

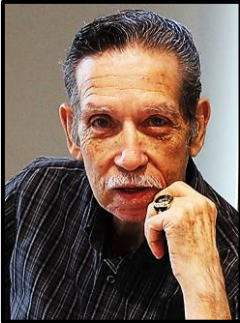
WRITERS MONTHLY PDF

JENNY CARLISLE

A GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONAL WRITERS

NOVEMBER 2024

CONTRIBUTING STAFF



Del Garrett, Owner/Managing Editor

Arkansas Hall of Fame writer Del Garrett is the author of seven novels: *Lollapalooza*, *Stories Cajun Style*, *Texas Justice*, *While the Angels Slept*, *Shadowlight*, *The Buccaneer's Daughter*, *The El Dorado Trail* and *Whispers in the Wind—The Search for Jack the Ripper*, a crime novella series featuring private detective Felix Nash, plus an anthology of short stories he calls *Del Garrett's Flea Market Tales*. Del's first attempt at writing fiction, a Civil War short story, was published by *Louis L'Amour Western Magazine*. He has also been published in *Pro Se Productions*, *Blood Moon Rising*, *Gateway Science Fiction* and *Storyteller Magazine*. He won an international award for Best Historical Western Fiction and numerous other contest awards. His poetry has been published by the Missouri Poetry Society. He is a former radio and TV announcer. He owns Raven's Inn Press which publishes fiction and nonfiction books and anthologies.



Renee' La Viness, Children's Stories/Advertising Executive

At the energetic age of 13, Renee' began her writing career as a professional ventriloquist who wrote and performed her own comedy skits. Since then, she has been published in anthologies, magazines, newspapers, and other projects, and won more than 40 writing awards. From 2013 to 2018, she worked as an editor for 4RV Publishing, including two years as the first Children's Corner Imprint Editor. She has founded/organized recurring writing events and groups in Oklahoma and Arkansas, and is a sponsor/judge for multiple contests, including the La Viness Short Story Writing Contest. She currently works as an independent editor and instructor, and enjoys speaking at conferences. When writing or drawing for children, she is known as JesPiddlin. Renee' lives in Oklahoma and spends her time with her author-husband, her precious grandchildren, one ornery chicken, and a contrary laptop.



Ellen E. Withers, Writing for Contests

Ellen E. Withers is a freelance writer and retired insurance fraud investigator. Her professional writing career began in 2003 as a contributor to the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*. A former editor of an international magazine, *SIU Today*, for insurance fraud investigators from 2007 to 2017 and remains on their editorial committee. She has written the monthly resident feature for *Life in Chenal Magazine* since 2006. Her non-fiction articles have been included in several national and regional magazines. Twelve of her fiction stories have been published in anthologies and two creative non-fiction stories were featured on KUAR's radio show *Tales from the South*. She was nominated in 2009 for The Pushcart Prize in the published short story category—a prestigious national award given for an outstanding literary work published in a small press. She was the contest coordinator for the annual Arkansas Writers' Conference, presented by the Pioneer Branch of the National League of American Pen Women.

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On the Cover

Jenny McLeod Carlisle writes books, poetry and short essays, which have developed into a loyal following of readers. She is a past president of the Arkansas Chapter of American Christian Fiction Writers, and her fiction and poetry have won awards at many local conferences. Though her works-in-progress fall in the category of con-temporary women's fiction, she also loves imagining what life was like in earlier times. She helped to form and later became president of Saline County Preservation, with the goal of restoring local historic sites.



Courtesy Photo.

FROM THE EDITOR

Writing fiction is like being god ... God with a small 'g' not the Big Guy upstairs. Think about it. We call it world building. We are taught that God created Heaven and Earth with a light for day (the sun) and a lesser light for night (the moon), all the animals and fishes in the sea. He did this in six days and rested on the seventh. What writer wouldn't want to create his or her world in only six days?

That's why the little 'g' – not powerful enough to do it all at once. But we are creators! Whether you plot your stories or just start writing until finished, you are creating the setting, the characters and the rules of your little universe how everything works, or is supposed to. Conflict comes when things don't go right.

Your demons may not be Legion. You can write them any way you wish—from creatures from hell to a natural disaster, such as the hurricanes that hit Florida (pray for those folks).

What happens is set into motion by your imagination. In fiction you are totally free to ask yourself "What if?". Just remember...your world must have flaws in it. That is called conflict. For your characters to survive, they must reach a resolution. Without conflict and resolution, you have no story worth reading.

Sage advice for beginning writers is to write what you like to read. Follow the examples of great writers before you. Create new worlds or set your story in the regular world, whatever works for you.

Del Garrett
Editor and Publisher



Photo illustration courtesy of Pixabay

Writing for Children

Picture Perfect

By Renee' La Viness

As writers, we're often reminded to make sure blue eyes stay blue, a four-year-old turns five, and other issues remain the same, unless they have a good reason for changing. Similarly, illustrations must remain consistent. This is important whether you are the illustrator, or you are hiring one.

Adults who read to children often point out items in pictures that support the written story. They notice unexpected variations. A house with three windows and a door should have the same windows and door whenever it is shown again from any view; the same shapes, colors, and locations. If a story happens all in one day, the characters' clothing should not change. Hair color, jewelry, shoes, trees, furniture, cars, and many more items find their way onto multiple pages in one book. Every time they show up, regardless of the angles from which they are viewed, they should be as they were before. Any changes should have a logical cause, such as a stolen item disappearing or a spill causing things to be rearranged.

A picture book is a combination of pictures and words that tell the story together. Readers expect the best books to follow this simple format. Is your book one of the best?

CONTESTS

ST. MARTIN'S MINOTAUR/ MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA FIRST CRIME NOVEL COMPETITION – DEADLINE: DEC. 17, 2024

[St. Martin's Minotaur/ Mystery Writers of America First Crime Novel Competition - Mystery Writers of America](#)

Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence – Deadline: Dec. 21, 2024

[Criteria & Submission — The Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence \(ernestjgainesaward.org\)](#)

Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards – Deadline: Dec. 31, 2004

[40 Free Writing Contests: Competitions With Cash Prizes \(thewritelife.com\)](#)

W.Y. Boyd Literary Award for Excellence in Military Fiction – Deadline: Dec. 31, 2024

[American Library Association](#)

Next Generation Short Story Awards -- Deadline: Feb. 27, 2025

[Next Generation Short Story Awards -- How To Enter](#)

Stella Kupferberg Memorial Short Story – Deadline: March 7, 2025

[2025 Stella Kupferberg Memorial Short Story Prize - Gotham Writers \(writingclasses.com\)](#)

Win contests with unforgettable characters

By Ellen E. Withers

Character is a Greek word that means a ‘distinctive mark.’ Actors create a character through spoken words and actions. Writers have a toolbox of written words to craft award-winning characters readers will love.

Craft your characters into well-rounded, three-dimensional believable people. Each character needs a diverse personality, as well as faults and strengths. Their dialogue needs to be as different as their personality. These traits, as well as interesting quirks, make readers remember them. They’re also relatable because we all have habits and oddities.

What if your character is a liar or a ‘stretcher’ of the truth? Readers can be surprised by finding out the character is lying. Or, the reader knows the character is lying, but the protagonist is still in the dark. Either way, readers are engaged.

I’ve had success crafting a character that seems to be nice and unassuming as the antagonist of a mystery. Readers expect the antagonist to stand out somehow, but that’s the way you lead your readers down a mysterious path. They never think ‘poor Susie’ could be a liar and a cheat or a murderess. When she is revealed to be just that, it’s exciting for the reader to have been unable to guess her true character.

Sometimes it’s better for the way out-of-the-ordinary personalities or strange quirks to apply to secondary characters. They should have an interest or ‘stake’ in the story, and need to have their own desires and problems outside of their association with the main character. Readers must believe they have ‘their life’ going on in the background.

Have secondary characters doing something else when they’re brought into the scene. They can be working or making a sandwich or taking a nap. Being interrupted from their normal activities to provide information or react to what’s happening in the scene makes them more ‘real’ to readers and contest judges. Give some emotional baggage to your characters for a wonderful dimension. Readers find the suffering and angst of characters interesting.

Doing research into personality types is suggested for writers. In short stories, the knowledge of the physical traits of a personality type (wringing hands, superficial charm, or inflated self-worth) helps develop character.

You add drama and emotion if your character struggles with their response to a bewildering situation. After a time for contemplation, they’re ready to slay the dragon.

Mannerisms can be a fantastic way to make your characters individuals. Characters can have simple gestures, such as pushing eyeglasses back into place or throwing their head to remove stray locks of hair out of their eyes. These can be endearing mannerisms for a character.

All the characters in your story should want something. An example could be the neighbor wanting to borrow a lawnmower and stumbling onto a dead body when they crossed through the hedge dividing their properties.



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Award Winning Author
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anthonywoodauthor.com
or on Facebook, Instagram
awoodxulon@yahoo.com



White County Creative Writer wins 1st Place in Kansas

Don Money, a member of White County Creative Writers, had a surprise pop up in his mailbox this week. He won 1st Place in the 2024 Kansas Author Club Prose Contest for a memoir titled "Last One on the Line".

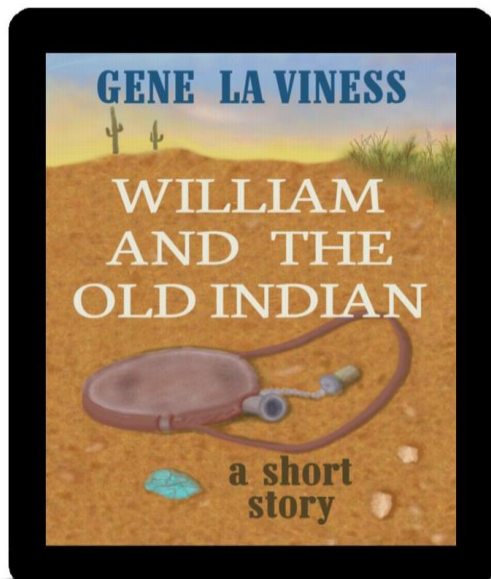
Money's writings have been published in a variety of anthologies, including The Vault of Terror, Trembling With Fear, along with Shackled Books, Black Hare Press, and in Medusa Tales magazine.

He enters a variety of writing contests and said he had a particular reason for doing so.

"My writing side quest is to see how many different states I can win a writing contests in. This (award) puts me at five," he said.

NEW RELEASE!

[Amazon.com: William and the Old Indian: A Short Story eBook : La Viness, Gene: Kindle Store](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0C8K8K8K8)



"By mid-April, we made it to Independence, where a man told us it would cost three dollars and two bits to go with the wagon train. Pa said we didn't need some trail master telling us when and where to go. A couple of days later, we headed southwest instead of following the regular trail, because Pa said it was warmer to the south."

Fifteen-year-old William tells the story of his family's move to the west and his encounter with Running Buffalo.

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The Intersection of Childhood Dreams and Real Life



Definitely daddy's little girl, her letters to him started her love for the written word.



Courtesy Photos.

The author's journey is everything she dreamed of (and nothing she could have imagined). Each step and misstep has been valuable. The intersection of her dreams with my real life has been completely joyful.

By Jenny Carlisle

The oldest daughter of a young couple in Pittsburg, Kan., developed a strong attachment to her daddy. There is no surprise here, because at the age of two years and two weeks, the couple's second daughter was born. During his off-work hours as a state policeman, the daddy assumed the role of distraction for the little girl so the mama could care for their sweet infant. The two enjoyed spending time reading or singing on the front porch swing, taking rides on country roads, visiting some of his friends and co-workers. This arrangement was a win, win, for the little family.

Most likely, this next revelation will not come as a surprise either. The little girl is me, Jenny Sue McLeod (later Carlisle).

While studying the structure of a novel, I have learned that there is always a point early in the story that can be viewed as a turning point—a door of no return. I have no problem identifying that moment in my own story.

Continued on next page.

One autumn day, I arrived at home after a three-block walk with neighborhood children. I was enjoying feeling grown up enough to come home from kindergarten 'by myself' and probably did as much skipping as walking. When I reached the driveway, my happiness was interrupted by the unusual sight of our station wagon in the driveway, back end open, with boxes loaded inside.

Daddy met me at the base of the back porch steps.

"Where are we going?" I looked up as he crouched down to meet me.

"I'm going away, but you and your mama and Toni will stay here."

"Why?" Instinctively, tears flooded my eyes. I knew something was terribly wrong.

"I won't be coming back. Listen, Jenny Sue." He grabbed my hands and looked into my eyes. "No matter what happens, I will always love you, and I will always be your daddy."

My five-year-old brain couldn't form a response.

The rest of that day is not as vivid in my mind. I know that mama met me at the back door, and I could tell that she had been crying as she hugged me close. Then, I found my three-old sister in daddy's favorite rocking chair in the living room. Trying to be brave, I remember hugging her close, assuring her that everything would be alright.

That day ushered in lots of changing and adjusting for all of us. One major coping mechanism for me was reading my favorite books, and as I continued in school, writing. I wrote letters to my daddy, who lived three hours away. He dutifully answered, and our correspondence helped develop my natural writing voice, even in elementary school.

Reading fictional stories naturally led to imagining my own. I created tales of buried treasure and mysteries patterned after my fictional heroine, Nancy Drew. Another favorite, Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* inspired me to write poetry.

My first taste of recognition happened in fifth grade, when a poem I had written was displayed in the hallway of the school. If we could ask young Jenny Sue at this point in her life about her career aspirations, she would have answered "I want to write books."

Continued on next page.



Courtesy Photo.

The American Christian Fiction Writers, Arkansas Chapter, gathered in January 2020, the author in forefront. Around the table from left, Shannon Vannatter, Kathy Vernich, Jolene Staker, Tonya Ashley and Linda Fulkerson.

All through my school years, English was my favorite subject. Two high school teachers in particular encouraged me to continue writing. One even told me that I was the only student she'd had who threatened her job. Realizing that writing books might not adequately pay my bills, I decided to try to be a teacher, writing in my 'spare time'. A well-meaning counselor changed my course, suggesting journalism as my college major.

Meanwhile, another dream of mine took center stage. Though I never viewed our family as 'broken', the loneliness of being separated from my daddy made me determined that my adult life would be quite different. I began the search for a life partner who would resolve to stay with me; one who understood the importance of two parents sharing the day-to-day responsibilities of raising children.

As a senior at Bryant High School, God placed the perfect young man in my path. When I shared my desire to find someone who would be committed for a lifetime, his answer was "Of course. Is there any other way?" Our first date was the senior prom, and we were married a year later. Since we both had full-time jobs, there was neither time nor money for me to continue college.

Fast forward through years of raising three children, my dreams of writing were still alive, but living in the background. I found people of like minds to encourage me, attended writing conferences as our budget allowed, and entered contests to hone my skills.

At the Ozark Creative Writers' conference in Eureka Springs, Ark., my husband bought into my vision for the first time when he enjoyed making a neat stack of second prize checks for several contests I had entered. I returned to my hometown of Pittsburg, Kan., for the Called to Write conference, and met agent Terry Burns, who agreed to represent me, submitting my first attempt at full length fiction to several publishers.

Meanwhile, I gained some publishing experience with a monthly nonfiction column in Ouachita Life magazine. This created my first fanbase in the southwest third of Arkansas. At the same conference in Kansas, I met a talented editor who helped me self-publish a collection of my columns.

The journey continued, with more learning at conferences, more rewriting in response to my agent's suggestions, more hoping for a positive response. My agent retired, possibilities for publication dried up, and another turning point was written into my story.

At a meeting of my favorite support group, the Arkansas chapter of American Christian Fiction Writers, a respected mentor looked me in the eyes for a drastic suggestion.

"I know you don't want to hear this," Shannon Vannatter, multi-published author gently advised. "It's time to start over. The story you are pitching is going nowhere. I know there is another story in your head. Write that one. Totally new story, new characters, a fresh start."

After years of pitching, revising, rethinking and rewriting that story, this suggestion devastated me. I even coined a new nickname for my friend, Shannon, 'Dreamcrusher.'

Continued on next page.

From that point, progress was fast and furious. I completed a manuscript for a rodeo story that had been stomping and snorting in the chute. I submitted a proposal to Scrivenings Press, a newly formed small press. Shannon's nickname of Dreamcrusher was no longer appropriate, when as one of the content editors, she was involved in the company's decision. This time, the answer I received was the one anticipated by that young girl reading with her daddy on the porch swing. *Hope Takes the Reins* was contracted for publication in March of 2022.

Following the signing of that all-important first contract, the climax of my story can be compared to a dog who has been chasing cars for years. Now that he finally captured his prey, what should he do with it? The learning process took a new angle as I became acquainted with the nuts and bolts of preparing a book for publication.

Fast forward again to the present. With the help of the professionals at Scrivenings Press, an entire three book series and a Christmas novella are in the hands of readers.

The journey is everything I dreamed of, and nothing I could have imagined. Each step and misstep has been valuable. The intersection of my dreams with my real life has been completely joyful.



See all of the
author's books
here:

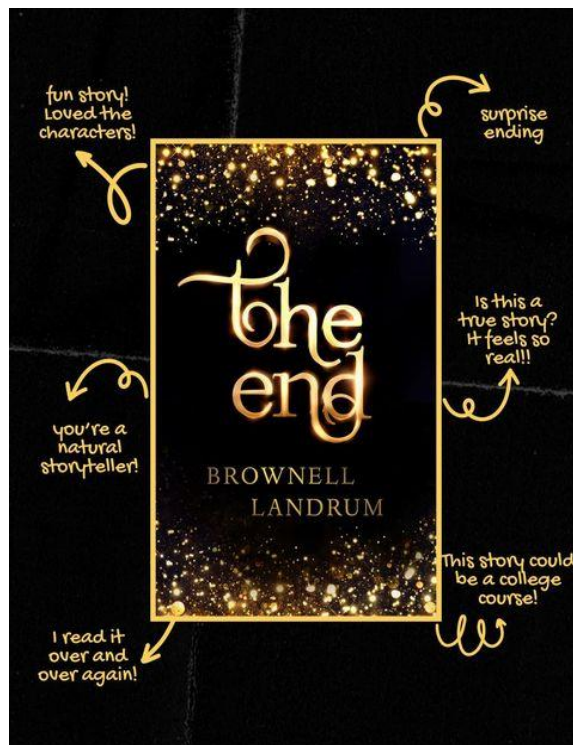
[Jenny Carlisle
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*Life Is A Trip
podcasts offer writers
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My story, *Preparing for Battle*, is now available on Trip's podcast. The story appears in printed form in this month's issue in *Hearts and Souls*.

—Del Garrett



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Have you ever wondered if you were destined to meet someone? That you might have known them 'before'? Do you believe things, especially relationships, happen 'for a reason'? That perhaps important encounters are being orchestrated from 'above'?

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Brownell Landrum is the author of the *DUET stories* novels, *Five Reasons Why Bad Things Happen*, and the upcoming trilogy entitled *We Meet Again* about a couple: "Separated by centuries... Reunited to change the world."

To read the more—and get more bonuses—sign up for Brownell's newsletter. And for more stories by other talented writers check out the *Life is a Trip* podcast and join the group on Facebook to stay tuned!

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Brownell's website:

<https://brownelllandrum.com/>

Brownell on Amazon:

<https://www.amazon.com/Brownell-Landrum/e/B00JFHZSGA>

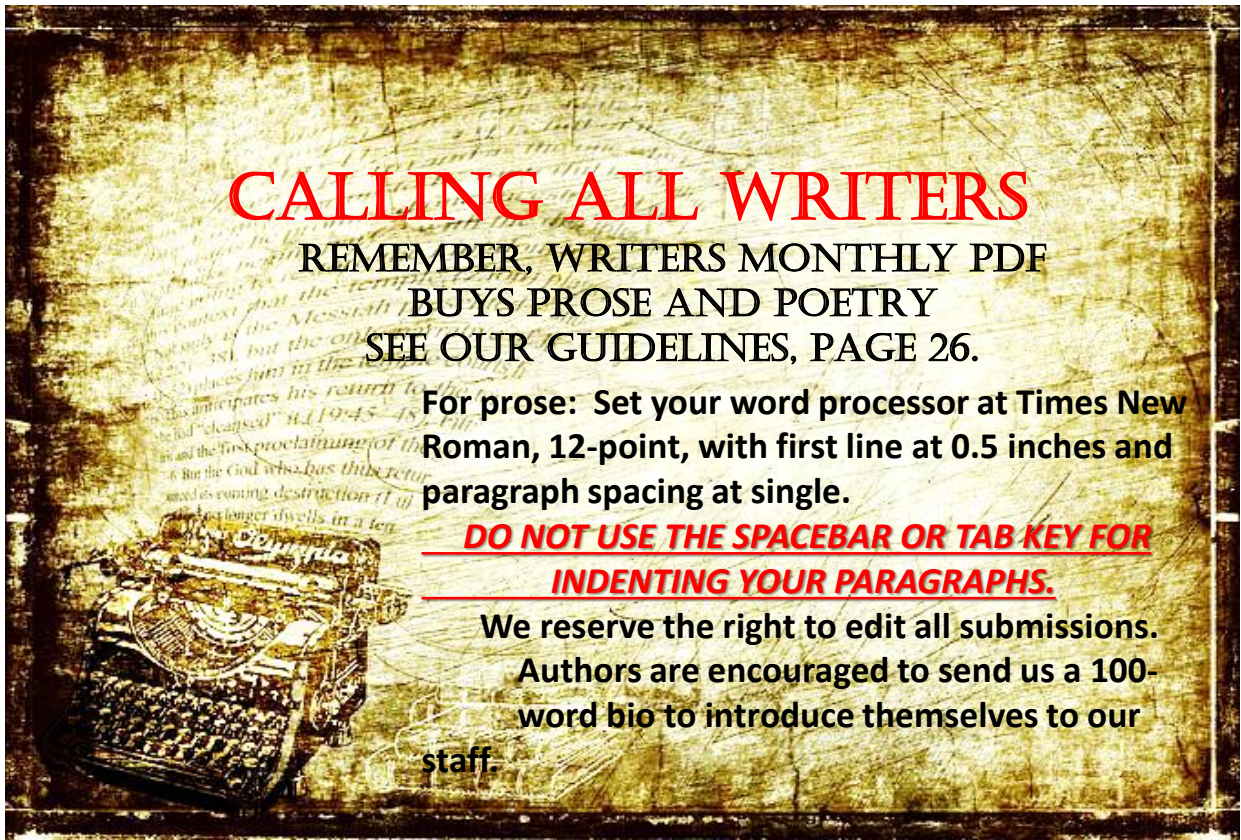
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Brownell Landrum



CALLING ALL WRITERS

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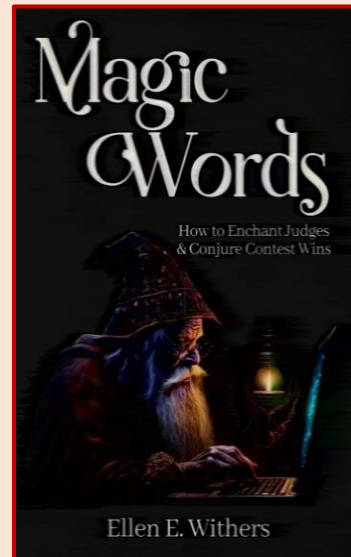
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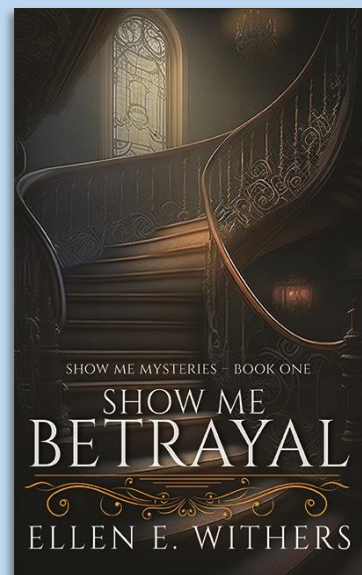
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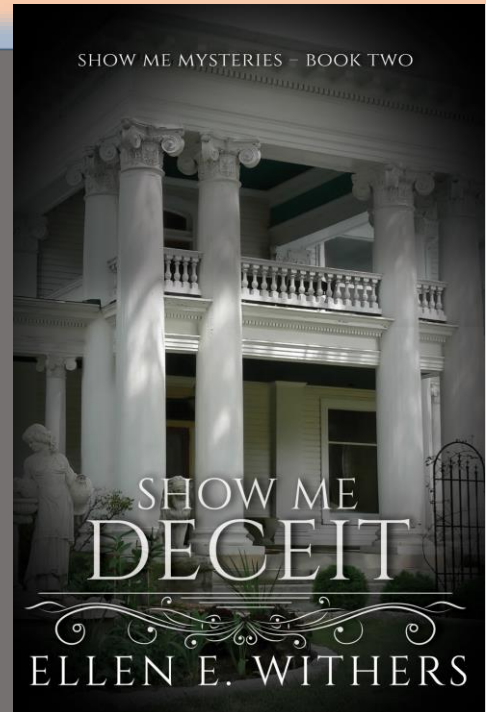
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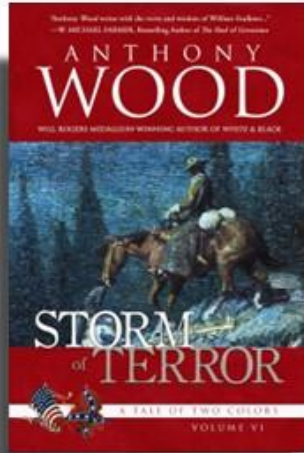
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Written by Hall of Fame writer Del Garrett.

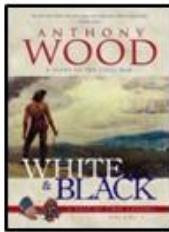
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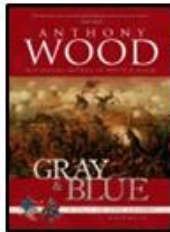
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BOOK #6 – HE THOUGHT HIS BATTLES WERE OVER. THIS ONE IS FOR HIS SOUL.



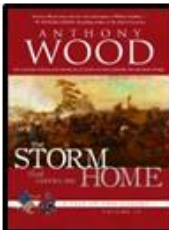
BOOK #1 -- WHITE & BLACK -- ALL HE EVER WANTED WAS A HOME AND FAMILY. HE WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE BOTH TO KEEP THEM.



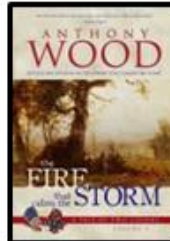
BOOK #2 -- GRAY & BLUE: -- HE TOOK AN OATH TO FIGHT. HE JUST DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS FOR THE WRONG REASONS.



BOOK #3 -- PEACE BEFORE THE STORM. THE BATTLE IS OVER BUT THE WAR HAS JUST BEGUN.



BOOK #4 -- THE STORM THAT CARRIES ME HOME -- HE MADE AN OATH. HE HAD TO SWITCH SIDES TO KEEP IT.



BOOK #5 -- THE FIRE THAT CALMS THE STORM -- THE MOST DANGEROUS BATTLE IS ALWAYS FOUGHT CLOSE TO HOME.



Find Arkansas Writers' Hall of Fame Will Rogers Medallion Award Winning Author Anthony Wood at anthonywoodauthor.com or on Facebook, Instagram, and at awoodxulon@yahoo.com

Hearts & Souls



Preparing for Battle

By Del Garrett

I woke up in a muddy ditch. Wet, cold and stiff, every joint in my body ached.

The smell of bacon cooking and coffee brewing caused me to snap my head up and look over the embankment in front of me.

A roughly calloused hand grabbed me by the collar and dragged me back below the ridgeline. “Stay down, boy,” a voice whispered. I looked at the old sergeant holding me back. “Them’s Yanks. They set up during the night.”

I ventured another quick look, careful not to show myself. A whole company had pitched tents, stabled their horses and lined up their canons—three 12-pounder Howitzers and one 24-pounder.

“Get ready to move out,” the sergeant said. “Cap’n said them boys was green so he’s gonna call for a charge. Gonna surprise them.”

Continued on next page.

I grabbed my rifle, a Sharps and Hankins .45, and checked to make sure the bore was clean. I had plenty of ammunition in my pouch, so I was as ready as the next man.

Lord, that bacon and coffee sure smelled good. I speculated the coffee would be thinned with roasted acorns since I knew supplies were tight on both sides. During cease fires we sometimes called out to Billy Yanks and agreed to a truce so we could meet and trade this for that in the way of food rations and tobacco.

We waited, me and the sarge, silent-like. Stiffness set in again in my legs and I longed for some of that hot coffee to ease the coldness of the morning dew that vexed me dearly.

Somewhere along the way, I hadn't really noticed, but I started shaking from the cold and the damp. It got so bad my body was trembling like I had a case of the St. Vitus dancing jitters.

"Take it easy, young fellow. Ain't nothing to be scared about. I have it on good faith from General Lee himself that them Yankees can't hit the broadside of a barn if'n they was standin' right in front of it."

I wasn't really scared. At least I didn't think I was. I'd been in one firefight just before we reached Chickamauga. I felt I was battle experienced. No, pretty sure I was just shaking 'cause of the coldness in the swamp.

In that first firefight, I hadn't actually killed anyone. I'd just pointed my rifle at a moving target, fired, snapped the breech open and reloaded a single bullet. When you're on the run you don't stop to run a tally, you just pick the man closest to you and fire. If he goes down, well, he's either dead or just wounded. Time enough for counting after the battle stops.

That bacon was sizzling so loud it sounded like a hornet's nest. My mouth started slobbering and I bit my sleeve to get it to stop. I fumbled in my pocket and couldn't find a crumb of anything. Looking all around me I smiled at the sight of a peach pit lying in the mud. I brushed it off against my jacket best as I could and slipped my bayonet out of my belt so I could crack the outer shell.

Peach kernels are bitter things, but it took my mind off'n what the Yanks was havin' for breakfast. I chewed down and it cracked into pieces. I didn't swallow right away 'cause then I'd be hungry again. In time I worked up enough spit to swallow the tiny chunks and wished I'd found the whole peach instead of just the pit.

"Get ready." The sergeant tapped me on the shoulder and all thoughts of food vanished. I didn't feel stiff in the legs anymore. My whole body was tensed and ready for the charge. When it came, we all started yelling like jackasses and climbed up over the ridgeline.

The Yanks were indeed taken by surprise and fumbled their way toward where they had stacked their rifles. I saw one bluebelly holding a field pot of coffee and I yelled, "Don't drop the coffee!" just as somebody dropped him with a rifle ball.

Continued on next page.

I made it to the first tent and stopped to reload. A blue uniform rushed out to meet me. We sort of looked at each other to convince ourselves that everything was happening and men on both sides were dying all around us.

I dropped my rifle and he dropped the bugle he had in his hands and we sort of dove toward each other and hit the ground with our arms and legs locked around each other like two young boys tusslin' on the school grounds. This weren't no wrestlin' match, though, and somebody came flyin' past my head and stuck a bayonet in his back.

He looked at me with a sorrowful look in his eyes, then toppled over on top of me. He wouldn't be blowin' Reveille this morning.

Dead bodies lay all about the bivouac area, blue and gray alike. Smoke drifted across the wide expanse of marsh grass from fire pits that we had trampled in our rush to kill the enemy. I surveyed the pitiful scene around me and wondered if there was even a point to all this slaughter. I knew all the soldiers were just like me, different uniforms but just regular guys—farmers, store keepers, maybe a school teacher or two. What was the point? That is something I've struggled with all my life. When will there be no more war?

We were victorious...this time. We gathered up what remained of the Yankees, disarmed them and roped off an area for them to sit in under four guards. Nobody spoke more than a few hushed words.

I roamed free, not being assigned any particular duty. I knew what I wanted and I found it. The coffee pot still had some liquid in it and it was still hot. I sipped on what I'd poured into my canteen cup and followed my nose trying to find the bacon. Obviously, someone had found it before me but I did managed to find a couple of hardtack biscuits and munched on one, stuffing the other'n in my tunic for later.

I found the sergeant I shared the ditch with. He'd made it through alive but had caught a round in the shoulder area.

"Can't hit the broadside of a barn, you said."

"Just a scratch. I've had worse than this on a Saturday night in Savannah. I see you made it through."

"Yeah, don't ask me how."

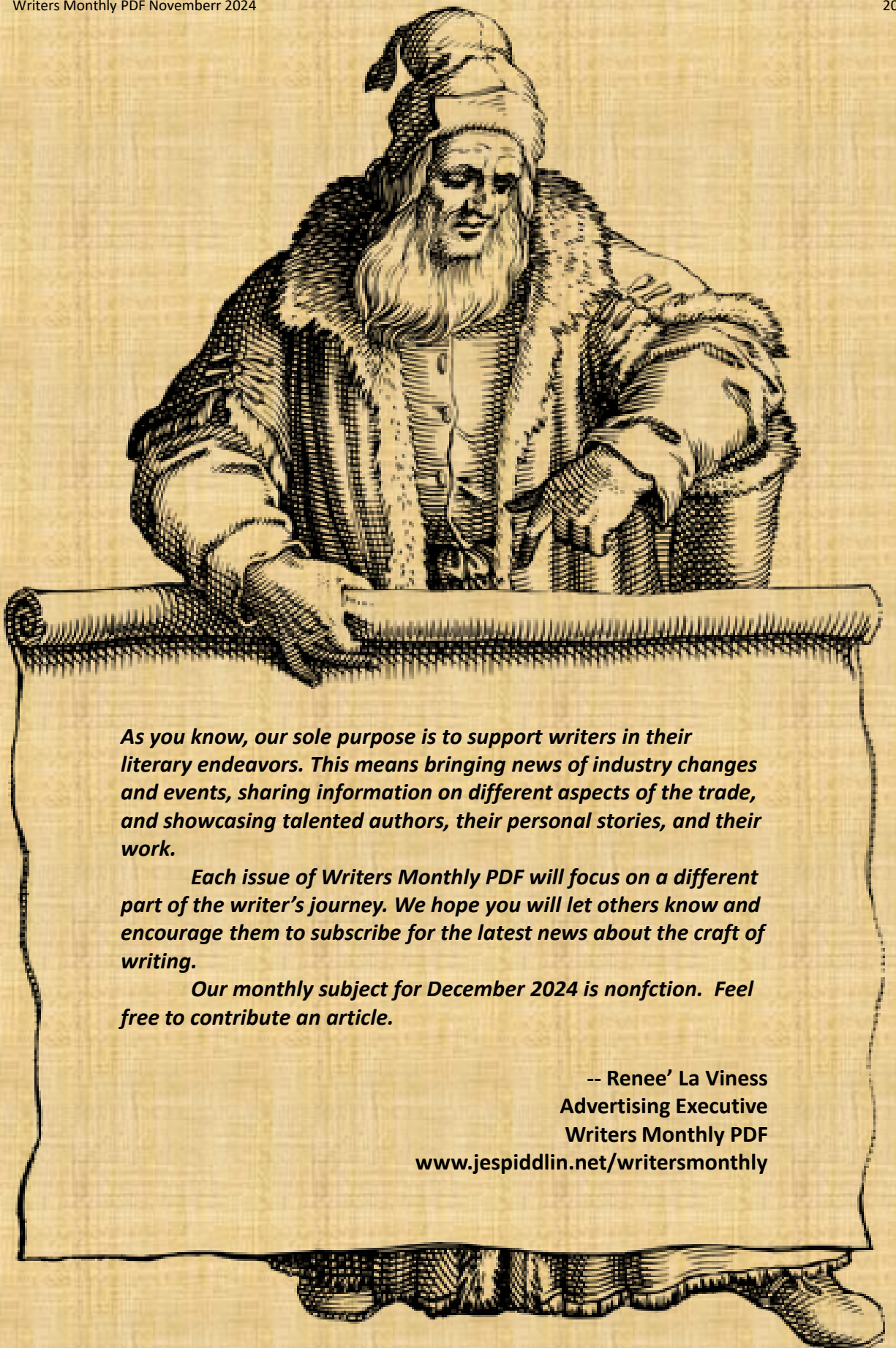
"No, never ask yourself how, just be glad when you do."

A fog rolled in as evening came. The air chilled and birds stopped singing. Everything got kind of melancholy as we settled in for the night. It didn't take me long to rest my head on a saddlebag and cover myself with a shredded wool blanket.

I woke to the smell of bacon, coffee and biscuits coming from the kitchen. I rolled out of bed, tossed some water on my face and walked stiffly down the stairs. My wife smiled at me as she handed me a cup and filled it full—hot and black, just the way I liked it. She motioned for me to sit at the table and handed me a plate. The eggs were scrambled, the bacon crisp, and she'd split open a couple of biscuits and spooned a ladle of sausage and gravy over them.

What a dream, I thought, as I reached for the Louisiana hot sauce...

Or was it?



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*-- Renee' La Viness
Advertising Executive
Writers Monthly PDF
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Writing Fiction: Characters and how they are used

Fiction genre covers many styles and aspects, from high drama to comedy, western to romance, but always about people – even if your people are three-legged lizards on a planet far, far away. All fiction is about people because your readers are people. Readers must identify with your characters.

There are three categories of characters that must appear in practically every story you write: Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. Your primary characters are hero, villain, victim and mentor, Secondary characters include family, friends and stooges. Tertiary characters include all the add-ons who deliver a quick line of information then depart the stage.

The MOST IMPORTANT character is the villain. Why? The villain is the cause of all action by the hero. Be it a mass murderer, a two-bit hustler who just cheated your grandma out of her life savings, a two-headed alien from Mars, or a hurricane blowing in from the Gulf of Mexico. The threat caused by the villain is the external conflict that moves the action of the story. Make him mean and nasty, but give him one positive trait – he loves cats.

Below are lists of the most commonly written characters and how they are used to develop your story:

MAIN CHARACTERS:

Hero – More properly, a reluctant hero. Readers need to identify with the hero to enjoy the story; therefore, he or she should not be a SUPER-hero unless you are writing fantasy or comic book characters. You want some reluctance to show the hero is smart enough to avoid trouble.

Villain – THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTER because the hero springs into action to save the world from the villain's evil plans.

Victim(s) – Who needs to be saved?

Mentor(s) – Who provides the information or the magic potion the hero needs to win?

SECONDARY and TERTIARY CHARACTERS:

These characters help round out the story.

Damsel in distress – Victim, the one most dear to the hero.

Family and friends – Give moral support to the hero.

Stooges – The villain's army of soldiers. The more the hero has to defeat, the longer the story. Keep it simple for short stories, add more for a complete book.

Gatekeeper(s) – These are the ones preventing the hero from doing the job. Example: Government bureaucrats, security guards, village bully.

Shapeshifter(s) – The 'friend' who turns his back on the hero or the 'enemy' who switches his allegiance and helps the hero.

Messengers: Characters who possess pieces of the puzzle later in the story.

Fiction Points to Remember

Setting: Time and Place — Know something about the living conditions, price of a meal in a restaurant, names of clothing or equipment, etc.

Characters: Primary - Main character, villain, victim, mentor. Secondary - Sidekicks and friends, villain's stooges. Tertiary - Any add-ins (messengers/gatekeepers/shapeshifters).

Conflict: External and Internal — External, the world will end; Internal, main character's personal dilemma

Resolution:
What's it going to take for the main character to overcome the two conflicts?

Denouement:
What is the conclusion? Did they all live happily ever after?

Epilogue:
What happens to all the characters?

Fiction

The Strawberry Girl By Sir Joshua Reynolds

One bright spring morning Offy woke up with a beautiful plan in her head. She would surprise her uncle. He had been so very busy she felt sure he had not looked at the strawberry bed for several days and did not know the berries were ripe.

She would take her little basket and pick it full of the largest ones for him.

It was great fun hunting for them, and her basket was almost full when suddenly she heard steps. It was her uncle and two strange men who walked with him. She did not have time to hide, but stood there with her basket on her arm, waiting to hear what they would say.

At first she thought her uncle was going to scold her, and that is why she looked so shy and half afraid. But no, her uncle soon guessed why she was picking the strawberries, and he was very glad he could offer some to his friends. One of the men called Offy "the little strawberry girl," and kept her with them all the rest of the day.

Or so the story goes...



--Public Domain

About the Author

Sir Joshua Reynolds (July 16, 1723 – Feb. 23, 1792) was a writer and master artist. His most notable work was *The Age of Innocence*.



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- pays \$60 per story
- looking for stories of between 500 and 1,000 words
- has a PG-13 rating
- see detailed submission guidelines at <http://ffo.submishmash.com/submit>

POETRY

The Moon Festival

*Ancient
Chinese
poem to
celebrate
Autumn*

*When is there moonlight?
Winecup in hand, I ask the deep blue sky—
Not knowing in those celestial palaces on high
What year it is tonight?
I long to fly on the wind,
Yet dread those crystal towers, those courts of jade,
Freezing to death among those icy heights.
Instead, I rise to dance with my pale shadow;
Better off, after all, in the world of men.
Rounding the red pavilion,
Stooping to look through gauze windows,
The moon shines on the sleepless.
The moon should know no sadness—
Why, then, is she always full when dear ones are parted?
As men's grief and joy, parting and union
So the moon is bright or dim, waxes and wanes.
Always some flaw, and so it has been since of old.
My one wish for you is long life
And to share in this loveliness far, far away.*



GUIDELINES

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