

# The Just Write Life



## A Note From the President

By Ann Gordon

We have a great group of writers in Just Write, and it's my pleasure to work with all of you. I'm proud that so many members are writing and publishing and winning contests—it's just awesome. The League certainly knows who we are by now! Here's a big *Thank You* to all members who have contributed to the chapter newsletter by writing an article or sharing their writing and publishing information, and of course, to all those who participate in the critique sessions.

### Some chapter officer announcements:

A big *Thank You* to Lisa for all her hard work for the chapter, not only with the newsletter but with chapter communications. She'll be greatly missed, but I hope she still

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Inside This Issue

New Members-----	2
Spotlight -----	3
Member Article -----	5
Who's Penned What -----	6
Upcoming Events -----	7
Productivity Tips -----	7
Member Article -----	8
Critique Guidelines-----	10

### Chapter Officers

- Ann Gordon, President  
(ann@gordoncomputer.com)
- Mechelle Morrison, Vice President  
(mechellemorrison@gmail.com)
- Tim Keller, PR and Voting Proxy  
(writerscache435@gmail.com)
- David Armstrong, Website

(Continued from page 1)

writes the occasional article for the newsletter.

To help me with chapter communications, I'm pleased that Mechelle Morrison (our former V.P.) has returned to an active role for the chapter. Over ten years ago, this fledgling chapter began with three members, one of whom was Mechelle. Thank you for hanging in with us all this time.

David Armstrong has offered to help me update the website. Thank you, David. I'm aware I've fallen behind with the updates, so I'm grateful to have some assistance.

Another Thank You to Josie for serving as Just Write's Public Relations officer for many years. It seems that every year she makes us proud by winning yet another award in the League's creative writing contests. She's attending school now – way to go!

Tim Keller, a League chapter president and also a member of Just Write, plus a former League president, has offered to serve as our chapter's Public Relations officer. He has sent several people to our chapter and serves as our chapter's proxy when I cannot attend League board meetings. Over the years he's been a powerful voice for Just Write.

On a personal note, I would rather work with fellow creative writers than spend so much time building corporate training. To that end, when I finish this last tech communications project (January 31), I'm determined to take myself off the corporate contract market to give fulltime writing another chance. I've tried that before, but this time I hope to actually succeed by writing five days a week and *marketing* what I write. I must get serious about publishing -- I'm getting too old to procrastinate any more.

Season's Greetings and Happy New Year to all of you!

Ann ✦

---

## New Members

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

- Michelle Chamberlain
- Darlene Reilly
- Amanda Snyder
- T.J. Tranchell
- Rick Steinke



## Member Spotlight: Q&A with Kathy Davidson



### **Q: When did you know you wanted to be a writer?**

A: When I was young, before I was eight, I told myself stories to be able to fall asleep, and even in the daytime when I was bored, I told myself stories. I named these daydreams Dreamity. I would sometimes share the stories with my sister, but most of the time I kept them to myself. In middle school I wrote a book. One of my friends heard I was writing it and invited me to her house to write together, but when I actually filled pages with words and she got bored, I wasn't invited over again. In high school I took a creative writing class and wrote. Up until this point I had not gotten over a 'C' in any of my English classes. I didn't do any better in this class. Their sideways glances and whispers behind my back made me not want to write. I realize now I made them feel something with my horror story which freaked everyone out a bit.

They didn't know what to think of me.

I joined a writer's group and wrote short stories. I finally finished another book and decided it was time I got serious about writing. I took online college courses, with an emphasis in Creative Writing and English. That's when I wrote my first published book. It turned out to be a Gothic novel and people who read it still whisper behind my back and give me sideways glances, but they liked it.

I'm scared of writing another. Could I write something good twice?

### **Q: Which books and authors have most influenced your own work?**

A: I loved reading Anne McCaffrey and anything science fiction but have always been told women don't write well enough to do science fiction. One day I want to think I'm good enough to do it anyway.

### **Q: What is the best piece of writing advice you've received?**

A: Don't give up. Just pile the words in and edit them later.

### **Q: What has been the worst piece of writing advice you've received?**

A: Write what you know.

### **Q: If you could spend a day picking the brain (not literally) of any deceased writer, who would it be?**

A: Anne McCaffrey. She's dead now though. It might be hard. Any successful writer would do.

### **Q: What is the one writing success you are most proud of?**

A: The fishing story I had published in the Idaho Magazine. It was the first one I was really paid for.

**Q: If you could get rid of one writing “rule,” what would it be?**

A: If I could spell phonetically, that would be nice. But run on sentences are my worst nemesis.

**Q: If you could spend two weeks at a writer’s retreat in any city or country, where would you like to go?**

A: I guess I wouldn’t mind staying right here in Bear Lake. Then I wouldn’t feel like I had to go sight-seeing. I could just write.

**Q: Do you listen to background music as you write? If so, what kind?**

A: I’ve tried this and it does help. I have listened to ambience music or classical, nothing with vocals or I just sing in my head instead of write.

**Q: If your next novel gained a slot on the NY Times bestseller list, how would you celebrate?**

A: Go to some island beach.

**Q: If you could time travel and give your younger self one piece of advice on life, what would it be?**

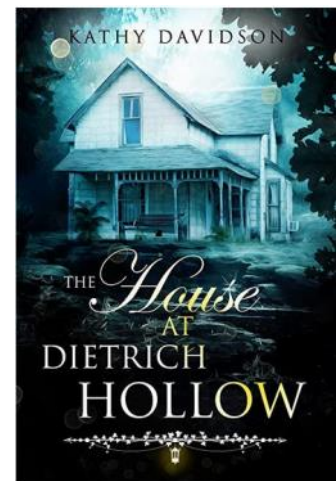
A: To not be afraid of what others say. Just write. Actually, I’m still trying to convince myself of this.

**Q: What has been the most valuable aspect of joining the Just Write chapter?**

A: Joining the Just Write chapter has helped me not be afraid and has shown me some other strengths and weakness. I love to read other’s work. It has also helped me in revising and creating story lines. I love the friendships I have made too. They are supportive and remind me that I write something worth reading. So thanks. ✨

Purchase Kathy’s book, *House at Dietrich Hollow*, [on Amazon](#).

Follow Kathy’s Amazon Author Page and purchase anthologies containing her work [here](#).



-----  
*“The pages are still blank, but there is a miraculous feeling of the words being there, written in invisible ink and clamoring to become visible.” – Vladimir Nabokov*  
-----

# Creating a Meaningful Draft

By Tamara Copley

I've been blogging about how to write in a more literary manner for several years. There are multiple things to consider as you start a new piece to make it deeper, more meaningful from the start. It's not just a matter of writing or spending endless amounts of time researching. There are certain steps that will help you fully understand the story before starting.

1. When you have a germ of an idea, do a basic brainstorm about your story and characters. Who is your protagonist? In what era does the story take place? What is the world like? What is your basic plot idea? What is going to drive “the story bus,” an element coined by Orson Scott Card? Will your story be driven primarily by character development (resolving your character’s unhappiness/misunderstanding), plot (something’s broken in the world, and your character needs to fix it), a question (who dunnit?), or milieu (think *Gulliver’s Travels* or *Lord of the Rings*—the most important character is the world).

According to Card, when you start one of these types of stories, it’s not over until you’ve fulfilled the contract with your reader. Harry Potter, for example, is driven by all four. The story isn’t over until Harry is happy, what’s broken in the world (Voldemort’s plotting) is resolved, the mystery is solved (in Harry’s case, a series of questions, one posed before the next is resolved), and the foreign world is introduced (we understand the basics of the wizarding world). I, personally, had a harder time getting into the latest Harry Potter-adjacent movies because they’re more milieu-driven, more about the magic and denizens of the magic land than character development or fixing a broken world. However, some people love that. You won’t please all people.



2. Once you have the basics of your story established, you can get into more detail, understanding the world of your story. This would be a good time to do your research if you’re creating a piece set in a different time or your characters grapple with an event or condition you don’t understand. It would also be a good time to create your map of the location. If you’re writing genre books such as fantasy and sci-fi, you’ll also want to establish a fictional set of rules, a detailed explanation of how the magic and/or technology works for your world. Your characters and plot need to stay true to these rules to keep the reader engaged. Creating these rules beforehand and keeping a detailed list of the power sources, magical rules, creatures, etc. will help bring your world to life for the reader.

3. You’ll also want to understand your characters on a deeper level. At this point, you may have names and perhaps an interview with likes, dislikes, wants, needs, and a bit of a story. This is a good start, especially when it comes to wants vs needs and fears. A plotline can be built around the conflict between what your character wants most vs what they need most. They may want to stay home and feel safe, but they really need to go on this quest or their loved one will die.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

The protagonist's fears and desires could create the foundation for a friend or, better yet, an antagonist. I always get a rough idea, then decide on an enneagram (character) type, which gives depth. Types like this, or Meyers-Briggs, come ready-made with characteristics. A character attribute system helps you figure out your character's basic flaw and misunderstandings, which they outgrow throughout their character arc(s).

4. Once you have a world, characters, and a rough idea for a plot, those who feel comfortable with outlining can create a generalized or specific plotline. I'd recommend you refer to a three-, seven- or twelve-act structure (various guidelines that walk you through the hero's journey) as a foundation. I tend to be a pantsier who writes, then outlines, unless it's a plot-based story, in which case I use basic outlines. Regardless, you'll want a trajectory of your story. A western, adventure, fantasy, sci-fi, or even a romance can be built around these structures.

5. Once you understand your plot, characters, and world, it's time to simply write. I wouldn't recommend editing, rethinking, revising, or rewriting in any way until you get to the end, or there's a good chance you won't finish. You'll likely lose steam and get frustrated. Revision comes later. To paraphrase the movie *Finding Forrester*, write the first draft with your heart and the second with your head.

If you haven't already completed this planning, you may not be ready to write your novel/biography/etc. If that's the case, consider beginning with the steps I've outlined. It will make your writing process that much easier. ✦

Find Tamara's writing blog here: <https://authortamaracopley.blogspot.com/>

---

## Who's Penned What

A List of Published Works

### Erica Richardson

Erica's poetry is currently on display in the art exhibit titled *I Am Bound Upon a Wheel of Fire*. The display focusing on artists and poets (or family members) with OCD runs until December 22, 2022 in Provo, UT. More info available [here](#).

Congratulations, Erica!

### Ann Gordon

Ann's article "In Media Res" was published on the Rocky Mountain Fiction Writer's website. Read the article [here](#).

Congratulations, Ann!



## Upcoming Events



### The Pre-Quill Conference

Dates: April 29, 2023

Location: SLC Marriott University Park and Online

For more information, visit the League's website [here](#).

### Luw Writing Contests

The Quills Awards (published novel contest), the Typewriter Awards (published short text contest), and the Olive Woolley Burt Awards (unpublished short fiction, non-fiction, and poetry contest) usually begins accepting entries at the beginning of each year with a deadline in May.

Last year our chapter had winners in each of the three writing contests. Now is the perfect time to consider what you would like to submit and to send those submissions through our critique groups for some pre-contest feedback.



For more deadline information and contest rules, keep an eye on the [League's website](#).

## Steps for a Productive New Year



1. Take an hour or two to plan out your writing goals.
2. Be sure your goals are achievable with the amount of time you have.
3. Set deadlines and, if necessary, break down larger goals into smaller objectives with their own deadlines.
4. Post your goals and deadlines where you'll be reminded of them frequently.
5. Reward yourself for each goal achieved.
6. Believe in yourself! Readers are waiting for your stories . . .

# Don't Give Up: How to Conquer NaNoWriMo

By Lisa Forsyth

*National Novel Writing Month—NaNoWriMo—occurs every November, a time when NaNo participants try to pen the first draft of a fifty-thousand-word novel within thirty days. Nanowrimo.org allows writers to create a profile, track their progress, and receive encouragement from friends, NaNo headquarters, and local organizations.*

## Begin with a Solid Idea

My first attempt at NaNoWriMo was a big fail. In the first week I wrote fewer than one thousand words and lost steam. In fact, I don't remember which project I had been working on. However, since then I've "won" NaNo several times and have learned exactly why my first attempt didn't work.



**National  
Novel  
Writing  
Month**

So, how can we begin NaNo with the best possible chance for success? By first snatching our story ideas from the abstract phase and writing them down in the solid idea phase. Maybe we've thought of an interesting character or plotline and would like to base our novel on that, but we need more elements and details worked out before the first day of writing begins. According to the rules, you can completely outline your novel before NaNo begins (see Tamara's article on page 5 for ideas on how to get started).

I was a serial pantsier before learning that a hybrid method works best for me. Now, before each NaNo, I create a basic outline of where the story will begin, where it will go, and where it will end up. This usually includes a chapter-by-chapter synopsis of two to five sentences each. Knowing my endgame from the beginning provides direction and motivates me to reach that goal of 50,000 words.

## Be Flexible

Have you ever been on a vacation where you knew which sights you planned to see each day but discovered something more exciting along the way? Detours can happen all the time during the writing process. Although some detours are dead ends, others may take us down beautiful roads we would have missed had we stuck to our outline. I suggest traveling down the paths you're unsure of to see where they lead.

## Schedule Catch-up Days

NaNo recommends penning 1667 words a day to reach that 50,000-word goal. The biggest secret I've found for keeping me on track is to save two days a week as catch-up days. For me, those days are Saturday and Sunday. This means that my per-day word count needs to go up, but it also means that if I have something fun scheduled on the weekend, I won't feel guilty if I don't get a chance to write. Also, if my week didn't go as planned, I have some spare time on the weekend to make up for the day(s) I missed.

(Continued on page 9)



(Continued from page 8)

## Don't Give up, Even If You're Behind

I can't stress this enough. It's one of the primary reasons I completed NaNo this year. During Thanksgiving week I lost precious writing time with holiday preparations and spending time with my husband. I almost gave up NaNo then. I was a little more than halfway through my novel but only had six days left to write 20,000 words. I didn't think I could do it.

I pressed on anyway.

Why?

Because *any* progress *is* progress, and even if I didn't make 50,000 words, I was that much closer to finishing the novel.

So, I doubled down, got into "the zone," and had a couple of my most successful writing days ever. In the end, I pulled out the win one day early.

### "The Zone"

There may not be a surefire formula for getting yourself into "the zone." However, here are a few techniques that can help your word count enter stratospheric heights. First, don't watch the clock. Please. If you have a limited amount of time to write, set an alarm instead of constantly glancing at your computer's timekeeper. Second, don't keep one eye on your word count and another on the page. A watched pot never boils, and if you want to get into that place of intense productivity, you need to temporarily forget about time and goals and get lost in your story. Once you've immersed yourself in your setting, and your characters have become a part of you, the only limits are your imagination and the amount of time you have available to write.

### Despite All of That . . .

It's important you don't set goals so difficult that they will require the bending of time and space to accomplish. There's no sense in setting yourself up for failure from the beginning. If you can't write 50,000 words in a month, set a smaller target and celebrate just as much for completing that goal as you would if you'd had more time for a full NaNo.



Remember, success comes wrapped in different packaging. Perhaps you didn't meet your 50,000-word goal, but you wrote carefully enough that your project won't need as many rewrites later on. That is also a success worthy of celebration. Ultimately, NaNo is a means to an end but not an end-all. You don't even have to wait until November rolls around to get working on that next project. Start anytime. Write at a pace that's reasonable for you and don't give up. ✦

# 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

---

**"What good is the warmth of summer without the cold of winter to give it sweetness?"**

**—John Steinbeck**

**Happy Holidays :)**

