



Penwheels Newsletter

Summer Issue 2019

For Escapees Writers, Published or Not

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Penwheels is a private group of Escapees members who enjoy writing and discussing the writing adventure.

The Penwheels Newsletter is digitally published quarterly.



Jaimie's Tips

Jaimie Bruzenak

- ◆ Supreme Court rules copyright registration required to sue. Protect your work. For more information, click [HERE](#).
- ◆ This article in the 4/4/19 *Writers Weekly* by Aylessa Goulet has some great resources if you are researching a topic or topics for an article or book. I have been using Google alerts for years but did not know about the others. <https://writersweekly.com/this-weeks-article/apps-for-organizing-your-research>
- ◆ If you are thinking of writing a book...read this article from the publisher of *Writers Weekly*. (4/26/19) <https://writersweekly.com/angela-desk/dont-waste-a-year-writing-a-book-you-cant-publish>
- ◆ For those who may not be regular publishers or working on a book, entering contests can be fun and financially rewarding. Rachel Carrington tells you how she does it and gives links to get started in *Writer's Weekly* 5/9/19 issue. <https://writersweekly.com/success-stories/small-contests>
- ◆ I love finding these libraries. Each is unique. I saw this one on Facebook.

The person posting removed a huge tree that was over 110 years old and turned it into a little free library.



Braggin' Rights

Joanne Alexakis

Betty Prange, SKP#22195, takes us on a tour in the "Avenue of Giants", the Redwoods of Northern California - on page 29.



"The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do."

- Thomas Jefferson



Holding Back

Ellen Behrens

For some reason she adored me, and her ritual Monday morning sugar cookies were a thank-you for taking the time to explain instructions to her."

In just forty-five words, we learn Ann Marie is a pleasant, thoughtful, middle-aged woman who's grateful for the special attention her boss gives her. She likes to bake. We don't need to know her height or weight, and Clark doesn't describe what she's wearing because it isn't important. **Not** describing what she's wearing tells us Ann Marie is average—nothing flashy or particularly dowdy here.

Dana Stabenow opens *A Cold Day for Murder* this way:

"They came out of the south late that morning on a black and silver Skidoo LT. The driver had thick eyebrows and a thicker beard and a lush fur ruff around his hood, all rimmed with frost from the moisture of his breath.

He was a big man, made larger by parka, down bib overalls, fur mukluks and thick fur gauntlets. His teeth were bared in a grin that was a half-snarl.

He looked like John Wayne ready to run the claim jumpers off his gold mine on that old White Mountain just a little southeast of Nome, if John Wayne had been outfitted by Eddie Bauer."

The description is over a hundred words, but Stabenow selects details that not only describe a character but set the scene and the mood. We get enough to picture the character, but not too much.

Are you doing too much?

Ellen Behrens (ellenbooks.com) is the award-winning author of three novels, a short story collection, and two nonfiction books, including her *Rollin RV Mystery Series*. She and her husband have been full-time RVers since 2009.



From the Editor

Are you looking for some quality feedback to get your book to market? Finding just the right person to assist takes time and energy.



Melanie Phillips is one of the finest fiction editors I have run across in my long career.

We refer to her articles many times in the Penwheels Newsletter. The diversity and excellent suggestions always ring home.

As a non-fiction writer, I have never used her services but her talent is obvious.

"Send me one page, ten pages, or your entire novel or screenplay and I'll provide targeted line by line feedback with suggestions for improvement of both your story structure and storytelling.

In addition, you'll get a free overview assessment of your story as a whole. And all of this for just \$10 per page!

For twenty-five years I've helped writers all around the world in every imaginable genre, and I'd be pleased to help you too."

Click [HERE](#) to get in touch with Melanie Phillips.

Disclosure: The editor does not receive any compensation from Ms. Phillips.

Once upon a time, novels included very long descriptions of characters and settings. Without visual media, written descriptions were the only way to conjure such images in the heads of readers. These days, long descriptions usually point to fledgling novelists. That's because most of us were brought up with those classics, and we tend to emulate what we think great writing is.

There's a lot we can learn from reading the classics, but conventions change over time. Nowadays, we've seen places on the other side of the world without leaving our homes, so a few words are all that's necessary. "Eiffel Tower" conjures a more vivid image than most descriptions could.

But how much is enough? How much is too much?

Clint McCown, award-winning literary novelist, says, "Show us only as much of the outside [of the character] as is relevant... So what if a character is five-foot-eleven? What does it matter? Three-foot-eleven would matter, and so would six-foot-eleven, because then height would become an issue with the way the character interacts with the world."

How are successful authors accomplishing this?

In *Lowcountry Bribe*, C. Hope Clark introduces a secondary character through the eyes of her narrator in this way:

"My middle-aged, wide-eyed clerk always wore a look of surprise on her face, as if she'd just witnessed a miracle.

Editor's Lament

In 2012, when I started publishing with the major players (Amazon, Barnes & Noble, iBooks, and Kobo), marketing a book was easy.

Write good content, create a compelling cover, put together a website, maybe start a blog, and wait for the sales to roll in.

Good content was at a premium then, at least in the non-fiction marketplace.

Yes, I played a major role in the increase of competition by spreading the word with free writing seminars and helpful articles. By 2015, the competition in my genre increased from 20 authors to 500.

Today the competition is fierce and new authors spring up every day. Learn the rules of the game so you can break them. Throw your sense of fair play to the wind.

Fortunately, I am at the end of my career, so I can be objective about the moral decline of the self-publishing book market. If you are just getting started, anger or tears is an appropriate response.

To be fair, before self-publishing there were only Agents and Traditional Publishing Houses in the game. The chance of your book reaching the public was slight. The rules of the game were very different and harder to circumvent.

There were lots of dirty tricks and unfair practices in traditional publishing too. Anywhere there is money to be made, scams and rip-offs abound.

The big difference is the amount of participation in the self-publishing industry. So much to learn, so little time.

About Reviews

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, iBooks, and Kobo, the major players today, make e-Publishing easy with few quality requirements.

With self-publishing accepted as the path to reaching the reading public, it is now the target of scammers, rip-off artists, and thieves.

In today's marketplace, if you have an unlimited promotion budget, buying reviews is easy.

Just the volume of reviews requested daily sends legitimate reviewers into hibernation.

If you are new to the book market, it can be overwhelming. It takes months, if not years, to understand how this industry works.

It is no longer about how good your book content is, but how much money you spend to promote it.

When you see a new book release that already has over 200 reviews, does it make you wonder about the process that creates it.

Marketing your book is a *business* that requires time and money to make a success. Many authors spend thousands of dollars up front hoping for future rewards. True profits may not appear in the first year for some.

However, the rules change frequently, so be prepared to flow with each trend.

For those of you that stress over "reviews," *Nicholas Erik* writes an excellent article about the essence of the "review." From his own personal experience, this mini-guide can change your perspective and, perhaps, set you free.

- ◆ "If your book isn't selling, reviews are usually not the culprit."
- ◆ "Reviews don't play into sales nearly as much as many authors think."
- ◆ "Using Reviews to Improve Your Craft"
- ◆ "Common Practices to Avoid"
- ◆ "Methods to get Reviews"

[The rest of the story...](#)

Get Out Of My Head!

When beginning a new novel, writers are often faced with one of two initial problems that hinders them right from the get go.

One – sometimes you have a story concept but can't think of what to do with it. In other words, you know what you want to write about, but the characters and plot elude you.

Two – sometimes your head is swimming with so many ideas that you haven't got a clue how to pull them all together into a single unified story.

Fortunately, the solution to both is the same. In each case, you need to clear your mind of what you do know about your story to make room for what you'd like to know.

[The rest of the story . . .](#)



Why Characters Misunderstand Each Other

All of our understandings of each other are based on the narratives we create to get a grip on what someone's intent is, and what their future behavior is likely to be.

Basically, we want to know what they mean by what they say, and what they are likely to do.

But trying to grasp someone else's meaning is an interpretive art. In addition, we all have our own blinders on.

Our own expectations based on a history of interactions, both with the specific individual with whom we are communicating and with other people, both similar and not so much, gathered over the course of our lives.

I use the word "justification" to describe how those past experiences add up to expectations, pre-judgments and even blind spots that keep us from seeing what's really going on or even warp it to convince us things are quite different—even opposite—of what someone really intended or intended to do.

[Read on . . .](#)

Semicolon

It's just a dot on top of a comma, but for many of us, the semicolon is pretty scary. When do we use it? How do we use it correctly?

Put simply, a semicolon joins a pair of independent clauses. If you think of it as a replacement for the word "and," you'll be right most of the time.

[More . . .](#)

World of Publishing

Army of Clones

Last January, Victoria Strauss at *Writers Beware* wrote a post about a new and rapidly-growing scam: Philippines-based publishing and "marketing" companies that have copied the Author Solutions (AS) business model, and are using it to rip off writers.

In many cases, these enterprises are run and/or staffed by former AS call center employees.

"Like AS, the clones rely on misleading hype, hard-sell sales tactics, and a lucrative catalog of junk marketing services. Even if authors actually receive the services they've paid for (and judging by the complaints I've gotten, there's no guarantee of that), they are getting stiffed. These are not businesses operating in good faith, but greedy opportunists seeking to profit from writers' inexperience, ignorance, and hunger for recognition. They are exploitative, dishonest, and predatory."

The clones share a distinctive cluster of characteristics that makes them relatively easy for an alert writer to identify.

[The rest of the story ...](#)

AMS Literary Agency

Major shifts in the publishing world have created alternatives to the traditional get-an-agent-to-land-a-publisher route to publication.

With agents no longer the be-all and end-all of a writing career, it's become a lot tougher for a scam agent to make a living.

As a result, literary agency scams have become rare. Even amateur agencies are much less common than they used to be.

They're still a potential danger, though, so when I stumbled across [AMS Literary Agency](#), a new venture (domain registered only last month) with a ton of red flags, it seemed like a good subject for a blog post.

When I started writing, I thought I'd just be doing an expose on an amateur agency. What I actually found is...more complicated.

[More . . .](#)

Kindle Unlimited Scam

In David Gaughran's post on Oct 9, 2018, he laid out the latest problem with Kindle Unlimited and the book stuffers/scammers.

If you have been publishing books on Amazon in the last few years (since 2015 specifically), you may have noticed that sales have slid to the bottom of the charts. It takes more advertising and promotion than ever before to keep royalties coming in at even lower amounts.

According to Gaughran, the "bad boy book stuffers" have figured out a way to game the Amazon system, particularly Kindle Select.

[The rest of the story . . .](#)

In modern business it is not the crook who is to be feared most, it is the honest man who doesn't know what he is doing.

- William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Writer's Marketplace

[Freelance Copy Editor/Production Manager](#) - Bridge Magazine

[Freelance Education Writer](#) – includes benefits—NerdWallet

[Freelance Investigative Reporters](#) - On Point Investigations

[Freelance Regulatory Reporter](#) - Modern Healthcare

[Freelance Reporter](#)—MLive

[Freelance Writer](#) – Pays \$125/article StudySync

[Freelance Investing Writer](#) – includes benefits—NerdWallet

[Freelance Associate Editor](#) HealthyWomen

[Freelance Writer](#) – Pays \$225/week for four articles—Learning Jewelry

[Freelance Boating/Outdoors Blog Writers](#) -Gander Outdoors/Camping World/Overtons

[Freelance Law Enforcement Technology Editor](#) – includes benefits Endeavor Business Media

[Freelance Content Optimization Writers](#) -Todays Growth Consultant

[Freelance Writer/Editor](#) - Paradise Writing

[Freelance Copy Editor](#) – Pays \$20-\$30/hour—Third Bridge Creative

[Freelance Reporter](#) Franklin Archer

[Freelance Cryptocurrency Writer](#) – Pays \$20/article—The Daily Hodl

[Freelance Photo Editor](#)—Granite Media Group, Inc.

[Freelance Technology Writer](#) StratoScale

[Freelance Culture Writer](#) – includes benefits—Salon.com

[Freelance Technical Editor](#) Steyer Content

[Freelance Proofreader/Editor](#) PaperBlazer

[Freelance Science Assessment Item Writer](#) – Pays \$25/hour—Education Service Center Region XIII

[Freelance Writer](#) Conquest Chronicles

[Freelance Technical Writer](#) - Clostra

[Freelance Editor](#)—Denny Mountain Media

[Freelance Science Assessment Item Reviewer](#) – Pays \$15/hour Education Service Center Region XIII

[Freelance Principal Medical Writer](#) PRA Health Sciences

[Freelance Content Editor](#) Escalon Services

[Freelance Editor](#) MikMak

[Freelance Digital Health Copywriter](#) Vida

[Freelance Content Editor](#) Escalon Services

[Freelance Technical Writer](#) Steyer

[Freelance Grant Writer](#) Assistance Dogs Northwest

[Freelance Curriculum Writer](#) – Pays \$500-\$2500/month Ethos Logos Classical

[Freelance Trending News Contributor](#) Heavy Inc.

[More . . .](#)

Writers Weekly Short Story Contest



This could be a fun summer project for all our Penwheelers.

24-Hour Short Story Contest

Cost: \$5.00

Start time: **Saturday July 13th, 2019** at 12:00 PM CST.

Entrants: Limited to 500

Prizes:

- ◆ 1st Place: \$300 cash +
- ◆ 2nd Place: \$250 cash +
- ◆ 3rd Place: \$200 cash +

[Details...](#)

You must be entered in the contest before the topic is posted in order to submit your story. You cannot write your story first, then enter the contest.

Note: Your state may prohibit your participation in skills-based contests that have an entry fee.

