

Write Angles



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BERKELEY BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

President's Message

NaNoWriMo Anyone?

-Tanya Grove

I had toyed with the idea for a few years but had never made the commitment. The idea behind National Novel Writing Month (or NaNoWriMo) is to encourage writers to spend the month of November penning a novel from start to finish. Many people spend all of October preparing. I decided to do it on November 1.



Day 1: I sign up on the official NaNoWriMo website. The goal is 50,000 words by November 30.

Day 2: Forty people with laptops gather at an Alameda library for a regional kick-off event. I arrive late, in the middle of a silent mini write-a-thon. I don't figure out what's going on until a voice yells "stop!" A candy bar is awarded to the participant who'd written the most words in the timed interval—a girl who looked to be 13. She's written over 700 words in twenty minutes. Since I've been quietly waiting for instructions, I have written exactly zero words. I've just arrived and already feel like a failure.

A few people get a 5K sticker for reaching 5000 words. A stuffed vampire fish is awarded to the person with the highest word count—the same 13-year-old who'd won the candy bar. My two-day

tally is now 778 words. I calculate that in order to reach 50,000 words by the end of the month, I have to average 1667 words a day. On day two, I am already 2556 words behind. And the math is starting to make my head hurt.

Day 3: I discovered that on my NaNoWriMo page, all the calculations are done for me: how many words I have to go, how many words per day I'll need to write in order to catch up, and even the date I would reach 50,000 at my current rate, which is in May of 2014. None of this makes me feel better, but at least I no longer have to do the math myself...

Day 5: I'm up to 3112 words. If I continue at this rate, I can finish my novel some time in January instead of May. Progress!

Day 6: I still haven't gotten the hang of 1667 words a day, but I do have a total of 4072.

Day 8: Today is complicated by the fact that I have to write an entire play in four days, which is likely to put my novel on the back burner...

Day 9: I join fellow NaNoWriMo folks at a write-a-thon at a bakery, having ducked out of my Weight Watchers meeting to make time. So it's likely that I'll gain weight over this novel business. But it's all worth it because I get my 5K sticker for passing 5000 words. I proudly affix the sticker to my laptop.

Day ?: Perhaps it's what they call the second week doldrums or perhaps I realize that I still have a job

that requires me to do something other than write a novel, but I lose track of time and words.

Day 15: How did that happen? The month is half over! I've only reached 7207. The good news is that I find out my play is being staged at Berkeley Rep, which means I spend the rest of the morning emailing everyone I know and promoting the play on Facebook instead of writing my novel.

Day 18: I'm up to 8095, but I don't go to my NaNoWriMo page because it would be too depressing to see how far behind I am.

Day 19: Tomorrow I should reach 10,000, which is only a fifth of the way there but is still 10,000 more than if I hadn't attempted NaNoWriMo at all!

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December 2013

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Upcoming Events

12/14- Holiday Luncheon

1/19/14 - Meeting Speaker: Kymberlie Ingalls

What Are Your Favorite Writing Tips?

– Tanya Grove

“Start as close to the end as possible.”

– Kurt Vonnegut

Every writer has definite opinions about the writing process, and famous writers are often asked for their secrets to success and tips on the craft. Thus we have a whole sub-genre of literature devoted to writing itself. Stephen King is almost as well known for his writing advice as he is for his tales of the supernatural.

Hemingway famously said, “There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.”

Much of this literature is more entertaining than instructive, such as this quote from Douglas Adams: “I love deadlines. I love the whooshing noise they make as they go by.”

Mark Twain had much to say on the subject. The one that resonates most for me is, “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.”

Some writers speak more to the general condition of being a writer, such as when [Maya Angelou](#) said, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

[Anton Chekhov](#) gave specific advice: “Don't tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.” As did George Orwell: “Never use a

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Day 20: Enough with the hopeful self-talk. I'm not going to reach 50,000 words. But I'm determined to make this experience worthwhile. I'm just going to focus on writing every day and learn from this, so that I can be ready next year.

Day 23: I peek at my stats. I've written 10,245 words. I get a pirate sticker for passing 10,000. To achieve my goal, I would need to write 39,755 words in the next eight days, which would require me to crank out 4,970 words per day.

long word where a short one will do.”

Once in a while someone writes down what many of us hope but don't say out loud. [Jack Kerouac](#) said, “One day I will find the right words, and they will be simple.”

Writing is often compared to other ventures, such as this clever quote from E.L. Doctorow: “Writing a novel is like driving a car at night. You can only see as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.”

And my personal favorite is this gem from Toni Morrison: “If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.”

Some tips are more helpful than others. What are *your* favorite tips? Whether they originated from Twain or your Aunt Sally, whether they are serious or merely good for a laugh, share your favorite writers' tips with other members. Just send them to writeangles@gmail.com with “writers' tips” in the subject line by December 15, and they'll go in our January issue of *Write Angles*. If you know who said or wrote it, please include the source.

I'll end with an appropriate quote from Frank Herbert:

“There is no real ending. It's just the place where you stop the story.”

Thanksgiving: I may not have made much progress in my novel, but I am thankful for other writing I've done this week—two articles for *Write Angles*, eight critiques on fellow playwrights' ten-minute plays, two blog posts, and a long poem. (Do to-do lists count?)

Day 30: I go to Berkeley's main library where nine others are still trying to reach 50,000 in a last-day NaNoWriMo write-a-thon. No prizes for me, but there's cider and brownies!

I didn't write a novel in a month, but I now have several chapters of a novel. And that's 13,011 more words than I'd have written had I not taken up the challenge. Plus, I got this article out of it.

Guest Column**Help Wanted: Hiring Fiction Writers Now**

- Larry Brooks

This is the opportunity of a lifetime. Write novels for money. Be your own boss. Work your own hours.

Get invited to all sorts of book signings and conferences. Quit your day job and live your dream. Have cocktails with John Grisham and Nora Roberts at the National Book Awards banquet.

Hiring one out of every 1000 qualified applicants. Of those (the one out of 1000), you may become one out of about 10,000 who will make a best-seller list. Or one out of every 100 (of those one out of 10,000) who do make a bestseller list twice. Feeling lucky? The odds of a David Baldacci-like career: a conservative one out of about 5 million.

You have to be VERY good to become very lucky.

Must be willing to invest 10,000 hours or more of your time in an apprenticeship. Must be willing to spend many thousands of dollars and hours doing the promotional work that you'd hoped your publisher would do, without access to the resources (major reviews and distribution buyers) that they have.

Quality work is essential. Anything less will not be considered. Once in, though, quality doesn't guarantee anything, which means your work stands as good a shot as anybody's. Read *50 Shades of Grey* to wrap your head around this. Then again, don't. It'll just piss you off.

Just like J.K. Rowling and Kathryn Stockett, spend a year or three of your life finding that one out of 50 agents who will recognize your work as being worthy.

Never mind that Barnes & Noble will never stock your book. Be assured, though, that they'll happily order it for cousins when they come in and ask.

Hang with other cool, like-minded people. Tens of thousands of them, in fact.

Great upside potential. Publish your own book and you'll make as much as \$500 (after you spend about \$800 getting the book ready for Kindle), far above the \$200 average. Publish with a small press and you may make as much as \$2500 or as little as a box delivered to your doorstep containing 25 copies of your work. Become that one out of every 100,000 writers who actually makes more than that with a larger publisher, even a Big-6 publisher, who will most likely dump you when you don't make back your advance, which hardly ever happens.

Thrill in the knowledge that half your family and friends will read your book. And the other half won't.

Must be willing to work the first two to 20 years without pay.

Know that of your 1000 Facebook friends who are writers, three of them will read your post containing your notice of publication, and two might buy the book.

Must tolerate Internet trolls who will scorch you in an Amazon.com review.

Serious applicants only. Get in on the ground floor today, while you still can. Because it's getting really crowded in there.

This post was edited for space. See the original post at storyfix.com.

The CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB is a 501(c) (3) educational nonprofit, dedicated to educating members and the public-at-large in the craft of writing and in the marketing of their work.



Poetry Page **holiday edition**

So you have a writer in your life, and it's that holiday season when you have to start thinking of gifts. Well, you've come to the right poem, my friend!

Gifts for the Writers in Your Life



Need a gift for writer friends? Here's how you will succeed
('Tis an easy task because there's so much that they need)
You could get a coffee mug with words that he might say
Like "Can't you see I'm writing? Why don't you go away?"

Refrigerator magnets please the nerdier of folks
Ones that tell us "Don't verb nouns!" or make bad grammar jokes
A mouse pad with a writer's quote could be the inspiration
That prompts her fingertips to type a stunning new creation

We all know that raw talent takes the writer just so far
To supplement, he's going to need some liquor from the bar
Hemingway and Faulkner knew the power of a drink
You need enough to lubricate the mind so you can think

The other liquid gift that helps the writer reach her goal
Is java by the pound to fuel the body and the soul
So whether she's a Starbucks fan or in the camp of Peet's
She'd enjoy some coffee (and of course some tasty treats)



Then there are your journals and your fancy fountain pens
Which some will like, but others won't—it really just depends
On how much he or she embraces new technology
Some might prefer new laptops, which of course are not for free

Reference books are practical, and they last a while
Get the latest version of *Chicago Manual of Style*
A thesaurus is quite handy, and she'll need a dictionary
Although the ones online are so much easier to carry...

If your writer's ready, there are how-to books to buy
The Idiot's Guide to Publishing is one that you might try
Or *How to Write a Query* or *Publishing Made Easy*
But be forewarned that reading these may make a writer queasy

If you're feeling generous, you could make the offer
To dig a little deeper in your Christmas-giving coffer
And fund a week at a writers' retreat—heck, spring for two!
Or build her her own writing studio—a room of her own, with a view!

I hope you've found the right gift for the writer in your life
Whether it's your brother, husband, daughter, or your wife
Of course you know the item that they wish you *could* have bought—
A contract with a publisher would truly hit the spot!

– Tanya Grove



Tidbits

Critique Group Now Forming for Children's Writers

The Berkeley Branch is interested in starting up a group devoted to writing picture books. If you write for children or have interest in doing so, this may be the support you need to get that book published and into the hands of children. We will work out the time, place, and all logistics once we have at least three or four members who want to get this group underway. All interested children's writers should contact Tanya at berkeley-cwc@gmail.org

Did you know that *Write Angles* is now up on our website? www.cwc-berkeley.org

And if you've missed past issues, you can find them on Scribd at this link:
<http://www.scribd.com/search?query=cwc.berkeley+Write+Angles>

Do You Have a Book to Nominate for a Saroyan Prize?

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2014 William Saroyan International Prize for Writing, co-sponsored by Stanford University Libraries and the William Saroyan Foundation. Two prizes of \$5,000 each are given biennially for works of fiction and nonfiction. The deadline for entries is Jan 31, 2014. For more information go to Stanford's website at: <http://library.stanford.edu/Saroyan/>



Write Angles

Editor Tanya Grove
Copyeditor/Member News Anne Fox

Member News

Berkeley Branch members are encouraged to send us writing-related news. Please write "Member News" in the subject line and send to Anne at writefox@aol.com no later than the 15th of the month.

Come celebrate the publication of the first trilogy of Alon Shalev's award-winning Wycaan Master Series. Tourmaline Books is hosting a book party Sunday, Dec. 15, 3 p.m., at Games of Berkeley, 2151 Shattuck Avenue, in Berkeley. For more details, go to http://alonshalev.com/upcoming_events.

Risa Nye's "No-Fail Ingredient" appears in the weekly online magazine *Better After 50*: <http://betterafter50.com/2013/11/no-fail-cooking-ingredients/>

Marketplace

Berkeley Branch members are welcome to advertise their writing-related services. Please write "Marketplace" in the subject line and send to Anne at writefox@aol.com no later than the 15th of the month.

Charlotte Cook offers story editing, pre-publishing services, and workshops for writers of fiction, creative nonfiction, and screenplays. Also available is office/retreat space for classes and meetings. storyeditor@att.net

Anne Fox's "Something in the Air" is in *Hippocampus Magazine*, December 2013, an online creative nonfiction publication.

Anne's "Contenders" is in the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop blog, www.humorwriters.org (scroll down) and here: <http://humorwriters.org/2013/11/25/contenders/>



Tanya Grove's ten-minute one-act musical, *Love Doctor, Heal Thyself*, was staged at the Berkeley Rep on Monday, November 18. Playground's artistic director, Jim Kleinmann, directed the piece as part of Monday Night Playground's celebration of George and Ira Gershwin.

Tatjana Greiner offers developmental editing for all genres of fiction and nonfiction. Email her at workshop@mac.com. More information at: <http://tatjanagreinerwordshop.com>.

Anne Fox, *Write Angles* copyeditor, offers copyediting services for all levels of fiction and nonfiction. References available. writefox@aol.com

Thomas Burchfield offers editing and proofreading services for fiction and nonfiction books by CWC Berkeley members. For details, visit his webpage, e-mail him at tbdeluxe@sbcglobal.net, or call 510-817-4432.

The Berkeley Branch meets on the third Sunday of each month (except July, August, and December) at 2:00 p.m. in the Bradley C. Walters Community Room of the Main Library in Oakland at 125 14th Street ([View Map](#)). Enter on Madison Street.

Free street parking is available, and it is a short walk from the Lake Merritt BART station.



The Berkeley Branch
of the California Writers Club
is proud to sponsor the

Annual Fifth Grade STORY CONTEST

a contest for fifth grade students in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

Teachers in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties may submit one story per student by any number of students.

Entry fee is \$1.00 per submission.

1st Place will receive \$100

2nd Place will receive \$75

3rd Place will receive \$50

and up to nine **4th-Place** winners will receive \$20.

All winners will be awarded certificates at a special ceremony on June 15.

We will also present the teacher of the 1st-place winner with a cash award of \$50.

Deadline: March 12, 2014

Names of winners will be announced on May 15 on CWC website www.cwc-berkeley.org.

Contest Rules:

1. Only teachers may submit entries. Entries from students or parents are not accepted.
2. Stories must be original and the student's own work.
3. Only one entry per student may be submitted. Teachers may submit any number of entries.
4. Entries must be typed, double-spaced, and may not exceed 1,000 words in length.
5. Postmark can not be later than March 12, 2014.
6. Send to Story Contest, 1618 Capistrano Ave., Berkeley CA 94707
7. Entries cannot be returned.
8. Please don't send covers or artwork.
9. First page must include title of the story and the word count.
10. **Do not write author's name anywhere on the story.**
11. On a **separate sheet** write the story's title, student's name, teacher's name and email, and school's name and address. (This sheet will be removed during judging.)

Questions? Write Berkeley.cwc@gmail.com

In order to help students produce their best work, we suggest teachers consult guides on elements of the short story, such as <http://www.coreygreen.com/storytips.html>.

