



The Valley Scribe



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



Kirsten Casey Puts the Fun Back Into Writing By CWC-SFV Program Chair Heather Bradshaw

In celebration of National Poetry Month, the San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club is pleased to welcome Nevada County Poet Laureate 2021, KIRSTEN CASEY, as our keynote speaker on Saturday, April 6th at 1:00 pm, via Zoom, with a presentation entitled, "Putting the Fun Back into Writing."

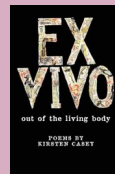
Are you feeling frustrated with your work-in-progress? Kirsten wants to show you how to enjoy writing again, even if you feel undisciplined and blocked. Her approach will entertain and inspire you whether you write poetry, fiction, short stories, or screenplays. To renew that sense of inspiration, Kirsten provides a glimpse into her process, and will provide prompts to renew your curiosity and love for writing. So be ready with pen and paper!

Kirsten is a California Poet in the Schools, creative writing teacher, and was the 2021 poet laureate of Nevada County. In 1992, she earned her MA in creative writing from San Francisco State University where she worked with Frances Mayes, her thesis advisor. Kirsten's poetry collection, *Ex Vivo: Out of the Living Body*, published by Hip Pocket Press in 2012, is inspired by odd stories, remarkable words, and the mysteries of the human body. Her second book of poetry, (with the working title *Instantaneous Obsolescence*), explores historical and literary characters struggling with social media.

In 2019, Kirsten taught high school workshops as part of



Kirsten Casey



the *Academy of American Poets Laureate* fellowship that was granted to Molly Fisk to facilitate the creation of the poetry anthology, *California Fire & Water*. The anthology, which was a response to California's climate crisis, includes one of Kirsten's poems. She was also a co-editor of the book.

Currently, Kirsten is an associate editor of the book *Small, Bright Things*, a collection of 100-word stories by teens, collaborating with author and editor, Kim Culbertson.

Kirsten has lived in Nevada City for almost 30 years with her husband, and has three children in their twenties, who patiently assist her with technology. Visit <https://kirstencasey.com/> for more info on Kirsten Casy, our terrific presenter.

While Kirsten will be joining us via Zoom on the big screen at the MPTF, we encourage you to attend in-person to meet and talk about your work with other members over snacks and drinks. Looking forward to seeing you there!

All members of the CWC-SFV will receive a Zoom invitation to this presentation. Members of other CWC branches should contact Zoom host, Anat Wenick, by noon on April 5th at SFV.CWC@gmail.com for an invitation to register. Guests may purchase admission at www.cwc-sfv.org by noon on April 5th. After purchasing admission, guests will receive a Zoom invitation. We regret we cannot accommodate late requests.

CWC-SFV HONORS
NATIONAL POETRY
MONTH

CWC-SFV MEMBERS
SHARE THEIR POEMS
REPORTS AND PLANS

CONTENTS



REVIEW OF OUR MARCH
PRESENTATION: THE
HERO'S JOURNEY

CWC-SFV CLUB
INFORMATION AND
SOCIAL MEDIA SITES



Karen's Corner



National Poetry Month

By CWCSV President Karen Gorback Ph.D.

Gentle reader: Welcome to National Poetry Month. Rather than wax on about my love of poetry and my many attempts to rearrange 26 letters into verse, I'd like to share with you one of my favorite poems by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Please enjoy.

What is Success?

To laugh often and much;

To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;

To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;

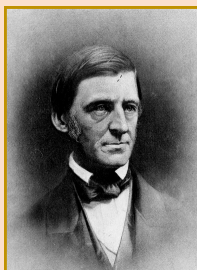
To appreciate beauty;

To find the best in others;

To leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition;

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived;

This is to have succeeded.



-Ralph Waldo Emerson

1803 - 1882

THE FIRST GENRE: THE HERO'S JOURNEY

By CWC-SFV Vice President/Secretary Elaine L. Mura,

Noted author Christopher Vogler, a titan in the movie industry renowned for his description and implementation of story structure, was our club's featured March speaker. His lecture titled, "The Hero's Journey," was based on Joseph Campbell's writings. Vogler indicated that the hero's journey could be seen in writing and stories, but also in life.

Born in the outskirts of St. Louis, Missouri, Vogler was raised in a farmhouse and subsequently became an Air Force officer who made documentaries for the aerospace industry. After attending film school at the University of Southern California, he became intrigued by the first "Star Wars" film, which inspired him to question what was causing bodily sensations which only occurred in good films – and in one's own life. Vogler then began to develop the stages of a hero's journey in films and other structures in many forms.

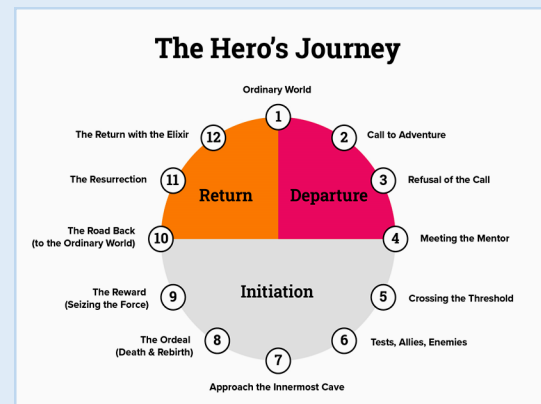
Finally, Vogler described 12 universal steps in the hero's life and in the writer's life (which appeared to mirror each other).

Basic principles grew from many sources. For example, the magician's credo: "Never do magic the same way twice." He emphasized that one must always improvise and find different ways to do the same thing. From this grew his concept of a two-part brain, one creative and one analytic. He suggested what the story needed to become intriguing and capture the audience. He hypothesized that the story should be about "me," a metaphor for each of us. In a world of multiple sensations, he sought to focus the mind in a "wave-like structure" which would stimulate the audience.

Although Campbell spoke of 17 steps, Vogler boiled the steps into their essentials and came up with 12 steps. He felt that these steps were like seasons of the year, points which made specific when the story begins and ends. By doing this, he helped the audience to orient and focus. He indicated that everything in the story takes place in two worlds, the ordinary world and the special world, with the journey traveling to another place created by disturbances in the ordinary world.

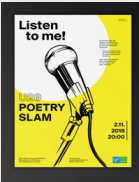
Vogler breaks down his 12 steps into acts (Act I, Act II A, Act II B, and Act III) encompassing the hero's descent, initiation, and return given new life. The hero must rebound and find a way back in Act III. To summarize Vogler's 12 steps:

- ◆ The ordinary world, often humble, bucolic
- ◆ A call to adventure – something occurs which triggers the adventure
- ◆ Refusal of the call – the hero rejects adventure, bringing fear to the audience
- ◆ Meeting the mentor (not mandatory) – The mentor give the hero something he will need for the adventure – perhaps a magic sword or an idea or philosophy to sustain him
- ◆ Crossing the threshold from the ordinary world to the special world
- ◆ The hero must test allies and enemies, maybe create teams, maybe study polar opposition
- ◆ The hero approaches the challenge – a place for character development – at this point, the writer may add comedy, romance, etc.
- ◆ The ordeal – so extreme that the hero is probably going to die – depresses the audience – but the hero prevails (death the rebirth)
- ◆ The reward (may be symbolized by light, mirrors, dawn)
- ◆ The Road back (since the audience may be getting sleepy, it's time to wake them up – typically loud sounds, chases, etc.
- ◆ The Most Important Spot – Hero returns to the ordinary world - Another life or death ordeal that may entail purification or sacrifice; the hero must give up something treasured – maybe a place for sword fights/family fights/confrontations. This is the showdown; the audience must be convinced that the hero may die, leading to possible tragedy.



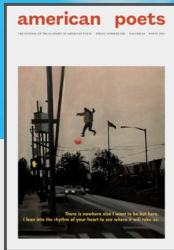
[joseph Campbell hero's journey chart - Search Images \(bing.com\)](#)

Vogler's presentation was fascinating and well received by the CWC audience. During the Q&A, he remarked that AI might be used to develop stories but "...it can't think ahead – project the future...it's limited."



national poetry month

April 2024



[American Poets Magazine](#) | [Academy of American Poets](#)

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Learn The History of National Poetry Month

Launched by the Academy of American Poets in April 1996, National Poetry Month is a special occasion that celebrates poets' integral role in our culture and that poetry matters. Over the years, it has become the largest literary celebration in the world, with tens of millions of readers, students, K-12 teachers, librarians, booksellers, literary events curators, publishers, families, and—of course—poets, marking poetry's important place in our lives.

Thanks in part to our [National Poetry Month partners and sponsors](#), each April the Academy is able to offer activities, initiatives, and resources so that anyone can join the celebration:

Display the [National Poetry Month poster](#)

Learn how to [celebrate at home](#)

Learn how to [celebrate in the classroom](#)

Attend the [Poetry & the Creative Mind virtual gala](#) on April 30, 2024

Find poetry readings and events on our [Poetry Near You calendar](#), and add your own

Encourage students in grades five through twelve to participate in the [Dear Poet Project](#)

Watch poets perform their poems on [Deaf Poetry and Storytelling Performances \(youtube.com\)](#)

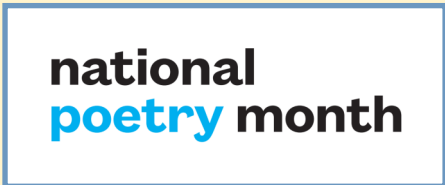
[Sign up for Poem-a-Day](#), curated in April by [Cyrus Cassells](#), and enjoy a free daily poem in your inbox

Follow the thousands of celebrations taking place on social media with the official hashtag [#NationalPoetryMonth](#) and follow the Academy of American Poets on Twitter and Instagram [@POETSorg](#)


Share a #PocketPoem on [Poem in Your Pocket Day](#) on April 18, 2024

[Make a gift](#) to the Academy of American Poets

Add the official National Poetry Month logo to your events:

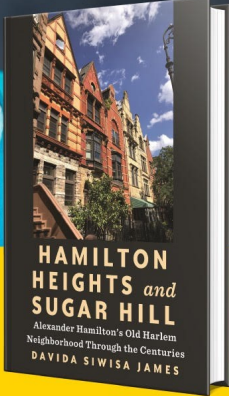


Source for all info on this page: [National Poetry Month](#) | [Academy of American Poets](#)



**MEET AUTHOR
DAVIDA SIWISA JAMES**

Los Angeles Times
FESTIVAL OF BOOKS
APRIL 20-21, 2024 | UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



Many stories. One weekend.

Congrats to CWC member Davida Siwisa James who will be exhibiting at the L.A. Times Festival of Books April 20-21 (Gold Zone, #166), signing copies of her new historical nonfiction book "Hamilton Heights and Sugar Hill" published by Fordham University Press.

All her other titles will also be available for sale. To stay abreast of her other appearances and her June book tour, follow the book's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/hamiltonheightsbook/>

Experience the magic of storytelling.

The Los Angeles Times Festival of Books returns to the University of Southern California, Saturday and Sunday, April 20-21. This **FREE** indoor and outdoor community event includes over 300 exhibitors and more than 500 authors. Come experience storytelling in all its forms and be sure to visit these USC stages and venues:

- USC Stage: offering music, arts and entertainment
- Wallis Annenberg Hall (ANN): featuring panel discussions and conversations
- USC Friends and Neighbors Stage: celebrating community, local talent, art and music. Enjoy family-friendly fun activities including author readings, book giveaways, educational activities and prizes!

Download the L.A. Times FOB app on [Apple](#) or [Android](#). You can also visit latimes.com/festivalofbooks for more information and details.

Follow the festival on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



Source: [Festival of Books 2024 » L.A. Times \(latimes.com\)](https://latimes.com/festivalofbooks)

By MPTF Outreach Chair and CWC-SFV Member Phyllis Butcher

I blame it all on Walmart. I believe they were the first to introduce us to those jolly, apple-cheeked retirees who, as soon as we stepped inside the store, startled us with a flashing smile and a booming, "Good morning! Welcome to Walmart!"

I think they were known as "greeters." It was a novel concept and for the most part not too annoying—except I considered it almost sadistic that anyone other than my dog could be that cheerful at nine o'clock in the morning. But the idea obviously caught on, and a few more retail establishments like Target jumped on the bandwagon.

Then, not leaving well enough alone, somewhere along the line it was decided that whatever it takes, each and every one of us must be made to feel *just swell* from the moment we cross the threshold of their establishment. But when this started including commercial institutions, like my bank, I had to draw the line.

Don't get me wrong, I'm certainly not averse to exchanging a few pleasantries with people even though we may not be acquainted. I do, in fact, often enjoy initiating some amiable repartee myself. I'm talking about simple things like, "Hi, how are you?" "Fine, thanks." Or "May I help you?" "Yes, please." "How's it going?" "Great!" But I find it beyond annoying when I am peppered with banal inquiries specific to the state of my wellbeing—past, present and future—from perfect strangers. Here's one of the worst offenders:

It's Monday. I already put off going to the bank last Friday, so I have to go today. Mondays and Fridays are terrible; you get The Weekend Questions. For example, I get in line behind three others. While waiting I never tire of looking at the impressive wall of eight or ten state-of-the-art teller windows, and except for two, all are devoid of tellers. *What, I wonder, was the thinking behind creating these additional stations? Everyone knows that those windows will remain unoccupied, even when lines grow longer and tempers shorter.* My reverie is suddenly shattered by a rapidly approaching suit with his hand extended and a hearty "Welcome to Citizens USA Bank!" Since I have my gym bag in one hand and I'm reaching into my pocket for my paperwork with the other, the suit picks up on the fact that I can't reciprocate his handshake. He quickly substitutes a practiced smile.

"What brings you to Citizens USA Bank today?" he asks, loud enough for those in front of me to hear. *How am I supposed to respond to his ridiculous question? What brings anyone to a bank? Banking business! Is that too vague?*

But of course, all I say to the suit is: "I need to deposit a check."

Fortunately, another unsuspecting soul comes through the front door and the suit unashamedly abandons me and rushes to greet him. Meanwhile, a teller is beckoning me to come forward. I approach her window,

preparing for my interrogation.

"Good morning!" the young woman says in her jolly Citizens USA Bank teller voice.



"Morning", I mutter. She's at least entitled to a response. I quickly shove my check and deposit slip into the tray under the window, hoping to discourage any further conversation. Doesn't work.

"How's your day going so far?" I cringe. She has now set me off with the **Number One** question on my gripe list. I'd **like** to say:

"Well, it's only been a little over three hours since I was roused out of my warm bed by my dog wailing like a cow overdue for milking. During our walk my plastic poop bag broke and the contents emptied out onto the top of one of my brand new Sketchers. That made me run late, so I decided to take my caffeine with me when I left the house. The car hit a speed bump a little too fast and a geyser of coffee erupted onto my chest, leaving a disgusting wet blotch which you have just noticed and are now staring at. So now you know how my day is going so far."

That's what I'd **like** to say. But here's my response: "Not too bad." However, the worst is yet to come: the Weekend Questions. Today is Monday, so I get this one:

"So, how was your weekend?" she asks, speaking directly to the ugly stain on my shirt. The Friday Question can be even more egregious, such as: "What are your plans for the weekend?" I'm thinking: *What is this? Do I know this person? Have we met before?* It seems that I am obliged to share all this personal information at the whim of a perfect stranger who has evidently chosen to bond with me, despite the bullet proof acrylic barrier that separates us. This is how I'd **love** to respond:

First, I'd bend down to discreetly whisper through the open space at the bottom of the window: "Ohmigosh, it was miserable. I was flat on my back wrapped around a heating pad for two days... you know what I mean," I'd say with a knowing wink-wink.

This would immediately divert her attention from the ugly stain on my blouse to the aging visage of the obviously post-menopausal banking customer on the other side of the Plexiglass. I'd try not to laugh as I watched her struggling to process this information.

But I spare her and instead respond, "My weekend was awesome! Thanks for asking!" I smile, scoop my receipt out of the tray, and make a dash for the door. I actually manage to outrun the suit who is chasing me down with a



piece of Wells Fargo wrapped candy.

Is it just me?

On my way home I decided to stop at the market for a few things, which should prove far less traumatic than my trip to the bank. I have everything in my cart in short order, except for one elusive item, an unfamiliar brand of breadcrumbs I need for a new recipe. It has an exotic name and I'm sure will be one of those ingredients that is used once and then relegated to the back of the cupboard to expire over a period of years. But I've been up and down every aisle in the store and can't find anything that looks like breadcrumbs. You'd think the bread section would be the logical location, but I've checked there twice. Then I spot a young man crouching down in the middle of an aisle restocking a lower shelf. I'm in luck.

"Excuse me," I say approaching with my cart. "Where would I find breadcrumbs?"

He looks up and smiles. "Aisle 13," he answers pleasantly, waving an arm toward the right side of the store. He must think I look like someone who gets lost easily, and undoubtedly is dependent upon leaving a trail of crumbs to navigate her way. So, as an afterthought he adds, "This is Aisle 10. Would you like me to show you?"

I answer politely, "Oh, no, that's fine, I can find it. Thanks very much." I start moving ahead but he jumps up and grabs the front of my cart. "Let me take you there!" he shouts, assuming I am also deaf, "I'll get it for you, it's way up on the top shelf!" Before I can protest, this self-appointed Boy Scout lurches forward and starts



towing me to Aisle 13. At this point I would love to firmly plant my Skechers, bring him to a very abrupt halt, and say this:

"Now, I want you to listen carefully. During the 1984 Olympic summer games in Los Angeles, the seemingly helpless old lady standing before you was a torch bearer in the Olympic Torch Relay. She ran nonstop for one kilometer (just shy of a mile) bearing a torch that was 23 inches high and weighed over 3 pounds, held high perpendicular to the ground the entire distance without changing arms or raising a sweat. That said, do you still think that reaching for a six-ounce container of breadcrumbs on the top shelf at Ralph's is going to be a problem for her?"

But this nice young man, who is undoubtedly aspiring to be chosen employee of the month, deserves something kinder, so I say instead: "I think I'll skip the breadcrumbs, but thank you so much for your help. I'm going to suggest to the manager that you should be up for employee of the month!"

I make a dash for the nearest open check stand, my cart in tow. If the checker dares to ask me, "Did you find everything you were looking for? ... "

Is it just me?

How was **your** day, Hobo?



The CWC-SFV board thanks all our branch members who sent in a response to our recent survey. Your answers and suggestions will help us make more informed decisions on how to serve your needs better in the coming year. Your active support, such as promptly renewing your dues and attending our monthly meetings, is very gratifying to your volunteer board members. Thanks again for your support!

WARM THOUGHTS

By CWC-SFV Member Bob Okowitz, Ph.D.

**My soul begins to quiet
As I walk on the beach.
The early morning air is crisp,
The sun is strong, and I breathe deeply to relax.**

**The warmth of the sun helps
Clear my mind of the worries
Life gives us. Work, the news,
Social obligations. So much to do.**

**Summer is my favorite season.
I love the warm days.
Doing laps at the pool, or going to the beach.
It's my time to relax, to bring back my smile.**

**Watching baseball games every Saturday.
Sunday dinner might be at the park,
Or at Auntie Marie's house, my favorite aunt.
It's always great to be there.**



**My brother told me
I was a dolphin in a prior life
I loved swimming so much.
I feel happiest in the water.**

**Once, I was at Cape Cod.
A wave caught me and it
Tumbled me three times.
It was exciting. I felt free.**

**I didn't tell my parents about it.
They would be agitated,
And keep me out of the water.
No way that could happen.**

We dolphins need to be in the water!

Fatherland Review–Greek Tragedy Circa 2024

By CWC-SFV Vice President/Secretary Elaine L. Mura, Ph. D.

Republished with the permission of Splash Magazine

Verbatim theater has reached a milestone of excellence with FATHERLAND. And exactly what is verbatim theater? Conceived and directed by Stephen Sachs, FATHERLAND sports no writer's credit – since every word in the play comes from court transcripts, podcasts, sound tapes, and other sources which documented the statements of the two principal characters as it happened in the true story.

Ripped from recent headlines, FATHERLAND is the story of a father and son, a father and son who find themselves embroiled in the explosive events of January 6. The first defendant to stand trial for the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol, Guy Reffitt was found guilty on five criminal counts and sentenced to 7 1/4 years in prison – based in part on the emotional testimony of his son. What led up to this turn of events? FATHERLAND attempts to answer some of these questions.



Patrick Keleher, Anna Khaja, and Ron Bottitta – Photo by Jenny Graham



Ron Bottitta and Patrick Keleher—Photo by Jenny Graham

The story probably begins when the father (Ron Bottitta) loses his job, slowly and inevitably resulting in his traumatic fall from middle class to poverty level as he and his family struggle to exist in an unforgiving world. The son (Patrick Keleher) remembers his father as the loving and even playful dad of his pre-teens – and is horrified by the changed person his father has become. Now he is an individual who has morphed into a paranoid and angry man, ripe for the nihilistic philosophy offered by “the three percenters,” a rebellious and incendiary far-right militia. As father and son grow apart and pops descends into what his son considers mental illness, the teenager makes a decision which will forever alter family dynamics: he turns his father in to the FBI. The gripping court trial which follows will leave its mark on everyone he holds dear as the prosecutor (Anna Khaja) and the defense attorney (Larry Poindexter) delve into what happened.

Skillfully helmed by Sachs, FATHERLAND presents a profoundly thought-provoking scenario: a father who has come to the end of his rope – and a son who must betray his father to uphold his own beliefs. FATHERLAND is a modern day Greek tragedy which tears apart the most important relationships in a family. It also presents ethical conundrums which cannot be ignored. What is right in this story? The powerful cast shines, with special kudos to Ron Bottitta, who grabs the essence of the father from the dry pages in a transcript and brings them to living and breathing life.

Joel David's scenic design is spare, in keeping with the show's verbatim approach. Alison Brummer's lighting adds subtle dimension to the stage, while Stewart Blackwood's sound and Danyele Thomas' costumes add to its authenticity.

In a talk-back after the show, Sachs emphasized his desire to offer the audience a play which would reflect the current elections taking place in the U.S. He hoped to bring something special to a season which is so important for the future of each of us – and he has succeeded royally. FATHERLAND pinpoints the controversial and often confusing beliefs which are rampant in today's world. This is a timely and exciting play which will nudge people into taking a careful look at what matters in the confrontational world of 2024. At the same time, it is an intimate study of how

larger political views can have ramifications for the closest of relationships. FATHERLAND is a provocative must-see play which examines today's often two-dimensional climate, a climate which has the potential for violent outcomes.

FATHERLAND runs through May 26, 2024, with performances at 8 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays, and Mondays and at 2 p.m. on Sundays. The Fountain Theatre is located at 5060 Fountain Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90029. Tickets range from \$40 to \$45 (seniors \$35, students \$25, Pay-What-You-Want Mondays subject to availability). For information and reservations, call 323-663-1525 or go [online](#).



Ron Bottitta – Photo by Jenny Graham



Patrick Keleher and Ron Bottitta – Photo by Jenny Graham



Larry Poindexter and Ann Khaja – Photo by Jenny Graham

NEWS UPDATE ON FORMER CWC-SFV MEMBER JUDY PRESNALL

By Ethel Ann (Pemberton) Shaffer

Until her move out of the Los Angeles area, Judy Presnall was an longtime member of the California Writers Club of the San Fernando Valley. She held various and numerous positions with the CWC-SFV such as secretary, treasurer, program chair, as well as chairman of countless committees. She was also presented with the coveted [CWC Jack London Award](#) in 1997.

This talented CWC member has published over two dozen middle-grade books and is one of our club's most proficient writers. Her books have found a home in public libraries throughout California for their entertainment and research value.

Judy's daughter and family moved to Lincoln, California, in 2015s. Judy and her husband Lance moved to a 55-plus community in Lincoln to be near them.

Lance passed away in 2020, leaving Judy heartbroken. In May of 2023, tragedy struck the Presnall family again: Judy suffered a massive stroke. Her entire right side was left nearly paralyzed and her speech was also seriously afflicted. Judy is still receiving therapy for these injuries. She currently lives in Roseville, California, where she attends outpatient rehabilitation therapy. According to her daughter, Kaye, she has made much progress since her stroke, but she still has a long way to go toward a complete recovery.

If you would like to reach out to Judy, she loves receiving cards from her friends. Please send your cards to her daughter home address: 2646 Woodgate Way, Roseville, CA 95747, and she will deliver them to Judy.

However, be aware that Kaye and family will be moving to Texas in June, and Judy will accompany them. After their move I will stay in touch with Judy and her family so I can pass on her new address in Texas to her CWC-SFV friends and well-wishers.



BELOW YOU'LL FIND JUDY PRESNALL'S BIO AND JUST A FEW OF HER PUBLISHED BOOKS



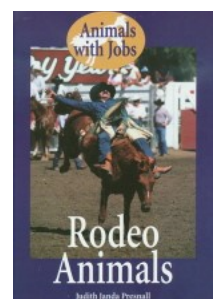
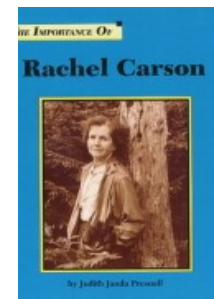
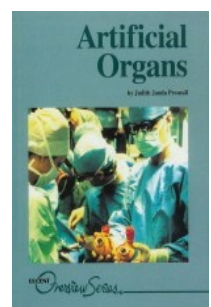
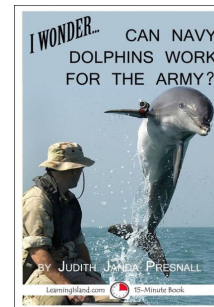
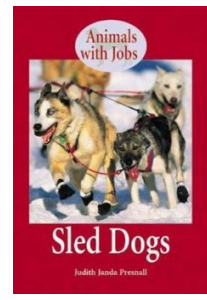
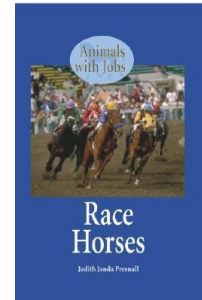
I am a children's nonfiction book writer that has more than thirty books published by Franklin Watts, Lucent Books, KidHaven Press, Learning Island, and most recently Two Lions (Imprint of Amazon Children's Publishing). Most of these books can be found at the library or at [Amazon.com](#) or at [AbeBooks.com](#) My books tell exciting information about bioluminescence (or glowing animals), skeletons, circuses, the giant panda, man-made

body parts, Alcatraz prisoners, Mount Rushmore, capuchin monkeys, U.S. . Navy dolphins, guide dogs, horse therapists, sled dogs, hearing dogs, canine companions, carrier pigeons, police dogs, animal actors, racehorses, rescue dogs, fish, plus two biographies: Oprah Winfrey and Rachel Carson. I also have a series of eBooks.

The seven-book series includes titles such as: **I Wonder ...** • **Does a Hammerhead Shark Pound Nails?** • **Do Bedbugs Snore?** • **Can a Bald Eagle Grow Hair?** • **How Do Monkeys Prevent Mosquito Bites?** • **Does a Camel Store Water in Its Hump?** • **Can Navy Dolphins Work for the Army?** • **Does the Hairy Tarantula Comb Its Hair?** These books are available at [Amazon.com](#) and [Barnesandnoble.com](#). My newest book, **Yukon Sled Dog**, tells the story of a puppy from birth through its training to become a sled dog in races. It includes information about the annual Iditarod Race in Alaska every March.

Judy Jana Presnall

Judy's books can be found on her website at [judithjandapresnall.com](#)



GET REAQUAINTED WITH ETHEL ANN (PEMBERTON) SHAFFER

What's New with an Old Member?

Ethel Ann Shaffer has been an active member of the San Fernando Valley of the California Writers Club since 1994, holding the following offices: program chair on two separate occasions, chair of various committees including the publishing of several anthologies for the club, and chair of club writing contests. She also served as president in 1995-1996 and again in 2010.

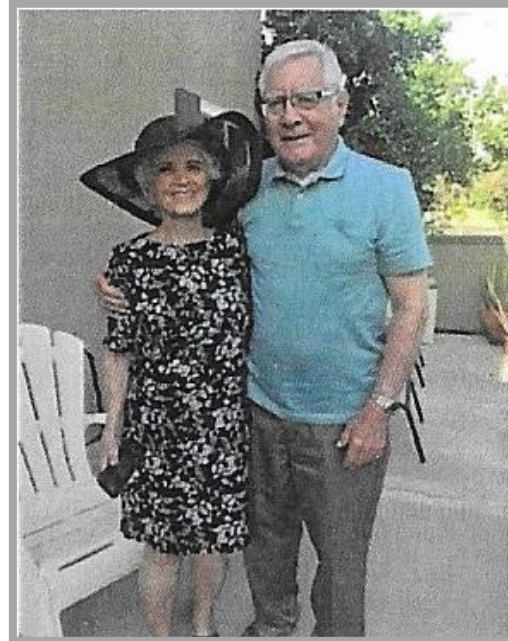
Ethel Ann has won many first-place awards in the CWC-SFV branch writing contests for her humorous articles. Her articles and essays have appeared in local and national magazines and newspapers throughout the years.

Her first article, **Burgled, Robbed, and Tired of Being a Victim**, was published in the Los Angeles Herald Examiner, now defunct, for which she was paid \$50 for turning a tragic home burglary into a positive publication experience. Her highest earnings came from Woman's World for abuse essays in the amount of \$500.

Her favorite stint was as a stringer for the [Ventura County Star](#) newspaper writing for their Best of Everything column. Her favorite award was being honored with the Jack London Award on behalf of her SFV branch.

She has a memoir, **The Last of the Red Hot Lovers**, debuting in April. Her women's fiction novel, **Secret Torment**, published in 2004 is still available at Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ethelann-shaffer-316a31a4>



Ethel Ann and Ted Shaffer currently live in Valencia, California. Ethel Ann has been a member of the CWC-SFV since 1994. She has served as our club president, editor of the this newsletter, editor of anthologies and other committee positions. If you'd like to contact here's her email address:

humorist4@gmail.com

Secret Torment : A Popular Novel Written By Ethel Ann Pemberton.



This story revolves around **Jenna Browning**, a willowy blonde with an angelic face. On the surface, Jenna seems to have it all, but internally, she grapples with torment. Her father had high expectations for her to be the perfect child, and her husband expected her to be the perfect wife. However, Jenna decides to break free from these expectations. She [quits](#) her job, divorces her husband, and embarks on a journey of self-discovery. Along the way, she pens a romance novel that draws inspiration from her abusive husband, a friend who betrayed her, and a lawyer who desires to be her substitute husband. Yet, throughout her journey, her heart remains haunted by an arrogant young boy with brooding black eyes whom she met once and can't forget.

The novel delves into themes of inner conflict, resilience, and the pursuit of personal freedom. Jenna's path leads her to both heaven and hell, as she seeks to find her own truth amidst societal expectations and personal struggles. Ethel Ann Pemberton weaves a tale of emotional complexity, inviting readers to explore the depths of human experience. If you're intrigued by stories of self-discovery, relationships, and inner turmoil, "Secret Torment" might be a compelling read for you.

[SECRET TORMENT: Pemberton, Ethel Ann: 9781418419073: Amazon.com: Books](#)

Two Poems by CWC-SFV Member Patricia Avery

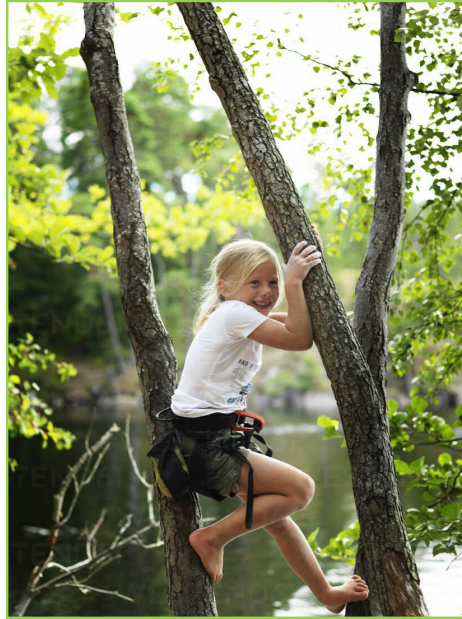
Climbing out of a Fog

I step out
My door
Eyes blinded
By damp gloom
Morning sun
Cannot penetrate.

Perfect
To go unseen
And undetected
With no one
To interrupt
My solitude.
My muffled steps
Continue through
Trees dripping with dew
My hair lank
As cool clammy air
Settles into my bones I shiver.

Climbing a summit
Wisps of white
Dance enticingly
Surrounding me
As light pierces
The haze.

Looking over a valley
Blanketed in white
Sky above brilliant blue
I bask in warm sun
With no wish to return
I keep walking.



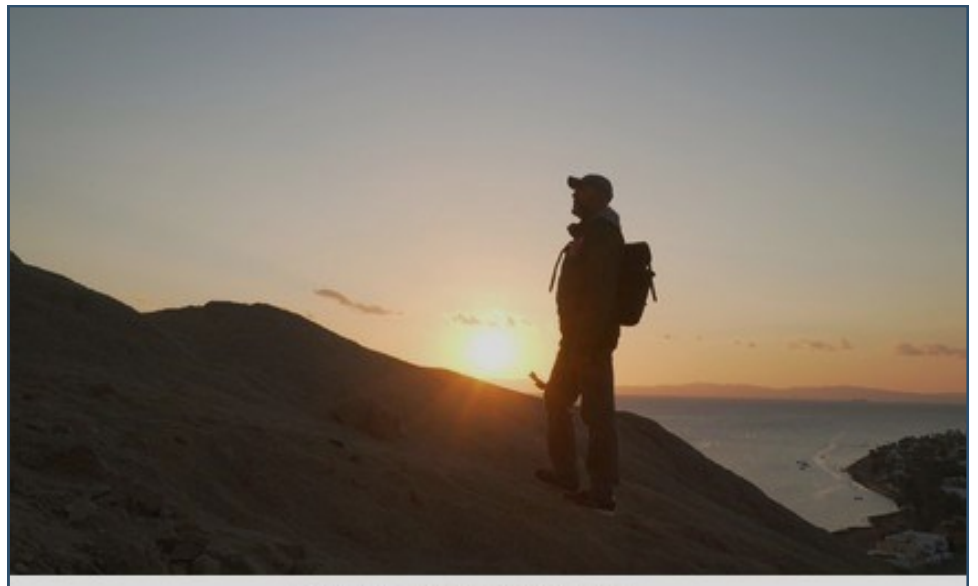
Risky Business

Once swaddled
Wrapped safe
Folds unraveled
When I failed
To watch.

Power surges
As you grab
A branch and
Swing giggling
Limb to limb.

Your fingers slip
A foot finds no hold
Tumbling down
You jump up
And try again.

Shouts of
Be careful
Are lost in
Your selective deafness
Cringing I realize
Growing up is risky business.



From the SCRIBE Archives



REVIEW AND REFRESH

By the late CWC-SFV Member Dave Wetterberg

Some of you remember the late Dave Wetterberg, who was the first editor of this newsletter and after persuading me to replace him as editor, started his terms as our President.

Dave had taught English to secondary students and also helped them put out a school newsletter. His former day job, which included teaching basic English grammar, made Dave a grammar savant, so to speak.

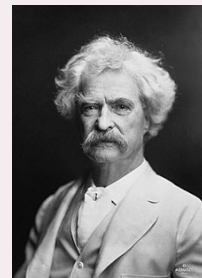
For decades, this newsletter featured Dave's grammar lessons. There was no reason to stop publishing his columns. Dave wrote clear, concise articles on every type of grammar error. I used him as a reference every year that I've been an editor. His lessons and explanations are timeless and help me help submitters to the Scribe.

In future newsletters, I will occasionally feature Dave's column.

Unfortunately, Dave was too modest to publish his canny lessons in a book, but I think reprinting his column in this newsletter keeps his tips and corrections available to both new and experienced writers ... and editors!

Kathy Highcove,
The Valley Scribe Editor

Good writers don't waste words. Mark Twain said a writer should eliminate one-third of everything he writes without losing any content. Here are some suggestions for learning this essential skill.



Combine Sentences

Original: My friend's name was Artemus. He ate half of my box of Valentine chocolates while I was busy making dinner. 20 wds

Revision: While I cooked dinner, Artimus ate half my box of Valentine chocolates. 12 wds

Use short openings

Original: Because she was so disappointed, she sulked all evening. 9 wds

Revision: Disappointed, she sulked all evening. 5 wds

Avoid There is/There are/There was/There were in favor of the active

Original: In Starbucks there was a group of retirees who were noisily socializing. 12wds

Revision: In Starbucks a noisy group of retirees socialized. 7 wds

Be careful of which and who clauses

Original: The apples, which were finally ripe, begged to be picked. 10 wds

Revision: The newly ripened apples begged to be picked. 8 wds

Original: Sam, who was my best friend, moved to Seattle. 9 wds

Revision: My best friend Sam moved to Seattle. 7 wds

Delete meaningless modifiers

Original: I was very nervous before I was about to meet Dr. Lee. 12 wds

Revision: Before meeting Dr. Lee, I was extremely nervous. 9 wds

Avoid trite phrasing

Original: Due to the fact that he was always late, he received a bad review. 14 wds

Revision: Always late, he received a bad review. 7 wds

Avoid cliches

Original: She's a person who lies through her teeth and I'll hate her 'till pigs can fly of 'till hell freezes over, or both. 23 wds

Revision: She can't be trusted and I'll always hate her. 9 wds

A SAGA IN GREEN

By CWC-SFV Member Norman Molesko

The Valley Scribe May, 2015

I was sitting worry-free by a tree
sensing a narrow expanse of grass.

I became awed by what I did see,
a particular single blade of grass.

My other thoughts were at an impasse,
except for this single blade of grass.
*Then a light breeze descended slowly,
the blade began to sway to and fro.*

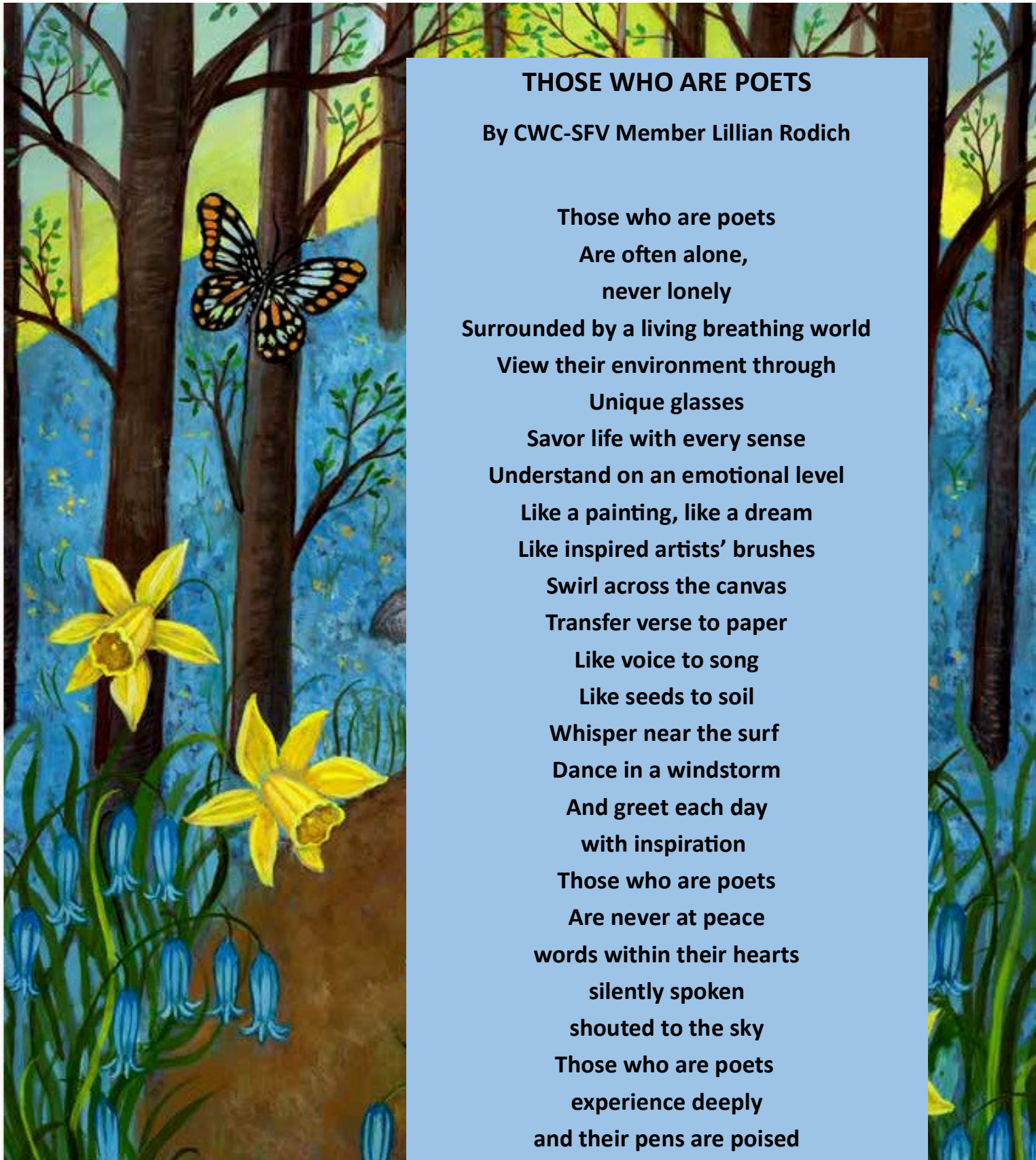
This moving blade intrigued me
in a motionless field of greenery.
The swaying blade was in its own class,
ignored by the other blades as an outcast.

Watching the blade's swaying motion,
its unique gymnastics were amusing.

The concentration I had retained
was quite deep and all-consuming.

As if by magic other blades energized.
The breeze became strengthened by now.
Swaying of other blades started somehow,
changing the greenery into a busy powwow.





THOSE WHO ARE POETS

By CWC-SFV Member Lillian Rodich

**Those who are poets
Are often alone,
never lonely
Surrounded by a living breathing world
View their environment through
Unique glasses
Savor life with every sense
Understand on an emotional level
Like a painting, like a dream
Like inspired artists' brushes
Swirl across the canvas
Transfer verse to paper
Like voice to song
Like seeds to soil
Whisper near the surf
Dance in a windstorm
And greet each day
with inspiration
Those who are poets
Are never at peace
words within their hearts
silently spoken
shouted to the sky
Those who are poets
experience deeply
and their pens are poised**

If All

By CWC-SFV Member Michael Edelstein

The Valley Scribe, April 2014

If all the trees and all the grass
Were ground up into dust
And all the silver and the brass
Were moldered into rust
If all the planes and all the trains
Were tunneled underground
And all the golden voices stilled
And hushed without a sound
If all the birdsongs of the air
Were formed to bricks of stone
And all the bears and cats and wolves
Never again did roam
If all the fishes in the sea
Would stand up head to head
And all the gold in all the crowns
Would turn to rings of lead
If all the brightest diamonds were
Transmuted into snow
And all the bucks in all the woods
Turned each into a doe
And all the concrete monuments
Were fashioned into toys
And all the pretty little girls
Were turned to nasty boys
And all the earth and all the sea
Were taken to the sky
I would love you darling still
Until the day I die.





VALLEY WRITERS



A BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

Whether you're a published author or "have always wanted to write," please join the CWC-SFV for monthly meetings at the Motion Picture and Television Fund Wasserman Campus in Woodland Hills. Meetings begin at 1 pm. Presenters will join us either in person or via Zoom on the huge screen in The Saban Center for Health and Wellness. You'll enjoy networking with other writers while learning more about the craft and business of writing. For more information and single lecture prices, visit <https://www.cwc-sfv.org>. Presentations are free for CWC

September 9, 2023



Join poet, photographer, author Hiram Sims as we explore the power, history and significance of the Ekphrastic poetry. We will identify homemade images and artwork that will be the basis of writing new poems. (Zoom)

October 7, 2023

A LONG STRANGE TRIP - A WRITER'S JOURNEY



NY Times bestselling author, Jonathan Maberry, will discuss how writing horror got him started in his writing career, share insider tips, fresh perspectives on the changes in the publishing trade, and strategies for getting in gear and getting in print. (Zoom)

November 4, 2023

Best-selling author Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin, (aka crime writer Sam Blake), will discuss exactly what the industry is looking for and how best to submit your work. She will show you how to improve your pitch and build your author platform. (Zoom)



December 2, 2023

BEATING REJECTION

Best-selling author Vanessa Fox O'Loughlin, (aka crime writer Sam Blake), will discuss exactly what the industry is looking for and how best to submit your work. She will show you how to improve your pitch and build your author platform. (Zoom)



January 6, 2024

A COMPLICATED LIFE

Author, lecturer and BBC presenter, Paul Lewis, will talk to us about prolific Victorian author Wilkie Collins's incredible work ethic and his colorful private life. (Zoom)



February 3, 2024

BLACK AND IN LOVE



Romance author, Synithia Williams, will talk about why she started writing romance novels and why she likes to focus on black love in her award-nominated stories. (Zoom)

March 2, 2024

THE HERO'S JOURNEY



Inspired by mythologist. Joseph Campbell, screenwriter, author and educator Christopher Vogler, will show us how to use the hero's journey to improve our creative writing. (Zoom)

April 6, 2024

PUTTING THE FUN BACK INTO WRITING



Kirsten Casey is a California Poet in the Schools, creative writing teacher, and the current Nevada County Poet Laureate. She wants you to enjoy writing, even if you feel undisciplined and blocked. (Zoom)

May 4, 2024

WRITING TRANSFORMED MY LIFE



Poet, writer, and activist, Luis Rodriguez, will share his poetry and discuss the transformative experience of writing his memoir: *Always Running, La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.* (Zoom)

June 1, 2024

COACH WOODEN AND ME



Author and award-winning columnist, Woody Woodburn, will discuss what we can learn from his memoir, *WOOD-EN & ME: Life Lessons from My Two-Decade Friendship with the Legendary Coach and Humanitarian.* (In-person)

Read on to learn more about The San Fernando Valley Branch of the California Writers Club

Do you live to write? Write for a living? Whether you're a published author or "just always wanted to write," there's a place for you in California Writers Club!

Our 22 branches range from Mendocino to Orange County and include writers of all levels and interests.

Our mission: to educate writers of all abilities in the craft of writing and the marketing of their work.

CWC-SFV CLUB INFORMATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

The California Writers Club has been in existence for over 100 years, and the SFV Branch for over 20 years. Our mission is to encourage excellence in writing, fiction, non-fiction and poetry, as well as to reach out into our community and mentor writers at all stages of their writing journey. We hold meetings at the Saban Health and Wellness Center at the Motion Picture & Television Fund (MPTF) in Woodland Hills on the first Saturday of each month from 1 PM to 3 PM. Meetings are free for all members.

Our meetings feature presentations from published writers, editors and other writing industry experts speaking on topics ranging from how to improve our writing, overcome writer's block, get published, and promote our work. In addition, we host six critique groups which meet monthly or bi-monthly to give CWC-SFV members feedback from their CWC-SFV peers. They meet in person, on Zoom, or in hybrid groups.

For information and reviews on prior monthly speakers, please go to [monthly editions of the Scribe](#) at [PUBLICATIONS | San Fernando Valley Writers \(cwc-sfv.org\)](#)

If you are interested in additional information about our San Fernando Valley branch of the California Writers Club, please check out our website at: [CWC-SFV.org](#)

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