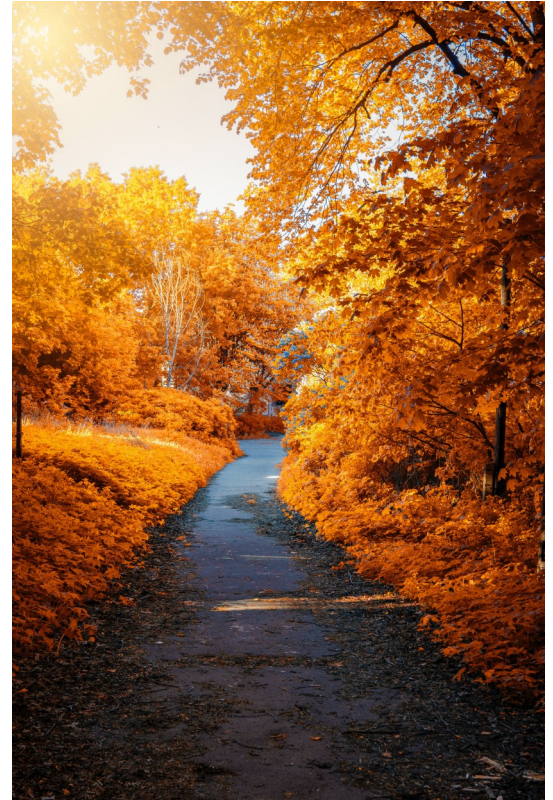


# The Just Write Life



## More Than Just Commas: Some Critique Guidelines and Reminders

*By Ann Gordon & Lisa Forsyth*

As the Just Write presidency, we thank you for adhering to our basic critique guidelines such as word count limits, font preferences, and spacing requirements. They make submissions easier (and less time consuming) to read. To facilitate an even more rewarding experience for all participants, we're attaching the wonderful "Critique Cheat Sheet" from Inked Voices and the new "Just Write Critique Cheat Sheet." These PDFs provide guidance for completing a well-rounded review for your fellow authors. Please glance over these cheat sheets as you begin your critiques, then make notes accordingly

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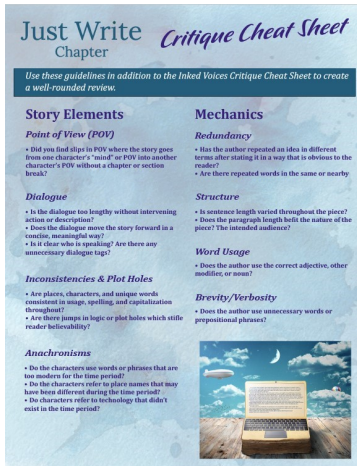
### Chapter Officers

- Ann Gordon, President  
(ann@gordoncomputer.com)
- Lisa Forsyth, Vice President  
(hermana\_v@yahoo.com)
- Josie Hulme, Public Relations  
(josiehulme513@gmail.com)

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throughout your group members' documents. That way you're sure to provide valuable feedback. These critique reminders help us remember what we might look for besides punctuation.

Granted, we don't expect participants to comment on each aspect during their review. By the same token, we want to encourage reviewers to do more than check punctuation and use of adverbs. If the author wanted to do that, they could put their own work through an AI grammar program (like Grammarly, ProWritingAid, or Hemingway). If errant commas, misspellings, and overused adverbs are distracting, then let the author know. But authors also need to know if their characters are acting in believable ways, if their plot makes sense, and if the voice and style are interesting enough to hook the reader, etc..



If you are already adding comments on these “big picture” items, we applaud you! For those who aren't, this is a friendly reminder to go a little further in your reviews. Remember the golden rule? It applies to critiques as well.

Moreover, while this next item has been a part of our rules for a long time, we feel the need to reiterate its importance. Please comment on what you like about someone's work in addition to what you feel could be improved. It's important to encourage each other with positive feedback. Focusing only on the negative aspects of a submission can dishearten writers, especially new ones. Our Just Write critique sessions are meant to be a place of learning and support. By encouraging each other and taking the time to provide valuable reviews, we all become better writers—and people. ✦

## New Members

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

- Nicole Dvorak
- McKenzie Wood



## Member Spotlight: David Armstrong



Born and raised in Long Beach, California, David Alan Armstrong received his B.A. in Elementary Education from Brigham Young University and his M.S. in Instructional Design from the University of Southern California. The author spent many years in the cold-war aerospace industry as a programmer, analyst and project manager before moving his family to Utah in 1995 and working for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the information technology department. Now retired, David and his wife Evelyn own plots in the Kaysville City cemetery, so Kaysville is home. The couple raised three children and enjoy five grandchildren.

An active member of the League of Utah Writers, David has received Gold Quill awards for two non-fiction books, *Searching Isaiah* and *Flooding My Life with the Book of Mormon*, and the Silver Quill award for his novel, *The Porch*. All are available on Amazon.com. He has two books currently in the works and has written weekly blog posts for an online education company ([remotemode.com](http://remotemode.com)) and an email security company ([Trustifi.com](http://Trustifi.com)), as well as occasionally contributing to *The Weekly Parable* ([theweeklyparable.net](http://theweeklyparable.net)). His website is [DavidArmstrongBooks.com](http://DavidArmstrongBooks.com). ✦

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## A Call for Beta Readers

### Joseph Miyasato is looking for beta readers.

- Project: "Snakes That Shed"
- Word Count: 11,887
- Audience: Adult, General (R-equivalent rating)

If you are interested in beta reading Joseph's story, please contact him directly at: [apedrapery@gmail.com](mailto:apedrapery@gmail.com).

### Josie Hulme is looking for beta readers.

- Project: *Out There*
- Tagline: *Ready Player One* meets *Fangirl*.
- Word Count: 98,000
- Audience: YA (PG-equivalent rating)

If you are interested in beta reading Josie's novel, please contact her directly at: [josiehulme513@gmail.com](mailto:josiehulme513@gmail.com).



# There's No Such Thing as a Pantser, Pt 2

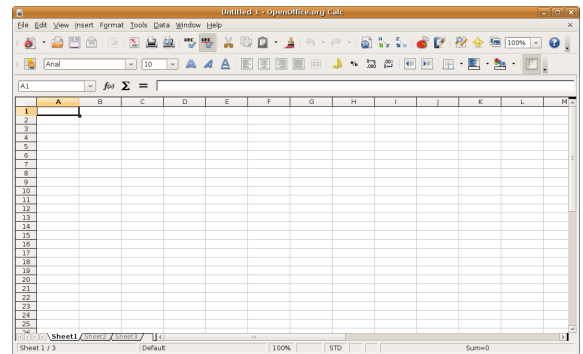
By Josie Hulme

*(Find Part 1 of Josie's article in June 2022's issue)*

Here are some more details and tips that have helped me write faster and might help you, too:

- I organize my outline in chapter form, so each new number is a new chapter, then the next step down are the big ideas that have to happen in that chapter, then the next step down are the details of those big ideas, etc.
- The brilliance of an outline is that even if you leave your book for two crazy, hectic weeks, it's super easy to just pick up right where you left off.
- I use just one spreadsheet per story and then keep tabs at the bottom with all different people and places. I always have one tab for each main character and setting, but I'll combine side-characters and places on the same tab. For instance, in my current book I have a tab labeled Chara (protagonist), Anton (love interest), The Oaks (Anton's estate), Wrenwood (Chara's estate), Anton's people (all the side characters associated with Anton), Chara's people (ditto), Stratton (all the people and shops we meet in the village), etc. And, since it's part of a series, I have tabs for the other people we'll follow in the other books so I can make sure I'm keeping track of any details I write about them.
- I like to use actors and actresses as my 'this is what my character looks like' pics because it's easy to find multiple photos of them in different hairstyles, clothes, positions, and facial expressions. I take a nice sampling of these photos and paste them into my spreadsheet. Make sure you write down the actor's name so you can find more pics if you need them. Then, when I'm describing my character, I go to my spreadsheet for inspiration. Don't forget to copy and paste the description you just wrote into your spreadsheet so you're both consistent and not repetitious.
- Thanks to the magic of the internet, you can also find pictures of houses, floor plans, etc to paste into your spreadsheet so that you know where your people live and eat and work.
- DO NOT EDIT YOUR FIRST DRAFT until you are finished with it. Many aspiring writers spend months honing and perfecting their first chapter and never really get around to finishing the story. I call the first draft 'word vomit' because you just want to get it out of you. Who cares what it sounds like?! Just get it down on the paper. Trust me, you'll feel better. Not only is it a boost to your ego, but your writing will be faster if you aren't worried about finding the exact right word. I use place holders in my first draft: expletives that I know I don't want to keep but that succinctly describe what my character is feeling; things like 'fight scene here' because I take forever to write fight scenes; 'witty repartee' is another of my common first draft place holders. You can also use highlighting to remind you of things you're not finished with and that you want to come back and

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revisit. First drafts are sprints. You keep moving, keep writing. Editing happens after the first draft.

- You can find all sorts of forms and ideas online to help you build your characters. I've looked at some and used a few and certainly, if you like them, you should use them. But I've found that I like the natural flow of discovering my character as I outline, spreadsheet (yes, I just used that as a verb), and write.
- Keep a notebook and pen next to your computer. This was an idea I heard at a Quills Conference and it has been a lifesaver! When you're writing and you think of things that you need to do, groceries you need to pick up, people you need to call, errands you need to run, etc, write them down in this notebook and then get back to writing. DO NOT DO THEM! Write them down so you remember them when you're done writing and do them at that time. Our writing time is precious. Don't waste it doing tasks that can wait.
- My first draft is full of 'tells' rather than 'shows' and long passages of just conversation, because that's the easy part. That's okay. Get the easy part on the paper. You'll put in all the other details when you edit. Editing is a whole other article!!

Writing is seriously the best job ever, and outlines, timelines, and spreadsheets make it easier and faster! Like every skill, the more you do it, the better you'll be. And you're in the right place!! Everyone here is excited to help you tell your story. It's not too hard. It's not too tricky. It's "Just Write!" ✦

## Upcoming Events

The League of Utah Writers

### *Speaker Series*

Welcomes:



**Bryan Young**

AUTHOR OF BATTLETECH: A  
QUESTION OF SURVIVAL



### *Speaker Series*

EXCLUSIVELY FOR  
LEAGUE MEMBERS

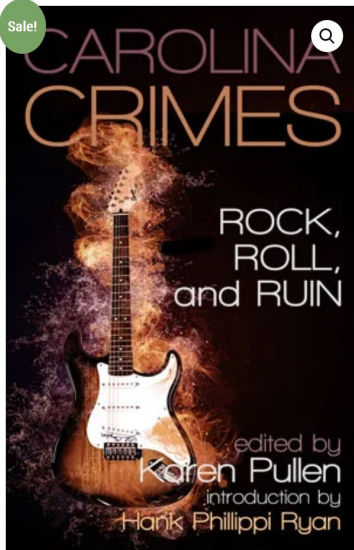
October 21st, 2022  
**7:00 pm MDT**

A virtual  
presentation on  
Writing Multiple  
Protagonists

Look for the link in your  
members-only newsletter

# Who’s Penned What

A List of Published Works and Contest Winners



## “PAST CONNECTIONS”

E.J. Murray

**Genre: Crime/Mystery**

Each story in Crime’s new anthology *Carolina Crimes: Rock, Roll, & Ruin* has a musical tie-in along with the crime. There are bad boy rockers, opera, tribal flutes, & even Elvis! If you like a good "whodunnit," you can't go wrong with these stories.

[Buy the anthology from Down and Out Books.](#)

## “THE PROPOSAL”

Shawn Pollock

**Genre: Mystery/Thriller**

Private investigator Charlie Cranston takes what he thinks will be a routine infidelity case. But one night of terrifying surveillance leaves him with nightmares he'll do anything to silence.

[Read it for free on Mysterical-E's website.](#)



## “ENTERTAINMENT VALUE”

Linda Allison

**Genre: Flash CNF**

[Read it for free on Dark Winter Lit's website.](#)

# Who's Penned What

(continued)



## “What I’ve Learned from Writing About Ghosts”

Ann Gordon

**Genre: NF Article**

Ann’s article has been published on the Rocky Mountain Fiction Writer’s Website.

[Read it for free on RMFW’s website.](#)

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## Contest Winners

### Quill Awards

Edward Massey—Novel—“Forever Sheriff”—Silver Quill

### Typewriter Awards

David Armstrong—Nonfiction—“A Pebble in the Shoe”—Silver Typewriter

### Olive Woolley Burt Awards

Linda Allison—New Voices: Nonfiction—“Summers of a Midwestern Youth”—First Place

Megan Condie —New Voices: Genre Fiction—“The God Project”—First Place

Megan Condie—New Voices: Adult First Chapter—“The Summer of the Sea”—Second Place (tie)

Tamara Copley—Established Writer: First Chapter Kid Lit—“Hisstruction”—First H.M.

Amanda Hill—Established Writer: Sonnet—“Why”—Third Place (tie)

Amanda Hill—Established Writer: Sonnet—“Enough”—First H.M.

Amanda Hill—Established Writer: General & Lit Fiction—“In the Hands of the Enemy”—First H.M.

Josie Hulme—Established Writer: Soliloquy—“Boomer”—First Place

Josie Hulme—Established Writer: Romance—“To England, With Love”—First Place

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Tim Keller—Established Writer: Flash Fiction—"Fortune's Favors"—Second Place

Tim Keller—Established Writer: Sci-Fi/Fantasy—"Menagerie"—First Honorable Mention

Josef Miyasato—Established Writer: General & Lit Fiction—"Javelina"—Second H.M.

Erica Richardson—Established Writer: Freeform Poetry—"Chains of Compulsion"—First H.M.

Linda Smith—Established Writer: Sonnet—"Pandemic Winter"—First H.M.

D. Reed Whittaker—Established Writer: Screenplay—"The Dance"—Second H.M.

Congratulations to all of the winners! We are lucky to have such talent among us.



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## Five Tips I Wished I'd Learned Sooner

*By Nancy Roe*

Ever since I was a kid, I wanted to write a book. I even wrote in my sixth-grade autobiography that I wanted to be an author. It took me until I turned fifty to make the dream a reality.

I've learned many lessons in the past ten years. Here are five tips I wished I'd known at the beginning of my career.

**Tip 1:** Find a writing group. Writing groups, whether in-person or online, are a valuable source of information. Share your words, your stories, your soul. Sometimes we get so close to our writing that another person can spot weaknesses in the plot or ask questions we hadn't thought to ask ourselves. The Just Write Chapter provides valuable feedback.

**Tip 2:** Take courses. Learn, learn, learn, and never stop. Reedsy Learning has tons of free courses. Jane Cleland offers a free hour webinar every month. For paid courses, look into Writer's Digest, Margie Lawson, or Sisters in Crime.

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**Tip 3:** Sign up for emails from authors you admire, agents, writing instructors, and writing blogs. After a few weeks or a few months, you'll know which providers give you the best information, and you can always unsubscribe from the ones you dislike. My favorites are Jane Friedman, Joan Dempsey, K.M. Weiland, Lisa Hall-Wilson, Mary Carroll Moore, Social Media Examiner, and Writers in the Storm.



**Tip 4:** Attend writer's conferences. Meet fellow writers. Share your experiences. Ask questions. Don't think of fellow writers as competitors, but as friends. And never, ever be afraid to talk to the guest speakers. The headliners go to conferences to share their wealth of information, not stand on a pedestal. The next Quills Conference is August 10-13, 2023.

**Tip 5:** Read, read, read. Read stories in your genre. Read stories in other genres. Why do you enjoy certain books and not others? Was it how the story made you feel? Did you love the red herrings and plot twists? Did you stop halfway because the book was boring, or did you stay up all night? ✦

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## Eastern Idaho Renaissance Faire

*By John Cullen*

The sun cast a warm glow from a cloudless sky through cottonwood and other deciduous trees. The soft breeze carried the sounds of a village awakening. To my right, Andrew set up several tables, covered them with cloth, and set his wares for display.

Across the open grass field, the blacksmith hammered nails through a canvas awning into the superstructure of his shop. Without protection, the sun would blaze his swords, shields, and bucklers and make them untouchable to the guests arriving behind us. Without something to touch, to carry home, sales would be shy.

The songs of birds chirping in the trees gave way to laughter. A small girlish giggle blended with a burly bellow from Sven, the apothecary. Adults emerged from tents and greeted each other. Then, as if on queue, vendors started their cars and drove away, turning the Krupp Scout Hollow into a gathering of creative anachronists.

A hoard of D & D enthusiasts surrounded Andrew and his dice, discussing their adventures, stats, and abilities; every story attempting to top the previous. Alas, not only do I understand the language, their tales awaken long-forgotten memories of the early days of the game.

The sun climbed higher, threatening to turn the hollow into an oven.

(Continued on page 10)

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“Check it out!” I said to a passerby. “Crazy ol’ Goot and I invented a brand new form of entertainment just the other day.” I waited for them to approach my table.

“What is it?” a woman asks.

“Words on a page causes visions to appear in your mind!”

“What?!?” the crowd gasps. Some wear surprise on their face, others doubt. “What sorcery is this?”

Broad smiles urge me to continue playing along. Although acting is a foreign activity, the extrovert in me welcomes the challenge.

Eventually, our discussions turn to my novels, and I perfect the pitch for all three on display. Worse than any potential publisher, my five seconds with each person—a connection to a sale—heightens the importance and deepens my insecurities. But then, someone smiles encouragement, takes a business card or bookmark, and thanks me for my time.

In one weekend, I sold more than I thought I’d trade in all four weekends of the fair, and I’m forced to spend the next weekend asking people to connect with me online where they’ll find links to all my books in print, Kindle, and audio.

Some people express surprise that there’s more than print, and I silently thank other authors who encouraged me in sessions at the Quills conferences to try voicing my own stories. And I, who loves technology, praise the programmers at Amazon, KDP, ACX, and Apple who’ve made it easier to create and distribute content.

“Look,” one guy shouts, eyes wide with surprise. “There you are on Audible.”

That one statement made hundreds of hours of writing, editing, and sweating, combined with dozens of hours recording, and even double that in post-production perfecting the sound of my voice and saving the files on servers in the cloud, worth the effort.

Near the guest entrance stands a woman painted in green and bronze. I watch her take a sip of water from a bottle and think, “How interesting it is that a statue can take a drink of water.” High in the sky, a dozen Bald Eagles dance, and I watch them until they float beyond sight. Between the “living statue” and I, a woman with a white feather in her hat strums on a harp, and the surrealness of it all hits me: Magic is real.

I can’t wait until Salt Lake City FanX and the Annual Quills Conference in between. ✦

# 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

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**"Autumn glows upon us like a splendid evening; it is the very sunset of the year."**

**—Mary Russell Mitford**

**Happy Autumn :)**

