

The Just Write Life

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President’s Article

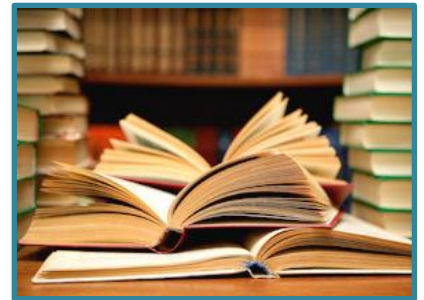
Page Turners

by Ann Gordon

The other night I had a good chat with my only granddaughter (she lives in Maryland now, so we rarely see each other). I don’t know if I’m to blame or not (probably am), but she loves to read novels and particularly likes spooky books. Yes, I have given her a bunch of S. King and D. Koontz novels over the years.

Well, she’s 30 now, still single, and enjoying her life as a bartender. She’s worked up to a manager position, loves her coworkers and her lifestyle, and has loads of friends. What the two of us have in common these days (besides looking a lot alike) is our love of page turners. She told me she had outgrown King and Koontz and ventured off to find another thrilling author. Right now she’s reading Riley Sager’s “The House Across the Lake” and says she cannot put it down. She’s really sold on this guy’s novel.

What struck me about our conversation was how much she *loves* that book. In fact, she doesn’t want it to end. Since she is already three-fourths the way through its pages, that night she plans to start reading slower so the story will last longer. Hmmm. I don’t think I’ve heard anyone say that before, not in those words anyway. Her enthusiasm over this best-selling author made me think about page turners in general. What do these novels have in common?



Well, they don’t get bogged down in description, they end every chapter with some type of cliff-hanger, they throw in a few clever plot twists, they make good use of dialog, they build in a sense of urgency like somewhere a stopwatch is running, and – at least in the beginning – they favor short sentences.

The authors of page-turners build in some unanswered questions. They don’t leave their readers completely in the dark, that would be frustrating, but they do leave them with questions; some get answered along the way while others leave the readers dangling to the last chapters. Most readers will keep turning those pages to get their answers.

So...this weekend I’m trying to decide which Riley Sager book to buy so she and I can discuss the author some more. According to Amazon, Goodreads, and other sources, all of his books are best-selling thrillers. I think I’ll start with one that has a ghost.

Links to Websites

Two interesting websites for authors

by Ann Gordon

In one of our newsletters of 2016, I shared this website about “Flogging the Quill: Pursuing the art and craft of compelling storytelling.” A unique feature of the site includes Ray’s Flogometer. <https://www.floggingthequill.com/> I hope you'll check out his list of do's and don'ts for a story's First Page. These tips serve as a great reminder.

While we're on the subject about first pages, here's a video from a gal who appears to know what she's talking about. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Idb6OIJ1Pv4> Ellen also has a series called a “Novel Boot Camp.” She is enthusiastic about helping writers as exemplified by her 104 YouTube videos and over 150 thousand subscribers. Wow!

“Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.”

– Will Rogers

New Members

Welcome the following new members of Just Write:

- ❖ Mary Ann Mejdrich
- ❖ Carl Riding (welcome back)



Member Spotlight



Erica Richardson

Lover of both fantasy and reality, Erica Richardson can't seem to get enough of dragons nor of good, clean romance. She is a wife, mother, and loves creatures of all kinds. She can be found in her home in Utah, snuggling young children, caring for her pets, and with her nose in a book or her fingers on the keyboard.

Erica also enjoys martial arts and the outdoors. Her writing motto is "books that build empathy," and she writes "clean books to engage and inspire" readers of all ages. She is neurodivergent and loves to write about characters who face invisible challenges.

Erica was awarded the Olive Woolley Burt Honorable Mention Award for her poem *Chains of Compulsion*. This poem was also published in Utah's Best Poetry and Prose 2023. She also received the "Recommended Read" award for her novel, *Dragonbreath and Prejudice*, in the 2023 LUW Quills writing contest.

Website: www.ericarichardsonauthor.com

Instagram: [EricaRichardsonAuthor](https://www.instagram.com/EricaRichardsonAuthor)

Facebook: [Erica Richardson Author](https://www.facebook.com/EricaRichardsonAuthor)

Member Article

What I Learned at my First Writing Conference

by Nicole Dvorak

The anticipation bubbled inside me as I was approaching my first writing conference in St. George, Utah. I was anxious and excited but, most of all, eager to learn what it was all about.

I planned on meeting people while there, attending the classes that piqued the most interest for me and my needs as a writer, and creating business cards along with a link tree site to put all my current finished work in one place. I felt good about this!



Surprisingly, the biggest takeaway for me on this special day was a poetry class I attended. I sat anxiously waiting for the lecture with my good friend next to me when the instructor said we will be “working” today. I was thrilled but also nervous because I find I create easier when I am in my own space and am very spontaneous with what I work on. Then, I quickly reminded myself I could come back at any point to review the work I created today.

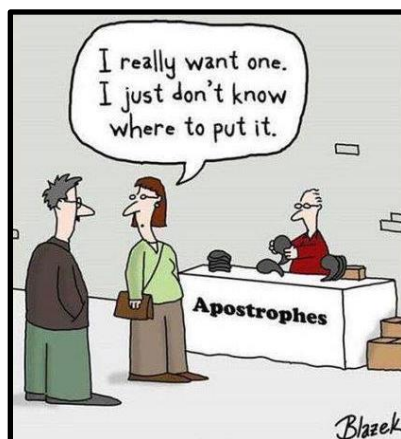
The instructor complimented our energy and creative flow throughout the room, which was amazing to be a part of. We wrote poems from two different pictures, meditated in our seats, and pulled our memories to the surface for a happy poem. The instructor named words, objects, things, places, people, etc.

We learned many tips and secrets on how to write poetry, carry a notebook around whenever a thought strikes, and use a picture or our own memories, happy or sad, to create this beautiful art called poetry.

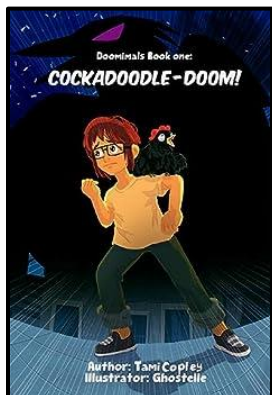
I was shocked at how I was able to get the juices flowing in this one-hour class with a little guidance and new techniques. I SHOWED UP! What would have happened if I didn’t show up? Well, I wouldn’t have shown up for myself! If you don’t show up because you’re afraid or it’s something new, then there would be no opportunity presented in front of you.

We need to do hard things, even if it is scary at first. Learning is empowering. Presenting your confidence to others and to yourself can feel exhilarating afterward. Be fearless and spontaneous.

You can say so much with the power of words!



Who's Penned What



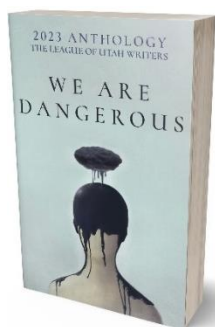
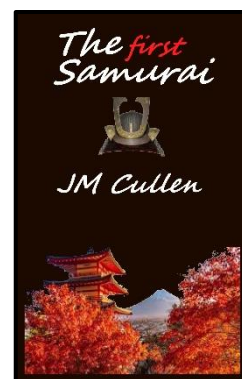
Tamara Copley's *Doomimals Book 1: Cockadoodle-DOOM!* is now available on Amazon. It's an action adventure book for 8-12-year-olds. Summary: Three kids and their super animal companions have to save the world from the evil Dog of War and her minion, the Bird. This book is based on "Chicken Little." Several people in this group gave me feedback some years ago, so this group is in the acknowledgments. It's free with KDP Select and only \$2.99 digital. It's also available in paperback as well as hardback.

[Purchase the novel on Amazon.](#)

John Cullen has published his sixth novel, *The First Samurai*, which the members of the Just Write! critique group made valuable contributions.

In the distant future, a forensic historian, whose job is to travel back in time to observe and record history, discovered the Bushido Code never entered the soul of the Japanese. Eastern Chivalry never took the people out of the Dark Ages. So, the Ministry for Chronological Affairs assembled a team to return to ancient Japan to find and save the first Samurai, a man named Sōma no Kojirō. This is where our story begins.

[Purchase the novel on Amazon.](#) Audio production is in the works!



Included in the 2023 LUW Anthology, We Are Dangerous:

Josie Hulme's short story *Mirror, Mirror*

Nicole Kluder's poem *Writing....Love...Dangerous Things?*

D. Reed Whittaker, *Assortment 12: Life is like...*

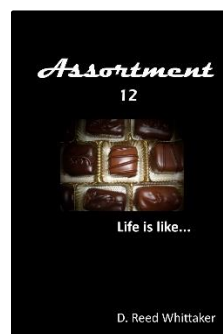
The 12th collection of short stories and poems. Most an outgrowth of contests on WDC.

[Purchase the collection on Amazon.](#)

D. Reed Whittaker, *Poems by Marie Anne*

A collection of poems, obviously. Latest effort is to convert poems into songs. Success has been elusive.

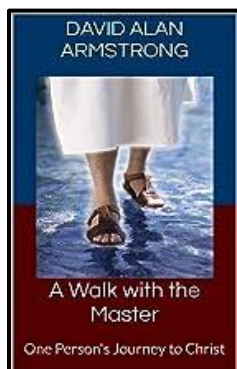
[Purchase the collection on Amazon.](#)



Linda Allison's three-piece collection of photography was included in a July edition of *Burningword Literary Journal*. [Linda K Allison | Burningword Literary Journal](#)

Awards

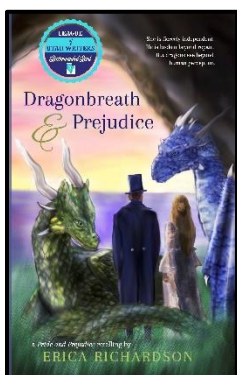
Winners of The Quills Awards:



David Armstrong
A Walk with the Master
Gold Quill in the nonfiction category



Lisa Vickers Forsyth
Sojourn: A Time Travel Romance
Bronze Quill in the novel category



Erica Richardson
Dragonbreath and Prejudice
Recommended Read in the novel category

Winners of The Olive Woolley Burt Awards:

Josie Hulme

Poetry – Freeform: *Love Poem to Gravity* won second place and *Cancer* won third place.
Mystery & Thriller: Short story *Avaris* won first place.

Megan Condie

Poetry: *Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?* Won second place.
To RJ Walker: From the Block on Top of Your Brick and *To the Black Person I Did Not March With* won honorable mention.
General and Literary Fiction: *The Smell of Books* won first place and *Fowles and Saint Peter* won third place.
First Chapter – Adult: *The Summer Tango* won third place and *The Summer We Danced* won honorable mention.
First Chapter – YA: *Blood Horse Empire* won first place.
Creative Non-Fiction: *The Good Girl's Chemical High* won second place and *A Daughter Like Me* won honorable mention.
General & Literary Fiction: *The Pastor's Wife* won first place.

Charity Nelson

First Chapter – Adult: *Bionic Woman* won second place.

Beta and Sensitivity Readers Needed

Michelle Backman has a book needing both beta and sensitivity readers.

Title: Waking Day (formerly Ghost Boy)

Genre: Magical realism/middle grade to YA with cultural and historical presentation of indigenous or First American issues 1913 to present.

Word count: 95,000 (which includes historical interludes)

Contact Michelle at mlbackman67@gmail.com.

Tamara Copely is looking for a beta reader for *Doomimals Book 2*.

Contact Tamara at shaeniff1@yahoo.com.

Charity Nelson is looking for beta readers for her debut novel titled *The Keyholder of Time* which is a YA Fantasy Romance of 95,000 words. There is nothing explicit except for 1-2 minor curse words.

Contact Charity at charityfnelson@gmail.com.

“If you fail, never give up because F.A.I.L. means ‘First Attempt in learning.’ End is not the end. In fact, E.N.D. means ‘Effort Never Dies.’ If you get NO as an answer, remember N.O. means ‘Next Opportunity.’”

– Positive Thinking

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 (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 with an overall review or comment
- Ideally, return your reviews by the last day of the session

Chapter Officers

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- Mechelle Morrison, Vice President
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- Tim Keller, PR and Voting Proxy
(writerscache435@gmail.com)
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