

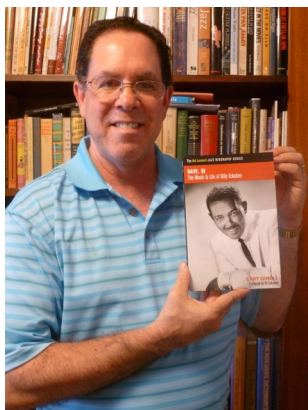


The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club

Cary Ginell Knows How to Make a Biography Come to Life



The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is pleased to welcome musical scholar and author Cary Ginell on Saturday, November 6 at 1:00 p.m. via Zoom with a lecture titled “Biographical Writing: From Proposal to Publication.”

Topics covered will include:

- ◆ How to select a topic
- ◆ Determining commercial viability
- ◆ Submitting a proposal to publishers
- ◆ Getting paid: expectations and realities
- ◆ Organizing your research
- ◆ Resources: personal and research
- ◆ How to handle controversial issues
- ◆ How to handle family members of your subject
- ◆ Working with a living subject
- ◆ Using existing research
- ◆ Conducting live interviews
- ◆ Developing strategies for publicizing your work

Cary Ginell is a music historian, writer, and lecturer who has taught courses on American music as well as presented lectures as a public speaker for 20 years. The author of 12 books (including five biographies), Ginell is a six-time winner of the ARSC (Association for Recorded Sound Collections) Award for Excellence as well as serving past president of the organization. His 2003 biography of jazz vibraphonist Terry Gibbs won the ASCAP/Deems Taylor Award for Music Journalism.

In his lecture, *Biographical Writing: From Proposal to Publishing*, Ginell goes through a step-by-step primer on what to do after deciding to write a biography.

Comments and questions from the audience regarding the above or other topics will be welcomed.

—Karen Gorback, Ph. D., CWC-SFV President

All CWC-SFV members will receive a Zoom invitation for this presentation. Members of other CWC branches may request a free Zoom invitation by contacting VP/Zoom Host Monte Swan by noon on Friday, November 5 at cwcfvhost@gmail.com Guests may learn about membership or purchase admission for this presentation at www.cwc-sfv.org.

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In 2021, Family and Friends Will Finally Feast Together

As we prepare for the 2021 Thanksgiving holiday, some folks might feel rather awkward to prepare or participate in a festive gathering. After all, all through 2020, we were earnestly urged to shun crowds and social gatherings, like club meetings, football games, restaurants, any type of crowd, and to wash our hands several times a day. Schools were closed. Folks worked from home. Streets and freeways were eerily quiet.

Large Thanksgiving family dinners were officially frowned upon and many folks—mostly senior citizens—stayed home from religious services and their gyms. Needless to say, travel agencies had a very bad holiday season in 2020.

Last Thanksgiving, after my spouse and I had several brief conversations on the phone with our adult children, my husband put on a football game and I began to set the table for our modest feast. Suddenly, our section of Woodland Hills was hit by a power black-out! Televisions, kitchen appliances, vacuums, refrigerators, OVENS — everything that runs on electrical power, mysteriously switched off! Oh, the angst! Imagine hundreds of ovens, that were supposed to cook meat, potatoes and pumpkin pies, all conking out at the traditional cooking time!

Shock and dismay emanated from every household. We had all anticipated a much needed truce in the COVID war to enjoy our hallowed Turkey Day!

As dusk settled, my spouse and I carefully placed lit candles in dark rooms and found several flashlights to help us maneuver in the gloom. Then we waited ... and waited in the dark... until the power was magically restored two hours later. "Hurray," we cried. Dinners would be served! We blew out the candles and turned on the oven. Dinner was late but we got it done!

A year later, in 2021, many thousands of folks are vaccinated and familiar patterns of life are returning. This fall Americans will be able to host festive tables of Thanksgiving guests and masks will not be required.

We can shake hands, embrace and converse without masks to muffle the good cheer. Slowly but surely, our communities are finding peace of mind.

This year before we feast, let's toast all the folks who labored to care for COVID victims, the scientists who created life-saving vaccines and the workers who quickly shipped the doses to every corner of our country. And let's hope, this fall holiday, that the lights stay on.

—Kathy Highcove, *The ValleyScribe* editor



Share a Holiday Memory In The December *Valley Scribe*



Do you have a favorite winter holiday story? Or a favorite sweet or savory holiday recipe? Maybe you'd like to share a poem or song that fits the holiday theme ... or perhaps, a nostalgic holiday photo?

If so, please send your submission for the December issue of *The Valley Scribe* to my email address: kghighcove@gmail.com Please send your contribution by November 20th



—Kathy Highcove, *The ValleyScribe* Editor

Describe
MYSELF?
Why?



You sit and stare at your computer, wondering how your characters should react to the situation you just threw at them. What are they feeling? What goes on in their minds? How can a writer translate the characters' emotions into words and

actions which their readers will connect to?

Crafting multi-dimensional and round characters is one of the hardest elements a writer must face, but if you implement the great advice given by our latest club meeting presenter, Dr. Seth Wagerman, you'll discover plenty of short cuts to make an informed decision.

"Who are you?" asked Dr. Wagerman as he began his lecture. "Answer not as yourself, but as your character."

What words would you use to describe yourself, and more importantly, why these specific words? What makes your character... well, your character? What makes them behave the way they do? What motivates them and why?

One literary example Dr. Wagerman used: Harry Potter. One would expect a child who grew up parentless, in an abusive home that never extended a warm hug, a good word, a listening ear, or a shoulder to cry on would grow up to be an introvert and reclusive, yet Harry is a positive child who has no troubles making new friends. Dr. Wagerman commented: "And that's where psychology of characters comes into play."

Dr. Wagerman started by clarifying that what makes an individual unique is their "characteristic pattern of thoughts, emotions, attitudes and behaviors along with the psychological mechanisms behind them, hidden or not." Their "personality is thought to be consistent and enduring over time and across situations." Scholars like Freud recorded Psychosexual Stages of Development.

Others, like Erickson, explored the Psychosocial Stages of Development.

Jung came along and introduced "Jungian Character Psychology." He identified twelve patterns or Archetypes in the human psyche. In his talk, Dr. Wagerman listed a few examples of Archetypes:

- ◆ The Hero (e.g., Harry Potter, Luke Skywalker, Bruce Wayne)
- ◆ The Shadow (e.g., Voldemort, Darth Vader, Batman)
- ◆ The Wise Old Man (e.g., Dumbledore, Yoda, Obi Wan Kenobi)
- ◆ The Great Mother (e.g., The Oracle, Galadriel)

Diving deeper into archetypes and using "Star Wars" as an example, Dr. Wagerman provided Eight Archetypal Characters found in a drama: The Protagonist (Luke), The Logic Character (C3PO), The Antagonist (The Empire), The Emotion Character (Chewie), The Guardian/Mentor (Old Ben), The Sidekick (R2D2), The Contagonist (Darth Vader), and The Skeptic (Han Solo).

Once you've identified the characters in your novel, it's time to use psychology to inject them with depth and complexity. For that, you'll need traits. Dr. Wagerman defined a trait of personality as "a description of a psychological difference between people in terms of a dimension that's been invented by psychologists (or colloquially)."

There are two main types of traits: Cardinal (traits that are so big that they take over everything else like Scrooge or Mother Teresa), which are great for supporting or secondary cast, and Central (five to seven main words that describe a character).

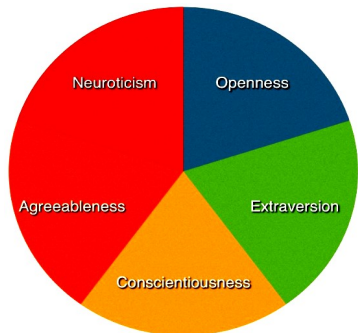
Within those two trait categories, there are The Big Five

(Continued on page 4)

Personality character traits. Your protagonists can be on either end of those definitions to make a more eccentric character, or fall somewhere on the spectrum for a more “normal” one. The five BIG TRAITS Are known as OCEAN (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Big Five personality traits):

- Openness to Experience
- Conscientiousness
- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Neuroticism



You can test how your characters would do on the big 5 scale at outofservice.com. Other personality tests you can use for your protagonists include The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) which can be found on 16 personalities.com and The Enneagram Typology at enneagramtest.net/.

Now that you dipped your characters in the OCEAN it’s time to slide them down the Three Character Sliders: Competence, Agency, and Likeability (writingexcuses.com/tag/three-sliders/). Superman, for example is high on all three sliders, while a character like Dr. House is high on Competence and Agency, but low on Likeability. Moving a character along those lines creates a character’s arc, which in a novel or a script translates into the lesson learned by the hero, or how they changed during the course of their journey (their story).

Putting it all together, Dr. Wagerman summed Behavior as “a function of the person and the situation” (you can read more at [rap.ucr.edu/qsorter/RSQ_3_15 .pdf](http://rap.ucr.edu/qsorter/RSQ_3_15.pdf)). However, he also encouraged writers to look beyond, at the character’s “Behavioral Residue, or the Snail Trail Your Character Leaves Behind Them.” Is their room or car messy or clean? What will you find there if you visited while they were gone? If they displayed pictures, what would they portray?

Imagine your character not just in a situation, but also in their environment. What will happen if a very neat person has to live in a messy place (“The Odd Couple”)? What will happen to a bratty Southern Bell when you pit her against a civil war (“Gone With the Wind”)?

After giving our Gallery all the right tools to build a fully developed character, Dr. Wagerman challenged us to once again answer the question: “Who are you?” but not as yourself, but as your main character.



- ◆ Interested in learning more about Dr. Seth Wagerman? Check out his website: sawagerman.com
- ◆ To learn more about Jung, check out <https://www.simplypsychology.org/psychosexual.html>.
- ◆ Additional background on Erickson is available at <https://www.simplypsychology.org/ErikErikson.html>.
- ◆ For a fuller review of Jung’s archetypes check out https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jungian_archetypes and <https://dramatica.com/theory/book/characters>.
- ◆ For additional information on Cardinal and Central traits, go to https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundlesspsychology/chapter/trait_perspectives_on_personality/.

Anne Hansell's Short Story Will Soon Be Published



Yosei (Japanese Fairy)

I've sold my story, "The Haunted Girl," to an online magazine, *White Enso*, and it'll appear in their fall issue. (Fall Issue, 3) This story is about a Japanese-American girl whose samurai ancestor once saved a fairy clan from a wicked lord—and the fairies swore they'd protect their rescuer's clan forever. The heroine of my story ran afoul of a gang when she was a teenager, and the Yosei rescued her from them, frightening them off for good. Years later, when she became a forensic scientist after graduating from university, she got a job helping the police bust local gang members by simply frightening them into confessing about their crimes.

How did I get my story published? I sent an early draft to the critique group of the *Critters Workshop* website, [Critters Writers Workshop](http://CrittersWritersWorkshop.com). One of the critique group members is a *White Enso* editor. After reading my story, she asked me for several rewrites and then a final copy. Hence, acceptance!

Sidenote—The editor was interested that I am a distant cousin of General Mitsunari Ishida, the officer who lost the Battle of Sekigahara to the Tokugawas, in October, 1600, during The Age of the Shoguns.

Mastering Meetup.com and Other Tips for Club Growth

By Bob Isbill, High Desert CWC State Representative



Brian Gaps, CWC Orange County Branch President

The methods for reaching today's socially conscious and tech-savvy audience may require different steps than what worked in the past. Does your CWC Branch have a MeetUp.com account or have you been considering one? What outreach changes have you made during the pandemic?

Whether you are a branch organizer or a writer, if you want to know more about reaching a wider audience, join us on Zoom for an interview with a marketing professional on Tuesday, November 23, 2021 at 6pm. We have arranged for this expert to share his insider knowledge and guide us toward success in this format designed to increase your branch membership.

Brian Gaps is the CWC branch president and 2021 Jack London recipient for Orange County. He will share techniques used to grow club membership in a year in which most branches lost members. Equally vital to the future success of the club is that the new member's average age is an estimated 25 years younger than the club's traditional membership.

The OC club's Meetup.com group exceeds 900 members and email guest list has climbed toward 200 opt-in subscribers converted from social media platforms. Average Zoom attendance consistently meets or exceeds pre-pandemic live audience sizes.

Brian is currently a senior copywriter working in the advertising and marketing industry. He is a former partner at a boutique digital agency and co-hosted a marketing radio show on KLAA AM830. He taught an 11-year-old how to build a YouTube channel that reached over 50 million views.

Statewide CWC president, Roger Lubeck, observed during the recent Jack London Awards ceremony, "This is the guy other branches should listen to."

The High Desert CWC (HDCWC) will present this event at no charge to CWC members wishing to attend.

Visit www.hdcwc.com for more information and the link to this program. You may also sign on with this link: Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86220784034?pwd=TThCMWhyc0FYbjRid1JmUnZiWit6Zz09>

Welcome to November, a month when the nights draw in, fires are lit and the end-of-the-year celebrations begin. Indeed, on November 25th, many of us are looking forward to celebrating Thanksgiving Day in-person again with our family and friends. Unfortunately, whatever the original intent of the holiday, some people feel that Turkey Day lacks inclusiveness. For that reason and because everyone knows about Thanksgiving anyway, I thought it better to talk about an observance we can all get behind: World Toilet Day. (#worldtoiletday)

This year, World Toilet Day (fun to write but let's go with WTD) will be celebrated on November 19th. Initiated by the United Nations in 2013 to celebrate toilets (yay!), WTD was first established in 2001 by the World Toilet Organization. This special day is marked to raise awareness of the 4.2 billion people living without access to safely managed sanitation and the 3.6 million who do not have access to safe and sanitary toilet facilities. The focus of 2021's WTD is "sustainable sanitation and climate change." The UN goal (actually *Sustainable Sanitation Goal 6*) is "toilets for all" by 2030. Toilets, that is, that treat and sanitize waste, capture greenhouse gases for energy, and result in the safe disposal of waste, which can provide nutrients for agriculture. Toilets can help fight climate change!

Just where do toilets come from? According to an article by Jimmy Stamp, "From Turrets to Toilets: a Partial History of the Throne Room," published on the *Smithsonian Magazine* website, "The flush toilet was invented in 1596 but didn't become widespread until 1851. Before that, the "toilet" was a motley collection of communal outhouses, chamber pots and holes in the ground."

The word "toilet" comes from the French word "toilette" which means cloth or wrapper. But you probably have your own term for it; the loo, the (W.C.) water closet, restroom, the john, the little girls' or little boys' room, the powder room, lavatory. Ladies, Gents, latrine, outhouse, privy, khazi, bog, can, crapper, commode or garderrobe (I'll leave you to do your own research on that one but a clue is in the final episode of *Game of Thrones*).

Some of our older CWC members may have interesting stories about the toilet systems they encountered in their childhood. My grandparents' house had, for a family of eleven, one outside toilet, which was a constant source of terror for me whenever I slept over. The seat was always cold, there were spiders and cobwebs in every corner and, no matter the season, an icy draft reached in through the large gap at the bottom of the door and bit my exposed ankles. When it was time to leave, I had to yank several times on a long, clunky chain that was attached to a reluctant cistern up on the wall. Then it was a quick dash out the door while the toilet made monstrous flushing and gurgling sounds behind me.

However, for the 494 million people who still practice 'open defecation', such a system might be considered a luxury. As the website worldtoiletday.info tells us, "We should all care more about toilets. If you have one, thank it. Life without a toilet is dirty dangerous and undignified." So on this Thanksgiving Day, as well as thanking family and friends, and your higher power if you have one, remember to thank your toilet as well.

Sources: UN.ORG, UNWATER.ORG, WORLDTOILETDAY.INFO SMITHSONIANMAG.COM



This is not a picture of me leaving my grandparents outhouse. It is in fact, Eriam Sheikh, 7 years old, coming out after using the toilet on stilts or floating toilet built over a drain passing by Rafiq Nagar in Mumbai.

PHOTO: UN Water

The California Writers Club Honors Jack London Award Winners



Patricia Avery
2021 CWC-SFV Jack London Award
Winner



On October 17, the CWC Jack London Awards were held at the Holiday Inn and Suites, Oakland Airport. The awards are held annually to honor outstanding volunteer service by an individual at each California Writers Club.

This year, Patricia Avery, our Membership Chair and Critique Group co-coordinator, was the SFV recipient. A long-time CWC member, Pat has also served as the club's Hospitality Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. What incredible service!

The California Writers Club was formed in 1909 and is one of the oldest groups for writers in continuous operation in the nation. Currently, the club has 1700 members in 22 branches! Only many, many hours of volunteering could have made the CWC the success it is today. Your club needs you!



2021 Recipients of the Jack London Award

Rusty LaGrange was honored with the Ina Coolbrith Award for outstanding service to the Central Board when she converted the Bulletin in paper form to a digital pdf file to send out to all members. This resulted in a savings of many thousands of dollars in expense. Additionally, she created a Flip Page digital magazine as an option that made the Bulletin more attractive and readable. Because of her conversion to digital format, we were able to offer advertising in the new format, causing us to have revenue income and turn red ink into black.



Rusty was also awarded the Jack London award for 2021 for her outstanding editing of the High Desert Inkslinger for the past 20 years as well as her involvement in many other aspects of activities in the High Desert Branch.

By Bob Isbill, High Desert CWC
State Representative

SFV Member Elaine Mura Shares the Highlights of Her Nightlife



CWC-SFV member, Elaine Mura, is a psychologist by day and a writer by night – or vice versa. She'll write for anyone who wants to read, and that includes courts, prisons, universities, and magazines like *Splash*, where she is a prolific contributor who reviews live theater, films, YouTubes, zooms, videos, and anything else that comes along to entertain and enlighten.

The following article was first published in Splash Magazine (www.splashmags.com)

Just as the worldwide pandemic was in its earliest infancy, SALVAGE made its debut in Los Angeles and proved to be a serious crowd pleaser lauded by critics across the city. Unbeknownst to the creators, cast, and crew, this well received and award-winning production was also the beginning of the end for live theater. In just three short months, all theaters in the U.S. would turn off their lights, draw their curtains, and shutter their doors for the next 18 months. How fitting that SALVAGE introduces the “new normal” of live theater as the pandemic begins to wane and live theater makes its long-awaited comeback.

With book and screenplay by Tim Alderson and music and lyrics by Mark Heard, Pat Terry, Randy Van Warmer, and Tim Alderson, SALVAGE examines the role of choices we all make in life – and their sometimes unexpected consequences. Director Damian D. Lewis and music director Colin Linden have combined their talents to create a musical which lets lyrics and spoken words combine to add a little something extra to each medium.

Old timer Preacher (David Atkinson) spends most of his time hanging out in his old buddy's bar – mainly polishing off bottles of Wild Turkey and occasionally plucking out a little ditty on his guitar about his bad decisions and lost dreams. Then, into Preacher's empty cocoon, steps Harley (Sam O'Byrne), a chatty young fellow who couldn't resist seeing the inside of the bar where his musical hero, Floyd Whitaker, died. In his hand is his old companion and best friend, the guitar which he scrimped and saved to buy and which must now be pawned to support him and his pregnant girlfriend. And with that guitar go his dreams to become a music composer and professional musician.

As it turns out, three men are trapped in that little saloon – the taciturn, surly, rarely sober Preacher; young and eager Harley, the talented kid ready to surrender his dreams and aspirations for responsibilities and obligations; and the inhospitable, irritated barkeep Johnson (Leonard Earl Howze), a man who may have some secrets of his own. Even if nobody seems to be listening, Harley keeps asking what really

happened to Floyd Whitaker. When Harley's girlfriend enters the bar looking for him, the pretty and very pregnant Destiny (Natalie Llerena) finally breaks the standoff. It quickly becomes apparent – to Preacher's and Johnson's astonishment – that she wants Harley to keep his guitar and his musical hopes alive. But even more surprises are in store. You'll have to see the production to tie all the invisible threads together.

SALVAGE tells its tale through lyrics and music coupled with the spoken word. Happily, David Atkinson, Sam O'Byrne, Natalie Llerena, and Leonard Earl Howze seem ready, willing, and more than able to offer their acting skills – liberally sprinkled with

songs – in this musical vehicle. SALVAGE cannot fail to remain an audience pleaser as it blends melody and meaning into the story of people who are lost – but may find their way through music. Kudos to the creators of the poignant lyrics – worth listening to and spurring the story forward.

Joel Daavid's scenic design is picture perfect – a seedy bar with lots of dark shadows threatening to shut out the light forever and only the light from a garish neon sign spilling into the shadows when the door opens. Matt Richter's lighting and Chris Moscatiello's sound enhance the musical production while Chiara Cola's costumes strike just the right note. SALVAGE is a real treat for audiences who love drama, music, complex people, and dreams. The production also adheres to local, state, and national COVID-19 guidelines, including proof of vaccination and masks indoors to insure safety. SALVAGE is 90 minutes long and performed without an intermission.

SALVAGE runs through November 14, 2021, with performances at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and at 3 p.m. on Sundays. The Hudson Theatre is located at 6539 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90038. Tickets are \$35. For information and reservations, go online.

www.Onstage411.com/Salvage

—Elaine Mura



Scene From the play, Salvage

Are you a novelist? Poet? Blogger?

It doesn't matter which genre you specialize in, you're surely wondered how to become a better writer. I'll tell all of you the same thing: **Writing short stories can improve your writing craft.** For those of you who are wary to spend your time writing short stories, let's be clear: **Writing short stories is not a waste of time.** It doesn't matter if you publish your stories or not because either way, you'll get something great out of it— becoming a better writer!

Here's how short stories can help you become a better writer.

1. Don't Worry About Length

Short stories get you writing.

Before I wrote my first novella in 2013, I was honestly scared of writing fiction because I didn't think I had what it took to **write a full-length novel**. I'd started and stopped so many stories when I was a kid because I was always aiming for something huge. When I stopped worrying about the word count, my first finished novella came in at 30,000 words.

That's still a little long for a short story, but the point is this: **If you're worried about length like I was, good stories are going to go left untold.**

Take it one small step at a time. I wish I would have written more short stories years ago so I could have honed my craft early on. When you're writing, your creative juices are flowing, and you need that to help you become a better writer.

Am I saying short stories are only for beginners or aspiring novelists? Of course not, but it definitely *does* help those who are crippled with fear over length.

2. Focus on Scenes

One thing I've noticed in my writing is that when I write long-form fiction, I get focused on reaching the destination and making sure each scene is going to take me there. But when doing that, it's easy to forget about the scene itself.

Short story writing is a little different.

While you should care about the destination, there are fewer scenes to focus on, allowing you to treat each one with special care.

3. Improve Your Word Choice

The benefit to short stories is that they're more focused. Subplots are minimal, and you typically don't need to work in as much backstory as in long-form fiction.

Does that mean you should ignore dialogue and description in long-form fiction? Of course not.

But short stories help you exercise your talents to improve your word choice skills and help you learn how to paint vivid pictures for your readers.



4. Tell Backstories

A great exercise is to use short stories to tell stories that don't make it into your longer form fiction. Dig into your characters' backstories, or write short stories about secondary characters.

Even if it doesn't make it into your novel or an anthology, it helps strengthen your other books by giving you deeper insight into your characters and bringing their experiences to life.

Plus, you can always use these short stories as reader magnets, in your newsletter or in anthologies meant to build your readership.

5. Work on Your Self-Editing

Some people might argue with me, but I feel that self-editing a short story is easier than self-editing a novel.

In my experience, you're less likely to have major plot holes, and **when you can read your story in one sitting, it gives you a better comprehensive view on your story.**

With fewer scenes and subplots to focus on, you can focus more energy on each scene, your dialogue and word choice. All of this helps you become better at catching inconsistencies, grammar mistakes and other story elements.

Writing short stories can be tough. I find them more difficult than writing novels because there's less room to elaborate on backstory or work in "clues" to the final resolution.

It's not about cramming a novel into a shorter word count.

While you should still follow a story arc, it doesn't mean your scenes are fast-paced. It just means there are fewer scenes that get you to the destination, and that gives you the chance to really hone your skills when it comes to dialogue, description, setting, and pace.

If you're struggling to write short stories, a great tip is to listen to the real-life stories people tell you. These stories almost always follow a story arc with a beginning, middle and end, so it gives you a good place to start to come up with ideas that will suit the "short story" category.

Short stories are not just exercises to help you with long-form fiction. However, they can act that way when you want to improve your writing skills.

About the Author: Alicia Rades

Alicia Rades is a USA Today bestselling fiction author and former freelance writer. She holds a bachelor's degree in communications with a minor in social media marketing. Learn more about her and her books at

aliciaradesauthor.com
Website | [@aliciarades](https://www.instagram.com/aliciarades)



Finding Comfort

(written as Tanka)

Splendid stars above
serene shy moon in the sky
smiles at us two girls
skipping boarding school's dinner
sneaking off to visit mom,

On the narrow road
small farmer houses' lights on
embraced by the dusk
the heavenly solitude
is our only companion,

High cumulus clouds
announcing possible rain
chasing away drought
farmers' prayer, open arms
crops yearning with ample thirst,

Rows of green pine trees
reaching high for sky above
standing tall and proud
under tear drops of light rain
dancing to the wind's music,

Crickets chirp loudly
you and I fearful, best friends
mischievous act for
brief Sabbath dinner at home
I ache, my mom all alone.

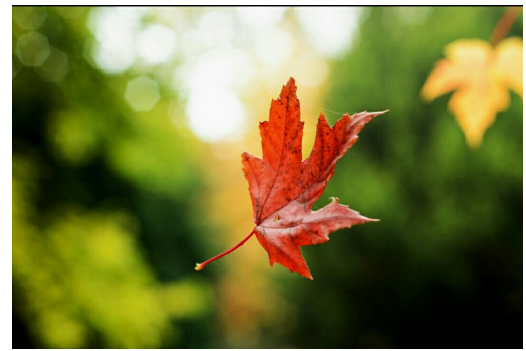
Pirhiya Goldstein



Autumn Performance

A spotlight shimmers
down from mountain peaks
creeps toward clustered
pines
highlights their elegance
all framed by Fall's curtain
trembling yellow orange
crimson
above an ancient fallen tree
resting peacefully
on a lake's rock strewn
shore
water caresses a log
laps at the mud-painted
grass
while a bird
shy actress in the spotlight
perches on the dry side
of a fallen tree

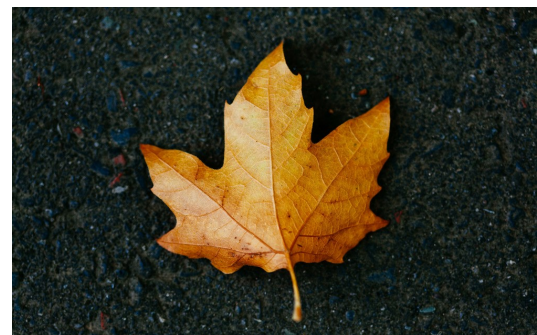
Lillian Rodich



NOVEMBER DANCER

the last leaf floats slowly
down from November's
barren branch
gliding twisting
reluctantly
along a path of ice crystals
a red gold dancer
on a frozen stage

Lillian Rodich



A Prolific Writer With A November Birthday: Margaret Atwood



If you have a birthday this month, Happy Birthday! Well done, you've made it this far. Have you ever researched to see if a well-known writer shares your special day? At the very least it's a great excuse to buy yourself a volume of their work to celebrate.

Writers' birthdays in November include; Robert Louis Stephenson, George Eliot (aka Mary Ann Evans), Frances Hodgson Burnett, C.S. Lewis, Madeleine L'Engle, Louise May Alcott, Uzodina Iweala and Mark Twain. So if your birthday is this month you are in good literary company.

Margaret Atwood, mostly known for *The Handmaid's Tale*, celebrates her birthday on November 18th. Recently, I watched her inspiring Master-

Class series (www.masterclass.com) and was interested to learn that she uses birthdays to help develop her characters. When she is planning a book she selects a birthdate for each character and consults astrology to help with character traits. Atwood is a Scorpio.

Born 1939 in Ottawa, Canada, Margaret Atwood knew she wanted to be a professional writer at the age of sixteen, though she was writing poems and plays when she was six. Atwood is a poet, author, essayist, literary critic, environmental activist, teacher and inventor, as well as being the recipient of many prestigious literary awards.

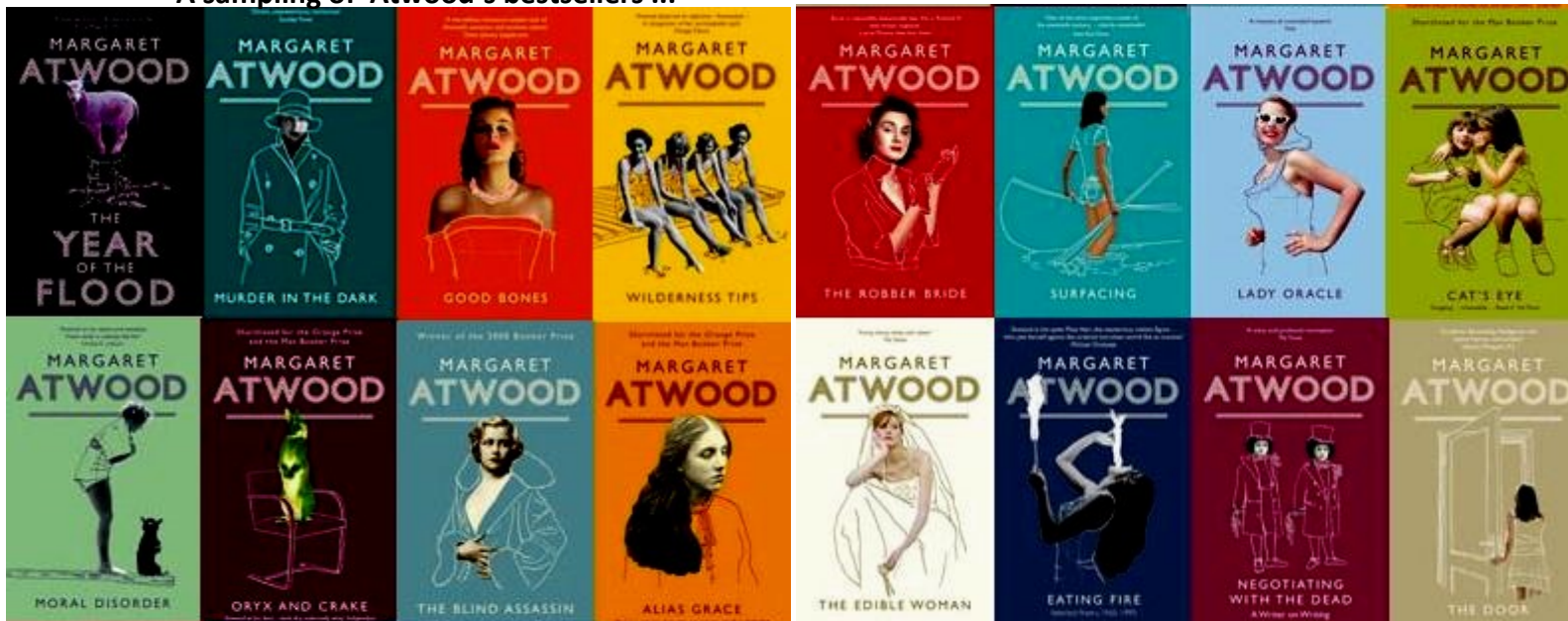
During the MasterClass, Atwood advises us not to wait for the perfect time and place to write, imagining for ourselves a writer's life of wood-paneled studies with hours of uninterrupted time is unrealistic for most of us. She was emphatic about exacting research, mainly as a way to avoid all the correspondence that is addressed to "You Idiot". Atwood also suggests that the real beginning of your book may well be twenty-thirty pages in but you don't know it yet. She also discussed how important it is to grab a reader's attention with the first-five-pages rule.

Atwood has much to teach us on the subject of writing. Her lecturing style is warm and engaging. It was interesting to learn, with examples, how her own work progressed from the spark of an idea to a fully-fledged novel I highly recommend her series. I've often played it on continual loop in the background while I write, her voice is so soothing!

(Sources: Library of America: www.loa.org, wikipedia.org, www.scholastic.com, www.weekendnotes.com, www.librarybooklists.com)

—Heather Bradshaw

A sampling of Atwood's bestsellers ...



A Thanksgiving Blessing

Please join hands. My thoughts for this Thanksgiving Day: We gather together to feast in a peaceful breaking of bread, offering thanks or good thoughts or nurturing mindsets, to the Creator or The Source or The Universal Truth - yes, I know you don't pray, so just meditate already - for the bounty or produce or organic life forms, in memory of the Pilgrim or Anglo-Saxon Survivors or Post-Columbian Invaders who feasted with the Native Americans or The People or The Wronged Ones after surviving a hellish winter ordained by God or Buddha or Gaia or the Bionic Force. Whoever. And so I'm carving this organic tofu turkey and I invite everyone to please pick up his or her recycled metal utensils...or polymer non-rain forest chopsticks. And now, at long last, it's time to dig each other and dig in.

- K. Highcove

Singing praises of foods
in seventeen syllables
forms series of haiku.

Coffee: elixir,
my daily pepper-upper;
even weak is good.

Eating raisin bran,
I ration out the raisins:
one for each spoonful.

Chicken noodle soup:
solace when I'm feeling low,
booster of my mood.

Wholesome apple pie:
symbol of all that is good;
favorite dessert.

I cut my chicken
into wee tiny pieces;
make it last longer.

Smooth flavor on tongue,
kissing my throat going down:
The joy of ice cream.

Brown blobs melt slowly,
titillating my taste buds.
Cheers for chocolate chips!

Erica Stux

In 2009, I was given the Jack London Award and then posed with past SFV winners. —Kathy Highcove

Jack London Award



Recipients (l to r): Cara Alson, Dave Wetterberg (WV), Ken Wilkins(WV), Kathy Highcove(WV), Judy Presnall, Ethel Ann Pemberton, Carol Wood, and Yolanda Finton. (WV - West Valley Branch) (Missing is Lenora Smalley.)

CWC-SFV BRANCH INFORMATON

AT A FUTURE DATE, THE MPTF MEETINGS WILL RESUME AT THIS WOODLAND HILLS LOCATION



AT A FUTURE DATE, THE MPTF MEETINGS WILL RESUME AT THIS WOODLAND HILLS LOCATION



INSIDE THE SABAN CENTER FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS.



Tuesday Poetry Critique Group
Meetings held once a month on the 2nd Tuesday from 10:30 AM until 1 PM. Poetry only.

Tuesday Long Fiction Critique Group
This group meets Via Zoom on Tuesdays, once a month, from 1 to 4 PM. Focus is on long fiction.

Wednesday Daytime Critique Group
Meetings held 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month from 11:30 to 3 PM. Long and short fiction, memoirs and poetry.

Friday Daytime Critique Group
Meetings held on the 2nd and 4th Friday of the month from 1 to 4 PM. All genres except poetry.

Saturday Critique Group
Meetings held 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month from 10 AM to 1 PM. Long and short fiction, memoirs and poetry.



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