



Hampton Roads Writers

Where Characters Connect

January 2013

Sometimes Rejection is Just a State of Mind

By Stephanie Brannick

My earliest foray into fiction writing was at 8 years old. I'd created a series of adventures about a muskrat, primarily for my father. He encouraged me to share them with my teacher, who then mortified me by reading one of my stories in class. When she'd finished, the only thing I recall was the deafening silence from my classmates. Even the teacher remained mum as she smiled, patted me on the head, and moved on to the next subject.

The humility of being shunned was quite real in my mind, and because I grew up in a hardnosed, low income area, I shut down my writing career then and there to avoid being ostracized.

For the next thirty-eight years I allowed that rejection to run my life, keeping the dream of writing stuck way in the back of my head. Then, out of the blue, an elementary school friend contacted me. I was stunned when he mentioned my story-writing skills. He was sure I was a successful writer by now. That was a jaw-dropping moment. But also, a pivotal one.

It was a harsh reality to acknowledge I'd wasted so many years on how I felt others perceived my work, but I also came to ac-

cept how my youth and dependence on peer recognition were heavy factors to overcome. It was finally time to leave those insecurities behind.

While we each experience life differently, we share the understanding that without direction or support, we drift away from the things that feed our creative side. Sometimes we allow bits and pieces to surface, feeding our psyche as we make our way through joy and sorrow, success and disappointment.

Many times we see these bits and pieces as just little blips on the radar, but I've found that the key to my own success is viewing those blips as stepping stones, and developing those stepping stones into milestones.

Taking that personal journey has led me to writing again, and the understanding that not everyone will like what I write. But unlike the second grade version of myself, I now know that it's okay, and life goes on. So I'll sit back down and revise and rework my story until I find someone who likes it. And when I do, I'll start on the next one.

Traveling Pen Workshops for 2013

To take advantage of this year's new workshop offerings, send your name, address, phone number, and e-mail, along with a note about which workshops you are registering for, plus your payment (check or money order) to:

Hampton Roads Writers
P.O. Box 7607
Norfolk, Virginia 23509-0607

Payment is possible at the door, but we would appreciate an email from you ahead of time so we can assure a sufficient number of handouts for everyone.

HRWriters@cox.net

Saturday, January 26, 9:30 A.M. to noon. Check-in 9:15
Workshop Title: Show, Don't Tell: When and How to Do

It. Presented by Lauran Strait. Location: Virginia Beach Tidewater Community College Campus, Blackwater Building, Room CW-134

Saturday, February 23, 9:30 A.M. to noon. Check-in 9:15
Workshop Title: From Scene to Story. Presented by Lydia Netzer. Location: Virginia Beach Tidewater Community College Campus, Blackwater Building, Room CW-134

For more information about these workshops and their presenters, as well as future workshop dates, please visit our website: Hamptonroadswriters.org

Nowhere else in Hampton Roads can you get such quality writing workshops at such bargain prices. We look forward to seeing you.

2013 Calendar for SHOW AND GROW YOUR PROSE with Professional Critique Events

Don't miss an opportunity to read ten minutes of your prose to an audience, followed by a professional critique. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend, whether you are reading or not, but registration is required if you do wish to be a reader. Please go to our [website](#) and follow the instructions. We are looking forward to hearing you.

- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[January 12](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach 9:30A.M.-Noon. **Dr. Dennis Bounds**, Professor at Regent University, and **Valerie Wilkinson** will offer the professional critiques.
- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[February 9](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach, 9:30A.M.-Noon **Dr. William Ruehlmann**, Professor Emeritus at Virginia Wesleyan University and **Lauran Strait**, founder and president of Hampton Roads Writers, will offer the professional critiques.
- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[March 9](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach, 9:30A.M.-Noon. **Patti Hinson**, who holds an M.F.A. in Creative writing from American University where her collection of personal essays, *Pulls Like Gravity*, was awarded the Myra Sklarew Prize for Outstanding Thesis, and **Lauran Strait** will offer the professional critiques.
- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[April 13](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach, 9:30A.M.-Noon. **Michael Khandelwal**, who holds two masters degrees and is co-founder of the Muse Writing Studios, and **Lauran Strait** will offer the professional critiques.
- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[May 11](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach, 9:30A.M.-Noon. Critiquers to be announced.
- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[June 8](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach. 9:30A.M.-Noon. Critiquers to be announced.
- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[July 13](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach. 9:30A.M.-Noon. Critiquers to be announced.
- **Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critique**--[August 10](#) at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library, Virginia Beach. 9:30A.M.-Noon. Critiquers to be announced.

Only eight readings per session, so register early to guarantee your place.

847. That is how many writing prompts appear on our [HRW website](#). Looking for a topic for a blog entry? Need a quick idea to get you started in the morning? Writer's Block stressing you out? Why not choose one of these **847** prompts, pick up your pen, and get busy.

“Grammar is a piano I play by ear.”

Joan Didion, *Essays and Conversations*

Getting Published

by Cecelia Robbins

One question that budding writers ask at HRW's yearly writers' conference is "How do I get published?" While it is possible to publish your own work now through Amazon, small book companies, and similar venues, the real question, before attempting any of these routes, should be, "Is my work of high quality enough to be publishable?"

There are ways to ensure that you have put your best possible work before the public. Revising and re-writing aren't the ultimate answers. Pick up any novel, and you will see acknowledgements listed in the frontispiece. Who are these people? A published writer usually has an enormous amount of help. First, second and third readers. A reliable mate who acts as a sounding board. Writing friends who read, edit, make suggestions, note discrepancies. A writer's group is a good place to find such friends. You cannot rely on family and intimate friends to give you honest evaluations of your work. First, they love you and would never hurt your feelings. Second, they are not writers, are they? This is all before you even think about submitting your work anywhere.

If you have never been published, you will have to establish a track record before any publisher will look at your work. No horse breeder is going to put a horse in a big-money race, not until that horse has proven he can run—and run well. Publishing works the same way. It's a business. They're rarely going to put a big-money bet down on a raw newcomer.

Let's assume you write novels, short stories, or poetry. You might try to get your work into one of the thousands of literary journals that publish world-wide. Many of them sponsor contests, which have a small entry fee, but you needn't feel like you have to spend money. Most of these same journals accept "regular" entries. There is no fee, and you have a chance at getting published, but you won't be in the running for money prizes. Which is okay. Publication is the goal here.

If you are an HRW member, Luran Strait, our president, regularly emails lists of journals. You can also find resources in writers' magazines, such as *Poets & Writers* or *Writer's Digest*, as well as the yearly volumes of various *Writer's Market* books.

No one can give you an instant list. Your own research will determine the best match for your submission. This means you will go to each journal's online site, check their "calls for submissions," and read last year's entries and winners. Yes, it is a lot of time-consuming work, but there are very few shortcuts for laying this foundation for your writing career.

Literary Trivia

This reclusive American writer was depicted in W.P. Kissella's novel *Shoeless Joe*. When the subject threatened to sue, he was replaced in the film version, titled *Field of Dreams*, by a fictitious writer named Terrence Mann, who was portrayed by James Earl Jones. (Answer on page 4)

Looking for a local writers' group to join? Take advantage of one of the many that are offered in our area. For a list of writing group opportunities, take a look at our [website](#). It's a great way to work on a piece and get feedback before you present it at one of our Show and Grow sessions.

Why I Make New Year Resolutions

by Susan Okaty

A few days ago I was talking to a woman about New Year resolutions, and she said she doesn't make them anymore. "I never keep them anyway, so why make them and be disappointed?" she said. I never keep mine either, but that doesn't deter me from making them, and here's why:

Making resolutions makes me take stock of myself every year and think about how I might improve myself or what I might like to do that I've put off doing. It also helps remind me of things I used to like doing but forgot about. For instance, last year I made the resolution that I would pick up my violin again. It took me nearly the whole year to go and get my broken E-string replaced, but I had it in my mind that at some point I was going to stop procrastinating and start practicing again. I enjoyed many months of playing before my E-string broke again. Guess I know at least one thing that will be on this year's resolutions list.

I also told myself last year that I was going to work out at the YMCA three or four days a week. Believe it or not, I kept that up for a good six months before I started petering out and only managed to get there two to three days a week. Then it got to be twice a week—if I was lucky, but by that time it was October and I knew I could renew my enthusiasm once the new year rolled around and I made another resolution. Some of the things I've contemplated making resolutions about this year, besides doing a better job at keeping up my exercise routine, are making one new dish a week for dinner, reducing my spending, relearning how to knit and maybe making a sweater (I'm not too serious about this one, now that I see it in print), and finally finishing that short story I started five or six years ago.

Perhaps you haven't picked up your short story in quite awhile or tackled rewriting your novel. Maybe you haven't even gotten as far as putting your ideas into words. What are you waiting for? Resolve now to follow your writing dreams and get busy. Get involved with Hampton Roads Writers and surround yourself with other like-minded creative people. Find a critique group, and then start writing so you have something to bring to it. Get inspired by attending our Open Mics and our Traveling Pen workshops. It's okay if you have trouble sticking with your resolution. We're here to help you stay on track. And if you falter? You will be that much farther down the road when you make another resolution.

Do I earnestly think I will fulfill all my resolutions? Heck, no! Will I be disappointed in myself if I don't keep them up? Likewise, heck, no! But what I do know is that I will achieve some of these goals for part of the year, and I will be better for it. Now, how can that be anything but a good thing?

Buying Amazon.com books and other products sold on the Amazon.com site (including gift cards)



through our HRW website is a quick and painless way to financially support HRW. For each sale, our group earns a 4-6.5% referral fee.

"I haven't any right to criticize books, and I don't do it except when I hate them. I often want to criticize Jane Austin, but her books madden me so that I can't conceal my frenzy from the reader; and therefore I have to stop every time I begin. Every time I read *Pride and Prejudice*, I want to dig her up and beat her over the head with her own shin bone.

~Mark Twain

Answer to Trivia Question:
Who was J.D. Salinger?