

KWI: KANSAS WRITER'S INK

Newsletter Vol. 16. No. 1

May 2014

Pre-Meetings at KWI

In case you missed the last issue, there is a new format for pre-meetings with KWI:

We have some new members and others who may not be familiar with how we're doing the 10 a.m. meetings that happen before our "formal" KWI meetings, which begin at 12:30. So I thought I'd remind everyone how this part of the meeting is working these days. We changed these meetings to critique meetings. Those in attendance can bring up to 10 pages, double-spaced, that will be read out loud and critiqued. If we get too many people to get them all done between 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. (when officers have a meeting and others go to lunch), then we'll keep track of who was there and didn't get critiqued so they can go first the next week.

This critiquing has been valuable. First, hearing your work read out loud can be an excellent learning experience. Second, to hear the opinions of others can help to focus in on the good and bad in your chapter or section. Third, it's just fun to hear all the creativity and excellent writing in our group!

If you want to attend and not submit anything for critique, that's fine. Please come and help critique, and we're confident you'll get over your shyness and plop something in the middle of the table for review.

Respectfully submitted by,

Morgan Rothenberger

2014 KWI Board Members

President: Tish Glasson

Vice President: Morgan Rothenberger

Secretary: Billie-Renee Knight

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Membership: Shayne Sawyer

Newsletter: Romie Chavez

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June Online Workshops

By Angela Johnson

Author vs. Editor

Date: June 2–6, 2014

Presenter: Robin Matheson. FMI, <http://crw-rwa.ning.com/page/2013-onlineworkshops>.

Snidely Whiplash, Look Out! Building a Better Villain

Date: June 2–6, 2014

Presenter: Beth Daniels. FMI, <http://crw-rwa.ning.com/page/2013-onlineworkshops>.

Inside the Mind of the American Teenager

Date: June 2–13, 2014

Presenter: Cynthia Richards, M.Ed. FMI, <http://www.frwriters.org/events/online-workshops/>.

Not My Circus, Not My Monkey: Navigating the Social Side of Publishing

Date: June 2–13, 2014

Presenter: Melissa Cutler. FMI, http://rwasd.com/training/index_cutler.html.

Walking That Consent Line

Date: June 2–13, 2014

Presenter: Jeffe Kennedy. FMI, http://rwasd.com/training/index_kennedy.html.

Dust Bunnies

Date: June 2–27, 2014

Presenter: Beth Henderson. FMI, <http://lowcountryrwa.com/workshops/all-workshops/#JUN>.

The Good, the Bad, and the Necessary: Critique Groups

Date: June 2–27, 2014

Presenter: Ally Broadfield. FMI, <http://www.carolinaromancewriters.com/online-workshop-schedule.html>.

Microsoft Word for Writers

Date: June 2–27, 2014

Presenter: Cathy Chant. FMI, <http://lowcountryrwa.com/workshops/all-workshops/#JUN>.

Self-Defense for Writers

Date: June 2–27, 2013

Presenter: Mark Pfeiffer & Wendy ‘Piper’ Rome. FMI, <http://www.rwamysterysuspense.org/coffin.php>.

Some Like It Hot: Writing the Erotic Romance

Date: June 2–27, 2014

Instructor: Louisa Bacio. FYI, <http://www.marylandromancewriters.com/some-like-it-hot-writing-the-erotic-romance/>.

Story Structures: One Shape Doesn’t Fit All

Date: June 2–27, 2013

Presenter: Kate Freiman. FMI, <http://www.rwamysterysuspense.org/coffin.php>.

Ten Minutes to Glory: Your Editor-Agent Pitch

Date: June 2–27, 2014

Presenter: Laurie Schnebly Campbell. FMI, <http://crw-rwa.ning.com/page/2013-onlineworkshops>.

Intermediate Scrivener

Date: June 2–July 11, 2014

Presenter: Rebeca Schiller. FMI, <http://crw-rwa.ning.com/page/2013-onlineworkshops>.

Engage Your Reader with Attention-Grabbing Prose

Date: June 9–20, 2014

Presenter: MM Pollard. FMI, <http://lowcountryrwa.com/workshops/all-workshops/#JUN>.

The Art of Blurb Writing

Date: June 9–27, 2014

Presenter: Beth Fred. FMI, <http://www.yosemiteromancewriters.com/workshops>.

Grammar that Matters

Date: June 15–July 13, 2014

Presenter: MM Pollard. FMI, <http://www.occrwa.org/onlineclasses.html>.

Overcoming Creative Impasses

Date: June 16–27, 2014

Presenter: Sonja Foust. FMI, <http://heartofcarolina.org/calendar/>.

Secrets of a Research Ninja

Date: June 16–27, 2014

Presenter: Kristen Koster. FMI, http://rwasd.com/training/index_koster.html.

Breathing Life Into Your Scene

Date: June 16–27, 2014

Presenter: Beth Corneilson. FMI, <http://www.rwaonlinechapter.org/campus.htm>

A Great Loss for the Theater

By Eleanor Liu

I might have been a great actress. Probably every eager Thespian longs for a part in a play by Shakespeare and feels that if he can be successful in it he will be certain of acclaim and a secure place in the theater.

I had several teachers in Elementary Scholl who were probably disillusioned actresses themselves and were determined to make at least one of their pupils a real actress. I can remember being a rosebud, violet, brownie, an elf and a monkey in various productions. I had a great deal of conceit about my acting ability never doubting that I was assigned each part because of my great talent.

One of my teachers had a strong predilection for Shakespeare and determined that we would present A MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT'S DREAM.

The production was to preserve the Elizabethan words of the original and our scenery was the natural setting of a suburban dell, in our school yard. From the other roles I had played it was not surprising I was given the part of Puck.

The teacher/director coached us all on how to perform and her idea was that Puck was a pure bundle of mischief. I was told to be a little whirlwind, to bound in, cavort and never be still a minute.

Our mothers made our costumes, which the teacher had not checked out. Since they were fragile and perishable we did not have a dress rehearsal. My mother had copied from a picture of a court jester. My cap had three stuffed horns, and the costume was a tight suit that covered me from neck, wrists to ankles with alternating red and green stripes and on it she had sewn about a hundred bells.

I made my entrance at the beginning of the second act, when I bounded onto the stage, began to dance up and down, cock my head and wave my arms. It must have been superb! I rang like sleigh bells and the spectators were enchanted! When I got to the center of the stage and went into my gestures the ringing became louder. I had my doubts about the gestures but I had been schooled by a responsible adult so I continued to play the part as I had practiced. My first speech to a fairy was mercifully brief, I said: "How now, Spirit, whither wander you?"

She began the speech bravely, "Over hill, over dale, through bush, through briar over park, over pale, through flood, through fire ...

The rest of the cast, being wholly unprepared for my sound effects, were mostly struck speechless, especially when my long waving gestures were made according to the cues in their lines.

By the time my first long speech came, the audience seemed to be in the throes of helpless gaiety. Every time my bells rang, laughter from the spectators mounted and everything else became inaudible. Someone in the wings called out, "Louder, you will have to talk louder!" The director seemed to be in a terrible state; "for heaven's sake, stop jingling," she said.

I spoke louder and tried to stop jingling but to no avail. I had no control over the bells. By the end of the speech, I was shouting, so was the audience and the bells continued to ring.

All this had a bad effect on the fairy who was near nervous collapse but she bravely began her next lines. I forgot that the rules had been changed and when she spoke my next cue I began my gestures with a furious jingling.

The fairy tried again, "Are you not he, that ___ that ___ and "stopped, looking helplessly to the wings.

A loud whisper said: "Say anything, anything" Nothing came, the fairy closed her eyes and shuddered.

The voice came again – Puck, say your next lines." Miraculously, I remembered them and was about to begin when the fairy's mouth also opened and in a high thin but clear monotone began:

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated _____"

She recited it through to the end and it was certainly a most successful speech.

I can't remember how we got back to the dull, normal thread of our play after that speech, but we did because it went on.

At the intermission, the teacher cut my bells off with her nail scissors and my rendition of Shakespeare quieted down and seemed flat and dull.

After that play, I couldn't quite see myself as God's gift to the theater.

The 7 Tools of Dialogue: A Review

By: Romie Chavez

The key to a great story is having all the necessary components to make it a cohesive entity, in which everything works together to produce a compelling tale. One of the areas that can be difficult for some authors is dialogue. Thanks to KWI member, Shayne Sawyer, I had the chance to read the *7 Tools of Dialogue* by Brian Klems, in which he has constructed his own list of favorite dialogue contrivances that could provide a welcome insight into making characters voices come alive. While I won't give you all his bullet points, I'm going to talk about some of the highlights of the article.

The first point the author makes is to 'let it flow.' We are all familiar with advice about writing everything down in the first draft and coming back later to fix mistakes. The same can be said about dialogue—get it all out. It will help you create lines that you never would have thought of if you spent time trying to get it all right the first time. In some cases, starting with dialogue first, helps to develop the scene. By doing this, you're recording what your characters are arguing about. Once that's finished, you begin to get a sense of what your characters are trying to say and what's going on in their world. From there, you can go back and write the narrative.

Acting can be a useful technique in creating good dialogue. Don't be afraid to act out your narrative. Of course, please do this in the comfort of your own home, unless you want to freak out your neighbors—which could be kind of funny, but I digress.

Kelms discusses how he attended an improvisation class in New York and met a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright. When asked why he was enrolled in the class, the man said improvisational work was a great exercise for learning to write dialogue. If that's not your cup of tea, the author tells us to do a Woody Allen. He uses the courtroom scene in Allen's movie *Bananas* as an example of this to drive home his point. In the movie, Allen represents himself at the trial. He takes the witness stand and begins cross-examining himself, running back-and-forth from the witness box.

Other interesting points the author makes is to 'sidestep the obvious.' Common mistakes that first-time authors make is creating dialogue that is a simple back-and-forth exchange. For every line of dialogue, the previous lines will often repeat a word or phrase.

An example the author gives is this:

"Hello, Mary."

"Hi, Sylvia."

"My, that's a wonderful outfit you're wearing."

"Outfit? You mean this old thing?"

"Old thing! It looks practically new."

"It's not new, but thank you for saying so."

What this example demonstrates is how there are no surprises, and the reader drifts along with little to no interest. Kelms reconfigures his example and gives the reader a revised version of the same conversation.

"Hello, Mary."

"Sylvia. I didn't see you."

"My, that's a wonderful outfit you're wearing."

"I need a drink."

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KWI Program for May

Billie-Renee Knight will review the various aspects of Point of View through examples and a few activities from her high school creative writing class. After presenting the examples and characteristics of various types of POV, the group will entertain one another with writing activities exploring these techniques in a write/share round robin.

Dialogue

From this, we gather that it is unclear what is actually going on with the scene. Yet, it's more interesting than its predecessor in that we pick up on subtle underlying currents within the dialogue. From there, Kelms takes the example one step further to show how you could develop the story around the dialogue.

"Hello, Mary."

"Sylvia. I didn't see you."

"My, that's a wonderful outfit you're wearing."

"Where is he, Sylvia?"

The sidestep technique can help the author come up with multiple directions in which to take the story by creating compelling dialogue that isn't bland. Who is "he," exactly? What role does Sylvia play in all of this? With this tool, the author can experiment to find the right path that works best for them.

The final point that I will address is titled 'Drop Words.' Kelms discusses how removing certain words here and there, can create a feeling of verisimilitude with dialogue. This technique was a favorite of Elmore Leonard.

He uses the following example:

"Your dog was killed?"

"Yes, run over by a car."

"What did you call it?"

"It was a she. I called her Tuffy."

Elmore Leonard did the dialogue in this form (taken from *Out of Sight*):

"Your dog was killed?"

"Got run over by a car."

"What did you call it?"

"Was a she, name Tuffy."

The dialogue from the examples above sound natural. Words are dropped, leaving the reader feeling as if they are reading real speech. However, the author points out that you can overdo this technique along with many of the others he lists. Choose wisely when it comes to your characters and how they interact with one another, this technique may not work in all situations, but if used properly, could create a cohesive strain of dialogue.

Overall, the techniques are interesting and good reminders of how to handle character dialogue as well as building a scene around it. If you're interested in checking out the rest of the article, check out the address below. It's a great read!

http://www.writersdigest.com/online-editor/the-7-tools-of-dialogue?et_mid=673791&rid=239453005

KWI Next Meeting:

[May Meeting](#)

Where:

Topeka Shawnee County
Public Library

When:

May 24th, 2014

Topic: Viewpoint

[June Meeting](#)

Where:

Topeka Shawnee County
Public Library

When:

June 28th, 2014

Topic:

Critique session and mini-writing retreat. More details to follow next month.

Financials

April 2014

Beginning balance: \$2,814.21

Receipts: 0

Expenses: 0

Ending balance \$2,814.21

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