

NightScripts



March 2023

Connie Palmer Dodson, Editor



In This Issue

Write On	2
The Write Touch	3
Welcome Wagon	4
February Speaker	
Followup	4
1st 5 Steps to Character	
Delevopment	5
Great Tips	6
Cover Prompt Winner	7
March Speaker	8
Bulletin Board	9
Submission Guidelines	10
Board Members	11
Meeting Info.	11

Writing Prompt:

Does this scene inspire a story for you?

Write a short story of 1000 words or less and get it to me by March 31st 2023. I'll print my favorite in the April issue.

You can also just use the image to spark a scene or a story.

If you submit it to me don't forget to title your story. Put Writing Prompt in the subject line and submit it to: editor@tulsanightwriters.org

WRITE ON

A Literary Journey

By our President, Merle Davenport



At the February, 2023 meeting, there were 47 in attendance! This is exciting evidence of a growing, thriving club. Many are new to writing, wondering what to do and how to do it. The reality is that writing is as much a journey as it is a skill. Like a

painter, mastering the art of writing means using the skills you have to do the best job possible and then learning that you needed to do something different.

As someone who has never taken a writing class, my journey to publication was filled with false starts and detours. I know I'm not alone. There are a lot of great writers out there who are still learning through trial and error.

My first attempt at writing a book was a story about a young boy and long lost dragons. My first chapter was really bad. It was more like an outline than a story. My readers told me so.

"Sigh." Taking a deep breath, I started adding details and spent more time describing the setting and the action. Dialog began to take on a more prominent role in my story. Much better! Now my readers could actually enjoy the story. So I wrote and wrote. 900 pages later, I finished my first book.

Okay, so I still had a lot to learn. My next book was an historical romance. It was meant to be a tender tear-jerker as the couple's love endured everything until one of them died at the end of the book. What a great book it was!

I went to my first writing conference to pitch my book. How did I know that the rule for romance books is the HEA (happily ever after) ending? Hmph! Then, I went to a seminar and learned that there was a pattern to every story called the "W." Things start out good and something goes wrong (first dip of the W). Then the main characters overcome it (back up from the middle point in

the W). Then everything goes very wrong (the second dip in the W). Eventually, the main characters overcome with some sort of new understanding (the last stroke up the W).

Hmmm ... back to work. My wife and I rewrote that story. I handed it to a beta reader and found out that I used adverbs in almost every dialog tag. "Don't make a sound," he said quietly.

I also used actions as dialog tags. "That sounds great," smiled Jane. I discovered that some readers hate it when you replace "said" with "smiled." One describes the words and the other describes the speaker's actions.

Okay, so I still have more to learn, right? After revising that book, we found a publisher and we thought we had it all figured out.

Once we joined Tulsa NightWriters, we started learning about character development and "show don't tell." I shook my head at all the things I still needed to learn. TNW was where I started hearing words like internal and external conflict. What? I didn't get my degree in writing. What do those phrases mean?

Once again Google became my friend. I looked up "internal conflict" and learned about the personal growth that the main character needs to have. What? I'm a storyteller, not some sort of literary genius. I thought that writing a story was no more complicated than thinking of a good tale and writing it down. Adding all these other elements to my books made the craft of writing a little too complicated.

Grumble, grumble.

Well, our next book tried to include all that I had learned. When it was done, we sent it off to our beta readers. They said it was one of the best books they have ever read. Really? You mean all these things actually make a difference? Who knew?

At last, I have it all figured out. Well, maybe not. I still have a lot to learn.

(Continued on page 8)

THE WRITE TOUCH

Enneagram for Characters

By our Vice President, Kathryn Helstrom



Several months ago, I ran across a reference to developing characters using the enneagram. I had never heard of the enneagram. Myers & Briggs personalities (all 16 of them) were familiar to me based on

leadership training I had received in business and education. Then, I bought a little book, *Enneagram Empowerment: Discover Your Personality Type and Unlock Your Potential*. I opened it up and found a powerful tool for writing.

The enneagram system of defining nine personality types works especially well for building your characters in your writing. It not only outlines the strengths and weaknesses of each type, but it also provides a path for improving (aka the character arc).

This system not only defines your characters, but how they will interact with each other. It illustrates how each identity relates to the other eight dispositions—a perfect way to build antagonistic and sympathetic roles for the people in your story. It pairs both support and stressor personalities with every type. My little book gave examples of how the support and stressor types would cooperate with or work against individual characters.

“Never judge a person by past or present situation, judge a person by the character he has built along the way.” Shiva Negi

I was surprised to find out that the enneagram is nothing new. Its roots date back to the writings of a 4th-century Christian mystic, Evagrius Ponticus. He said there are eight “deadly thoughts” with an overarching “love of self” and there are “remedies” for each. By the 20th century, other philosophers, mystics, and psychiatrists had revisited the nine deadly thoughts and created a highly interactive scheme for personality tests and methods for overcoming weaknesses and capitalizing on strengths.

Basically, there are nine characteristic roles. Each character has a specific “ego fixation” such as vanity, vengeance, or cowardice. They each have a basic fear, desire, vice, and virtue. Within the nine roles there are three dominant patterns: intellectual, emotional, or instinctual. The table for the enneagram system is the dream worksheet for any author’s character development!

You can find your character anywhere on this diagram, whether she has a certain fear or desire, a unique weakness or strength, or a particular kind of driving intellect. Then, using the enneagram, you can determine how far along on the path of destruction or redemption she is at the beginning of the story. Then you can work out where you want her character arc to go, based on the plot points of your story.

I highly recommend you study up on the enneagram system and see if it will help you develop the personalities in your story.

Happy Writing!



Welcome Wagon

Rebekah Warren, Inola
Sydney Bandy, Broken Arrow
Amy Lillard, Tulsa
Bonny Hardgrove, Tulsa

Give a big Howdy to our new members.



February Meeting Followup

By Connie Dodson



In February our speaker was Susan Badaracco speaking on *Are You Serious About Writing a Series?* We had a packed meeting and received a lot of good information.

Susan pointed out that series in some genres have become an expectation. She said, “readers of these genres commit to a series and they expect them with a certain amount of speed.” This means that the author should be able to write faster to get the series installments out.

“When considering a series,” she said, “you should ask yourself these questions.”

Why do you want to do a series?

Can you plot stretch, and are there opportunities for subplot?

How many books will you have in the series, most commonly 3.

What will be the themes? Determine the overarching theme for a serial and the individual books.

What characters will be present in each book and how are they connected? Readers get emotionally invested in characters.

Susan also pointed out the importance of having a series bible. She says the “bible is regarded as authoritative in a particular sphere.” It is important to keep information on character descriptions, and the many other details that will be present in the other books of the series. This allows you to be consistent without repeating verbatim. Readers will catch inconsistencies and be disappointed.

On a final note, if you start a series be committed to it because your readers will be.

THE FIRST 5 STEPS TO CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

By Bill Wetterman



Consider some of literature's most memorable characters—Scarlett O'Hara, Lizabeth Salander, Ebenezer Scrooge, Huckleberry Finn, Katniss Everdeen, Harry Potter. Can you name the novels they come from and what they have in common?

- Larger than life, they are also universally human
- They see courage not as a lack of fear but rather the ability to act in the face of fear
- They learn from failure and rise to great moral victories

Compelling characters like these make the difference between a memorable novel and a forgettable one.

So, what are the keys to making a character unforgettable?

How to Develop Your Main Character

1. Introduce the protagonist and antagonist early, by name

The biggest mistake new writers make is introducing their main character too late. As a rule, the protagonist or antagonist should appear on stage at the beginning, and the reader should be able to associate his name with how they see him. Both should appear in the first ten pages to hold the reader's interest.

Naming your character can be almost as stressful as naming a newborn. You want something exciting and memorable, but not quirky or outrageous. Leave Blaze Starr and Holly Golightly to the melodramas. (Actually, I wish I had thought of Holly Golightly; Audrey Hepburn plays her in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.)

Allegories call for telling names like Prudence and Truth and Pride, but modern ones should be subtle. I wrote my first detective story with a character named Brasher, and his nickname is Pop. He is both fatherly and impetuous.

For traditional novels, common names are forgettable. Harry Bosch is forgettable on the surface but connected to the plot where his actual name is Hieronymus Bosch after the painter, and it becomes unforgettable. Ethnicity is important. You should not have a Frenchman named Hans Von Stubben.

2. Give your readers a look at them

You want a clear picture of your character in your mind's eye, but do not make the mistake of forcing your reader to see him exactly the way you do. Sure, height, hair and eye color, and physicality (athletic or not) are helpful. (William Bernhardt says Ben Kinkaid is never described)

I teach character descriptions the same as descriptions of the sky, the weather, and settings. It is essential that your images are not lengthy paragraphs but layered in dialogue and shown in action scenes. (Jonathon spotted a jet stream trail in an otherwise cloudless sky. Versus: It was a clear day.) (Reacher towered above Malloy. And gripping his opponent's neck with both hands headbutted his prey, breaking the heavier man's nose.)

Hint at just enough to trigger the muse in the reader's mind, so he forms his own mental image.

Thousands of readers might have thousands of slightly varied images of the character, which is all right, provided you have given them enough information to know whether your hero is big or small, attractive or not, and athletic or not.

Interview your main characters as if they were sitting right in front of you. The more you know about them, the better you will tell their story. How old is he? What is his nationality? Does he have scars? Piercings? Tattoos? Physical imperfections? Is his voice gravelly? Does he have an accent? Give him a tag in the form of a unique gesture or mannerism that helps set him apart.

You will not come close to using all the information you know about him, but the more you know, the more plot ideas will come to you.

(Continued on next page)

3. Give the main characters a backstory

The backstory is everything that has happened before Chapter 1. Dig deep. What has shaped your characters into who they are today? When, where, and to whom was he born. Brothers and sisters, their names and ages. Where did he attend high school, college, or graduate school? What are his political affiliations, occupation, income, goals, skills, and talents? How is his spiritual life, and who is his best friend? Is the character is single, dating, or married, and what is his Worldview, etc?

4. Make sure your protagonist is human, vulnerable, and flawed.

Even superheroes have flaws and weaknesses. For Superman, there is Kryptonite. For swash-bucklers like Indiana Jones, there are ssssnakes.

Lead characters without human qualities are impossible to bond with. Nevertheless, make sure their flaws aren't deal-breakers. They should be forgivable, understandable, identifiable. You want characters with whom your reader can relate, and to do that, they need to be vulnerable.

Create events that subtly exhibit their strength of character and spirit. For example, does your protagonist respect a waitress and recognize her by name? Would he treat a cashier the same way he treats his broker?

These are called pet-the-dog moments, where an otherwise bigger-than-life personality does something out of character—something honorable that might be considered beneath him.

Readers remember such touching episodes, and they make vital moments more dramatic.

It was George Bailey's sacrificing his travel-the-world dreams to take over the lowly savings and loan that made his standing up to the villainous Mr. Potter so heroic in the classic movie. "It's a Wonderful Life."

You want to turn your Jimmy Stewart into a George Bailey.

Make him real. Give him a pet-the-dog moment.

5. But also give your central character classic, heroic qualities

While working to make your leading character natural and human, be sure to insert the potential to be courageous.

Do not make the mistake of making a hero perfect. What reader can identify with perfect? Potentially heroic, yes. Honorable, sure. With a bent toward doing the right thing, yes! But perfect, no.

Your hero must overcome his failures to rise to the occasion and win against all odds. Give your lead character human strengths and weaknesses your reader can identify with. In the end, after he has learned all the lessons he needs to from his failures to get out of the terrible trouble you plunged him into, he should rise to the occasion and score a great moral victory.

A well-developed character should be extraordinary but relatable. Never allow your protagonist to be the victim. It is certainly okay to let him face obstacles and challenges but never portray him as a whiner or a coward.

Give your character qualities that captivate and compel the reader to continue.

Great Tips

By Connie Dodson

On of our newest members, Amy Lillard, offered a great idea for a meeting topic. However, I think it makes a great opportunity to add value to the newsletter. The premise is this, share tips, so I'm starting a newsletter section called **Great Tips**. For instance she mentioned D2D at the February meeting and realized that many of our members didn't know what it was. So maybe she can be the first contributor to this new section.

Contributions to this sections can be any tips or tricks that you have found or personally use to make writing life easier. It can also include information on workshops, contests, calls for submissions, software reviews, social media tips, favorite craft books & why you liked it, etc.

I look forward to seeing what you have to share, and thank you Amy for the great suggestion.

COVER PROMPT WINNER

MEMORIES RELIVED

BY JAMES R SYBRANT

The lantern that once kept away the shadowy monsters from my bedroom, was now smashed and laying on the window sill. It was the first time I'd been to the cabin since I was a boy, and memories crept in like those monsters when the light was turned out. Most of those memories were of happy times, but some were dark.

Those happy memories were spending the summer with my cousins. We did the usual activities: swimming, hiking, volleyball, canoeing. Even catching frogs, and grasshoppers, and pitting them against each other. Most of the time nothing really happened. The grasshopper would jump on the frog's head or back, and the frog would just sit there as if this sort of thing happened all the time. But once in a while you would catch a frog that was hungry enough not to care if humans were watching, and eat the grasshopper right in front of us. It was so cool to watch. Its tongue springing out, smacking the grasshopper, and pull it into its mouth. Sometimes the frog would be a little small and would have a hard time fitting the grasshopper in its mouth. That was great, you got to watch the fight. The grasshopper kicking the frog in the eye or hooking its feet in the frog's nose. You never knew which way it was going to go. Sometimes the frog would decided it wasn't worth the fight, and spit it out, and sometimes it would triumph.

However, the dark memories were from what came at night. Often my parents would send me to bed while they sat around the fire pit with my aunt and uncle. It wasn't just shadows that haunted my nights, it was the noises all around me.

Under the cabin was a basement with a flag stone floor and rock walls. There were shelves filled with old canning jars, the seals long gone, their contents desiccated and unrecognizable. The only thing down there to catch my attention was a stuffed pheasant, but that fascination wasn't enough to get me to go back down there. It was cold, even in the height of summer, and creepy. The stairs were old and creaked with every step.

The door to the basement was close to my room, and every night I heard footsteps coming up to

the door. Then the nob would rattle and the shadows would darken. I hated nights in that place, but my parent wouldn't let me stay with my cousins, they said it was just my imagination. They never heard anything, and said I was just being childish. I've often heard that there are thing children are sensitive to, but as an adult that ability is lost.

Within a year of our last trip, my father passed away, and we never returned to the cabin. Then when my mother passed away the cabin was mine. I knew I had to return, in the daylight, to decide if I wanted to keep the place or sell it. Remembering those dark nights, and being there, had made me think I should sell. But I needed to see the basement to push my decision one way or the other. I also wanted to know if, as an adult, I could sense anything.

“I opened the door to that dark realm and took a deep breath, gathering courage.”

I opened the door to that dark realm and took a deep breath, gathering courage. Before I took a step, a stench pounded my nose. It wasn't a smell of a damp and musty basement, it was a foul odor of rot and decay. I stepped back, shinning my flashlight down into the darkness, and found a pair of red eyes staring at me. I froze from fear, until it moved, it was just a rat.

I laughed at myself and stepped forward onto the landing, thinking myself foolish. But then I heard it, footfalls coming up to met me. It was slow at first, then increased in speed. As I turned to run, a wind slammed into my back, shoving me into the living room. I stumbled, but kept my footing, and ran outside. It wasn't until I reached the car that I stopped and looked back. Two glowing green orbs were staring at me from the open doorway. I knew then, I would never return to that place. Selling was an option, but that would leave that darkness for others to deal with. I wasn't sure that was something I could do. (continued on following page)

(Memories Relived, continued)

I could let the realtor know my experiences, so he could warn potential buyers, but they would likely think it was a sells pitch. And there were people who would love the idea of living in such a place. So I decided, if someone was willing to buy the place, knowing what I'd experienced, that was up to them. Plus, I could use the money to buy a cabin elsewhere. One that was full of light, and without a basement. I'd always wanted to know the history of the place, but never learned anything, now I don't want to know. It will soon be in my past, and that's where it'll stay.

**A Literary Journey
(continued from pg 1)**

In fact, when I talk to veteran writers who have written and sold more books than I can imagine, they all say the same thing ... they're still learning.

I know my journey is not the same as anyone else's, but one thing is clear. The craft of writing is an art that will challenge every writer with every book. That's why it's so important to keep writing. The next book should be better than the last one because we continue to grow as writers. I may never write a masterpiece. All I know is that my next book will be better than my last one.

March Guest Speaker

By Kathryn Helstrom



Join us at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, March 21 at the OSU Tulsa Convention Center Room 153 for an evening learning how to create characters for our stories.

Cassidy McCants received her B.A. in creative writing from University of Arkansas and her M.F.A. in fiction writing at Vermont College of Fine Arts. She edits for Nimrod Journal and is creator/editor of Apple in the Dark. Her prose has appeared in or is forthcoming from The Lascoux Review, Liars' League NYC, Gravel, The Idle Class, filling Station, Witch Craft Magazine, Grist, Clackamas Literary Review and other publications. She won the 2020 Innovative Short Fiction Contest from The Conium Review, and her stories have received honorable mentions from Glimmer Train Press. She was a 2020 Artist INC fellow.

Portraiture and Prose

We'll discuss how to make short stories like portraits—what do our small stories tell about our characters? What kind of lens do we want to use in portraying them; what's essential to the image, and what can we go without?

BULLETIN BOARD



[Available Here on Amazon
https://a.co/d/7De1wBK](https://a.co/d/7De1wBK)

Brag

Linda Trout was featured on the front page of the Claremore Progress newspaper on Wednesday, February 15th. The article showcased her writing.

Her latest release, Shattered Promises, competed in the weekly cover contest in InD'tale Magazine and Won. The book was also listed in the magazine's YouTube Elite Review video for the month of February.

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NightScripts Submission Guidelines and Wants

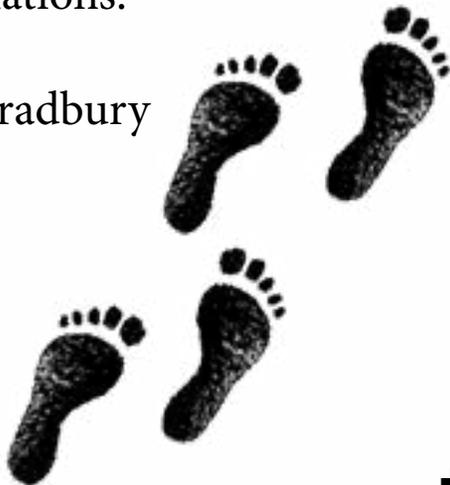
From Members: Currently accepting ads (for books and services), articles, short stories (100 - 200 words), poetry, and event information.

Submit To: editor@tulsanightwriters.org
 Deadline: 5th of the Month
 Specifications: Please format your text as follows:
 Times New Roman, 12 pt
 Single Spaced
 Attach as a doc or pages
 Attach graphics and / or photographs

From Non-Members: Paid Ad Space Available,
 contact editor@tulsanightwriters.org

“Plot is no more than foot-prints left in the snow after your characters have run by on their way to incredible destinations.”

Ray Bradbury



Word Search

E	M	C	G	T	F	K	O	S	Y
T	N	C	R	I	T	I	Q	U	E
J	A	I	Q	D	G	N	F	B	R
P	T	M	L	E	F	Y	V	M	I
L	W	S	R	T	Y	L	P	I	Q
O	N	E	E	O	U	W	L	S	U
T	D	M	I	T	F	O	A	S	E
W	Z	R	I	V	N	I	N	I	R
D	R	A	F	T	E	O	P	O	Y
E	T	I	R	W	E	R	C	N	Y

CONTEST
 CRITIQUE
 DRAFT
 EDIT
 FORMAT
 OUTLINE

PLAN
 PLOT
 QUERY
 REVIEW
 REWRITE
 SUBMISSION



[Member Group](#)

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2023 TNW Board & Meeting Information

Merle Davenport
President
President@tulsanightwriters.org



Tulsa NightWriters will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 21, 2023, location information below.

Kathryn Helstrom
Vice President
VicePresident@tulsanightwriters.org



March Speaker
Cassidy McCants
on
Portraiture & Prose
See page 8 for additional information about this months topic & speaker.

Bill Wetterman
Treasurer
treasurer@tulsanightwriters.org



Directions

Take the I-244 to downtown Tulsa, and exit on Detroit. If you are coming from the west, the exit for the OSU campus is on the LEFT.

From Detroit Ave., turn right onto JH Franklin Road. You will see the Auditorium and Conference Center (North Hall) on the left. You can park in Lot E (first parking lot on left), or across the street in Lot D. We meet in Room 153. Look for signs posted at both entrances.

Parking is free and open to the public. It is a very short walk, and handicapped accessible. Campus security patrols the parking lots regularly.

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