

Hamilton Mountain Writers' Guild *Newsletter*



October 2024



“And if you want to know why great editors scare the pants off of writers everywhere, read ‘Eats, Shoots and Leaves’ by Lynne Truss. The punctuation police are everywhere!”
- Dorothea Benton Frank

Welcome to our October Newsletter!

In this issue, Sheila Hanratty describes one aspect of her writing journey, the Anthology Team shares email excerpts, and Karen Wood provides her notes from the meeting on September 18.

Please note that we were back to Zoom meetings in September while the library was undergoing construction.

If you would like to contribute to our newsletter, or if you have any comments or suggestions, please email Linda at lindalambert33@gmail.com

Happy Writing!

In this newsletter
you can expect:

Schedule
October 2024

Anthology VII
Team Emails

**Writing
Interiority**
Sheila Hanratty

**Bi-Weekly
Recap**

Bonus:
Writing Tips

Schedule: October 2024		
October 2	Michael Williams	TBA
October 16	Liam Oneill	Anthology Workshop w/ Writing Exercises
October 30	Bob Nothnagel	Formatting for Self-Publishing

Anthology VII: Team Emails

What follows is a peek at some of the content from the emails flying back and forth between the Anthology team members to help you understand where we are coming from!

"I do think we are trying to encourage, educate, and raise the bar. This whole anthology is supposed to be a supportive editing process so we amateurs can gain confidence and experience. It's about helping members learn this creative process which involves collaboration with editors."

- j.l.oneill

"Producing a volume of interesting, compelling, and well-edited stories will be a positive reflection on the guild. Conversely, a selection of sloppy, poorly punctuated etc stories will be a detriment to the guild."

- Linda Lambert

"Our goals should be to educate amateur writers and raise money for N2N, not publish something as quick as possible."

"If we want this anthology to be of high quality and have it represent the Guild's talents we're going to need time. Time to teach, time for writers to learn, time to help writers navigate the craft. Then time to party with a banger book."

- Alexander Stepaniuk

"Because we have a large number of beginner writers, we need to help direct/supply tools for good writing."

"If we expect excellence, we need to make sure that everyone is aware of the tools available and knows where to find them. That way, they can write their story, let it rest, then follow the editing steps to prepare as clean a copy as they can before submitting their work to the editing committee."

- Karen Wood

Writing Interiority, by Sheila Hanratty

I walk to the podium at centre stage and look out at the expectant faces of the audience. I am at a charity gala fundraiser in the ballroom of the Park Plaza Hotel. New York's wealthiest art and literary patrons are present. I am a guest speaker, reading a passage from my book about my father and his work. He was a historian, a professor, a scholar, and a writer. He taught years ago at Durham University in Durham, England.

I look down at the pages in my hands and shuffle them. "Where is page one?" My hands are shaking, and my mouth is dry. I can hear my heart pounding in my chest. I'm sweating. I think, "What am I doing here?" I close my eyes and whisper, "Get a grip."

My thoughts go to my father. I see myself as a child. I am at Durham University at the bottom of a grand staircase. I see my dad at the top, smiling down at me, and I run up the stairs to greet him. He opens the ancient door to his office, and I run in and nestle into the tufted red leather chair near his desk. It encircles my small body like a warm hug, and I get comfortable while looking up at the familiar rows of books lining the shelves. My dad has tea ready and pours the piping hot liquid into a cup for me. I wait for it to cool while he places a tiny cake on a saucer. He begins to speak. He always explains history to me as though I am an adult, not a child. I listen attentively to the soft even timbre of his voice as he describes his latest research project. I cherish these moments. This is why I am a historian.

He is gone now. I lost him one horrific night when a drunk driver ran a red light and slammed into his vehicle. The impact killed him instantly. My world shattered and my life changed forever.

I open my eyes and stare out at the audience, pushing the papers of the speech aside. I will not be needing them. I open the book to the selected passage and begin to read. I find my voice. Everything I have to say tonight will come straight from my heart.

The above appears at the beginning of my novel. It sets the scene and introduces the protagonist, Sara. Sara struggles with public speaking, and the reader feels her discomfort. A bit of backstory unfolds: she has suffered a deep loss, the death of her beloved father. This loss will shape the outcome of her life. She says, "My world shattered, and my life changed forever." So, what now?

Sara's story depends on the choices she makes. Her story will have a plot and external events. The external plot, however, is not the true story. The true story is Sara's character-driven internal struggle. I, the writer, make it my priority to know my protagonist intimately and make her story happen. Sara must discover what matters to her most and take action to fulfil her desires and goals. She will make hard decisions, make mistakes, and deal with consequences. The reader experiences all this through her. The reader needs to be inside Sara's head and body and experience every emotion she feels. This can be powerful and magical. It becomes a biological experience for the reader, coupled with the events of a solid, well-crafted story. It is also a tall task and challenging and hard to pull off.

While researching the craft of writing, the use of interiority comes up repeatedly. Sara's story is a modern-day romance with a dual timeline and historical twist. She will suffer, she will grow, and she will have an "Aha!" moment and, hopefully, a happy ending. Whether I can deliver a good read remains to be seen. The point is, I have to try, learn the craft, and read other authors. I have to understand the publishing industry. As writers, we can't give up. Whatever genre and writing style we choose, we don't stop. We love to write! Cheers!

Bi-Weekly Recap: September 2024

Last month, we had two bi-weekly meetings.

On September 4th, we convened on Zoom. We all had time to talk about our writing journeys and challenges. Sheila introduced us to the literary term, "interiority," which is on-the-page access to a protagonist's psyche as they process information in an interesting way. She also shares with us, in this newsletter, her experience utilizing interiority.

On September 18th, Karen Wood presented an informative talk regarding things every writer should know about. These tips included: the importance of commas, commonly confused words, a short story rubric, and an understanding of the four levels of editing.

If you're interested in the writing tips Karen Wood provided, see the following pages, which includes her pertinent notes.



Hamilton Mountain Writers' Guild



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Commas (Basic Uses)

To better understand the use of the comma, begin by learning the following basic uses.

1. USE A COMMA TO SEPARATE INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

Rule: Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, yet, so, or, nor, for*) when it joins two complete ideas (independent clauses).

1. He walked down the street, and then he turned the corner.
2. You can go shopping with me, or you can go to a movie alone.

BUT where the second half does not contain a subject, there is no comma.

3. He walked down the street and then turned the corner.
4. You can go shopping with me or can go to a movie alone.

2. USE A COMMA AFTER AN INTRODUCTORY CLAUSE OR PHRASE

Rule: Use a comma after an introductory clause or phrase. A comma tells readers that the introductory clause or phrase has come to a close and that the main part of the sentence is about to begin.

1. When Evan was ready to iron, his cat tripped on the cord.
2. Near a small stream at the bottom of the canyon, park rangers discovered a gold mine.

BUT use no comma if four words or less.

3. USE A COMMA BETWEEN ALL ITEMS IN A SERIES (serial comma)

Rule: Use a comma to separate each item in a series; a series is a group of three or more items having the same function and form in a sentence.

1. We bought apples, peaches, and bananas today. (series of words)
2. Mary promised she would be a good girl, that she would not bite her brother, and that she would not climb onto the television. (series of clauses)
3. The instructor looked through his briefcase, through his desk, and around the office for the lost grade book. (series of phrases)

4. USE COMMAS TO SET OFF NON-ESSENTIAL CLAUSES

Rule: Use commas to enclose clauses or phrases not essential to the meaning of a sentence.

1. Steven Strom, whose show you like, will host a party next week. (non-essential)
2. John, who spent the last three day's fishing, is back on the job again. (non-essential)
3. Alexander Pope, the Restoration poet, is famous for his monologues. (non-essential)
4. The New York Jets, the underdogs, surprised everyone by winning the Super Bowl. (non-essential)

BUT where the sentence would be unclear without the clause or phrase, use no commas.

5. The gentleman who is standing by the fireplace is a well-known composer. (essential)
6. The poet Pope is famous for his monologues. (essential)

5. USE A COMMA TO SHOW DIRECT ADDRESS

Rule: When a speaker in a sentence addresses a person or persons, the name is offset by commas.

1. I think, John, you're wrong.
 2. John, I think you're wrong.
 3. I think you're wrong, John.
-

6. USE COMMAS TO SET OFF DIRECT QUOTATIONS

Rule: *If the speaker in a conversation is identified, enclose the noun or pronoun plus the verb in commas*

1. Mary said, "I dislike concerts because the music is too loud."
2. "I dislike concerts because the music is too loud," she said.
3. "I dislike concerts," proclaimed Mary, "because the music is too loud."

7. USE COMMAS WITH DATES, ADDRESSES, TITLES, AND NUMBERS

Rules for dates: *Set off the year from the rest of the sentence with a pair of commas.*

1. On December 12, 1890, General Ruger sent an order for the arrest of Sitting Bull.

Rules for addresses: *Separate by commas the elements of an address or place name. A zip code, however, is not preceded by a comma.*

1. John Lennon was born in Liverpool, England, in 1940.
2. Please send the letter to Greg Carvin at 708 Spring Street, Washington, IL 61571.

Rules for titles: *If a title follows a name, separate the title from the rest of the sentence with a pair of commas.*

1. Sandra Belinsky, MD, has been appointed to the board.
2. John Smith, Junior/Senior, has been appointed to the board.

Also, in lists: *Proper names and titles*

3. Smith, John, Junior/Senior
4. John, Junior/Senior

Rules for numbers: *In numbers over four digits long, use commas to separate the numbers into groups of three, starting from the right. In numbers four digits long, a comma is optional.*

1. 3,500 [or 3500]; 100,000; 6,000,000

8. USE OF COMMAS BETWEEN MULTIPLE ADJECTIVES PRECEDING AND QUALIFYING A NOUN

Rules: *If two or more adjectives are used, separate them with commas.*

1. an enterprising, ambitious man
2. a cold, damp, north-facing room
3. a great, wise, and beneficent measure

BUT (exception 1) *where an "and" joins two modifying adjectives or phrases, no comma is used.*

4. the honourable and learned member

AND (exception 2) *where the last adjective is in close relation to the noun, no comma is used.*

5. a distinguished foreign author

9. USE OF COMMAS SURROUNDING TRANSITIONAL WORDS (MOREOVER, HOWEVER, THEREFORE, ETC.)

Rule: *When transitional words are used for emphasis, enclose in commas.*

1. It is undeniable, therefore, that the defendant is guilty.
2. However, it won't be as easy as you think.

BUT *where there are other commas nearby, these commas may be omitted.*

3. He is silly, foolish, and therefore an unlikely choice.
-

COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

1. Accept/Except

Accept: to take willingly; to receive (verb): "I accept the position with pleasure."

Except: preposition of exclusion: "Everyone is going except Ted."

2. Advice/Advise

Advice: consultation or information given or taken (noun): "Sometimes advice isn't wanted, even if it is needed."

Advise: to give someone suggestions (verb): "Jim advised John not to cosign on the loan."

3. Affect/Effect

Affect: to influence (verb): "The garden's yield was affected by the lack of water."

Effect: to make or accomplish (verb); result (noun): "The new reward system effected great changes in the workers' morale." "One effect of the drought was a poor tomato crop."

4. All ready/Already

All ready: this phrase means "completely prepared": "We were all ready for the hurricane."

Already: this word means in the past (adverb): "I have already taken that class."

5. All right/Alright

All right: Everything is right, fine and good

Alright: informal, means adequate (accepted in fiction writing)

6. Cause/Because

Cause: a reason, motive, principle; a thing responsible for a condition or a result (noun): "The earthquake was the cause of the deadly tsunami."

Because: a conjunction indicating a cause and effect relationship: "I gained weight because I couldn't exercise for three months."

7. Desert/Dessert

Desert: An area of land characterized by dry, sandy conditions (noun); or the verb "to abandon":

"The Sahara Desert makes up much of Northern Africa." "The hitch hiker was deserted at the rest stop."

Dessert: the last course of the meal, usually a sweet treat (noun): "For dessert, we had chocolate cream pie."

8. Discreet/Discrete

Discreet: tactful or prudent (adjective): "Cheryl was discreet about giving her advice to Naomi."

Discrete: distinct or separate (adjective): "The voters were divided into six discrete factions."

9. Fewer/Less

Fewer: refers to items that can be counted: "Fewer people showed up at the play tonight than were expected."

Less: refers to general amounts: "Less snow fell than was predicted." (Snow can't be measured by counting.)

10. Its/It's

Its: Possessive pronoun: "Its condition was bad."

It's: Contraction for "it is": "It's cold out tonight."

11. Lay/Lie

Lay: a verb meaning "to set down." Its principal parts are lay, laid, laid: "The workers laid carpet for a living."

Lie: a verb meaning "to recline." Its principal parts are lie, lay, lain: "Sheila lies down after every meal."

12. Loose/Lose

Loose: not tight (adjective or adverb): "The loose knot caused the net to give way." "The knot worked loose, and the rowboat drifted away from the dock."

Lose: to misplace, or the opposite of "to win" (verb): "I predict the Panthers will lose tonight."

13. Precede/Proceed

Precede: to come before (verb): "K precedes L in the alphabet."

Proceed: to go forward (verb): "The diplomatic party proceeded into the restaurant."

14. Principal/Principle

Principal: The main one; most important (adjective); the head of an organization, or a sum of money (noun): "A principal witness in the case has been granted immunity."

Principle: an ideal or a belief; a basic standard of law (noun): "The United States was founded on the principle of freedom."

15. Quiet/Quite

Quiet: This word means "without noise" (adjective): "The nursery was very quiet."

Quite: this adverb is a qualifier: "I was quite happy without any television."

16. Than/Then

Than: a word used in making comparisons: "My sister is younger than my brother but older than I am."

Then: an adverb referring to time, or "next": "I walked a mile; then I swam forty laps."

17. Their/They're/There

Their: possessive pronoun, belonging to "them."

There: an adverb of place; "Where is it?" "There."

They're: a contraction for "they are."

"Their doughnuts were purchased there at Krispy Kreme. They're still very fresh."

18. To/Too/two

Too: an intensifier (adverb): "It was too cold to go swimming."

To: a preposition: "I will go to the evening meeting."

Two: the number 2

19. Weather/Whether

Weather: this noun refers to atmospheric conditions: rain, snow, wind, and so on: "Montana residents experience a wide variety of weather."

Whether: This conjunction refers to a choice between alternatives: "I have to decide whether or not to take Algebra."

20. Who/Whom

'Who' refers to the subject; 'Whom' refers to the object in a sentence

21. Which/That

Which: Non-defining clauses with 'which' are disposable, those with 'that' are necessary

22. Whose/Who's

Whose: a possessive pronoun: "Whose boots are those?"

Who's: a contraction for "who is": "Who's going to The Incredibles?"

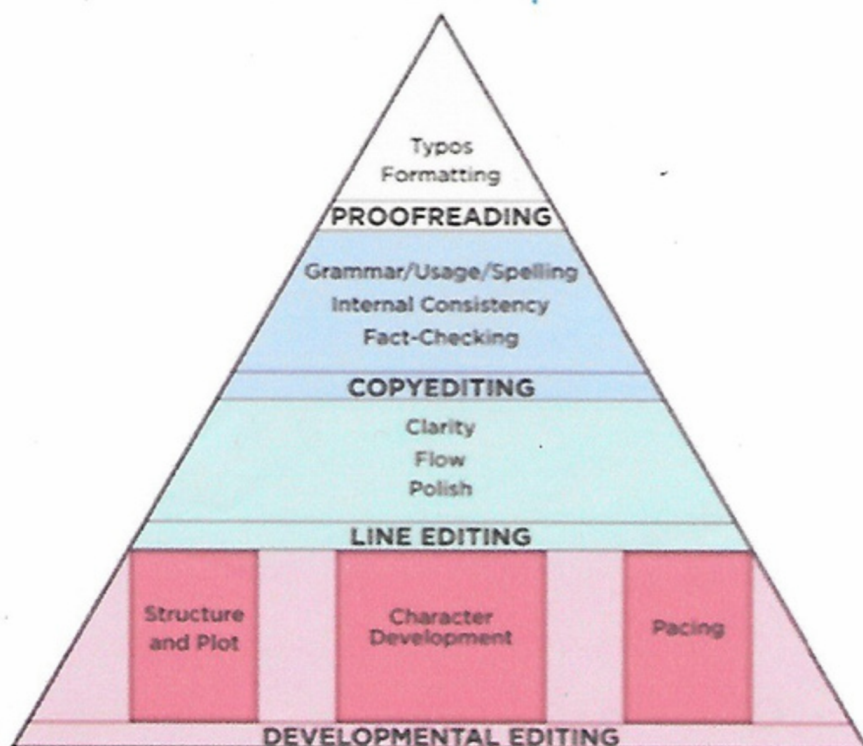
23. Your/You're

Your: possessive pronoun: "It is your fault."

You're: contraction for "you are": "You're the person selected to chair the committee."

Effective Editing– Molly McCown – Great Courses

Lesson 1 – Understanding the Four Levels of Editing



Lesson 2 – Planning Your Edit

Distance and Perspective

Where to start editing – really matters on what task to start with

Start with one task at a time

Develop your editor's eye – 5 ways

- 1) Let work rest – ideally a month or two
 - 2) Read widely for inspiration
 - 3) Join critique group
 - 4) Learn how to receive/give feedback on writing of other
 - a. compliment sandwich, give only feedback asked for
 - 5) Gain perspective on your writing – make it look new to you
 - a. Print it out, change way you look at it
 - b. Read aloud – to yourself or someone else, computer read to you
 - c. Change color of paper, font
 - d. Change location
 - e. Set time limits for hour, take breaks
 - f. Email it to someone – you might think of things before you sent it
-

SHORT STORY RUBRIC

Key Traits	4 20 pts.	3 15 pts.	2 10 pts.	1 5 pts.
IDEAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The opening lines vividly present the story's main conflict and characters. Significant, descriptive details reveal the setting and characters. The writer uses strong dialogue to show the characters' personalities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The opening lines present the story's main conflict and characters. Most details are relevant in revealing the setting and characters. The writer often uses dialogue to show the characters' personalities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The opening lines vaguely present the story's main conflict or characters. More details and examples are needed. The writer occasionally uses dialogue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The opening lines do not present the story's main conflict or characters. Details and examples are irrelevant or are missing. The writer does not use dialogue.
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer sets the scene by introducing the characters, setting, or action in a memorable way. The ending resolves the conflict satisfactorily. The sequence of events is clear and engaging. The story has a clear beginning, middle, and ending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer vaguely presents the characters, setting, or action. The ending resolves the conflict. The sequence of events is mostly clear. The story has a beginning, middle, and end, but the action is not always easy to follow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer hints at the characters, setting, or action. The ending does not bring the conflict to a satisfying conclusion. The sequence of events is sometimes confusing. The story has a beginning, middle, and end, but the action is hard to follow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writer does not set up what the story is about. The story begins and ends in a confusing way.
VOICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tone and voice are strongly individual and appropriate for the story. The point of view is highly consistent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tone and voice are individual and acceptable. The point of view is consistent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tone and voice are not clearly individual and not always appropriate. The point of view is occasionally inconsistent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The voice lacks individuality. The point of view is inconsistent and confusing.
WORD CHOICE & SENTENCE FLUENCY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thoughtful use of sensory language helps create memorable pictures of the setting, characters, and conflict. Sentences have a pleasing variety of structures. Use of fragments and run-on sentences in dialogue is deliberate and thoughtful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensory language is adequate to describe the setting, characters, and conflict. Sentences mostly have a variety of structures. Use of fragments and run-on sentences in dialogue is thoughtful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A little more sensory language is needed. Some sentences have a variety of structures. Use of fragments and run-on sentences in dialogue is not always thoughtful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of sensory language limits the picture of the setting, characters, and conflict. Repetitive sentence structures and lack of dialogue make the writing difficult to follow.
CONVENTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are correct. Grammar and usage are correct. Paragraphing tends to be correct. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are sometimes incorrect. Grammar and usage do not distort meaning but are not always correct. Paragraphing is attempted but is not always sound. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation are sometimes incorrect. Grammar and usage errors distract from meaning. Paragraphing is irregular or too frequent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common words are misspelled and almost all punctuation is missing or incorrect. Grammar and usage mistakes are frequent and distort meaning. Paragraphing is missing.