

# The Just Write Life

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## President's Article

### Commanding Your Muse

by Ann Gordon

For a decade I had this on again, off again relationship with my Muse. For the most part, I'd plod on with my typical daily life until inspiration struck. Out of nowhere a story arc or unforgettable character would flood my mind and I'd drop whatever I was doing to write it down. I'd rush to write five or more pages while the idea was hot. These moments were exhilarating. The new story would show promise, the characters memorable, the setting vivid. When I finished, I'd grant a workable name to the pages and slip them into a folder, certain my Muse would soon revisit me with more of the story.

But much of the time she didn't grant me another word about that tale, leaving me with characters but no arc, situations with no theme, story beginning with no middle or end. Eventually I'd type up the handwritten pages and file them in my computer's "Ideas" folder. Unfortunately, over the years this spurt and famine process left me with thirty promising beginnings or middles that weren't marketable because I didn't know what to do with them. I couldn't even combine them because the various pieces/parts had nothing in common.

I wondered about that doggone Muse and her fickleness. I had no idea how to coax her return, so I'd wait for another of her magical flashes of inspiration, which might occur in the middle of fixing dinner or doing the laundry – or may not show up at all.

Thus, I researched "inspiration," hoping to find an elixir that would coax the Muse to return. Luckily, I found what I needed in a Jack London quote: "You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club." With a club? Hmm...that equates to getting stern. As a former middle school teacher and mother of three sons, I had some experience with that.

Instead of waiting for the Muse to drop in and dazzle me, I decided to set a time every day when I'd demand her attention. Authors William Faulkner and Stephen King both swear by this plan. Show up at your desk at 8:00 a.m. and expect the words to come. As a catalyst, I began dusting off one or two of my partial stories, sharpen half a dozen pencils, and then sit with lined paper in front of me, calmly pondering what I'd already penned while waiting for the Muse to show. And before long, she would. This way I've been able to flesh out story snippets that languished in my desk for years.

Now, instead of just waiting for the Muse to drop by, I set appointments for her; and as long as I expectantly show up at my desk, she does too. Looks like I found my club. Thanks, Jack.



## Upcoming Events



**The Pre-Quill Conference**  
April 20, 2024

The Pre-Quill Conference will be on April 20th, 2024, at Salt Lake City Marriott University Park at 480 Wakara Way, Salt Lake City, UT 84108.

Cost is \$30.00.

The Quills Conference is the LUW's premium writer's weekend at Marriott University Park, Salt Lake City; it's streamed online for virtual attendees.

Come learn what you need to be successful in writing and publishing.

Whether you're looking for traditional publishing or exploring indie publishing, find insider tips from top professionals.

Visit <https://www.leagueofutahwriters.com> for more information.



## New Members

Welcome to the following new members of Just Write:

- ❖ Jessica Gustafson
- ❖ Rachel Hanks



**“Reading is dreaming with open eyes.”**

**– unknown**

## Member Spotlight

### Lorraine Jeffery



Lorraine Jeffery delights in her closeup view of the Utah mountains after living and working in Texas, New Mexico, Ohio, Georgia, and Oregon. She earned a MLIS degree in library science, and managed public libraries for over twenty years. She states that her real education didn't take place in a classroom, but rather in her home, where she and her husband raised their ten children (eight diverse adopted children and two biological). There is an old adage that states that with age comes wisdom, but she contends that sometimes age shows up by itself.

Her prose has appeared in many publications, including *Persimmon Tree*, *Focus on the Family*, *Elsewhere*, *Ocotillo*, *Utah Senior Review* and *Mature Years*. Her first novel, *Death is Always a Resident* was published by Cedarfort Press.

She has won poetry prizes in state and national contests and published over 200 poems in journals and anthologies including *Clockhouse*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Rockhurst Review*, and *Bacopa Press*. Her first book, *When the Universe Brings Us Back*, was published in 2022. Her chapbook titled, *Tethers*, was published by Kelsay Books in 2023 and her second chapbook titled *Saltwater Soul* will be published by Kelsay Books in 2024.

## Member Article

### Trust the Creative Journey That Is...Writing!

by Nicole Klunder

The magic of the creative process in writing is just that...Magic!

I tend to forget.

I allow myself to get overwhelmed with the entire writing process. My focus turns toward: how will I ever get this book done, and how will I create the characters, setting, and plot?

I have learned so much over the past three years while writing, but most recently from the writer groups I am a part of. I have digested little bits of tips here and there to add to my writer's toolbox.

One important tip was to create a daily habit of making a writing appointment with myself. Find that time that works best for you and it will turn into a habit just like locking your front door and brushing your teeth!

The story is the journey and it can change and develop as you go. You don't need all the answers when you first start. Enjoy the journey!

#### When you sit down to write think of these key components:

##### **Opening of Story:**

Create that hook for the reader! Even at the beginning of each chapter, it should pull the reader in, and then leave them hanging at the end of each chapter.

##### **Return to these simple steps to write your story:**

Thought, action, and dialogue in every sentence!

##### **Characters are the most important:**

I know I get obsessed with characters from romance novels, horror movies, and so on.

What do we love so much about a book story or movie?

Characters! Sure, the setting and plot are exciting and intriguing. I happen to love a fun exciting and whimsical setting (cover to match), but there is nothing like the wonderful characters we fall in love and become obsessed with. Romance is easy but in horror, why do we love and laugh with the villains?

Characters are everything to the story!

You can use personality tests, conduct questions and answers for your characters, and brainstorm using character profiles

##### **Plot:**

Plot is just as important. Make sure there aren't any plot holes and that the narrative is running smoothly and makes sense. Always keep it exciting so the reader doesn't get bored. Check with critique groups for other eyes on your story.

##### **Theme:**

When you let your story world flow, it comes naturally along with the authors voice.

#### Recent Discoveries

**Return to the beginning of your story:** Add more emotion to each scene. This reminded me of the fact that I have this wonderful story written and X amount of words completed. It just needs some TLC. You've got this!



**Create a collage:** This was the best advice I received. I researched pictures of my vision for the setting and characters of my story. I printed pictures and glued them to colorful scrapbook paper to visually experience the world I am creating. You can add words, stickers, or anything that is in your world to make it more realistic.

**Write your ending:** Finishing is very final. For me it was. The feeling is different before the ending was written versus after the ending was written. This is probably why I took so long to write the ending. But, I did write it naturally and let it flow out of me.

You can feel the growth of the characters and how different they have transformed through their journey in their story. You can also plot better leading up to the ending of your HEA.

**Create Book Back Covers:** I enjoyed doing this a long time ago well before I had much written as the story, to kick start my story idea and plot. I also used the GPT chatbot for extra help as a summary outline so it could inspire me to visualize the plot or plot holes I had.

**Invest in a book organizing scenes:** Develop the character's voice, emotional state, and physical condition. Also, summarize the scene, explaining why it is an important one/what are you trying to say about life, how you want readers to feel. Additionally, identify the disruption in the scene.

Again, enjoy the process.

## Links to Websites

### Four Links to Websites

by Ann Gordon

Last month I stumbled upon these entertaining and informative Internet sites. Hope you find some of them worthwhile.



1. This writing offers a long list of psychological-horror prompts. Many reminded me of plots used in episodes of *Twilight Zone*, *Tales from the Darkside*, and *One Step Beyond*.  
<https://www.novelrocket.com/psychological-horror-writing-prompts/>
2. What fun: "Tips for writing a novel with an ambiguous ending." The article's title reminded me of the funny (but seemingly pointless) movie: *Asteroid City*.  
<https://www.novelrocket.com/what-are-some-tips-for-writing-a-novel-with-an-ambiguous-ending>
3. I adore this list! If you haven't read Chuck Palahniuk's "Top 13 Writing Tips," please take a minute to do so. This is a great list of to-dos:  
<https://bobbypowers.net/chuck-palahniuks-top-13-writing-tips/>
4. This interesting article, "Time to Kill a Book," contains an author's reluctant admission that he has written a bad book which he needs to burn or bury.  
<https://dahaines.com/time-to-kill-a-book/>

**"If you realized how powerful your thoughts are, you'd never think a negative thought again."**

**– Natural Life**

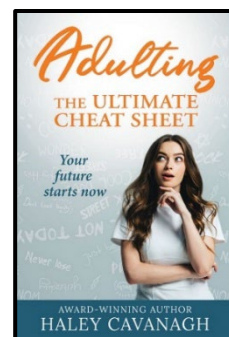
## Who's Penned What

**Haley Cavanaugh's** *Adulting: The Ultimate Cheat Sheet* came out with Cedar Fort Publishing on March 12th.

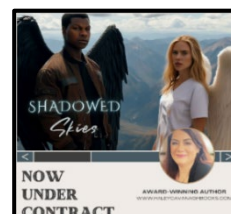
Embark on a journey to adulthood mastery with *Adulting: The Ultimate Cheat Sheet*. Unlock the secrets to a well-rounded adult life with clear, concise, and invaluable advice on budgeting, cooking, time management, building meaningful relationships, and so much more! This comprehensive guide is your roadmap to taking charge of your life, offering you the tools and wisdom you need to sculpt the life of your dreams.

Join author, Haley Cavanaugh—military veteran, devoted wife and mother, and award-winning author—in waving goodbye to uncertainty and hesitation and embracing the fulfilling life you've envisioned. Don't just drift through adulthood—thrive in it. The future is yours to shape, and this book is your indispensable guide on the journey to living the adult life you truly desire.

[Purchase the book on Amazon.](#)



**Haley Cavanaugh's** Dystopian YA Fantasy novel, *Shadowed Skies*, has officially found a home with Collective Ink Books' Our Street Books Imprint. *Shadowed Skies* is set to hit the shelves in Fall 2024!



**Michelle Chamberlain's** debut novel, *The Aviator Awakening* launched on February 29<sup>th</sup>.

*The Aviator Awakening* features a rebellious cybernetic character comparable to the protagonist in *The Murderbot Diaries* in a contained (and alien) setting similar to *Project Hail Mary*. This story will appeal to readers who enjoy character-driven SciFi with some elements of horror and slow-burn romance.

[\\$5 Available at Amazon/B&N/and more](#)

**Nicole Dvorak** published a poem and two paintings in *Heritage Writers Anthology: A collection of Prose, Poetry, and Art*.

**Alex Hugie** recently published a YA urban fantasy novel called *Loophole* through an indie publisher.

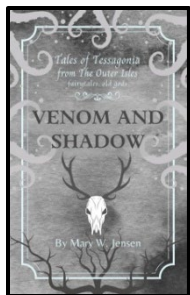
In Alannah's world, every moral choice you make changes your physical appearance—for better or worse. Any good deed increases beauty, while any misdeed leaves an immediate, ugly mark. Alannah grows up in a society that uses this natural system to judge the “goodness” or “badness” of each individual. Consequently, she wants to be as good and beautiful as possible—until her penchant for finding ways around the rules leads her to discover that people have found devious ways to abuse this system.

[Purchase the novel on Amazon.](#)



**Lorraine Jeffery** published poems *Stoke* and *As Gray* in *Encore* (the National Federation of State Poetry Societies publication); *Booked Retro* in *Truth Serum*; *Frank* and *Night Watch* in *Ink to Paper* (Indiana); *Heartwood and Owls* and *Eye Witness* in *Cadence* (Florida); *Planning Ahead* and *Empty-Breasted* in *Ohio Poetry Days*; and *Unintended Consequences* in *Naugatuck River Review*.





Mary W. Jensen's *Venom and Shadow* is a fairy-tale retelling novella, book four in the Tales of Tessagonia series. Published on February 20, 2024.

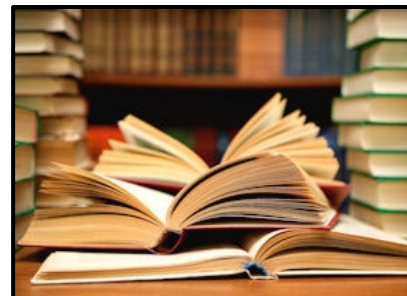
When Fatinah's husband is bitten by a venomous snake, she learns he has seven days to live. The Shadow Market may have a remedy, if she can get there in time. What will she be willing to do to save the man she loves?

[Purchase the novel on Amazon.](#)

## Book Review: *Make Every Word Count*

Posted on Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers by **Ann Gordon**

The full title of this book is: *Make Every Word Count: a guide to writing that works—for fiction and nonfiction* by Gary Provost. Gary, an author, speaker, and writing coach, had a unique sense of humor that flavored his writing and speaking. While I've often found plowing through a grammar or writing book tedious, Gary believes in writing tight: That is, he gets in, gets to the point, and moves on. Although he's a word-count minimalist, he still makes room for humor. I found his writing style delightful.



I've been writing since grade school. I've studied writing, taught it, and published, yet I marvel why it took me so long to run across this book. I can't remember what I was looking for among the used books on eBay, but this one caught my eye. With a title like *Make Every Word Count*, I couldn't resist buying it. This ex-library book from Austin College is a first edition hardback, published in 1980. Although I already own half a dozen writing books I've yet to read, I started reading this one the day it arrived.

In Part One, Gary opened with the question, "Can writing be taught?" His response: "No. Throw this book away." The following paragraph reads, "Yes, yes, of course writing can be taught." Nice intro. He often refers to "writing that works," meaning that every word in a sentence must be doing some work "or it should be fired." Ah, a guy after my own heart. In critique sessions, I often note that a piece is "too wordy." On this subject he wrote, "The smaller the number of words you use to contain a thought or an image, the more impact that thought or image will have."

He explains that "pruning your prose" need not be a chore, that it can be "as much fun as any word game." Throughout the book, Gary paused to suggest word games that authors could use to improve their writing. Great exercises for writing students.

I wanted to jump for joy when I read his *Coffee Break* about writing at McDonald's because I've written many stories and articles doing the same thing. In Moab, the McDonald's has a large, lounge-type room with lots of windows where visitors can eat a Big Breakfast and drink cups of coffee for as long as they want. I'd sit there for three hours or more just reading and writing. In Gary's words, "I go to McDonald's not for the gourmet food, but because I can have a table to myself without being waited on or charged a minimum." He claims that his "McDonald's fix" always proved to be a productive period. Well, it always was for me. I really miss that place.

In Part Two, Gary discussed the various nuances of *Style*. He pointed out that although there are dozens of style guides, they don't always agree, which most writers have discovered. Nevertheless, he wisely adds: "The important thing is not to be 'right,' but to be consistent." Yep.

In Part Three, the section on *Tone* begins with the line, "Your writing won't work if the reader doesn't know how he's supposed to feel." If the author's words don't encourage an emotional response in the reader, the reader will soon find something more interesting to read...or do. By *tone* Gary meant "a

consistent attitude about the material, an attitude that the writer weaves into his work. He expects the reader to maintain the same attitude..." Gary advised writers to refrain from sending the reader mixed messages, like depicting a vigorous chase scene full of tension and fear yet taking a moment to describe the awesome orange sunset on the horizon. That may seem like an obvious gaffe, but it happens.

A quick search reveals many instances of Gary Provost's famous quote about sentence length, which begins with: "This sentence has five words." The quote is on Goodreads, Rutgers University-Camden, Stetson University, Tumblr ... it's all over. Naturally that famous paragraph is highlighted on the site devoted to Gary: <https://www.garyprovost.com/how-to-tips/>

This book contains eight parts, each short and succinct, demonstrating how Gary took his own advice: *Make Every Word Count*.

Happy writing!

## Member Article

### 5 Things I Learned During my Master's Degree in English Creative Writing

by Mariah Hawkins

1. **There's an audience for everything.** Don't believe me? Go read *Predator* by Ander Monson. This book is about someone's takeaway from the movie *Predator*. I am not the audience for it; however, I do believe that if someone can write and sell a book about watching a movie over and over again, then at least one person will be interested in your work.
2. **You are not your work.** Look it's hard. I get it. Part of me loved going to workshops and getting input, but a bigger part of me was afraid of people absolutely hating my work—and therefore me. I had to take a deep breath and remind myself that I am not the character they are insulting. I'm not the world they don't understand. Criticism of your work is not criticism of you and the more you can separate the two the better it is for your mental well-being.
3. **Some people just will not get the genre you're going for.** In other words, though feedback is important to get, not everyone will give good feedback. I had a teacher who didn't seem to understand that high-heels in a steampunk universe were more or less fine. She was focused on the high-heels for some reason talking about historical inaccuracies as if clockwork fish actually existed. Even smart people and experienced writers won't always get what you are going for, and that has to be okay.
4. **You can spend agonizing hours on something and it still might not get the point across to your readers.** The thing is, no matter how much you labor over something, no matter how perfect you think it is, a reader telling you their experience isn't wrong. I had a workshop situation in which I was very proud of my piece because I'd spent hours revising it. Let me tell you, I was shocked when everyone was in agreement that the parents in the story were acting inconsistent with their "established" conservative and traditional viewpoints. They were supposed to be liberals. Everything in the scene had a different tone if you were unaware of that.
5. **Outlining is imperative.** Otherwise, you end up like me with 40,000 words of vampires being dimwits and not much else. I am the queen of the pantsers, but I've had to admit it doesn't work; before you get mad, please let me explain. Outlines will look different from person to person. For some they need each chapter outlined before they write. For others it can be a loose thing. For me, who likes to see where my characters take me, the best outlines I can have are character arcs. The best thing that happened to my writing was a professor asking me what a character's goals were and how they were going to change. So, I do character arcs, and they can be simple. I have one character whose arc is literally 'refuses to kill out of morals' to 'will kill just about anyone without remorse.' Basically, if you have a direction to go in of some kind, it will save you a lot of trouble in the future.

## Website Author Bios

**Just Write Members:** Please check out your website bio page and let Ann or Nancy know if you would like any changes to your writing bio. <http://justwritechapter.org/MemberBios.html>

**If your bio isn't on the website, and you want it to be included, send Nancy or Ann a picture of yourself and an author bio no greater than 125 words.** Questions you could answer include:

- When did you realize you wanted to write? At what time in your life, etc.
- What genres do you like to read?
- What are you currently working on?
- Do you have a writing schedule? If so, what's that like?
- Links to social media.

## Critique Sessions and Submission Guidelines

Critique sessions run twice a month. Invitation emails are usually sent the first and sixteenth of each month; these invitations include an RSVP deadline. Once the deadline has passed, the spreadsheet with current group information is sent. Each session is generally divided into two or three groups with three to six participants each, depending on how many members participate.

Submissions are then emailed to each member of the participant's group and returned by the end-of-session deadline, usually the fifteenth or the last day of the month. If you want to read a submission from someone in a different group in addition to those in your own group, you may request their work, but please do not expect them to read yours in return.

Fiction and non-fiction chapters, short stories, articles, and poems are all welcome in our critique sessions...query letters too.

### Submission Guidelines

- 3,200 words or less (not including any synopses at the beginning)
- Include a synopsis if there are chapters/ sections prior to your current submission
- 12-point or larger serif font (such as Times New Roman or Cambria)
- Double or 1.5 spaced lines
- Word document format (.doc, .docx)
- Include your name or initials in the filename
- Submit within three days of receiving the group spreadsheet

### Critiquing Guidelines

- Please make at least six suggestions or comments in your reviews (AI grammar programs should not be used)
- Be honest, kind, and encouraging
- Corrections and comments are made using the "Track Changes" and "New Comment" features under the "Review" tab in Word
- Include a note at the end of the document or in the email with an overall review or comment
- Ideally, return your reviews by the last day of the session

## Chapter Officers

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ann Gordon, President<br/>(<a href="mailto:ann@gordoncomputer.com">ann@gordoncomputer.com</a>)</li> <li>▪ Tim Keller, PR and Voting Proxy<br/>(<a href="mailto:writerscache435@gmail.com">writerscache435@gmail.com</a>)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Website: Ann Gordon</li> <li>▪ Nancy Roe, Newsletter Editor<br/>(<a href="mailto:Newsletter.JustWriteChapter@gmail.com">Newsletter.JustWriteChapter@gmail.com</a>)</li> </ul> |
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**"Think of it this way: Failure is a single event, while success is a process."**

**– Dale T. Phillips**