

The Reading-Writing Connection

In partnership with The Haliburton County Public Library

Website: www.reading-writing-connection.ca/

November / December 2014 Newsletter

UPCOMING MEETINGS FOR the *Reading / Writing Connection*

Wednesday, November 5 (10 a.m.) in the Howard Robert's Room of the Dysart Library

Wednesday, November 19 (10 a.m.) in the Rotary Room of the Minden Library

Friday, December 5 (12 noon) Heatherwood Dining Room at Pinestone Resort

Guest Speaker: *Matthew Desrosiers*, editor of *The Highlander Newspaper*

Wednesday, November 5 at the Dysart Library in the Howard Robert's Room at 11:30 a.m.

Come and ask your questions about freelancing, the newspaper business or writing in general.



The Tall Pine Tales

Mark your calendars and save the date.

Wednesday July 15, 2015

at 6 p.m.

**at the Community Room
in Haliburton**

Christmas Luncheon Social for Writers and Friends across Haliburton, Muskoka and around

Friday, Dec. 5 at noon

Heatherwood Dining Room at Pinestone Resort



To RSVP, contact Pauline at 705-489-3878

CANADIAN AUTHORS ASSOCIATION – *NEW* BRANCH

Join the Canadian Authors' Association in Bracebridge (Muskoka). The cost is only **\$112** for the year and presentations/speakers are included in this price. Just pay for your drinks or supper and enjoy speakers and the company of other writers. Contact Wendie Donabe for more information at wdd550@gmail.com. If not a member, your first visit is free and the cost is \$20 per event thereafter. Speakers are presented monthly.

Next CAA Branch meeting on a Thursday evening in November. Details coming soon.

Challenge from Sharon Lawrence to all members of the Reading Writing Connection:

Choose a collection of memoirs, stories, poems or whatever you write and put it into a chap book from which you might read at Tall Pine Tales next July. Works should be chosen by May so your books can be produced and shared by July.

From Northwords Literary Festival

Writers always appreciate reading good books on writing. The following were recommended by Michael Wuitchik, a writer and presenter at the North Words Literary Festival in October.

- Writing a Novel, John Braine, 1974, Methuen
- Finding Your Voice: How to put personality in your writing. Les Edgerton, 3003, Writers' Digest Books
- The Writer's Journey: Mythic structure for writers, 3rd ed., Christopher Vogler, 2007, Michael Wiese productions
- Things Feigned or Imagined: The craft in fiction, Fred Stenson, 2002, The Banff Centre
- Revision and Self-editing: Techniques for transforming your first draft into a finished novel, James Scott Bell, 2008, Writer's Digest Books

Lastly, (my own advice) don't forget Stephen King's memoir and "how to write" book called *On Writing*. It's just a really interesting read for anyone. Pauline

Here are some of the reasons students cite for writing their memoirs:

This segment is from the website of Linda Howe Steiger, sent to us by Irene.

www.lindahowesteiger.com/index.html

- The process of writing these stories brings back so many memories I thought I'd completely forgotten. It's quite an amazing and very pleasurable experience!
- I am writing my stories down so future generations will know I was a *real* person, not just a name on some genealogical chart.
- I write so the stories my parents and grandparents told me won't die with me.
- Some of the things I did and the experiences I had when I was young seem very remote today. I want my children and my grandchildren to understand how it was then, where I came from, and why I am the way I am.
- Telling stories has helped me work through and understand painful experiences. Writing these stories has produced a sense of peace about my past.
- I'm too old to keep secrets any more. Now I can say what really happened.
- When I work on my stories, I relive my past and assess its meaning. It's been an interesting experience to see how my perceptions about myself have changed through this experience.
- I'm creating a legacy for my kids and for future generations. I hope they'll treasure these stories, since I won't be leaving them much money. I hope they will help them understand who they are. I wish my parents had left me *their* stories!
- I don't have any family, but my ordinary life is part of the social history of life in San Francisco. I'll give these stories to the historical society to archive. Maybe in a hundred years some graduate student will mine all the specific details I put in for a research paper.
- No one else knows how to tell my stories quite like I do.
- Finally, I am beginning to get the story of my own life straight!

Character Questionnaire

Creating intriguing and memorable characters is one of a writer's greatest challenges. The following list of things to ask yourself about your characters was presented at the festival. (with thanks to Helen Humpheries and Richard Van Camp).

1. Name: contrary? Magical? Welcoming? Special meaning?
2. Age: Write from the vantage point of another age and show your work to someone that age.
3. Gender: Earn every word. Be courageous and vulnerable. Write from the "other" side.
4. Skin: spots, scars, colour (and not just white/black) perhaps different from you so you are forced to examine it.
5. Height/weight: Try writing from a different vantage point than your own.
6. Language: spirit/sign/idioms: be sure to use words of the time and place, be ruthless or the character will not be authentic. [*Hint*: if your character is speaking in a strong dialect, use the dialect for a few lines and then revert to ordinary language. That will give the reader a flavour for your character but then allow the readers to follow the story easily.]
7. Education: The informal kind: life skills, culture. Look back and write your character into a time you were introduced to a new kind of education.
8. Setting: Where does he/she live and work? Does he/she like it where they live and like what they do?
9. Extrovert/Introvert: demonstrative/reserved?
10. Relationship to family? Relationship to lover/spouse?
11. Happiest time of life? Unhappiest time of life?
12. Income: Maybe a change in financial status, windfall or something taken away. "Money amplifies who you are" (as opposed to changing you).
13. Location: accents, customs, traditions can be specific even to a particular town. Pretend you don't know what you know.
14. Voice: isms (go through dialogue and check for these.)
15. Movements: slow, fast, fidgeting, gestures etc. and then use throughout.
16. Attitudes: toward life (optimist/pessimist), money, sex?
17. Family: Challenge your family structure. Go out of your comfort zone.
18. Friends: are the family you choose. Who does this character choose and why?
19. Who understands him/her best?
20. Habits/Addictions: What does he/she avoid?
21. Morality: honest, deceitful, inconsistent?
22. Goals: Money, Love, Fame, Solitude, Revenge, etc. This is important because it speaks to the motivations of a character. Perhaps he/she is mostly honest, but is so consumed by the need for fame, they do immoral things to achieve.
23. Fears: Conflict will usually reveal what a character fears most.
24. Secrets: All characters have secrets. Important for secondary characters as well because they will have their own motivations for behaviour.
25. Things they hate: About life, others or themselves?
26. Mistakes he/she has made in life?
27. Faith: What is it? Test it? Even an agnostic can have his/her faith tested. Be contrary.
28. Wisdoms: different kinds of things, spiritual, magical, mystical, sixth sense kind of stuff we don't usually talk about. Where else can we explore if not in fiction?
29. Issues: trust, forgiveness, regrets (these are the spine of a character's motivations and may come from childhood, relationships, events etc.)