

# Fiction Fix



The nuts and bolts of crafting better fiction

## Lights, Camera, Flash!

by Paul Alan Fahey

Have you ever wondered what makes a terrific film? Is it a great script? Is it in the casting? The set design and costumes? The soundtrack? Of course, it's all these elements combined in unique and amazing ways. Yet Hollywood insiders agree that fancy trappings rarely save a film that lacks a strong dramatic premise, a series of believable confrontations and a satisfying climax and resolution. Think for a moment. I bet you can name a dozen films that recently went straight to your local video store after lackluster reviews and poor box office attendance. Was the culprit a poorly structured screenplay? Chances are good it was.

Syd Field, the famous screen-writing teacher, would argue that structure is everything when it comes to creating outstanding films. Take Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* or Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*. These classics have strong elements going for them, but it's their three-act structure that seals the deal.

Mr. Field describes the importance of screenplay structure in his text, *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*. His paradigm consists of three acts and two major turning points called plot points that hold the structure in place. Act I, or the set-up, presents the major characters, the dramatic premise of the story and the surrounding circumstances. Plot Point I happens at the end of Act I, spins the action

in another direction and propels the characters into Act II.

In Act II, the characters face obstacle after obstacle as they struggle to achieve their goals. Plot Point II happens near the end of Act II and leads to Act III's dramatic climax and resolution. While reading Field, I wondered if his paradigm might apply to the writing of short stories and specifically to flash fiction where a tight focus and brevity are critical elements of the genre.

Several definitions abound, but many consider flash to be complete stories of around one thousand words. Even though it's not necessarily mandatory that stories in this genre have discernable beginnings, middles and ends, I wanted to see if the three-act paradigm would keep me on target and hopefully produce leaner writing in my earlier drafts.

### Pre-writing Structure

Field emphasizes you need to know four things **before** you begin to write your story: the beginning, ending and the two plot points. I had a general idea how my tale would begin. The setting of the story would be London near the end of the Nineteenth Century. A maid, working for a wealthy woman, has stolen her employer's diamond brooch and has passed it on to her fiancé. They plan to meet later in the day and begin a life together with the proceeds from the

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sale of the brooch.

At the end of the story, the maid, having learned her fiancé has run off with the brooch and left her behind, decides to return to her employer and tell her the truth about the theft. The employer, touched by the maid's honesty, welcomes her back but cannot completely forgive her betrayal. The employer now has the upper hand in controlling this "simple child."

### The Writing Process

Changes in the story occurred while writing the initial and subsequent drafts, yet I felt the paradigm held the story in place and kept me better focused as I passed through the plot points and the three-act structure.

I learned more about the characters as I thought about the plot points and the overall structure of the story. For example, I discovered the maid had a strong connection to her mother, one that led to the mother becoming an important presence that propelled the story forward. I also discovered the employer had a softer side, and this led to a shift in the story's theme from one of power over others to one of loneliness and emotional need.

Act II began to take shape in the first draft and served as a bridge between the beginning and end of the story. The maid's confession in Act III also led to a brief resolution scene that allowed greater insight into her employer's character.

### The Final Edit

The final version of "The Brooch" runs approximately 866 words, a length well within the previously stated limits for flash fiction. I'll leave it to you, the reader, to decide if I've succeeded. See if you can

visualize the screenplay paradigm as you read the story. Take note before the curtains close at the end of an act, and I bet you'll discover the plot points that push the story forward in different, and hopefully, surprising directions.

## THE BROOCH

Mavis was lost in thought as she navigated the main stairway at Devonshire House. She really wasn't a bad person, yet she thought of herself that way, especially after taking the diamond brooch. "There's good and bad in most folks, Mavis," her mother once said. "Everyone has something dirty deep inside they can't wash away."

Mavis knew this was true of her as well since she'd left the house earlier, walked the three blocks to the Compass and Crown and handed over Mrs. Grainger's brooch to Alfred.

Mavis was downstairs now in the hall. She'd just opened the utility closet, her hand about to grasp the duster when Mrs. Grainger called out from the sitting room.

"I can be depressingly sloppy, Mavis. Guess you have your work cut out for you. Did you lay out my green dress for tonight?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Good. I think I'll see how it looks this morning with my diamond brooch." Mavis suddenly felt queasy, lightheaded.

"I'll do the errands first, Mrs. Grainger."

"Oh, you're going out again so soon?"

But Mavis didn't answer. She was already on her way.

Ten minutes later, Mavis rang the bell at 231 Brick Lane, and Alfred's landlady, Mrs. Harcourt, opened the door. "He's not here," she said.

"I know. I'll just wait for him in his room."

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*(Continued from page 13)*

The bed looked hastily made. Mavis flung open the closet: nothing but empty clothes hangers.

"Didn't I tell you?" Mrs. Harcourt said. "Best not to get mixed up with his kind."

Perhaps an hour or so later—Mavis couldn't be sure—she found herself staring at her reflection in the window at the Compass and Crown with no idea how she'd gotten there. The sound of carriages on the cobbled street, the chatter of passersby entered her consciousness. "Do the right thing, Mavis," she heard her mother say. "Go back and tell her the truth."

"Mavis you were gone so long. I was worried," Mrs. Grainger said.

"I . . ." Mavis began, and it all poured out. How she'd taken the brooch, given it to Alfred, their plans to run off together to a new, uncomplicated life and the fact that

Alfred had deserted her.

Mrs. Grainger gave a sigh. "I was young and foolish once, Mavis. The good news is you've come back to Devonshire where you belong and where you'll stay. Run along now and fetch my tea."

\*\*\*

Okay, maybe this isn't the whole story, but you get the idea. In the Act III resolution, Mrs. Grainger meets her friend, Polly, in a café. Polly asks why she took the maid back when she obviously couldn't trust her. Mrs. Grainger finally admits the brooch was a fake and says what matters most in life are her friends and the need for companionship.

And the curtain falls.

END

*What's the difference between a writer and a pizza?*

*Answer: A pizza can feed a family.*

### Monthly Meetings

NightWriters' Evening Meetings: the second Tuesday of every month, year round. We encourage interested visitors to join us. Admission is free; refreshments served. Next Meeting: December 10, 2019, at United Church of Christ, 11245 Los Osos Valley Road, San Luis Obispo 93405.

General meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Round Table presentations start at 5:15 p.m.

Writers' Critique Groups: Free for members, \$5 for non-members. These groups read and critique each other's work and discuss the business of writing. Visitors are always welcome. For details, visit our website: [www.slomightwriters.org](http://www.slomightwriters.org).

## TECH TIP

By Brian Schwartz



# BUILD AN ARC

An often overlooked, but important step in publishing your book is to first produce an ARC (Advance Reader Copy) edition or Bound Galley. It's not intended to be the final version, so a 'quick & dirty' formatting job will suffice. You can print professionally bound ARC copies for less than \$5/book and you don't need an ISBN number.

**An ARC can help you avoid the expense of republishing and negative comments in reviews related to poor editing.**

An ARC refers to an Advance Reader Copy (aka Bound Galley). It's an uncorrected proof that is sent out to beta readers in the pre-publication phase of a book. While it has been edited, the author may not be finished making changes.

Want to know how authors can spend a small fortune on an editor? They rewrite what they've already sent off to an editor. Rewrites require costly reedit.

The intent in sending out ARCs is to get feedback from readers before you invest money in editing and interior design. That being said, you may still want to hire a proofreader before sending it out to your beta readers. The alternative 'no cost' routes are to use a tool like Grammarly or ask your friends or family to do some early proofing for you.

If I receive a manuscript with obvious first-time author errors (the word 'foreword' being misspelled is an early indicator), I know that they've had few (if any) readers review it before sending it to me to format and publish.

Another way authors overspend is by hiring a formatter **before** they are finished making

changes. Their eagerness to see their book in print comes at a premium. This becomes especially true if your layout person uses a program like InDesign.

Unless your book has been formatted in a program you can edit yourself (like MS Word), you will need to pay for the labor to edit the formatted work. Also, every edit introduces the potential for more errors. If the changes are extensive enough, or the author failed to track changes, it may require a complete restart of the entire job (this is less common than you'd think). As a formatter for over 10 years, I can tell you that rework often takes longer (and thus more costly) than the initial layout.

## Why Begin With an ARC?

ARCs can be sent to agents and publishers if you want to keep the door open to traditionally publishing before you self-publish. ARCs can be sent to beta readers and advance readers to give you feedback on your work.

Did you know that ARCs were used to secure six-figure publishing deals for the authors of *Fight Club* and *Ready Player One*? Most recently, Rikk Dunlap had his unpublished book adapted into a movie with Hallmark (*Christmas Under The Stars*).

The cost of an ARC is minimal. Think of it as a pilot episode. If the book is not well received in its beta form, if you can't get positive reviews before it's published, why do you think you'll be successful after it's published?

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**BEFORE you spend money on marketing a book, be sure that it is a book worth marketing.**

Last year, I helped a SLOW member get his ARC completed. The feedback he received was hard to take at first, but it did make him realize he needed to take a second shot. I'm happy to report that although it delayed his book by a year, it will be worth the wait. A side benefit to the delay is that he was able to spend time building his platform and has gained far more confidence as a result. In that year, he's published articles and managed to land on **page one** of Google for his primary keyword! You can't do much

better than that when it comes to a book launch. If he published what he originally sent me, no amount of marketing would have mattered and every bad review would have been another cut in his credibility.

Building an ARC into your plan will allow you to limit your upfront investment and test the waters before you jump in. I'm pulling together an 'ARC Bootcamp' that will give you step-by-step guidance to go at this from a DIY approach. The printer I'll suggest even lets you drop ship books directly to your advance (beta) readers, to save you trips to the post office.

Brian Schwartz  
[brian@selfpublish.org](mailto:brian@selfpublish.org)  
 805-225-1251

## Have You Checked Out Our Website Lately?

### Control Your Own Information

Post your bio, picture, book covers and ordering links. Contribute a writing blog post-free publicity!

#### MEMBER SITE LINKS

List your website(s) and blog(s) with live links — makes it easier for the public to find you and helps build your platform.

#### BOOK REVIEWS

Get your book reviewed. Write a review—it's a valid publishing credit.

#### WRITERS SERVICES

Do you have a writing or professional skill? Get listed on our new Services Page. (Returning next issue.)

#### FACEBOOK

Become a "Fan" of NightWriters! Visit NW's Facebook page and sign up today! Also, link your Facebook page and your websites and blogs to NW sites.

#### LINKEDIN

Connect with NW on LinkedIn. Help build your author platform with writing professional connections.

## Kudos, Kudos, Kudos...

### *Janice Konstantinidis*

Writer Janice Konstantinidis and photographer Lorraine Flakemore have collaborated on a book of Tasmanian bird photos with accompanying humorous and reflective limericks. Their book, *Words of Beak*, has been published in Tasmania, Australia this month by [Lorraine Flakemore Photography](#).

### *Steven Mintz*

Steven Mintz was interviewed on the [Canadian Television Network](#) about ethics, civility and the impeachment hearings. The interview can be viewed at the following link: [CTV Interview Dr. Steven Mintz](#).

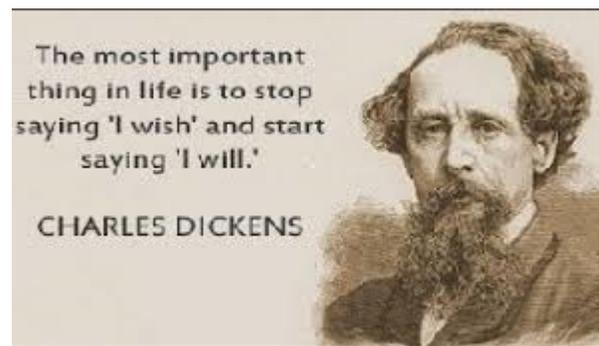
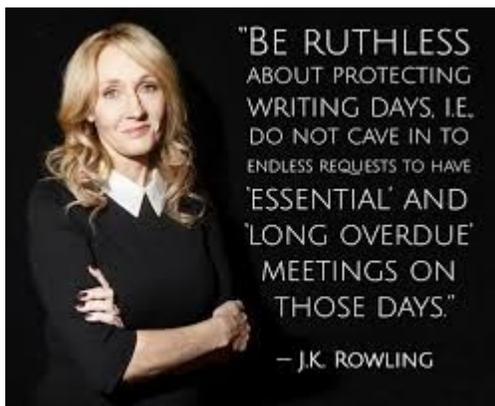
Steven also published an opinion article in [The Fulcrum](#), an online political forum, concerning the need for politicians to modify the tone of political debate. His article can be viewed at the following link: [The Fulcrum Opinion Dr. Steven Mintz](#).

## Have Kudos to Crow About?

**Do you have a recent article or story published in a local, national or even international print or online magazine? Or a book published?**

**How about a review, or an award, honor or recognition of your writing?**

**If so, we'd like to know about it. To have your literary kudos included in *WordSmiths*, send an email to [slownewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:slownewsletter@gmail.com) by the 20th of the month.**



## LYIN' LUCY

by Ruth Cowne

Lucy is not a silver-tongue wizard. She doesn't spew lies with orations, misleading statements or half-truths. Lucy's lies are delivered in a whirlpool of speed with her arm, her wrist and a slight twist of her hand. These are the tools of her deception.

Lucy is the pitcher on a woman's fast-pitch softball team called the Diamond Divas. The players are past their prime, but they enjoy the camaraderie and ascribe to the motto, "So what if we lose; we still booze."

This year the Divas are scheduled to play Chicks with a Stick. The match-up is a seven inning battle to see which team deserves the trophy and a free celebratory meal of all-you-can-eat chicken wings at the Weekend Warriors Bar and Grill.

Fans begin to fill the bleachers. The atmosphere is edgy because everyone remembers the previous year when a fight broke out between the Ponytail Express and the Hit Squad.

Before the game even started, a player for the Ponytails stood at home plate, flashed the fans and yelled, "Lemon Lime, tooty fruity, our team's gonna kick your booty."

Her gesture was mimicked by a player on the Hit Squad who chanted, "Hut, hut, hut, we're gonna beat your butt."

All hell broke loose. There was yelling, pushing and hair yanking. The local newspaper headlined it, "Bat Attitude, Spoils Game." Everyone hoped this would not be a repeat of the previous fiasco.

The Divas and the Chicks are evenly matched. The consensus is that this championship game is a battle between the two pitchers. Lyin' Lucy's opponent is Hurlin' Hannah. She has the fastest pitch in the league but that's all she's got. No magic tricks here, just a ball with the speed of a bullet train that dares the batter to swing.

On the other hand, Lyin' Lucy hoodwinks the batter with the swing of an arm, a twist of

a wrist and a slight of the hand. Her tactic is to give the illusion that her ball will cross right over the plate but at the last minute, it curves, it drops, it turns into a change up or a slider. She is rewarded with a swing and a miss by the batter. Her fans tell her she's an ace pitcher.

Lyin' Lucy modestly lowers her eyes and says, "Gosh darn, no. I'm just a good liar." She smiles sheepishly and goes on to explain, "Sometimes, I don't fib. I deliver a fast ball right over the base, but the batter never knows if my pitch is the truth or my usual lie."

With a flip of the coin, Chicks-with-a-Stick choose to be the home team and take the field. This guarantees them a last-at-bat, and a last chance to win the game. The Chicks' Hurlin' Hannah walks to the pitchers' circle and takes a few warm-up pitches.

The umpire yells, "Batter up."

The first six innings are scoreless. The fans are bored and take their frustrations out on the umpire. They heckle him with chants like, "Hey Blue, you couldn't see the plate if your dinner was on it." And "Can I pet your seeing eye dog after the game?"

At the top of the seventh, Hurlin' Hannah strikes out the first two batters. The third batter swings on the first pitch and everyone watches the ball sail over the fence in center field, like a shooting star in the night sky. Home run! Divas one. For the first time since the game started, Diva fans feel the tide turn in their favor. Lyin' Lucy won't let them down.

The Chicks go into the bottom of the seventh inning, scoreless but have the final at-bat. They hope to even the score or better yet, score two runs and win the game. Lyin' Lucy takes the pitchers circle. She is ready for the game to end.

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She quickly strikes out the first two batters. The third batter approaches the plate.

"Ball one," says the ump.

Diva fans cheer.

Chick fans hiss and yell, "Hey ump, did your glass eye fog up?"

Three more pitches are called balls and the batter walks.

Lyn' Lucy has been in this situation before. Even with a runner on first base, she knows the next batter, Blind Bat Betty, is an easy out. Diva players can taste the chicken wings.

Lyn' Lucy looks at Blind Bat Betty and sees the fear in her eyes. She decides to end the game with a fast pitch down the pipe and right over the plate. Blind Bat Betty can barely see the spinning ball hurled toward her. She doesn't know if it's a curve ball, a drop ball or one right over the plate. She gulps, closes her eyes and swings with all her might. Half the crowd roars with delight; the other half hang their heads and hope for a rematch next year.

An hour later the softball field is deserted. Trash bins overflow with Styrofoam containers of nachos, plastic cups and straws. Gusts of

wind toss candy wrappers against the catchers' back drop. Discarded sunflower seeds litter the ground below the bleachers. A forgotten sweater hangs from a pole.

All but one of the players is at the Weekend Warriors Bar. The winners drink their booze and scarf down free chicken wings. Losers drown their sorrows in beer and pony up the money for their wings. Blind Bat Betty is dancing on the table to Uptown Funk by Bruno Mars. She was chosen the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the game after her homerun brought in two runs to make the final score, Divas, one, Chicks, two.

One player sits in the stands and thinks about what might have been if only she had lied instead of told the truth.

## Moved or Changed Email?

Please notify NightWriters of any change in address or email: [jkon50@gmail.com](mailto:jkon50@gmail.com). Join NightWriters and send dues or renewal checks (payable to SLO NightWriters) to: SLO NightWriters, PO Box 2986, Paso Robles, CA 93447. Or join/renew online through our website: [www.slolightwriters.org](http://www.slolightwriters.org) and pay with a credit card.

## THE NEW TEACHER

by Susan Tuttle

Jordan stood at the head of the room and watched the students file in. The looks directed Jordan's way ranged from disbelief to amusement, with a good dollop of scorn thrown in just for the fun of it. *Kids these days have no sense of propriety*, Jordan thought. *And no respect, either.*

She waited until the last student sat, a boy large for the fourth grade. He'd stopped and stared at her, his mouth agape. Then he'd started pointing and laughing so hard he could barely talk. Her iron-faced stare had finally brought him under control enough that he eventually found his seat and plunked his chubby ass onto it.

She stood staring at the kids, who wriggled in their seats and whispered among themselves for the first few minutes. Then her motionless silence began to penetrate their preoccupation and they slowly quieted. *Probably used to being yelled at, or lectured*, Jordan thought. *Aren't they in for a surprise?*

When she had everyone's attention, she smiled at the group.

"My name is Jordan Adaire and I'll be your teacher this year. You may call me Miss Adaire."

She sent her penetrating gaze around the room and saw the wiggles begin once again as the kids' attention spans ran out. Two girls near the back passed a note between them. Two boys near the front whispered behind secreting hands.

Jordan smiled to herself and let the noise level rise. Then she rapped a pointer on her desk. When she again had silence, she smiled at the class.

"Since I'm new here, I'll give you my list of rules. These are inviolate, unbreakable rules, rules you must follow. Do you understand?"

She got frowns of confusion from most, nods from a few.

"There are only three rules. Here they are." She held up her fingers, her unnaturally long, quadruple-jointed fingers, as she enumerated. "First rule: silence in the room unless I ask you to talk. Second rule: You may ask me anything, but only if I first give you permission. Third rule: You must never ever tell anyone else what happens here in this room. It is our secret."

Again she looked around a room filled now with deep silence, and rapt, almost-scared faces.

"If you do tell anyone - your parents, other teachers, your brothers and/or sisters - I will not return to this classroom. You will be assigned another teacher, a boring one who will simply teach you what the syllabus says you must learn. If you *can* keep our secret, you will learn what life truly holds for you. Does everyone understand?"

The kids nodded, shrugged, frowned, shook their heads. Once more the noise rose. One hand, halfway to the back, rose. Jordan again rapped the pointer.

"Yes?" she asked into the once-again abrupt silence. "Your name?"

"I'm Cristie Abernathy, Miss Adaire. Can I ask..."

The girl, all freckles and pigtails, broke off as though afraid she'd be scolded. Jordan nodded.

"You may ask."

"You're wearing a bow tie," Christie blurted out, her face turning red. "A huge polka dotted bow tie. Girls don't wear ties, boys do."

"Yeah, boys, not girls," a few of the boys crowed. The room erupted into laughter.

"Ah, and who says I'm a girl?" Jordan looked around the room, at this class of delicious little people who giggled and

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wiggled and shoved and poked each other. "Or a boy?" she added and the merriment died.

Thirty pairs of eyes looked back at her, questions in every one. The two boys in the front row who'd been whispering earlier both began to speak. Jordan silenced them with a look.

"Rule number one, boys. Rule number one... Now let me tell you all, things in life are rarely the way they look," she said. She touched the fabric knotted around her neck. "Never assume that what stands before you is the truth."

She pulled one end of the bow tie and the

fabric slithered and undulated. It wiggled just like the kids did until the tie ends fell apart and light shot out from each of the dots scattered on the surface. The air began to thrum, the walls to shimmer, and in moments the class found themselves in a dark cavern, surrounded by strange aquatic shapes.

"Your first lesson," Jordan said, grinning at the astonishment on thirty little faces. "The sea life of Mars. You will have fifteen minutes until I re-knot my bow tie and we return to our classroom. And remember," she said, placing a finger against her lips, "rule number three: *Don't tell anyone*. Now, go make friends and learn."



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*Let me help you Write It Right*  
 Susan Tuttle, Award Winning Author

**Proofreading:** spelling, punctuation, and grammar only. The last step before publication.

Cost: \$5/3 pages

**What you get:** a corrected document. Turnaround time @ 1 week for a 250-300 page manuscript.

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I will never rewrite your work, I will only suggest ways you can make it better, with examples for clarification. My goal is to help strengthen your unique author's voice while making sure you tell the best story you can write.

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## NightWriters REVIEW BOARD

As writers, we need to read in order to see what's being done out there. We also learn what works and what doesn't, what we need to avoid and what we want to incorporate into our own bag of skills.

So, as long as we're reading, why not read other members' books and then write reviews for them? It's a win-win for everyone: we learn by reading, and authors garner those all-important reviews for their work.

NightWriters has set up a Review Board, where we connect member readers with member writers' new works. Below you will find a listing of members who are willing to read and review (on Amazon, Goodreads, or their other favorite review site) specific works by other members. You must be a NightWriter member in good standing to take advantage of this new board.

### *Review Board Members\**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Email</u>	<u>Genres</u>
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Mary Silberstein	<a href="mailto:luvlamas@gmail.com">luvlamas@gmail.com</a>	poetry, fiction
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*\*To be added to our Review Board listing, write to: [slonwnnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:slonwnnewsletter@gmail.com) and put Newsletter Info in the subject line.*

## Submit Stores, Photos and Ads to the Newsletter

We will publish advertisements for NightWriters' books and book or writing related events. This advertising is Free For Members. Please provide the graphic (book cover or other graphic) for the announcement.

We will also accept original photographs, and unpublished Flash Fiction between 400-800 words from current members. Excerpts from published works, if they stand alone as their own mini-story, are also acceptable. We are also interested in articles, kudos and event notices. And if you have any other ideas for content, please let me know.

Send all submissions as attachments to: [slonnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:slonnewsletter@gmail.com), and put NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION in the subject line. We're all writers... so, take advantage of this opportunity to be published in your newsletter.

## SLO NightWriter Officers

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The success of non-profit organizations like SLO NightWriters depends on its members. We all have talents other than writing that any organization could make use of. NightWriters has many special opportunities for members to get involved, working "behind the scenes." If you'd like to assist in any capacity, email: [jkon50@gmail.com](mailto:jkon50@gmail.com)