

# The Writer's Life

A bad book is as much of a labour to write as a good one. . . . Aldous Huxley



[www.sdwritersguild.org](http://www.sdwritersguild.org)

February 2013

## Patricia Buckley to Speak at February 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting



Have you ever considered writing the next Harry Potter or Hunger Games? You're not alone. Get the inside scoop on writing for younger readers. Patricia Morris Buckley, published children's author, journalist and co-Regional Advisor for the San Diego chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (one of the largest writing organizations in the world), will discuss SCBWI and how to get in this vastly rewarding, if not always lucrative, field.

Patricia is an award-winning journalist with 28 years of experience writing for regional and national publications. She has also been published in national children's magazines, is the co-Regional Advisor for the San Diego chapter of SCBWI. She has lectured at the Learning Annex on "Writing and Illustrating for Children" and teaches writing for children at USD.

### When Readers Read

Neuroscientists tell us that the brain does not make much of a distinction between reading about an experience and encountering it in real life. In each case, the same neurological regions are stimulated.

Reading produces a vivid simulation of reality, one that "runs on minds of readers just as computer simulations run on computers." \* Fiction details, imaginative metaphors and descriptions of people and their actions offer an especially rich replica of life. In one respect, novels go beyond simulating reality to give readers an experience unavailable off the page: the opportunity to enter fully into other people's thoughts and feelings.

Scientists call this capacity of the brain to construct a map of other people's intentions "theory of mind." Narratives offer a unique opportunity to engage this capacity, as we identify with characters' longings and frustrations, guess at their hidden motives and track their encounters with friends and enemies, neighbors and lovers.

Functional MRI imaging showed when subjects read words like "perfume" and "coffee," their olfactory cortex lights up, and metaphors like "The singer had a velvet voice" and "He had leathery hands" roused the sensory cortex.

When you write, you can truly "get into readers' heads."

\* Keith Oatley, emeritus professor of cognitive psychology at the University of Toronto, a published novelist.

### The Prez Says

Anthologies are selling quickly. We may be placing a second order with Lulu.com soon. If you would like to reserve copies from this order contact Linda Loegel. at [noirons@cox.net](mailto:noirons@cox.net).

The new Member Directory will be coming out the first part of March. Contact Rick Peterson if you still need to pay dues or update your entry information.

This year we will also be adding Member Resource pages to the Directory, listing services, products, and events of interest to members. If you provide such a service, perhaps you would like to consider entering a minimal cost ad in the Directory so members can locate you when such a service is needed. Contact Rick or me if you are interested.

During a recent visit to the San Diego Women's Museum at Liberty Station (Barracks 16) the Director mentioned that she would be interested in starting a women's writing class/group at the Museum in the near future. Contact me if you would like more information about teaching or attending such a class/group.

*Ruth Leyse-Wallace*

**The next meeting is February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

*Networking 6:30. . . Business meeting 6:45. . . Program 7-8:30*

## A Tip of the Hat To . . .

**Ruth Leyse-Wallace PhD, RD**, for the publication of her book, *Nutrition and Mental Health*, by CRC Press.

The release date was January 29, 2013. You go, girl!

**David Brin, Ralph Cates, Alan Converse, Chet Cunningham, Linda Loegel, Carl Nelson, Howard Rubenstein, Philip Shafer, and Amy Zajac** for having their books, published in 2012, on display at the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Local Author Exhibit at the San Diego Public Library.

**Gary Winters**, whose poem, *840 moons*, was accepted for the *San Diego Poetry Annual 2012-2013*. His flash story, *Roses & Daggers*, was published in early January in *The Flashing Type Anthology* on Kindle

*If you, or someone you know, has published a book, scheduled a book signing, or some other accomplishment to share, please contact Linda Loegel at noirons@cox.net to be included in our next newsletter. Let your light shine!*

## What You Missed . . . An Evening with Jeniffer Thompson: How to Build/Market Your Website (Not for Dummies) by Ellen Shaw Tufts

Speaking at our January 28 membership meeting, internet marketing strategist Jeniffer Thompson (<http://JenifferThompson.com>) brought professional savvy along with her entrepreneurial expertise in a full-service San Diego design house specializing in websites (<http://MonkeyCMedia.com>).

Thompson seasoned her engaging talk with the savvy of a stand-up entertainer, often dropping both familiar and current internet marketing terms/concepts such as *flicker, sidebar, funneling, spiders, bubble-gum pink vs. earth hues, Helvetica font, bounce rate, mommy bloggers and "SEO"* (Search Engine Optimization) or optimizing your website for effective search-engine viewing.

Speaking to us as “Authors who want to sell books,” she urged a silent promise between “the two of you”—*i.e. a message from you the author to your readers that they will want to stay on your site.*” She used the same pattern during her talk, forging an instant, unspoken contractual promise between **her**, *as our speaker*) and **us**, the house audience. Thompson also urged connecting with social sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, “and don't forget your own contact info; make it easy to contact you! Make it easy to buy your book!”

## Coming Soon to SDW/EG

**March 25, 2013** Dave Feldman, SDWEG member, will speak on journalism in San Diego and as a foreign correspondent.

**April 22, 2013** David Brin, scientist, futurist, and award-winning science fiction author, will speak on his genre(s) and writing experiences.

## “So What?” A Quick Evaluation Tool

As a writer works through putting his story to paper, s/he can try looking through the eyes of an agent.

Review your characters and ask, “So what?”. Is the reader likely to care about this character?

In creating a situation, ask, “So What?”. Are the characters making difficult decisions, facing impossible odds? Will your reader identify with this situation or difficulty?

As the details of the story are fleshed, out does everything have a purpose, which will be revealed and connected as the story progresses? If a detail isn't connected, ask “So What?”. Why have this or that specific detail, if it adds nothing to the story?

“So What?”: a good question to keep in mind. (Resource: Jennifer Rofe, agent from Andrea Brown Literary Agency, Inc., at January SCBWI meeting).

## A Form of Fiction: Single Scene Stories

Distinguished from short stories, the short-short story, flash fiction and micro-fiction, is the single-scene story. A “scene” provides a fixed setting in an unbroken stream of time. The single-scene story provides a fully developed purpose, passion and perception/recognition, taking place in one geographical coordinate, one window of time. It is a full story. The before and after is left to the reader's imagination, helped by the scene the author provides. The author accomplishes more with less; a tighter form allows the author to express emotions—conflict, dissonance, fear, or love—that could be overwhelming or trite given too much free-form space.

Thirty-two single scene short stories by Ernest Hemingway, Jack London, Guy de Maupassant, James Joyce, Doris Lessing, Katherine Anne Porter and others are collected in *Single Scene Short Stories* edited by Margaret Bishop, from Gibbs Smith, Publisher, Santa Barbara, CA.

“The greatest promotional tool any self-published author has is his new work.” Porter Anderson *WD* Feb., 2013

## American Trivia

by Richard Lederer and Caroline McCullagh

SDW/EG members Richard Lederer and Caroline McCullagh are the proud co-authors of *American Trivia: What We All Should Know About U.S. History, Culture & Geography* (Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2012). Over a span of three years, Rich and Caroline will share with you their journey through American history.

### Fascinating Facts about Our Presidents, Part I

#### ***What two presidents died on the same day?***

Our second and third presidents—the only two presidential signers of the Declaration of Independence—John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, political rivals, then friends, both died on July 4, 1826, exactly 50 years after the Declaration became official.

As Jefferson lay weak and dying in his home in Monticello on the evening of July 3, he whispered, “Is this the Fourth?” To quiet the former president, his secretary, Nicholas Trist, who was also his grandson-in-law, answered, “Yes.” Jefferson fell asleep with a smile. His heart continued to beat until the next day, when bells rang out and fireworks exploded for the Fourth.

At dawn of that same day, Adams was dying in his home in Quincy, Massachusetts. A servant asked the fading Adams, “Do you know what day it is?” “Oh yes,” responded the lion in winter. “It is the glorious Fourth of July.” He then lapsed into a stupor but awakened in the afternoon and sighed feebly, “Thomas Jefferson survives.” He ceased to breathe around sunset, about six hours after Jefferson.

#### ***Who was the youngest man ever to have served as President of the United States?***

If your answer is John Fitzgerald Kennedy, you’re slightly off the mark. When he took office, Kennedy was, at the age of 43 years and seven months, the youngest man ever to have been *elected* president; but Theodore Roosevelt became president at 42 years and 10 months, in the wake of the assassination of President William McKinley. When TR’s second term was over, he was still only 50 years old, making him the youngest ex-president.

Bill Clinton was our third youngest president (46 years and five months), followed, surprisingly, by Ulysses S. Grant (46, 11) and Barack Obama (47, 1).

#### ***Who were our tallest, heftiest, and most compact presidents?***

Abraham Lincoln, at six feet four inches, was our most elevated president, but at six feet and 300-340 pounds, William Howard Taft was our bulkiest president. After he became stuck in the White House bathtub, Taft ordered a new one installed that would accommodate four men of average stature. Although “Big Bill” Taft was our most portly president, he was considered a good dancer and a decent tennis player and golfer.

At five feet four inches and weighing about a hundred pounds (less than a third of Taft), James Madison was >>>

## Revising Tips . . . by Laurie Richards

### Point of View Musings

Whose head should the reader be in? Are you writing a mystery that will be more interesting if you sometimes switch into the killer’s head? Can you pull off scenes that are entirely in the head of a child and stay true to the perceptions of the child’s age and experiences? If you do, will it hold the interest of adult readers? If you select a first person narrator, should you switch to a third person narrator in another chapter? If you select the viewpoint of a mean-spirited character who changes into Mr. Good, will you be able to keep the reader interested enough to care what happens to him while you set up the beginnings of his change? The questions could continue. The point is, as with all other choices an author makes, the story’s needs should drive the choice of point of view.

**Tip:** Read a variety of authors and stories using different points of view. Analyze the reasons the authors selected the points of view and whether the choice strengthened the impact of the story. One book can give you all. *Points of View*, edited by James Moffett and Kenneth R. McElhenny, is an excellent anthology in which short stories by well-known authors are presented according to the point of view used.

**Tip:** Rewrite a short story or chapter of a novel from different points of view. Analyze the demands of each and the impact on the result.

### Publish & Profit with Ebooks

The Ebook Academy, (Andrea Glass and Bruce Fischer) are offering two workshops on February 16, 2013. From 10 am to 2 pm: Write & Publish and from 1 pm to 5 pm: Promote & Profit. For more information and registration, call (858)350-5235 or see [www.TheEbookAcademy.com](http://www.TheEbookAcademy.com).

“The best way to become acquainted with a subject is to write a book about it” . . . Benjamin Disraeli

### Fascinating Facts. . . continued

our most compact president. The author Washington Irving described Madison as “but a withered little apple-John,” but another observer marveled that he had “never seen so much mind in so little matter.” Madison is probably our only president who weighed less than his IQ.

**San Diego Writers/Editors Guild  
 Post Office Box 881931  
 San Diego, CA 92168**

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