

KWA

Kansas Writers Association

all genres. all formats. ALL WRITERS.

SEPTEMBER 2010

SEPTEMBER WORKSHOP

Saturday, Sept. 18
1:30-4 p.m.
Rockwell Library

Hearing Voices

We're told these days that 50 percent of our stories should be dialogue. Perhaps it's the Hollywood influence: Readers want to "watch" the scenes of your story, and nothing puts them into the action like characters talking to each other. At our September meeting we'll spend some time discussing what makes compelling, authentic dialogue.

Many of us tend to freeze up while putting words in our characters' mouths. But it's just conversation — something we do every day. Author and writing coach Gloria Kempton says writing dialogue has always come naturally to her. What's her secret?: "[O]nce we understand that our characters are not outside of us but within us, it takes the mystery out of how to write dialogue for any character. If we pull our characters up from inside of us instead of approach them from the outside, writing dialogue becomes an organic process."

So if you're struggling with getting your characters to talk to each other, perhaps you should get to know your characters better. Try interviewing them — write an exchange as if you were sitting down and talking to your characters. Or develop character sketches — a catalog of your character's physical, emotional, and behavioral traits. Maybe then you'll start hearing their voices.

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Editor: Erin Perry O'Donnell

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Calendar

- Oct. 16: **Regular Meeting.** Writing for Children & Young Adults
- March 19, 2011: **Scene Conference**



Critique Encore

Last month's critique session was so popular that we're going to do some more! Just bring one copy to read aloud, and an open mind. Since our meeting topic is dialogue, you might consider bringing a sample of dialogue you've written to get feedback on it. *See page 3 for more scenes from the August meeting.*

**Our mission:
to inform,
support,
encourage,
and promote
the writer.**

President's Remarks: Meetings Make the Creative Process a Little Less Solitary

By A. Lisette Walker
KWA President



August's critique meeting was a huge success—if you didn't make it, you missed a great time! I had fun seeing some members I hadn't seen in a while—and welcoming new members to KWA! We'll try to have a couple of these meetings a year.

Because of the keen interest in critiques and discussion, we are going to set aside the last portion of the monthly meeting for members to have the chance to discuss their current writing with each other. We will continue to discuss craft and solicit speakers on various topics of interest to our members. Our September meeting will cover dialogue—currently the most heavily requested craft topic.

There's a great scene in a movie, *The Whole Wide World*, in which aspiring writer Novalyne Price is in a café, writing down entire conversations so she can learn how to write dialogue. Robert Howard (author of *Conan the Barbarian*) catches her at it and is aghast; this is something that just comes naturally to him. The movie is more

about Novalyne's efforts to become a writer and her relationship with Howard as a convenient mentor (they live in the same small town) than Howard's writing career. It's not a great movie, but writers will recognize Novalyne's struggles, and the disparity in the methods of both writers will hit home.

I'm a sucker for movies about writers—probably because there are so few. One of the more interesting ones I've seen recently was an anime. *Whispers of the Heart* is about a young girl who challenges herself to write. We see glimpses of what she's creating, but it's mostly about how she came to write and is caught up in the creative process. We do get to find out all about the book she wrote—it becomes the companion movie, *The Cat Returns*. *Cat* really seems like something a young girl would write about—at least it was similar to the stories I created when I was in school. Both are charming (and available on Netflix).

Writing is a solitary profession, which is probably why there aren't more movies about the process. That's also why getting a chance to hang out with other people who share this passion is so enjoyable.

I hope to see you at our next meeting. Keep writing!

Cowley County Writers Guild marks first anniversary

By Carol Martin
KWA Member

The Cowley County Writers Guild celebrated its first anniversary with "Creativity Night: An Arts Showcase" on July 16 at the Cherokee Strip Land Rush Museum in Arkansas City. The event featured live music, art displays, and presentations by local poets and writers. In addition to wood carvings, oil and acrylic paintings, and pen and ink sketches, vocal and instrumental music was provided by singer/songwriters Danice Sweet, Tim Durham and Sylvia Riggs. Co-hosted by the Arkansas City Public Library, Creativity Night was sponsored by Country Mart and the Arkansas City Senior Center.

The Cowley County Writers Guild meets at 6:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of every month in the Ark City Public Library, 120 E. Fifth Ave., Arkansas City. The group is open to anyone with an interest in writing. For more information, contact Carol Martin at cjmartin62@yahoo.com or (620) 442-6112.



Listening and Learning

We had a full house for our August critique meeting. Writers grouped themselves by genre, then read their work aloud and exchanged impressions, opinions, and advice. The session was so popular that we're offering a little extra time to do it again this month. Don't miss it!



TOP LEFT: Mystery and thriller writers made up one of the largest critique groups in the room—and one of the liveliest.

TOP RIGHT: Memoir writers share their works in progress.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Sonny Collins gives Carol Martin some feedback.

BOTTOM LEFT: Chick lit and fantasy writers came together in one group.



Annual KWA Prose and Poetry Contest Now Open; Judges Wanted

It's time again for the annual KWA Prose and Poetry Competition! There are five categories for adult writers and two for youth writers (age 18 and younger). Cash prizes are awarded. Complete rules and details are posted on the KWA website, www.kwawriters.org. **The postmark deadline for entries is Nov. 30.** We're also looking for judges to evaluate

contest entries. It only takes a few hours, and we provide a judging guide with criteria. Please consider taking on a category to judge.

Contact Contest Chair Ray "Grizzly" Racobs at contest@kwawriters.org to volunteer or for more information.

Good luck!

Member News

H.B. Berlow's poem "9 November 1938" was included in *Poetica* magazine's online Holocaust edition (poeticamagazine.com). He is still blogging at tikiman1962.wordpress.com.

Starla Criser, writing as Starla Kaye, has sold a contemporary Western romance novel, *His By Valentine's Day*, to Blushing Books. It is currently being published monthly from now until February 2011.

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P.O. Box 2236, Wichita, KS 67201

Newsletter Submissions

Submit articles and member news by the 20th of the month to Erin Perry O'Donnell at newsletter@kwawriters.org or to our address above. Put "KWA" in the subject line for emails, and please send information in the body of the email, not as an attachment.

Join KWA

Get a membership through Dec. 31, our monthly newsletter, and a discount on our programs and seminars. Dues are \$13 for a mailed newsletter, \$10 for emailed newsletter, and \$6 for a youth membership (under 21). Membership forms are online at www.kwawriters.org. Renewals are due Jan. 1. Send your check to: KWA, P.O. Box 2236, Wichita, KS 67201

*The Kansas Writers Association is a not-for-profit
501(c)(3) organization.*

<http://www.kwawriters.org>

Head to Hutchinson for the Prairie Book Festival

The Prairie Book Festival, a celebration of reading, writing, and literature, takes place this month at the Hutchinson Public Library.

Kansas authors will read from their books and talk about their work. The event also features book sales and autographing; storytelling and crafts for children; book valuations; memoir readings; and live music. It all takes place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sept. 25 at the library, 901 N. Main St. in Hutchinson.

Two current KWA members will be festival speakers. **B.D. Tharp** is the author of *Feisty Family Values.*, and **Marilyn Hope Lake** has written several children's books, including *Buddy and the Grandcats*. Other writers in the lineup include:

- Poet **Steven Hind**, whose book *The Loose Change*

of Wonder was named a Kansas Notable Book

- **Jim Hoy**, whose folk history of the Flint Hills includes *Flint Hills Cowboys: Tales of the Tallgrass Prairie*
- Non-fiction writers **Steven Farney**, **Dr. Mark R. Fesen**, and **Bob Gress**

Two authors familiar to KWA members will be on hand as vendors: **Bonnie Eaton**, a.k.a. B.J. Myrick, is the author of *Edge of Nowhere*, and **Hazel Hart** is the author of *Like Mother, Like Daughter*.

The festival is jointly sponsored by the Hutchinson/Reno Arts and Humanities Council, the Friends of the Hutchinson Public Library, and the Hutchinson Public Library. For more information, visit www.prairiebookfestival.com.