

Hampton Roads Writers Where Characters Connect

July 2014

Conference Writing Contests Deadline Quickly Approaches

Surfing the Net for writing contests, you will find a slew of them, and the majority of them charge a fee. Some fees are as small as \$5.00, but many are \$15.00 and more. There is one, however, which charges no fee at all. None. Zippo. And it pays pretty darn well for first, second, third places, and even honorable mention. That place, of course, is our own Hampton Roads Writers upcoming September conference. But the deadline is approaching fast. Your entry must be mailed (no faxes or emails) and in the HRW office by **Friday, July 25**. No exceptions.

First place winners in each category receive \$500, second place is an award of \$250, and third place winners receive \$150. Honorable mention winners will get a tuition break of \$75 on next year's conference. The details for submission are quite precise, so please go to our [website](#) and read the guidelines carefully.

We've lined up fabulous judges for our three contests (fiction, nonfiction, and poetry).



Jeanne Larsen, poet, novelist, translator, and essayist, will be judging the poetry contest. The recipient of grants from The National Endowment for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the Japan/ U.S. Friendship Commission, Larsen lives and teaches in southwest Virginia at Hollins University. She has a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in Comparative Literature. Jeanne has received numerous awards and honors including Pushcart Prize nominations, the William L. Crawford Award for the year's best new novelist (1990), and numerous residency fellowships.

Michelle Garren Flye, our short story judge, is an award-winning romance author of six novels. Michelle placed third in the Hyperink Romance Writing Contest for her short story "Life After." Her short stories have been published by the romance anthology *Foreign Affairs*, *Opium.com*, *SmokelongQuarterly.com* and *Flashquake.com*. She has served on the editorial staffs of *Horror Library Volume 1*, *Horror Library Volume 3*, *Butcher Shop Quartet II* and *Tattered Souls*. Michelle has a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Mass Communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Master's degree in Library and Information Science from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. You can check out her [website](#) for more information about Michelle as well as her books.



Janine Latus is our nonfiction judge. Janine is a freelance writer, radio commentator, and regular speaker on domestic abuse issues. According to BookBrowse.com, Janine "has busked on the streets of Chicago to write about what it's like to sing for your supper. She has galloped the beaches of the Dominican Republic, eaten her way through Kansas City and danced herself into a frenzy, all to gather the kind of you-are-there details that make a story sing. She has coaxed women to tell her how much they weigh and why, and couples to admit how much they earn, how they spend their money and what they'd like to do differently. She has cried along with women as they described surviving mastectomies, and wept with their family members when they did not."

SOCIAL AND SILENT AUCTION

IF you missed last year's optional social with silent auction after the Friday session of the HRW conference, make sure you don't miss out on this one. Last year's was such a smashing success, we are keeping this event as one of our yearly conference highlights. We will have delicious food, a ticket for a free drink, Chinese auction items, gift baskets, and many silent auction items, including gift cards for restaurants, musical events, merchandise, and services. Bring your checkbook and get your Christmas shopping done early while contributing to one of your favorite non-profits. Besides being a great way to cap off the first full day of our conference, the social provides an important opportunity to network and meet our presenters.



You can pay for the social when you pay for your registration (members \$20, nonmembers \$25), or you can pay later. Just remember that the price of the social is \$35 for everyone after September 15.

GET A ROOM

Ever thought how much more relaxing the conference would be if you didn't have to rush to get there in the morning? Why not book a room at the Westin, our conference hotel in Town Center, sleep in and simply walk downstairs and grab a complimentary cup of coffee as you head for the keynote address?

The Westin is offering special conference rates, and it couldn't be easier to book a room. Just go to our website and click on the [link](#). Then enjoy the restaurants and nightlife of our exciting Town Center at the end of each day.

First 10 Lines Critiques

Two of our participants' favorite sessions at the conference are the first 10 lines critiques that will take place this year on September 19 and 20 from 8:30 to 10 AM. Send the first 10 lines of your manuscript to HRW to hear how some of the world's most critical readers would react to your writing. For more details and guidelines go to our [website](#).

"Writing is like sex. First you do it for love, then you do it for your friends, and then you do it for money."

—Virginia Woolf

PERFECT PITCH

The 10-minute elevator pitch provides you the chance to present the idea of your book the way you would if you were on a slow elevator ride with an agent or publisher. Your job is to learn how to pitch so compellingly that the agent or publisher tells you to send the entire manuscript for consideration of representation.

Conference attendees have the opportunity to sign up for up to three 10-minute pitches with any of the literary agents or indie publishers **FREE of charge**. Slots will be filled on a first-come basis, with priority given to members of Hampton Roads Writers. Indicate your interest on the conference registration. Then come prepared to pitch your project!

First 5 Pages Manuscript Evaluation



Author Ginger Marcinkowski will evaluate the first five pages of your manuscript prior to the conference and then meet with you in private for 15 minutes during the conference to discuss the manuscript's weaknesses and strengths. If you'd like to participate in this optional conference offering, please go to our [website](#) and follow the directions for submission. This conference offering costs \$15 for HRW members and \$20 for nonmembers. HRW must have your manuscript, synopsis, and conference registration along with payment no later than July 25, 2014, if you want to take advantage of this great opportunity, so don't delay.

Ginger is the author of *Run, River Currents*, a 2012 semi-finalist in the American Christian Fiction Writers Genesis Contest and a finalist in the 2013 Kindle Indie Awards. Her second novella, *The Button Legacy*, is being expanded into a full novel and will be released in 2014.

HRW Keeps Growing!

Hampton Roads Writers welcomes the following new members who have joined since April:

- ◆ Nikki Dornin
- ◆ Millie Thomas
- ◆ Delona Southerland
- ◆ Kimberly Jaramillo
- ◆ Tammie Kechula
- ◆ Helen Marsh
- ◆ Heather Hildenbrand
- ◆ Tom Frost
- ◆ Mike Moylan
- ◆ Jean Grow
- ◆ Matthew Foster

Who Are We?

Our members come from all fields and professions: doctors, lawyers, poets, novelists, journalists, housewives, students, teachers. You name it, we've probably got one of those. The only things we all have in common is love of the written word and the desire to get better at our craft and help others along the way. Here are snippets about some of our newest members:

Nikki Dornin heard about HRW from someone she met at a job fair who raved about the conference. A friend in Pennsylvania, of all places, told her about it, too. Nikki moved here from Pennsylvania three years ago and is looking for a job in customer service. As a teenager she read the book *Notes to Myself*, and it became her motivation to keep a journal. Her chosen genre is fiction with an emphasis on sci-fi. She writes short stories and hopes to eventually write a novel. Nikki also had one of her poems published.

Millie Thomas heard about HRW when she took a workshop with Lauran Strait. Millie is an avid romance novel reader who challenged herself to write her own book in this genre. Not only did she complete the book, she has almost finished writing another one. "This is a woman of independent character who doesn't back down from challenges," says fellow member Donna Levy.

Mike Moylan first heard of HRW through Jan Fast, publisher of *Chesapeake Style*. Mike was born in Roanoke and has lived in various cities throughout Virginia, residing now in Northern Neck. He professes, "I've written my entire life, starting as a child." He has produced poems, plays, short stories, and a historical novel, *The Stumbling Trail*, that uses the construction of Sky-

HUZZAH

Congratulations to **Lynn Moon**, a member of HRW for a year, who has just signed a traditional contract with Koehler Books for her new Young Adult series *Reflection*. The anticipated release date is May 2015. Lynn says, "*Reflection* is a story about a young girl, Miss Journey, and her deep love for Takoda. She's excited to be introduced to his exotic culture but is terrified when she's awakened to the reality of her ancestry. She must come to grips with who she is and accept her purpose in life. Miss Journey is a vibrant sixteen-year-old dedicated to her younger sister. But her sister becomes her life when their mother suddenly dies and they must reunite with their estranged father. Their cabin, nestled between large mountains, is the perfect place for the girls to gather their thoughts and heal. But when Journey realizes where the cabin really is, she's terrified—her cabin is not located on Earth."

Lynn has also signed on with Koehler for them to self-publish book four in The Agency Series, *In the Defendant's Chair*, with an anticipated release date of November 2014.

You can find her at lynnyvonnemoon.com.

line Drive as a backdrop to the story. He formerly wrote articles for *Ghent Press*, an earlier incarnation of *Portfolio Magazine*. Mike blesses all the wonderful English teachers in his life for helping him develop the craft of writing. He plans to next create a suspense novel and aims at writing a new novel every two years.

Heather Hildenbrand is a publishing and success coach who splits her time between coastal Virginia and Guam. She has published more than eight YA and NA novels including the bestselling *Dirty Blood* series. Heather prefers working on series because "stand alones make me sad when I have to say goodbye to them [the characters] so soon." On Facebook Heather found this quote: "When you die, your life is summed up by two dates and a dash. Make the most of the dash." She asks us, "What are you making of your dash?"

Tom Frost heard about HRW through a Google search of local writers' associations and by asking at the Virginia Beach Main Library. As a lawyer he has a lot of experience in legal writing, but he has never written for commercial publication. He's hoping to use some of his memories of courtroom drama to craft some fiction stories. Before he began practicing law, Tom was a merchant marine officer, and he says, "I have a lot of fond memories of ships and sailors, of hurricanes and collisions and all the rest, that may be grist for some attempt at writing."

Jean Grow originally heard about HRW almost two years ago at a book festival in Town Point. Her interest led to attending Open Mics. She has a strong desire to write. Up until now, she has been involved in journaling, but her dream is to write picture books for children and non-fiction articles for magazines.

Traveling Pen Series

These 2.5-hour workshop sessions on different aspects of writing are \$10 for HRW members and \$20 for non-members. All workshops are held at the Virginia Beach Tidewater Community College campus in the Blackwater Building, Room CW-134. Check out one or more of the upcoming ones:

Saturday, August 23, 2014, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon (check-in at 9:15): Methods of Direct and Indirect Characterization. Presented by ODU's **Princess Perry**. Characters drive stories, carrying the reader from the first page to the last. Skilled writers create a sense that their characters are people—physical, emotional, living, breathing, thinking people. In this workshop, participants will learn how to create 3-dimensional characters using both direct and indirect characterization techniques. Additionally, they will learn how figuring out what characters want can aid in the development of both character and plot.

Saturday, October 25, 2014, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon (check-in at 9:15): Designing, Building and Managing Your Own Author Website: You've written an entire book; don't let building a little website scare you! Presented by **Nora Firestone**, journalist and PR pro. Building and running your own website can save time and money and facilitate endless creative marketing and publicity opportunities. You know it's important to do, but where do you start? What does it all mean? How can you avoid those "in-over-my-head" stumbling blocks in the site-building process? This workshop will shed light on the essentials of domain registration, site design principles and goals, do-it-yourself site-building platforms, search-engine optimization and more, for a relaxed, better understanding of the various components involved and how to easily and successfully pull them together to work for you. Be excited, not intimidated. It's just another art with cool new tools!

Please send your name, address, email, and phone number along with a note about which workshop you're registering for and payment (check or money order) to:

**Hampton Roads Writers
P.O. Box 56228
Virginia Beach, VA 23456**

Payment is possible at the door, but we'd appreciate an email from you ahead of time so we can assure a sufficient number of handouts for everyone. HRWriters@cox.net. For more detailed information about these workshops, including more about the presenters, please visit our [website](#).

A Message from Our President, Lauran Strait

Busting a Myth

Perhaps the most disabling myth about writing is that we practice a lonely craft. There is something romantic about the notion of a writer locked away in a loft overlooking the ocean, his only companions a laptop, a bottle of wine, and a kitty named Hemingway.

In the real world, writing is more like line dancing, a social function with many partners. Some of those partners—especially a writing teacher/coach, members of a critique group, and an editor—are practically required in order to achieve publication success.

HRW has compiled a [list of local writing groups](#) in the Hampton Roads area. Donna Levy, a member of HRW's advisory board, recently updated that list. If you're looking for a critique group, this list should be your first stop. Call the group leader. Attend a meeting. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Someone is bound to know someone who's looking to add members to their critique group. Attend as many HRW sponsored events as possible. Networking will pay off in ways you might never have imagined.

I love deadlines. I love the whooshing noise they make as they go by." —Douglas Adams

Show and Grow your Prose with Professional Critiques

Don't miss an opportunity to read ten minutes of your prose (short story, memoir, or novel chapter only) in front of a very accepting audience of your peers, followed by a brief professional critique by our guest critiquer and by the moderator (usually Lauran Strait, founder and president of HRW), all without removing even a penny from your pocket. Even if you don't want to read a piece, sitting in the audience and listening to what the critiquer has to say can help you with your own writing. In fact, after sitting in the audience and listening to other people read their work and receive professional feedback, many people have been emboldened to dust off some of their own pieces or write a new one for the next session. We have only time for six or seven readings per session, so go to our [website](#) for detailed information on how to share your work. Registration is required for those who wish to read, and as you will see on our webpage, you will need to format and email us your submission in time for us to prepare it for the session. Readers will be chosen on a first come, first served basis.

Why not take advantage of this great opportunity to have your piece critiqued before this fall's conference?

Here is the schedule for the next sessions, all of which will take place at Meyera Oberndorf Central Library in Virginia Beach from 9:15 to Noon.

July 12, 2014: Author **John Mack** will offer the professional critiques. Two reading slots remain.

August 9, 2014: Author and educator **Michael Khandelwal** will offer the professional critiques. Seven reading slots remain.

October 11, 2014: Author and educator **Dr. Bill Ruehlmann** will offer the professional critiques. Seven reading slots remain.

HURRY!

BRING A BIG NAME TO VB

An anonymous donor will gift Hampton Roads Writers 1K to establish a keynote speaker fund with the condition that an additional 2.5K is raised during our **Bring a Big Name to Virginia Beach** fundraising drive. We are asking for donations *in addition to* your **regular** yearly membership. Make sure you designate what portion of your check or money order is for our fundraiser. Remember, all donations are tax deductible. **Your gift, in whatever amount, could make the difference.**

We are so close! Only \$825 more is needed. Won't you help us?



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. The more products sold through a referral from the HRW

page, the higher the percentage referral we receive. You pay no more going through our site than you would if you went directly to Amazon.com. Look for the Amazon link on our HRW home page and start shopping today. Why not start by purchasing a book or two written by one of our conference presenters, then bring them to the next conference and get them signed! Oh, and tell your friends and family about our link to Amazon!

FUN WITH WRITING

Try out this writing prompt:

A dying man presses an airport locker key into a doctor's hand and begs him to use it to help exonerate a death row inmate soon to be executed. The dying man tells the doctor that inside the locker is the evidence that will exonerate the unjustly convicted man. What happens next?

"Write with nouns and verbs, not with adjectives and adverbs. The adjective hasn't been built that can pull a weak or inaccurate noun out of a tight place."

Strunk and White

Grammar School With Bernadette

Let's Be Clear, Concise, and Frank: I Hate Serial Commas.

I have finally realized that people's beliefs about serial commas are as fierce as people's thoughts on anchovies and reality shows. You either love them or hate them. No amount of arguing will persuade you to switch to the other camp. And that's OK. No lives are likely to be lost if you eat an anchovy or use a serial comma.

I happen to love anchovies, hate reality shows and hate the serial comma. The serial comma is used in a series of three or more words or phrases. I'll demonstrate the serial comma using cereal.

When I was young, I mainly ate Fruity Pebbles, Frosted Flakes, and Honeycomb cereals. (This may explain my numerous visits to the dentist.) That comma after "Flakes" is the serial comma that causes the angst. If you like the serial comma, you use one there. If you don't you don't. I don't.

As with many grammar guidelines, using the serial comma is a matter of preference. You listen to the stylebook that you follow. Newspapers, in general, do not use the serial comma. *The Associated Press Stylebook* says to use a serial comma only when leaving it out would cause confusion.

Many book publishers use it, including the *Oxford University Press*, which is why it's also called the Oxford comma. Other fans of the device are *Garner's American Usage*, *The Chicago Manual of Style* and many college writing guides.

And, yes, my friends William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, in *The Elements of Style*, dictate using the serial comma. Their reasoning is that leaving it out may cause ambiguity.

The people for the serial comma despise confusion. They cite an example like this: *I want to thank my parents, Madonna and the pope.* They fear that if you read this, you might believe that the writer's parents are Madonna and the pope. In this age of the ubiquitous Internet, wouldn't everyone already know if someone were, indeed, the love child of Madonna and the pope?

Yes, I know lessons are taught with extreme examples, but could I be expected not to grab that opportunity for a joke? No.

Bernadette Kinlaw has been writing for the *Virginian-Pilot* since 1988. Her column, "Grammar School," appears once a week in the Daily Break and online. She may be reached at bernadette.kinlaw@pilotonline.com. Thank you, Bernadette, for allowing us to print portions of your column.



Alone

By Maya Angelou

*Lying, thinking
Last night
How to find my soul a home
Where water is not thirsty
And bread loaf is not stone
I came up with one thing
And I don't believe I'm wrong
That nobody,
But nobody
Can make it out here alone.*

*Alone, all alone
Nobody, but nobody
Can make it out here alone.*

*There are some millionaires
With money they can't use
Their wives run round like banshees
Their children sing the blues
They've got expensive doctors
To cure their hearts of stone.
But nobody
No, nobody
Can make it out here alone.*

*Alone, all alone
Nobody, but nobody
Can make it out here alone.*

*Now if you listen closely
I'll tell you what I know
Storm clouds are gathering
The wind is gonna blow
The race of man is suffering
And I can hear the moan,
'Cause nobody,
But nobody
Can make it out here alone.*

*Alone, all alone
Nobody, but nobody
Can make it out here alone.*