

The Just Write Life



Should Just Write Zoom?

By Linda Smith

Over the past year we have all become zoomers. Should Just Write hold Zoom meetings?

Yes! Review A Complete Work

We could host periodic zoom meetings to review a complete work/novel for a member.

Our twice-monthly critiques give us excellent opportunities for line/language editing and critiquing. It would not be helpful to try to replace that with a Zoom meeting. However, while focusing on 3200-word segments, we don't get much feedback on the arc of the story.

We could schedule a once-a-month zoom meeting to

(Continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue

New Members-----	2
Member Spotlight -----	3
Member Article -----	4
A Call for Beta Readers -----	5
Who's Penned What-----	6
Upcoming Events -----	7
Resources and Inspiration -----	7
Critique Session Info -----	8

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(Continued from page 1)



review the complete work of one author who has been submitting to Just Write chapter-by-chapter. This would give us an opportunity to provide feedback on plot, setting, character, and theme development in a richer way. (It would also be an opportunity to see how our feedback has contributed to the work.)

Yes! Practice Pitches

League of Utah Writers Conferences offer opportunities for us to pitch our works to editors and agents. We could use a Zoom meeting to practice and refine our oral pitches.

Yes! Another Idea

If you have another idea, please share it.

"If a nation loses its storytellers, it loses its childhood." —Peter Handke

New Members

We would like to welcome the following new members to Just Write:

- Peter Steele
- Maile Johnson
- Giana Hulet
- Nancy Roe
- Brenna Perry
- Doree Anderson
- Alexander Copley



Member Spotlight: Lisa Vickers



Lisa wrote her first story in third grade, but “The Vampire Who Lost His Teeth” never made it past homework status. Since then, she has lost the original copy but vows one day to rewrite it and publish it as children’s fiction.

Writing became an off and on hobby, with several ideas stored on the floppy disks of times past. There they sat for ages, waiting for the next spark of imagination to guide their plots further. Being the packrat that she is, those floppy disks still exist in a bin somewhere—and the stories too.

The itch to write full time came only after the success of the Harry Potter series. Books can change the world, and that idea fueled her desire to entertain and enrapture audiences of all ages with fantastic tales of heroics, humor, and horror.

In 2011 Lisa self-published a middle grade novel, *Tokens*, but later sought to improve the book. She changed the title to *The Lost Prince* and has been passing it through our critique sessions. She hopes to republish it with a new cover and begin editing and writing the other books in the *Kingdoms Through the Doorways* series.

She has one short story available on Amazon and intends to add more this year. But planning a wedding and a big move have hindered the progress on her publishing goals for the moment.

Aside from writing, Lisa loves photography and sells her landscape prints online. She’ll also take portraits for people who beg, although her confidence wavers in that domain.

She holds a bachelor’s degree in History from Utah State University (go Aggies!) and lived as a missionary in Chile for a year and a half. She can still speak some rusty Spanish, but perhaps “rusty” is an overstatement.

Her hopes for the future include managing a successful publishing empire (tongue-in-cheek obviously) and visiting the Faroe Islands on a photography tour. It’s also her wish to make enough money so her soon-to-be husband can quit his job and become a full-time illustrator. For now, software engineering pays the bills.

She blogs once in a blue moon on her author website: lisbethadamson.blogspot.com.

Her photography can be found at: shutterquills.com.

Juggling Family Life and—“Mom, We’re Hungry!”— Writing

By Alissa Holyoak

I am an aspiring author and a stay-at-home mom of four young children. These two roles don’t always pair easily. I intentionally choose family first every day, so *finding* time to write is impossible, and *making* time to write can be a—



Hang on. Child #1 just barged in without knocking to ask permission to go a friend’s house. I consent and he proceeds to explain something his friend taught him about Minecraft. He quickly loses me with the words “withers storm.” I interrupt him (with little guilt considering he interrupted me first) and politely ask him to tell me about it later as I am busy writing. What was I saying? Oh, yes . . .

. . . challenge.

My dream is not only to publish a novel (a goal I have yet to accomplish) but also to become a #1 New York Times best-selling—

Oh, dear. Child #2 and Child #3 are fighting in the living room. It’s quickly progressed to Defcon 3 and I just overheard the words “fire” and “your fault,” so I’d better check on the safety of the house. After a lengthy and tear-filled discussion with Child #3 about how *several* kinds of Legos can be used to complete his Lego flame thrower (not just the extra-special one Child #2 is clutching), peace is restored. While I’m up, I switch laundry to the dryer, put some frozen hamburger in the microwave to defrost and unload the dishwasher in preparation for dinner. I then return to finish my last sentence with the word . . .

. . . author.

During my nearly ten years as a mother, I have made purposeful yet sluggish strides toward publishing my works to great—

Accjdfjonvjjj. Pardon the typo. Child #4 just climbed onto my lap and added her opinion. I guess I forgot to shut the door. She holds my face in her tiny hands and says, “Mommy, can you please read me a book?” I promise her I will take a break soon. She toddles off and I amend the last word of the sentence she tried to finish for me to . . .

. . . acclaim.

I’m not naïve. I know that dreaming isn’t enough and consistent practice is essential. The

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

only way to learn how to write novels is to write them. And I have. That is, I've outlined four, written rough drafts for three, and edited two. These numbers may seem unimpressive to you and indeed they are often discouraging to me, but I'm—

Just a second. Child #4 is back with a whole stack of books. I would get upset, but she smiles up at me with big blue eyes (pigtails bouncing atop her head). I surrender to her cuteness, but not before finishing my last sentence with the word . . .

. . . determined.

Sigh. By the time I'm done reading the books, the microwave will beep, alerting me to brown the hamburger for taco night.

I know, I know. You're wondering why I don't just write at night while all four children are tucked cozily and quietly in bed. I do. It's just that, strangely, my writing stamina is lacking. I never last more than an hour before my head starts to bob. I don't know about you, but I find that writing is exhausting.

My progress is slow, but I won't lose...

A Call for Beta Readers

Hi, fellow Just Write members! I need your help.

My manuscript, *The Cowboy Ninja Murders*, is ready for beta readers. It is a mystery of about 50,000 words.

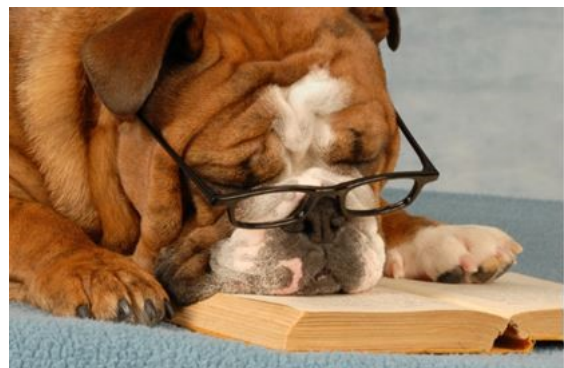
I'm happy for anyone who was part of the story's original critique groups to read it again, but I would also love to get the input of people who haven't read it to see if the mystery works.

What's in it for you? I will exchange beta reads on your work-in-progress. I can also offer basic Photoshop skills, if that's a need anyone has.

If you'd like to be a beta reader for *The Cowboy Ninja Murders*, please contact me at shawnpollock2016@gmail.com.

Thanks!

Shawn



Who's Penned What

A List of Published Works and Contest Winners

Alissa Holyoak

Friend magazine has purchased two of Alissa's short stories: "The Big Earthquake" and "Two New Words." Look for them in upcoming issues.

Linda Smith

First place, Introductory Category of The Utah State Poetry Society Contest

Poem: "Sonnet for a Grandchild"

Marilynn Rockelman

Honorable Mention Utah Arts and Museums Council contest

Memoir excerpt: Ducky: The True Story of a Decoy Prostitute

If you have published a novel, story, article, poem, etc. or won a writing contest within the last six months (and it hasn't already been featured in our newsletter), please let Lisa or Ann know so they can include your accomplishment in the next edition of The Just Write Life, expected September 2021.



Upcoming Events



Just Write Chapter Meet and Mingle Dinner

Date: Summer 2021, TBD

Location: TBD

Watch your inboxes for more details...

The Quills Conference

August 12-15, 2021

Salt Lake City Marriott University Park

Register [here](#).



Resources and Inspiration: Opening Lines that Hook

“The first bite of a new book will make or break your book’s success,” writes thriller writer August Birch. “We’ve got to grab the reader with both hands . . .”

Because readers have more choices than ever when it comes to book selection, the onus falls on the writer to craft an engaging tale from the first paragraph to the last. For tips on killer first lines, read more of Birch’s post: <https://medium.com/the-book-mechanic/how-to-write-a-killer-first-chapter-that-sells-your-entire-book-cbc4b31a7b31>

For a more style- and syntax-based approach, Jericho Writers offers these suggestions:

- Full stops are your friends. Short, clear sentences will grab your reader’s attention
- Use language that will add weight to your sentences
- Use your verbs correctly and your adjectives sparingly
- Opening lines don’t have to be loud. Subtlety is just as effective

Read the entire post: <https://jerichowriters.com/good-opening-sentences/>

“The first chapter sells your book. The last chapter sells the next one.” Mickey Spillane



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 two days of receiving the group spreadsheet

Critiquing Guidelines

- Please make at least six suggestions or comments in your reviews
- 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 with an overall review or comment
- Ideally, return your reviews by the last day of the session

**Wishing you a happy, healthy,
and adventurous summer :)**

