

SIERRA WRITERS
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Fall 2014

Special features:

- * Ron Cherry's Fiction Critique Group
- * Linda Horngreen on "to be" verbs
- * The Women's Writing Salon
- * Getting reviews

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October 2014

President's Message

Dear Sierra Writers,

Welcome to the 2014-2015 season. We have an exciting program and some house-keeping matters to attend to. In addition to the Fall program (see page 8), we look forward to a session on publishing an ebook (January 2015), publishing a hard-cover book (February 2015), publishing in a literary magazine (April 2015) and a session devoted to pesky problems authors have to resolve like POV, dialogues, and "show not tell."

A couple of opportunities are begging to be filled (see page 7)—one for a Communications coordinator that requires a commitment of about two hours a month and the other for a Room Setup Coordinator that requires a commitment to arrive for our monthly meetings in time to obtain the key from the library, set the chairs and if necessary the audio visual equipment (45 minutes a month).

We also have a financial opportunity since we have been collecting money for the Young Writers' Awards and now no longer present those due to the lack of a coordinator for this worthy program. Please let the Board know your views on how best to spend the \$3,000 or so that we currently have. Among suggestions under consideration is giving the money in some portion to high school seniors as a scholarship for their further education.

Speaking of finances, the new season also means DUES (\$25) are now gratefully collected.

Finally, I am taking the opportunity at this beginning of a new year to ask for your thoughts, suggestions, etc., on what should be the **Vision, Mission, and Goals** of the Sierra Writers' Group. Please take a moment to think of what you would like to see the group do and let us know. Call or email any member of the Board—see page 7.

Sincerely,

Susan Gabrielle



“You must have chaos within you to give birth to a dancing star.”

—Friedrich Nietzsche

What: A meeting of fellow fiction writers who constructively critique each other’s work.

Why: To improve their writing.

How: Bring a chapter (5 pages or so) of your writing with copies for all attendees.

“I can’t imagine anyone really enjoying a book and reading it only once.”

— C. S. Lewis

Ron Cherry’s Fiction Critique Group

While it is true that, as Anne Tyler once said, “writing is a solitary occupation,” that does not mean writers do not need any input on their writing. We are not hermits. Having a constructive critique of what you write is of immense value to a serious writer. Having that critique come from other writers of the same type of text (fiction or nonfiction, poetry or prose) makes it even more valuable. And that is exactly what the Sierra Writers fiction-writers group offers and is open to all its members.

While prose is the medium of these writers, they have varied genres. The group has included, either in the past or currently, writers of chick-lit, mysteries, children’s, medical thrillers, literary fiction, humor, young adult, post-apocalypse, fantasy, science fiction, mainstream, noir, historical, paranormal, romance, short story, flash and suspense fiction. If you write fiction and do not fit in any of these categories, it doesn’t matter. It is not an exclusive list. Remember the adage that “writers are readers.” Even if your particular genre is not in the list, you can profit greatly from having other writers read your work and comment upon it.

Whether it be in the area of grammar, punctuation, continuity, realistic dialogue, plot clarity and/or consistency, having objective readers review one’s work can help a writer cope with those common problematic issues. Whether you use all the suggestions you receive from the group in your writing or not is up to you, but at least you will have their input to consider. Your fellow Sierra Writers fiction writers are a valuable editorial asset and they are free. Some are published, some are not, but all have the same passion: to write the best fiction they can. Join the fiction writers group and take your writing to another level.

Who: The Sierra Writers Fiction Group.

When: Every other Tuesday at 6:30 PM.

Where: Ron Cherry’s house, romuluswolf@comcast.net or [\(530\)478-5616](tel:5304785616) for more info.

What: A meeting of fellow fiction writers who constructively critique each other’s work.

Why: To improve their writing.

How: Bring a chapter (5 pages or so) of your writing with copies for all attendees.

"It is only when our characters and events begin to disobey us that they begin to live."
— John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

In the Review Group, under its Discussion Board, check out a couple or so threads in the first section, "Advice - how we do things here."

"When you are describing,
A shape, or sound, or tint;
Don't state the matter plainly,
But put it in a hint;
And learn to look at all things,
With a sort of mental squint."
— Lewis Carroll

Getting reviews on the web

By Hock Tjoa

Go to "www.goodreads.com/group/show/78683-review-group."

In the Review Group, under its Discussion Board, check out a couple or so threads in the first section, "Advice - how we do things here."

Then go to the section "Review Rounds" to see how the groups/ rounds work.

You'll have to join Goodreads--it is free. Then you'll have to join the Review Group; that too is free.

Watch to sign up in the Groups (a new one is formed almost every week or two). Each Group consists of ten authors/reviewers, each of whom reviews four books, thus avoiding reciprocal reviews. You commit to reviewing four books and four others will review yours. (No free rides.)

Several other Groups in Goodreads organize reviews also but The Review Group is one I prefer. One new group, started this July, seems promising but I do not have direct experience with it. (Try this link www.goodreads.com/group/show/139546-goodreads-reviewers-association)

The whole Goodreads web-site is a lot like the Smithsonian, impossible to see everything in a day or a week. Here are a few more groups you might like:

Beta/proof readers—www.goodreads.com/group/show/104076-beta-proof-readers. People willing to read drafts and give comments.

Resources, discussions about bloggers, editors, cover artists, formatters, etc. within Goodreads Authors/Readers Group—www.goodreads.com/topic/group_folder/116489?group_id=26989.

You can (and should) set up a profile of yourself on Goodreads and link any books published if it is available on Amazon. You can also, and should, link your blog to to profile.

Women's Writing Salon at the Northstar House on August 17.

See article on page 5.



At the June meeting of Jan Westmore’s Sierra Writers Nonfiction Critique Group, I was told my writing was riddled with “to be” verbs, and I needed to get rid of them. In the back of my mind, I remembered hearing about this kind of verb, but couldn’t remember why it is something to avoid. Trusting the group’s advice, I hurried home to my computer where I could examine the issue more closely.

My very first Google query revealed countless articles describing why “to be” verbs are undesirable. “To be” verbs, and conjugations thereof, are vague and lack specificity. They’re dull and boring. “The cat is lazy” vs. “The cat lounges lazily between feedings without goals or ambition.” Here is a list of the offending verbs:

am, is, are, was, were,
be, being, been, do, does,
did, has, have, had, can, may, might, must,
will, shall, would, should, could.

Sing them all to the tune of Row, Row, Row Your Boat to help memorize them.

Several articles describe how a writer can highlight and isolate problem verbs using the search and replace feature in his or her word processing program. Search for a verb, replace it with the same verb highlighted, then save. The writer can then methodically go through the text replacing each dull passive highlighted verb with a more descriptive action verb.

I followed the instructions and immediately saw what the critique group had already seen in my writing. Peppered across my screen lay the highlighted inactive verbs in living color. I spent the rest of the day changing a dull, boring script and bringing it back to life. The time I spent on this exercise more than paid for itself when I compared before and after versions of my document.

For the more seasoned writer, used to grabbing the most descriptive of verbs and skillfully applying them to the page, this exercise may be unnecessary. For the rest of us, I am here to tell you the exercise works and will make a difference in your writing.

Dues Notice

Sierra Writers will begin a new year on September 1st. Remember to renew your membership by mailing a \$25 check, payable to "Sierra Writers." The address is: Sierra Writers, P.O. Box 1595, Grass Valley, CA 95945. Membership makes you eligible to participate in critique groups, insures you will receive the quarterly newsletter, and maintains your contact information in the annual directory. You won't want to miss out on the monthly meetings, a friendly venue providing peer support and enriching speakers. Links on our ever-expanding website are a great way to attract new followers to your writing endeavors. *Sierra Writers* sponsors an annual young writers contest for area students and supports the Nevada County library. What a terrific organization. Renew your membership today, you'll have one less thing to do tomorrow!

The Women's Writing Salon of Nevada County

Call for Submissions for the Women's Writing Salon.

**"There are
three rules for
writing a novel.
Unfortunately,
no one knows
what they are."**

— **W. Somerset
Maugham**

The Women's Writing Salon is seeking well-polished literary work from both emerging and established writers for the upcoming Fireside Salon in November 2014 and Grand Salon in early 2015. If you've read before and would like to read again, please contact Patricia at her email listed below. If you haven't read your writing before, please submit to Patricia the *actual* prose piece or poems you would like to read. The reading should be no longer than ten minutes. The Submissions Committee provides guidance in selecting the readers so that we have well-balanced selections of prose and poetry at each Salon. Final selections are made on that basis. The Women's Writing Salon was founded in 2006 by Gail Entrekin and Ronnie Paul to showcase local women writers. Betsy Fasbinder and Patricia Dove Miller continued the popular quarterly Salons from 2008–2013, holding them at local coffee houses.

In early 2014, the three current producers of the Salon—Patricia Dove Miller, Joan Keyes, and Shirley DicKard—launched a new format of holding one or two large *Grand Salons* and one or two intimate *Fireside Salons* each year. Each Women's Writing Salon features six established and emerging local women writers who share their works-in-progress, completed, and published writings.

**"I like
nonsense, it
wakes up the
brain cells.
Fantasy is a
necessary
ingredient in
living."**

— **Dr. Seuss**

The large **Grand Salon** is for writers who would like to reach a large number of appreciative listeners, and will be well-publicized in the media. The first Grand Salon was held in the historic North Star Conservancy House in Grass Valley, the home of Gold Rush author and illustrator, Mary Hallock Foote.

The smaller **Fireside/Garden Salons** are held in private homes, similar to a house concert. These feature six readers and two to three of their invited guests. This Salon may appeal to writers who would prefer to read for a smaller, more intimate audience, with time for reflection, conversation, a glass of wine and appetizers. The next Fireside Salon will be in November.

Cont'd on next page

Resources

Need to organize your notes? Work on more than one device? Try **Evernote**. It lets you set up various folders (recipes, pets, new poetry, plot for "50 shades of Orange," etc.) and have notes in each folder—and if you have this installed on a laptop and a tablet and a smart-phone ... the application will keep all your notes synchronized! Really. Remember your user i.d. and password though.

Have you visited any great websites for writers? Found must-have software, applications, or tools? Share what works for you.

Groups

Note: Critique and writing support groups are open only to members of *Sierra Writers*

Poetry Critique Group

Contact Susan Gabrielle

s_gabrielle@sbcglobal.net

Fiction critique group

For information, contact Ron Cherry (530)

478-5616; romuluswolf@comcast.net

This group is actively seeking new members. Critique includes editing comments as well as structural and narrative suggestions. We hope you'll join us!

Nonfiction critique group

For information, contact Jan Westmore (530)

265-0718; jwestmore@sbcglobal.net

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If you want help starting a critique group, or want to be in touch with members with similar genres, information may be found at: <http://sierrawriters.org/events/critique-groups/starting-a-critique-group>

Get involved with *Sierra Writers*

WE ARE looking for Board members and volunteers to help with publicity, programs, and a variety of other opportunities. The publicity position is a great way to strengthen your PR skills as well as to help our organization grow. All of our board and volunteer positions are rewarding and without a huge time commitment.

NEED!—Communications Coordinator - Sends emails to members regarding upcoming meetings, community events, and other information relevant to writers. If interested check with Babbette.

NEED!—Room Set-up Coordinator - Arrives before meetings in time to get the key from the Library and set up chairs, tables, and (if needed) audio visual equipment. If interested check with Susan.

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MEMBERS MAY HAVE THEIR OWN PAGES on SW's website. Members may use their page to introduce themselves, to link users to information on how to purchase their books, or to link back to their own website. A new feature of the *Sierra Writers* website is a page listing links to our members' blogs. To add your info, contact Babbette Donaldson, babbette-donaldson@sbcglobal.net

Our Board

President, Susan Gabrielle, s_gabrielle@sbcglobal.net

Treasurer, Marty Austin, homebookkeeper@yahoo.com

Membership Coordinator, Nichole Renee Bowden, nov-nika@msn.com

Publicity, Amy Rutten--amy_rutten@yahoo.com

Webmaster, Babbette Donaldson,

babettedonaldson@sbcglobal.net

Program Coordinator, Jan Fishler, janfishler@gmail.com

Young Writers Contest, **Open**

Newsletter Staff

Please send all newsletter submissions to

Linda Horning, hornings2@gmail.com

Hock G. Tjoa, hgtjoa@gmail.com

Winter Issue, Pub. Jan. 1st, Deadline – Dec. 1st

Submission guidelines can be found at www.sierrawriters.org

CALENDAR

Unless noted otherwise, all meetings are held at the Madelyn Helling Library Community Room 980 Helling Way, Nevada City at 6:30 PM and will be open to the public.

Note: Sierra Writers WILL MEET in December—it's a party!!

Coming Up:

November Open Read
>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

November 1-30 is National Novel Writing Month, better known as NaNoWriMo. Check out the web-site at <http://nanowrimo.org/>

Sierra Writers offers speaker meetings, critique groups, a newsletter, a membership directory, the young writer contest, and our ever-expanding website. Sierra Writers supports the Nevada County library and other community activities. Membership in Sierra Writers provides peer support and a venue for all of us to grow as writers.

Upcoming Meetings

Wednesday, October 8th: NaNoWriMo

National Novel Writing Month (November). Katrina Templeton and Richard Crawford, experienced NaNoWriMo authors from Sacramento will speak.

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Wednesday, November 12: Open Read

This is another opportunity for writers of all ages and abilities to have their anonymously-submitted story, poem, memoir, essay or excerpt read aloud by members of Sierra Writers, then receive brief, considerate, and supportive feedback from participants.

Entries must be 750 words or less (2-3 double-spaced pages, size 12 font). State whether piece is beginning, middle, end or entire piece (such as a poem). Do not include author's name, but author must be present. All community writers are invited to participate.

Sierra Writers provides a venue for writers of all types to meet, share and learn, with a range of experience and expertise.

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Wednesday, December 10: Holiday Party at the Library

There will also be an "open mike" for reading or ...

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Wanted: Gently-used or new books for raffle. All the proceeds go to our Young Writers Contest. Bring books you'd like to donate to any meeting or email sierrawriters@gmail.com

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Just Write It! Meetup

Jan Fishler (530-277-9173) and Susan Gabrielle (530-205-5068) are conducting meetings from 5 to 6 p.m., the second Thursday of each month at Summer Thyme's in Grass Valley and the third Tuesday of each month at Starbucks near Lake of the Pines to encourage and support writers of all levels. Check out the web-site www.meetup.com/Just-Write-It-Writing-Meetup/

There is a suggested donation of \$5