



KWA Meeting

February 18

**Rockwell Public Library
5939 E. 9th, Wichita**

**12:30—1:30 p.m. Pre-meeting mini-workshop
“Using Romantic Elements in Various Genres”
presented by Starla Criser**

We'll explore how romantic elements are threaded into a number of genres besides the obvious romance lines. There will be general tips provided on what elements are used, on how much to include, and how to find your comfort zone in using these elements.

1:30—2:00 p.m. Social Time

**2:00—3:30 Main Program
“We All Have Grammar Problems”**

At newsletter deadline time the specific presenters were not known, but the people considering the task will be knowledgeable and enjoyable. Grammar issues are something writers either feel they are excellent at or feel they are miserable at using. Most writers actually fall somewhere in the middle.

We will be learning some quick and easy tips for dealing with grammar problems. Handouts will be given for handy little cheat-sheets, instead of having to dive into a book on grammar for help.

3:30—5:00 p.m. Critique Session

New & Renewing Members

New

Sam Kepfield

Renewals

Keith Boscher
Rachel Dayvault
Judy Nichols
Orville Voth

Mark Your Calendar

Feb. 1 & 15—GK Brainstormers novel-writing critique group, 7:00 p.m. in the “History” section at Borders East. Contact Gordon at gordon@gordonkessler.com or 316-685-0098.

Feb. 1—First Saturday Terrorist Women will meet on Wednesday, 1 to 4 p.m. at Watermark Books, 4701 E. Douglas.

Feb. 10, 24—Working Women Writers, 10 a.m. Watermark Books, 4701 E. Douglas. (Full group)

Feb. 18—KWA Meeting: 12:30-1:30 p.m. Pre-meeting mini-workshop, 1:30-2:00 p.m. Social time, 2:00-3:30 p.m. Program on Grammar, 3:30-5:00 p.m. Critique Session. Rockwell Library.

Feb. 20—Newsletter deadline for March.

March 1—GK Brainstormers, 7:00 p.m., in the “History” section at Borders East. Contact Gordon Kessler at gordon@gordonkessler.com or 316-685-0098.

March 1—First Saturday Terrorist Women will meet on Wednesday, 1 to 4 p.m. at Watermark Books, 4701 E. Douglas.

Market Place

Contests

ByLine Magazine Contests. For more information on all of their contests, see www.bylinemag.com/contests.asp.

Short Story: Deadline: Feb. 6. Entry Fee: \$5. Prizes: \$70 first, \$40 second, \$25 third. Submission: General fiction up to 5,000 words.

Valentine or Love Poem: Deadline: Feb. 14. Entry Fee: \$3. Prizes: \$40 first, \$25 second, \$15 third. Submission: Any style or length poem.

Short Article: Deadline: Feb. 17. Entry Fee: \$5. Prizes: \$50 first, \$25 second, \$15 third. Submission: Any non-fiction subject suitable for a magazine or newspaper.

Winter or Snow Poem: Deadline: Feb. 28. Entry Fee: \$3. Prizes: \$40 first, \$25 second, \$15 third. Submission: Any style or length poem.

Filler: Deadline: March 10. Entry Fee: \$4. Prizes: \$35 first, \$20 second, \$10 third. Submission: Short prose (up to 500 words) on any topic, from humor to household hints, tips, original anecdotes, etc.

Association For Ingenious Writing (AFIW) Horror Contest

Deadline: Feb 28. Entry Fee: \$2 for nonmembers. Prize: \$500. Submission: Horror fiction or nonfiction up to 2,500 words. Details at <http://www.ingeniouswriting.org/contests.html>.

TallGrass Writers Guild Literary Anthology/Contest

Deadline: Feb. 28. Entry Fee: \$16 for nonmembers. Prizes: \$1,000 first, for poetry and prose. Submission: Poetry, single-page to 28 lines. Prose, up to 2,500 words. Details by emailing outriderpr@aol.com or TallGrassWriters@aol.com.

Fire Story Contest

Deadline: Feb. 28. Entry Fee: None. Prizes: \$500 first, \$200 second, \$100 third, \$50 each four runners up. Submission: Nonfictional stories about kitchen fires caused by inattention, impaired cooking, or leaving cooking unattended on the stove. Winning entries will be part of a book being published on the dangers of kitchen fires and experiences of those who survived them. Details at <http://www.safestove.net/contest.html>.

That First Line Writing Contest

Deadline: March 1. Entry Fee: \$5. Prizes: \$500. Submission: A great opening line for a book, movie, comedy, act, stage play, poem, short story, article or song. Details at https://thatfirstline.com/fl.php?url_do=login.

Kansas Voices

Deadline: March 15. Entry Fee: \$3. Prizes: Adult Division: \$275 best poem, \$275 best short story Youth Division: \$75 best poem, \$75 best short story. Submission: Unpublished poetry or short stories up to 20 pages. Details at <http://www.winfieldarts.com/events.htm>.

Writers' Haven Press Love Poem Contest

Deadline: March 31. Entry Fee: \$3. Prizes: Cash prizes, prize winners and honorable mentions will be published. Submission: Two copies of each poem, any form, up to 60 lines. On both copies type "Love Poem Contest." On one copy only, type name, address, phone number and email address. Mail with check to Writers' Haven Press, 2006 Love Poem Contest, PO Box 368, Seabeck, WA 98380-0368.

2006 Wabash Prize for Fiction

Deadline: March 15. Entry Fee: \$10. Prizes: \$1,000 first, honorable mention. Both will be published in the

Summer/Fall 2006 issue of The Sycamore Review. Submission: One story or collection of related short shorts, total entry up to 10,000 words. Details at <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/engl/sycamore/sr/contest.htm>.

Avari Press Young Adult Fantasy Fiction Contest

Deadline: March 31. Entry Fee: \$5. Prizes: \$200, an advance, and a book contract. Submission: Young Adult Fantasy novels between 60,000 and 120,000 words. Details at <http://www.avariypress.com/contest.htm>.

Conferences

Wichita Area Romance Authors "Discovering Story Magic" presented by Robin Perini and Laura Baker

Date: March 11, 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.
Place: Friends University, Casado Campus Center
Cost: \$65 for non-WARA members, \$55 for WARA members (lunch included in price)
Details at: <http://www.angelfire.com/ks/WARA>.

Sea-SI Crime Scene Cruise

Date: July 15-July 22
Place: Alaska cruise, sailing from Seattle
Program: Forensic science multimedia presentations using real & fictional stories as examples.
Workshops: DNA, fingerprints, blood analysis, trace evidence, body identification, drugs & poisons, crime scene reconstruction, ballistics
Cost: \$300 Sea-SI Seminar, \$285.25 port charges and taxes, \$1109-\$1869 staterooms
Details at <http://www.innovativejourneys.com>

Grammar Matters

By Jennifer Stark Fry

“Who really cares about all those picky grammar rules that my high school English teacher used to harp about? Who cares about whether all the commas and semi-colons are perfectly in place or not? Doesn’t perfectionism hinder freedom of expression, after all? And besides, I haven’t reviewed all those darn comma and semi-colon rules for years!”

If these sentiments sound all too familiar to you, you may not wish to reconsider your thoughts about the “nuts and bolts” of punctuation by reading Lynn Truss’s delightful best seller *Eats Shoots & Leaves*, in which she addresses the need to attend to punctuation with the dry wit and humor that fans of British humor appreciate.

Truss’s punctuation wisdom becomes apparent before the reader-to-be even cracks open her book with the following story that graces the back cover of her book:

“A panda walks into a café. He orders a sandwich, eats it, then draws a gun and fires two shots in the air.

‘Why?’ asks the confused waiter, as the panda makes towards the exit. The panda produces a badly punctuated wildlife manual and tosses it over his shoulder.

‘I’m a panda,’ he says, at the door. ‘Look it up.’

The waiter turns to the relevant entry and, sure enough, finds an explanation.

‘Panda. Large black and white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves.’”

Upon opening the book, the lucky reader immediately encounters further musings that underscore the importance of punctuation. Truss, in her introduction, cites another perhaps familiar example of why punctuation matters greatly:

“A woman, without her man, is nothing.
A woman: without her, man is nothing” (Truss 9).

This witty example, and many similarly entertaining others underscore the importance of punctuation and illustrate how profoundly punctuation or lack thereof can alter a sentence’s meaning.

No wonder author Frank McCourt, in his forward to the book, claims, “If Lynne Truss were Catholic I’d nominate her for sainthood. As it is, thousands of English teachers from Maine to Maui will be calling down blessings on her merry, learned head for the gift of her book.” Truss’s book is a gift, and all writers would be wise to read it if they have not already, in celebration of the fine points of writing. Indeed, punctuation matters!

Jennifer Stark Fry

KWA Contributor, picky English Teacher, and fan of Truss and correct punctuation in general

Organizational Ideas for Your Next Project

By Starla Criser

Trust me, I’m nowhere close to being an expert on organization. What I offer you here is a sample of how I put together the basic research materials, plotting thoughts, and drafts of the manuscripts for my various writing projects. Over my twenty-some years of writing I have tried many methods of organization, used many forms of research, and tried many different preparatory forms. I’ve finally decided to stop driving myself nuts and use the KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) method. Again, this is what works for me.

Because I work on my projects at home, when I travel, and at the office, I need organizational portability. I use those wonderful little flash drives for saving and transferring my

files from one computer to another. You can get an amazing amount of information on even a 256 MB drive, although I prefer using a 1 GB flash drive at the minimum.

My flash drives (and I have a backup one of those too) hold not only my current writing project, but also all of the projects I am in various stages of creating.

As part of each project’s file, the drive contains my plotting outline, character profiles, and sometimes it contains photos I have taken for setting details, scanned in setting and character details (maps, pictures of places, pictures of my characters, miscellaneous information I might use in the project), and, of course, various drafts of the manuscripts.

The other main item I use for portability of each project is a notebook, with dividers for each chapter and basic project information.

(Cont’d pg. 5)

The Poetry Corner

Common Mistakes in Poetry

By Colleen Kelly Johnston

Poetry judges run across three or four common errors made by otherwise talented writers. The most common errors critiqued by our judges last year are the last line syndrome, using archaic vocabulary and incorrect formatting. In poetry submitted to KWA's 2005 contest these errors prevented some submitters from winning.

The last line syndrome can better be said as the poet's distrust of their reader. Too often, poets seem to feel that the reader is too dense to get the point of the poem. Therefore, the poet repeats the last line several times or sums up the poem's intent in a final unnecessary line.

For example:

I can't believe the drivers here
My way is clear
This road is mine.
Look out driver,
I'm out of here.
I'm going around you out of here.

It's redundant for the last line to be virtually repeated, and will not gain you points on a judge's scorecard. Edward Allen Poe may have written distinguished poetry with repeated lines and words, but Poe never repeated them immediately after one another and always each changed line had a meaningful distinguishing difference from others.

The use of archaic language should be avoided at all costs in poetry. Including words such as e'er, whence, yesteryear, morn, etc. are dating in a poem by a 21st century poet, which we all are. True, sometimes they make the meter work better. However, a substitute should be found, regardless of how long it takes to rewrite using a change of verbiage. Again, a number of poems entered in KWA's contests are always commented on and downgraded by poetry judges for this reason.

Failure to use correct formatting of your poetry is another common error poets make too frequently. These mistakes work the same whether a poet is entering work in a competition or sending manuscripts to a publisher.

Do not center every line of your poetry, it makes the poem too difficult to read and it is out of fashion since about 1975.

THIS

You step into the voting booth.
There is a keyboard before you.
You fumble at the keys,

then vote for dandelions
blooming in a dead meadow
two weasels for president.

NOT THIS

You step into the voting booth.
There is a keyboard before you.
You fumble at the keys,
then vote for dandelions
blooming in a dead meadow
and two weasels for president.

The centered form became popular during rise of free verse and was popular during the Beat Generation for a short time. But that was thirty years ago and today is almost a surefire method of having your work discounted since such formatting is considered immature or "girlie."

Similarly, proper formatting tells us to use capital letters where they are properly due, such as in your title, in the pronoun "I," in proper nouns and at the beginning of sentences.

THIS

Kalahari

Nothing moves but heat waves, nothing lives
unless another dies. Brittlebush crackles
under the drumming sun. Seared husks of scorpions,
cactus shreds, dead bits of other years
hide against rusted, broken stones.
Water dug from deep depressions seeps into dry membranes.
We dream of vodka and tonic, the sharp tang of lime,
cool creams for sandblasted skin.

NOT THIS

kalahari

nothing moves but heat waves, nothing lives
unless another dies. brittlebush crackles
under the drumming sun. seared husks of scorpions,
cactus shreds, dead bits of other years
hide against rusted, broken stones.
water dug from deep depressions seeps into dry membranes.
we dream of vodka and tonic, the sharp tang of lime,
cool creams for sandblasted skin.

Lastly do not use unusual fonts in hopes of making your poem stand out. The poem itself needs to stand out by virtue of its genius. The rule when sending poetry to a contest or a magazine is to stick with Courier or Times New Roman in 12 pt font.

Pick up any book of modern poetry and check it out. Then submit your work with that as an example.

Choosing the One Big Writing Workshop — 2006

By Colleen Kelly Johnston

It's hard, deciding where to spend your few extra dollars in the best place to gain you the most help for your writing and make the contacts needed to market your manuscripts. While being sure to save time in October for KWA's 10th Anniversary 2-day Scene of the Crime Writers Conference, dozens of seminars are promoted as just the right combination of editors, agents and teachers. Here are a few suggestions to help you in making your decision. A few even provide a bit of vacation with the work you will do.

OWFI — May 5th and 6th, Embassy Suites Hotel, 1815 S. Meridian, Oklahoma City, OK. Best conference in the Midwest according to KWA members who go frequently. Good mix of agents, editors, writers, genre leaders, presenters. Awards presentation to contest winners. This year's theme: Writer's Inspiration 2006. Early registration costs \$125 for the complete two days. For full info check out their home page at <http://www.owfi.org>.

University of Iowa Summer Writing Program. The best workshops in driving distance cover the writing techniques necessary for journalism, poetry, publicity, prose, both short story and novels. There are two-day weekend classes

as well as five-day week-long classes. Housing available in local hotels or B&B's. For a catalog showing the complete range of workshops call Iowa Summer Writing Festival 319-335-4160, email iswfestival@iowa.edu or visit webpage: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~iswfest>.

Ghost Ranch — Hidden away in the mountains above Taos, New Mexico, a haven for writers, poets and other artists can rest in the congenial company of other writers while perfecting their craft. Classes include everything in writing from songwriting and bookbinding, from poetry through drama to editing your work. Anita Skeen, former professor at Wichita State and writer of several books of poetry, spends time teaching her specialty every summer. No editor or publisher contacts, but learning in such an atmosphere cannot be beat. Contact at their website: <http://www.ghostranch.org>.

Lastly, for lower cost but the benefits of major contacts through all the writing media, don't forget the *Wichita Eagle's* hosting of their **Wirter's Conference** scheduled in April for Wichita. Registration cost is said to be \$75 for the two-day conference set to be announced soon in the *Eagle*. Do not make the mistake of thinking attendance will only benefit journalists. Those who went last year, can tell you exactly how wrong you are in such an assumption. Specifics in next month's KWA newsletter and an upcoming *Wichita Eagle*.

Organizational Ideas

(Cont'd from pg. 3)

The first item inside the notebook is a sheet protector holding a basic plotting guideline created in Excel that I can modify easily. The guideline is set up for three stages of a work: beginning, middle, and ending. It is further divided into the appropriate number of chapters that work best in each of those phases. Each chapter division is set up to remind me of settings, what characters will be involved, how the goals are changing, how the internal and external conflicts are changing, what main action will occur, the basic genre element involved (for romances, how the relationship is evolving), and a hook to end the chapter.

I mentioned that my flash drive files contain photos, etc. In addition, each project notebook contains (in sheet protectors) character pictures (from magazines, calendars, or wherever), clothing ideas (from magazines, catalogs, Internet, etc.), a map or sketches (of the geographic area, of property details like building locations on a ranch, of city

details like where certain businesses or buildings are located), pictures of the character's homes (with room layouts, room design ideas, specific type furnishings), and whatever other information may be necessary for the story.

While not necessarily an organizational element, I use dual monitors at the office, and they're wonderful. I'm trying to figure out how to add a second monitor at home next. Two monitors allows me to work on my manuscript on one monitor and have either my plotting outline up on the other monitor or some kind of story detail. Currently I'm working on two stories that take place in Maui, where I recently visited. I have a photo of the resort in which I stayed (which is loosely being used in one of the stories) as a background on the monitors. When my memory gets fuzzy about a detail, I look at the background and I'm right there all over again.

I hope some of my musings about my methods for organizing writing projects will be help to you as well.

KWA: 2006 Events

The monthly meetings, except for October, November and December 2006 will be at Rockwell Library.

The new monthly meeting schedule will be:
 12:30-1:30 p.m. Pre-meeting mini-workshop
 1:30-2:00 p.m. Social time
 2:00-3:30 p.m. Main meeting with a program
 3:30-5:00 p.m. Critique session

March 18 Pre-meeting mini-workshop on *The Mysteries of MS Word* by Gordon Kessler. Main program time will be for member readings. Critique session to follow.

April 15 No mini-workshop. Main program on Science Fiction/Horror Writing. Critique session to follow.

May 20 Pre-meeting mini-workshop on *Style* by Hazel Hart. Main program on Writing for Young Adults by Mike Klaassen. Critique session to follow.

June 17 Undetermined as yet.

July 15 Undetermined as yet, but will probably be focused on writing poetry.

August 19 Undetermined as yet.

September 16 Undetermined as yet.

October 20-22 Scene of the Crime conference. Watch for details as the event planning progresses.

November 18 Undetermined as yet.

December 9 KWA Writing Competition Awards Banquet.

KWA Critique Groups

As you can see on KWA's Calendar, there are already several groups for writers who get together for critiquing. Beginning this year, we have added time after the main monthly meeting for a critique session for anyone interested.

Hazel Hart passed out a Critique Group Survey at the November meeting to find out what interest for additional critique groups those present at the meeting might have. With the feedback she received, she put together an online critique group.

Additionally, Brian Johnson has formed a horror/thriller critique group looking for new members. He can be contacted by email at wbj67067@cox.net by anyone interested in joining this group.

The following is an abbreviation of the Critique Group Survey. Read through the items, and if you are interested in finding out more about a group, email hihart@prodigy.net. Be specific in your email message about what of the listed items below in which you are interested.

What type of group would you be interested in joining?

- Face-to-face meeting twice a month
- Face-to-face meeting once a month
- Online critique twice a month
- Online critique once a month
- Combination of online critiques every two weeks and one face-to-face meeting each month after the KWA monthly meeting

Would you prefer a genre specific group or a group that will consider various types of writing?

- Genre specific group
- Mixed genre group

If not enough writers in your particular genre are interested in forming a critique group, would you be receptive to a mixed-genre critique group?

Your genre?

Would you be willing to lead some kind of critique group?

Characters rely less on nonverbal communication than we do in everyday life, so load your dialogue with the diction of emotion.

Avoid thumbnail sketches of characters. Let readers come to know your characters gradually, just as in real life.

There are three elements to every plot: Get your character up a tree. Put tigers under the tree. Get your character out of the tree.

Source: Martin, Paul Raymond. *Craft & Technique*. Cincinnati, Ohio, 2005.

President's Letter

By Conrad Jestmore

What a good celebration and beginning for my tenure as the president of KWA. Thank you one and all for your vote of confidence, and I will do my best to lead you through the next year. Also, a heart-felt thank you to outgoing board members Richard Walkup for his years of devotion as our treasurer, and to Suzann Robinson for her two-year stint as our leader. I will try to live up to the standards she has set.

January's meeting provided outstanding opportunities for those present, and I hope you were one who was in attendance. At the pre-meeting, Hazel Hart inspired us all to set goals for this year, and as those of you who were there know, I have an extra incentive to reach my goal, thanks to an offer from a fellow member.

At the general meeting, Phyllis Rowland not only provided inspiration, but also nuts-and-bolts practical ideas on how to approach memoir writing. In addition, her collection of sample books gave us all fantastic examples of what we might strive for, and I can personally vouch for the effectiveness of the game Lifestories and how it is an inspiration to go sit down and actually write. Who was it (Hemingway?) that said, "Apply the seat of your pants to the seat of your chair, and write." Thank you Phyllis, for a fine presentation.

And finally, thank you Gordon Kessler, for leading a critique group that we all learned a great deal from.

I invite each of you to our next meeting, a presentation focusing on grammar, something we can all use. Hey, I'm an English teacher, and I expect to come away with useful information. Ain't that sumptin'?

See you on February 18th at Rockwell Library.

New Books to Consider

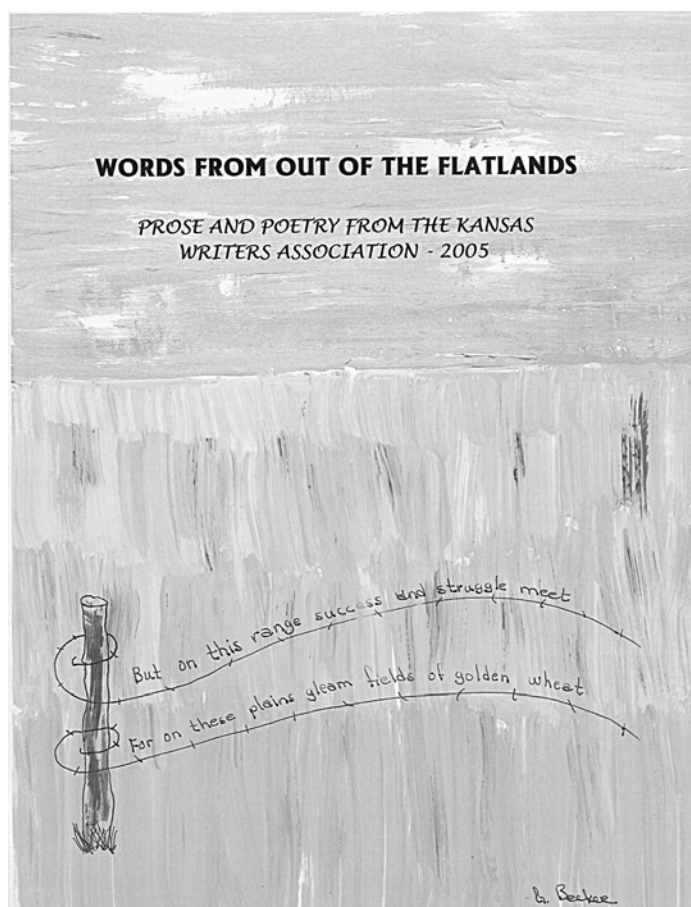
The Write-Brain Workbook by Bonnie Neubauer, copyright 2006. 366 exercises for playing with words and styles. ISBN 1-58297-355-5

The Writer's Little Helper by James V. Smith, Jr., copyright 2006. Short checklists, Q&As and tools for the writer. ISBN 13: 978-1-58297-422-4

Member News

Bill DeArmond, Professor of Mass Comm and Film at Southwestern College in Winfield, has had his poem "The Prisoner" selected for inclusion in Volume IV of the Meridian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry to be released in April of this year.

Starla Criser has sold her e-book novella *Valentine's Cowboy* to her editor.



Grace Becker, winner of poetry and short story awards, won KWA's contest for the cover design for our 2006 Anthology. Becker, from Newton, Kansas, presented a water color and pen cover of golden Kansas wheat rising to meet a blue summer sky.

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Newsletter

Please send all newsletter submissions of articles, member news, or encouraging quotes by the 25th of each month prior to publication to starlakaye@earthlink.net or by snail mail to Starla Criser, 9415 E. Harry, Ste. 603, Wichita, KS 67207. All email attachments should have "KWA" in the subject line and can be submitted in Word, WordPerfect, Works, or rtf format.

Join KWA For Only \$25.00

This will give you a one-year membership, our monthly newsletter, and a membership card which entitles you to discounts to our various programs and seminars. Send your check to KWA, P.O. Box 2236, Wichita, KS 67201

Visit our Web Site at: www.kwawriters.org

Our Mission Statement

To inform, support, encourage, and promote the writer.

KANSAS WRITERS ASSOCIATION

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ADDRESS CORRECTION
REQUESTED

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