



WritersTalk

Volume 19
Number 1
January 2011

Monthly Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club

January Speaker BECKY LEVINE

Critique Groups: Finding Some Resolutions We Can Keep

By Colin Seymour

Our June resolution to improve interaction among individual South Bay Writers in 2010-2011 has stressed a casual, glad-handing, people-skills sort of thing.

But the ultimate interaction comes in a critique group, and January 11 seems an opportune time to have SBW critique groups guru Becky Levine as our dinner speaker to describe this up-close-and-personal activity that probably enhances more club memberships than any other pastime. Here's her pitch:

"Is a critique group on your resolution list? Or are you already in a critique group and wondering what you and your critique partners can do to make it run more smoothly and productively? Come hear Becky Levine speak about what makes a strong critique group and how you can contribute to growing a good one. Come ready to share your ideas —let's give everyone a critique resolution for 2011, one they'll want to go after."

Quite a few of you are already in critique groups, which seem to function best with four to six members. There are six critique groups in SBW, with a seventh forming. So if you've been waiting for an opening in a group, you might be able to take action on that resolution.

Or you might be hesitant. It isn't likely that the most important criteria for choosing a critique group are when and where they meet. Levine's discussion will help you determine how to find the right group for you.

Becky was going to present a workshop at East of Eden on critique groups,

so her presentation at our dinner meeting has been brewing for many months.

She titled the E of E workshop "The Power of a Strong Critique Group." In the workshop, she said, "we'll find out what respect really means, and we'll dig into the steps for developing truly helpful feedback. Come prepared to critique and to see how a strong group helps grow everybody's writing craft."

There's that other word from those June resolutions. The clamor in the club for dinner speakers who stress writing craft has led us to stress those presenters in 2010-2011. Our January theme might not focus directly on craft, but it may lead you to fellow club members who can have a great impact on your writing process and skills and hence, your projects.

And vice versa, Levine points out. "Everybody in a critique group wears both hats -- critiquer and writer."

She recently illustrated that on her blog at www.beckylevine.com by way of closing out 2010 with "things you want to thank your critique partners for."

Here are some of them:

"*They point out that your first chapter would be a lot more interesting if you started . . . there (usually a LOT further in).

* They show you the place they lost track of which character is saying what.

* They tell you that they laughed out loud three times when they read your scene. Especially if you actually wanted those moments to be funny.

* They circle the six times you wrote "She looked at . . ." on the same page.

* They tell you, gently, that a character is still . . . a . . . little . . . boring. And then they pat your hand and remind you that you can fix this problem.

* They help you brainstorm a plot problem.

* They celebrate with you -- at the end of your first draft, at the end of each revision, when you send your first query letter, when you get a request for more.

How do you say Happy New Year?

Chinese (C) - Gung hay fat choy

Chinese (M) - Xin nian yu kuai

Danish - Godt Nyttår

Dutch - Gelukkig nieuwjaar

Farsi - Aide shoma mobarak

French - Bonne année

Gaelic - Aith-bhliain Fe Nhaise Dhuit

(I still don't know how to say it. Ed.)

German - Gutes Neues Jahr

Greek - Kali hronia

Hawaiian - Hauoli Makahiki Hou

Hebrew - Shanah tovah

Hmong - Nyob zoo xyoo tshiab

(It sounds the same backwards. Ed.)

Hungarian - Boldog új évet

Indonesian - Selamat Tahun Baru

Italian Buon - Capo d'Anno

Japanese - Akemashite Omedetou

Gozaimasu

Norwegian - Godt Nyttår

Pilipino (T) - Maligayang Bagong Taon

Polish - Szczesliwego Nowego roku

(Do not try to say this while drinking milk. Ed.)

Portuguese - Feliz ano novo

Romanian - La Multi Ani

Russian - S Novym Godom

Spanish - Feliz Año Nuevo

Sundanese -Wilujeng Tahun Baru

Swedish - Gott Nytt År

Turkish - Yeni Yiliniz Kutlu Olsun

Welsh - Blwyddyn Newydd Dda

(Can I buy a vowel? Ed.)

Yiddish - Gut Yor WT

www.enchantedlearning.com

And so on. You get the point. Lots of celebrations."

Maybe you've already celebrated too much this month, but our January meeting just might lead you to bigger and better reasons to rejoice than the passage of another year your manuscript has languished. WT

Accolades

by Jackie Mutz

As 2010 came and went and 2011 begins, I think of all the things I should have done: taken more walks, hugged loved ones, felt more gratitude, filled my journal with writing, maintained a consistent writing schedule, finished that book that's been rumbling around in my head for the last eight months, and the list goes on. In her book, *If You Want to Write*, Brenda Ueland tells the reader: if you want to write, you have to actually sit down, do it and don't be afraid (my summary). Which is what any writer will tell you, published or not. It is that act of doing that creates something, whether it is art or just change in general.

Some South Bay writers had news:

- Mary Tomasi Dubois, author of *The Mariner's Secret* and *Danger in the Jeweled City*, had two accolades: 1. the holiday family story, Douglas' Big Christmas, was narrated by actors from the Los Gatos Shakespeare Festival troupe at Borders, Old Town Los Gatos on December 11th and 2. the cable TV show, Word Sleuth, Detective of All Things Written, is airing on KCAT Channel 15, where she "interviews Los Gatos authors, publishers, etc. on the monthly, half hour show." See Mary's website: <http://www.marytomasi.com>.
- Maureen Griswold had her short story, "Courting Glory," published in the Nov/Dec 2010 issue of All Things Girl which is themed "metamorphosis." She notes "the story was inspired by a true, mischievous, incident from my high school fringe career as a PE flunky struggling to survive tennis." To read her story, go to: <http://allthingsgirl.net/writings/metamorphosis-novdec-2010/courting-glory-by-maureen-griswold>.
- Bill Belew's blog network surpassed 2 million views in one month for the second time this year, 20 million views for the year and 37 million views overall. You can check it out starting at www.billbelew.com.
- Steve Wetlesen continues to market his poetic abilities by creating haiku art for Xmas cards (or any occasion for that matter). Look for Steve at the monthly meetings to commission his talents for that special poetic occasion.

New writing beginnings can start anytime, whether it is January 1st or December 12th. If you have that passion to write, then sit down and let the words unfold. There are so many communities of writers, both online and as South Bay Writers, who gather to share and support writers such as yourself. You are never too young or old to share your stories. Humans

have been doing this since time immemorial, so what are you waiting for?

Wishing everyone a healthy, safe, prosperous and productive 2011. Send in your writing success stories to

accolades@southbaywriters.com. As always, I can't wait to hear from you. WT

New Members

by Jackie Mutz

New members either come in droves or trickle in a few at a time. How it works is Marjorie Johnson contacts me with a new member name and email address and I send out the CWC New Member Questionnaire to which I hope to receive a response. Sometimes I do and sometimes I don't. Here is what I have on new members over the last few months. More brief profiles to follow in the February newsletter:

- Elena Martina writes: "I moved to California from North Carolina in May, 2010. My first book *Clinging to Deceit* comes out in 2011. I freelanced for nine different newspapers in NC as a weekly columnist, and I created a Spanish language newspaper, too."
- New members Kristina Wright and Rajesh Ananth are interested in the novel genre and, I presume, being published one day. You have picked a great venue to hone your writing skills and meet other writers who share your dreams.
- June Chen, whose novel *Seeing the Light*, a coming of age story was published earlier this year, has also recently joined SouthBay Writers. Welcome June!
- Taryn Hook writes "speculative short stories, nonfiction articles about reptiles and law, and just completed a fantasy novel about a woman with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder." She is also a "lifelong amateur herpetologist and have a seven foot Madagascar Boa Constrictor named Larry," who is her writing partner. Contact Taryn at tarynhook@yahoo.com to learn more about Larry and maybe other writing adventures.

So, as a new member, if you receive an email titled CWC New Member Questionnaire, please take a few moments to answer the questions and shoot it back to j_mutz@yahoo.com. Even if it's just to say you don't want your new member info included or to provide more details about your writing life. And it's a great way to connect with your fellow CWC writers. WT

Craft on Craft - Voice

by Danita Craft

The most important character in fiction is often the storyteller. Orson Scott Card says in *Characters & Viewpoint*, that he slips into character when he writes. His own speech patterns don't have the same rhythms, patterns, verbiage, or nuance as his writer's voice.

Voice is the personality of the storyteller. It is created by word choice, pauses within text, and the apparent speed of the storyteller's voice. It resonates with the storyteller's observations, focus, speech, and mood, the rhythmic beat of syllables, and the personal quality of the prose.

Voice is a quality in writing that makes one narrator distinguishable from another. Here are some examples of voice in fiction.

From *Turtle Moon*, by Alice Hoffman:

"Bobby's cousin was crying by then, and it was the oddest thing: instead of tears, little rocks fell from his eyes, and they kept falling until there was a pile of stones at his feet."

From *The Lake of Dead Languages*, by Carol Goodman:

"On the lawn in front of the mansion I see my girls collapsed in a lopsided circle. From here their dark clothing and dyed hair... make them look like hybrid flowers bred into unnatural shades. Black dahlias and tulips. Flowers the bruised color of dead skin. Past where the girls sit, Heart Lake lies blue-green and still in its glacial cradle of limestone."

From *The Cider House Rules*, by John Irving:

"The other nurse imagined herself to be in love with Dr. Larch, and when it was her turn to name a baby, she frequently named him John Larch, or John Wilbur

If he had been named by this dull, love-struck nurse, he probably would have been a Larch or a Wilbur of one kind or another; and a John, a Jack, or a Robert-to make matters even duller. Because it was the other nurse's turn, he was named Homer Wells."

From *The Hunt for Red October*, by Tom Clancy:

"Captain First Rank Marko Ramius of the Soviet Navy was dressed for the Artic conditions normal to the Northern Fleet submarine base at Polyarnyy. Five layers of wool and oilskin enclosed him. A dirty harbor tug pushed his submarine's bow around to the north, facing down the channel. The dock that had held his Red October for two interminable months was now a water-filled concrete box, one of the many specially built to shelter strategic missile submarines from the harsh elements."

In each of these examples, the narrators sound like very different people. Three examples are in third person and one is in first person. All types of narrators can have a strong voice.

Natalie Goldberg (*Writing Down the Bones*) and Thaisa Frank & Dorothy Wall (*Finding Your Writer's Voice*) supply writing exercises to develop voice.

The following exercises should be written or typed very rapidly with no editorial touches, no pausing to consid-

er word choice, and no hesitation over getting-it-right. These exercises free the subconscious to create with words. Imagine painting something with no form or shape, painting just to experience the joy of color. This is how words are used in these exercises.

Goldberg suggests daily filling a page of notebook paper on any subject. Here's an example that began with the idea bubble:

Bubbles dripping from a faucet fill a bowl. It turns blue in the dim light. I get up from a chair, lift the weight of it, heavy on my wrists. There are other things on my mind than this. I carry the bowl across the room, thinking, always thinking of another place. The liquid sloshes side to side, as if pushing my thoughts. Back and forth we go, the water, my thoughts, my footsteps.

Frank and Wall suggest a similar exercise: Fill a page with nonsense words that don't go together. Here's an example:

Dripping yellow rhymes across sun burnt musical scores, faded like yellow we run. All out and fast across the arc like diamonds. Yesterday was underneath the promise; we live; we cry. Always tomorrow remains untouched until the sky reddens, weighted by ice and sorrow.

The goal isn't to make the prose beautiful. The goal is to type or write it so quickly that you free your inner voice, your personality, your sleeping poet, to dream aloud.

As you continue to write daily exercises, your voice will migrate to your fiction. It will show up slowly at first, perhaps as a narrator sharing a unique observation, eventually as a storyteller sharing your story. WT

Books offering insight on the craft, the craziness, and the creativity - Danita

The Writers Journey - plot arc - Christopher Vogler

The Plot Thickens - creating characters - Noah Lukeman

Hero With A Thousand Faces - protagonist's journey - Joseph Campbell

Creating Unforgettable Characters - character psychology - Linda Seger

Bird By Bird - writers' psychology - Ann Lamott

Writing Down the Bones - creativity and voice - Natalie Goldberg

How to Write a Damn Good Novel - craft of writing - James Frey

Dynamic Characters - creating characters - Nancy Kress

Finding Your Inner Voice - Voice - T. Frank & D. Wall

Characters and Viewpoint - narrator's perspective - Orson Scott Card

Story - craft of writing - Robert McKee

The First Five Pages - agent's POV - Noah Lukeman (agent)

Writing Fiction - craft of writing - Gotham Writers Workshop

On Writing - insights on craft - Stephen King

The Making of A Story - craft of writing - La Plante

The Craft of Writing - craft of writing - William Sloane

Beyond the Writers Workshop - exercises, analysis - Carol Bly

Continued on page 8

South Bay Writers Presents:

The Long and Short of Writing Great Fiction

by Nina Amir

March 19, 2010

9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

The Lookout Restaurant, 605 Macara Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94085

Registration at 9:00 a.m.; workshop begins promptly at 9:30 a.m.; continental breakfast and lunch included.

Early Bird (before March 4, 2010): CWC members: \$45; Non-members: \$55

Students w/ID (up to age 25), anytime \$25

After March 4 and at the door: CWC members: \$55; Non-members: \$65

Cancellation Policy: \$5 fee through midnight 2/26; \$15 fee 2/27 through midnight 2/13; no refunds after midnight 2/13. Register and pay by credit card (Paypal) at www.southbaywriters.com

Want to write a novel? Do you prefer short stories? Whatever its length, a well-written story is a joy for both writer and reader. But what defines a great story, and how do you craft one? What, besides length, are the differences between the two forms?

Discover the answers to these questions at "The Long and Short of Writing Great Fiction." This workshop is a chance to explore the challenges and rewards of writing both long and short fiction from the first inspiration to the final polished draft. Margaret Lucke will give you tips, tricks, and techniques for artfully weaving characters, plot, and setting into a strong and compelling story. Whether you are new to fiction writing or have lots of writing experience, you'll receive encouragement and practical help as well as useful tips and strategies.

Margaret Lucke flings words around as a writer and editorial consultant in the San Francisco Bay Area. Ever since she produced her first book at age four, she has been fascinated by the power of stories and the magic of creativity. One

of her novels, *A Relative Stranger*, was nominated for an Anthony Award for Best First Mystery. She has published more than 60 short stories, feature articles, and book reviews, along with two how-to books on writing, *Writing Mysteries* and *Schaum's Quick Guide to Writing Great Short Stories*.

Since 1994 she has taught fiction writing classes for University of California, Berkeley Extension and other venues, most recently for the Frank Bette Center for the Arts in Alameda, CA. She has conducted writing workshops for elementary schools, libraries, teachers organizations, and writers groups.

As an editorial consultant to fiction writers, she has helped numerous individuals to reach their writing goals. She also produces marketing and management materials for businesses and organizations. Visit her at www.margaretlucke.com. WT

2 Reasons to be Stingy With Your Blog Posts

by Rik Scott

Whether you are blogging for traffic or for content, or a combination of both, it is always a good idea to moderate your output. What does this mean? Don't put all your eggs in one basket, or rather, don't pile up all of your ideas in a single post.

This does not mean you can't tell a long story, present a complex idea, or carry a theme out to many pages. It just means that learning to do it a little at a time will pay off for you in the long run.

Why are you blogging? To be read, of course. A blog that just sits there unobserved isn't worth much. The way you get found on the Internet has quite a bit to do with the way you schedule your posts. If you write a long-winded post, or even several in a row, and post them all at the same time you may get some traffic, but it won't be much, and the traffic will not continue on into the future. Instead, your goal should be to parcel out what you have to say. Keep your posts short, but at the end of each one, suggest that your reader come back the next day for more on the topic. It is

also worthwhile to actually insert links into your series-related posts pointing to the next in the series, the previous in the series, and if you have three or more, a link that sends you to the first. This helps if somebody finds your series in the middle and wants to start at the beginning.

There are two excellent reasons for doing it this way.

1. The web-crawling software robots that reach out every day to keep the search engines up to date like sites that have recurring activity. Dumping all of your information into a very long post, or several, but all at the same time might get noticed, but it doesn't establish a track record with the search engines. It doesn't give them a good reason to check with you. Breaking down your long and complex post into several smaller--and well connected--segments and then releasing them at the same time every day teaches the search engines that your blog is a serious contender, and that you can be counted upon to post with regularity.

2. In much the same way that the web-crawlers work, your human readers can be trained to come back to your site day after day in order to read the next wonderful installment of your on-going project. By holding back, by teasing a bit, you begin to create an agreement between your readers and yourself. If they come back every day, you'll have something special for them to see.

Further, as each post leaves them wanting more, they are more likely to hang around a bit, and to go searching elsewhere on your site to see what more you have to offer

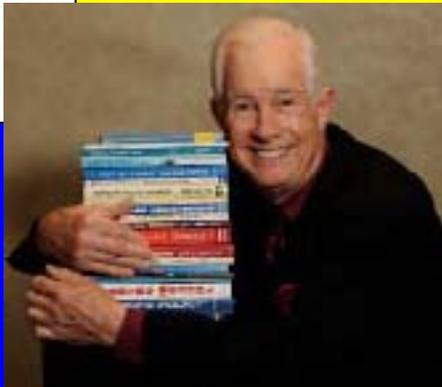
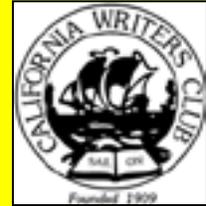
Keep in mind that your series posts do not have to be the only thing you publish each day. There is no reason you can't pump out 3, 4 or more other pieces daily as long as you keep your main post theme held to schedule. As long as you remain stingy with your best stuff, your readers will come back again and again. WT

Richard Scott is a blogger and aspiring novelist. His yet to be published novel, FIVE took top honors out of a field of 450 entrants. He currently serves as the president of the CWC Fremont Area Writers Club. His blog is UphillWriting.org

SOUTH BAY WRITERS PRESENTS:

A Workshop Led by

Dan Poynter



The New Book Model: Writing, Producing and Promoting Your Book

Plus! A Self-Publishing Book Fair

You can make a difference and make a living with your book. A book will bring you more credibility, increased fame and a new profit center.

During this four-hour workshop you will discover how to use new techniques and the latest technology to write your book faster, produce your book for less (printed, audiobooks and e-books) and promote your book more effectively. Dan will share the secrets to finding an agent, contacting a publisher and publishing yourself. He has your step-by-step plan.

Show up with an idea, proposal or manuscript, a book under your arm, or just to learn. This program will propel you into celebrity (published author) status.

About the presenter:

Since 1969, Dan Poynter has written more than 100 books, including *Is There a Book Inside You?*, *Writing Nonfiction*, *The Self-Publishing Manual*, *The Skydiver's Handbook*, and *The Expert Witness Handbook*. Dan has turned thousands of writers into authors. The media come to Dan because he is the leading authority on how to write, publish and promote books.

January 15, 9:00-3:30

Lookout Restaurant

605 Macara Ave.

Sunnyvale, CA 94085

Registration @ 8:30; WORKSHOP begins promptly at 9; continental breakfast and lunch included. SELF-PUBLISHING BOOK FAIR following lunch from 2-3:30.

SELF-PUBLISHING FAIR

During the last 90 minutes of this event, meet and ask questions of:

- **SBW self-published authors**
- **local print-on-demand and e-book publishers**

Early Bird (before Dec. 30, 2010)

CWC members: \$45

Non-members: \$55

Students w/ID (up to age 25), anytime \$25
After Dec. 30 and at the door

CWC members: \$55

Non-members: \$65

Cancellation Policy: \$5 fee through midnight 12/25; \$15 fee 12/15 through midnight 1/8; no refunds after midnight 1/8.

Register and pay by credit card (Paypal) at www.southbaywriters.com

Mail in this portion to: SBW Workshops, PO Box 3254, Santa Clara, CA 95055.

Check Payable to: South Bay Writers

(South Bay Writers is a non-profit 501c3)

Name: _____ CWC branch (if applicable) _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ Email _____ Amount Enclosed: _____

_____ Early Bird (before 12/30) _____ Regular Registration (after 12/30) _____ Student Registration

In Between Monthly Meetings

Mark Twain at the Learning Center

by Dave LaRoche, LC Publicist

If there was ever a quintessential American everyman, it could well have been Mark Twain. He was, perhaps remains, the existentialist of his time: both an intellectual and frontiersman, writer and ubiquitous performer, journalist and imaginative fictionalist, homeboy of Missouri and world traveler—the list of “everything’s” goes on. He was as American as apple pie yet one of the country’s ardent and most vocal critics, couching his vigorous censures in humor at once, while at another, a serious and preachy essayist. He seemed everything to everybody all the time—jumping frogs to international relations.

This past November, the first of a three-volume autobiography was published by UC Berkeley. It is said to be the first release of the real Twain-penned biography; held by his request for one-hundred years after his death (some scholars contest this notion, suggesting small parts have been published before). Today that volume resides on the New York Times Bestsellers List with two more to follow. We are, once again, hip to Twain.

Writers! Don’t miss out on this literary movement—Sam Clemens to Mark Twain. Your Learning Center currently features lectures on the man and his writings, and that won’t cost you the jacket price of \$34 per volume. In fact it’s free. Bring nibbles, if you like, and a coffee, and spend an hour or so with Rich Burns and me learning of this everyman’s life and his works. It’s not only that he wrote some of the best American literature still heralded and still widely read; he was an interesting and complex individual—a business man and investor, a river-boat captain, lecturer, traveler, and writer. He was a husband, father, and romantic, part-time philosopher and inventor ... and both an abject failure and a roaring success—he was American everyman.

1st and 3rd Tuesdays through March
Westmont Retirement Home
1675 Scott Blvd at El Camino,
Santa Clara
See you there! WT

Meetups

by Bill Belew

What’s a Meetup? And why isn’t the word spelled correctly?

First of all there is Meetup, then there are Meetups. Meetup is an online website for people who want to organize something to get other like-minded folk together to learn or do something. Meetup is also a place where people go to find other like-minded folk to learn or do something with. That makes sense, right?

A Meetup is an individual group that is centered on a theme or topic. South Bay Writers Club sponsors one such Meetup. It is called South Bay Writers Meetup. Not so creative, I know. It can be found online by going to

<http://www.meetup.com/South-Bay-Writers/>.

Past titles/topics:

OVC write-in

Write-In at King Library

For newbie and wannabe bloggers!
4 obstacles every beginner must overcome

Food!! Mixer, networking,
international Mega-Meetup Potluck
Shut up and blog while building your network, too

10 must-know Wordpress techniques to optimize your site

How to Get 1,000,000 Unique Visitors to Your Site - 7+1 Steps That Worked for Me

10 must-know SEO basics every writer should be using

The Open Mic schedule can also be found at the Meetup site.

Because of the nature of some of the topics Meetups are attended not only by writers and bloggers but by many other interesting folk - business people, marketers, entrepreneurs and such.

Attendance can range from just a few to more than 60! Attendance and evaluations of past events can be found at the Meetup site above.

It is free to join and members will get notices of upcoming events and reminders if they RSVP to attend. The writers and bloggers Meetup member-

ship is a whopping 1080 members. And events often draw participants from members of other groups totaling over 3800 members. What this means is there is a lot of buzz going on at the various events which happen weekly.

The short - If you are looking for a way to stay motivated between monthly meetings, to interact with other folk just like you, to make friends, to build your platform, to network and so on, a Meetup might be just what you are looking for. Oh, and did I say they were free? They are free.

What to do:

1. Check out the link
2. Join (it’s free)
3. Watch for announcements of upcoming events
4. RSVP yes if you are interested
5. Reminders will come automatically
6. Show up

That’s it. See you at an upcoming Meetup! WT



George

Seven Basic Query Letter Rules

by Nina Amir

Query letters represent a necessity in the world of nonfiction writing. If you want to get your writing published, you have to know how to write a query letter. Whether you want a book contract or an article assignment, taking basic precautions when sending query letters can help you avoid receiving rejection letters in return.

First, you must, of course, send it out to the correct person in the correct fashion. Once you know who to send it to, you must decide if you will send it by email or by snail (traditional) mail. Writers used to have no choice in this matter. These days, you may have the option of composing an e-mail rather than a letter. The key lies in knowing which editor, agent or publisher prefers. Be sure you find out before sending your query.

Second, treat your emailed query just as professionally as a query you print out, put in an envelope and put into a mail box. Email is a friendlier and less formal method of communication. That doesn't mean you shouldn't approach agents and publishers - especially those you've never contacted before - with a fair degree of respect and formality. Yet, you can do this with a bit lighter tone in an email.

A writer once told me she had sent out an emailed query consisting of just five lines--and this was for a book project. I was surprised but thought she had quite a bit of gumption to approach her query in that fashion. Five lines is short. Really short. Most query letters are a page long, and contain three to four paragraphs describing the book project, its market and why the author is the right person to write the book. Even a query for an article tends to run about a page in length and cover the same basic information.

Third, it's okay to break the rules occasionally. One of my book projects recently achieved consideration from a publisher, and I sent a two-page query letter that included at least two paragraphs you wouldn't find mentioned in any query letter formula. I've never tried a five-line query to an agent or publisher, though, but it sounds a lot

easier than a full-page or even a two-page query.

Rules can be broken. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't.

By the way, writing a two-page query is easier; it's hard and time-consuming to cram everything you want to say and are supposed to say about your book project into a one-page letter and still leave room for the date and your signature. Sometimes it's hard to describe an article in that amount of space as well.

The odds of getting a positive response may actually increase with a longer letter that is not overly wordy than with a short query missing important information. A short pithy letter remains the better choice if it has all the pertinent details.

Fourth, you can loosen up your query style once you know an editor. Don't go overboard, but if you feel you've gotten to know a publication's editor, you can shoot off a short and witty emailed query that doesn't fit all the guidelines. You can simply say, "Would you be interested in a story on such and such. I'll interview Mr. Smith and Mrs. Young, plus I'll be sure to get information on how they have interacted with organization X. I'm sure your readers will find this story interesting because they fall into the target market that belongs to this organization. I'll write to your publication's specs, turning in a 1,200-word article." No longer do you need to convince the editor of your ability to write. You do need to let the editor know you remember the publication's writers' guidelines.

Fifth, don't get lazy about grammar and spelling when you email query letters. When sending emailed queries, you still have to be careful of your grammar and spelling. It's easy to get lazy with e-mail and assume no one will care or notice if there is a slight mistake. Believe me, an editor, agent or publisher will notice your mistakes.

Sixth, give the editor, agent or publisher time to respond. Many publications, literary agencies, and publishing houses offer information on their response time. Give them at least that long--if not longer. Then you can follow up with a polite note. Don't, however, hound them or ask for constant updates. That won't help your acceptance rate. And don't be surprised if you get responses much later than expected. I

received a response to a query sent out with a book proposal a full year later. I've received responses to article queries six or eight months later. (And, yes, I sent the book proposal with the query; good thing, since I waited so long for a response!)

Seventh, if you don't want to wait around forever for responses to your query letters, you can send out simultaneous submissions. Some editors, agents and publishers will tell you they don't accept these. You can choose not to send query letters to them. (Or you can ignore their request and apologize later if you end up with multiple acceptance letters--a nice position in which to find yourself.)

When you send a simultaneous submission, it's good to note that on the letter. Some people ask for that courtesy; some don't.

I highly recommend sending simultaneous submissions. I've wasted tons... tons...of time waiting for editors, agents and publishers to get back to me. Many of those articles are still unpublished because I lost interest, and many of those books are still unpublished for the same reason or because I went on to other projects or got busy in the meantime. Don't let that happen to you. *WT Nina Amir is the founder of Write Nonfiction in November. Find out more about her services at www.copywrightcommunications.com and her writing at www.writenonfictionnow.com*

Central Coast Branch Writing Contest

Spring 2011

\$15 entry fee per story
\$5 per poem
Max length - 4,000 words
Deadline - January 15, 2011

How to enter:
Make check payable to Central Coast Writers and send submission to:

CCW Writing Contest
PO Box 997
Pacific Grove

Details: www.centralcoast.org
Winners get:

\$500 and publication!

SAGE ADVICE

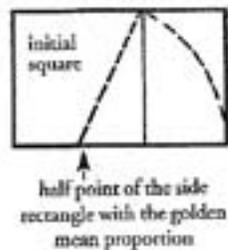
by Marjorie Bicknell Johnson

How the Maya Constructed the Golden Rectangle

Maya priests and Greek Pythagoreans had much in common. The Maya believed that the measuring of the square with a cord was the first action of the gods when they created the Cosmos and saw the harmony of the Cosmos in their geometry. The Pythagoreans saw numbers as the ultimate reality and found harmony in the mathematical movements of planets and stars.

Thousands of miles from Greece, the Maya used simple cords to lay the groundwork for buildings. They used a cord to form a figure with four equal sides and then squared the angles by insuring that the diagonals were equal. Each pyramid had a square base, the fundamental shape of Maya geometry and the module from which all Creation was generated.

Like Pythagoras, the Maya saw harmony in the golden mean and developed a simple procedure for creating that proportion by first forming a square. The builders halved the cord to find the center of a side and stretched the cord from that center to a corner of the square as in the figure below. Then they swung the cord down to measure out the baseline for a rectangle, the famous golden rectangle.



The golden mean, held in high regard by the Pythagoreans, appears in Greek art and architecture. The golden mean, the ratio of length to width of the golden rectangle, has value $(1 + \sqrt{5})/2$. If the width of the rectangle above is 2, then the square has side 2 and half-side 1, and the sides of the central triangle are 1, 2, and $\sqrt{5}$. The distance from the arrow to the right corner is $\sqrt{5}$ and the length of the rectangle is $(1 + \sqrt{5})$.

The Maya described the god's construction of a square as: "its four sections; its four cornerings; its measurings; its four stakings." They constructed a golden rectangle by: "its doubling-over cord measurement; its stretching cord measurement; its womb sky; its womb earth; its four sides; its four corners as it is said." (Linda Schele and Peter Mathews, *The Code of Kings*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1999: 35-36.) The Maya saw the proportions of the golden rectangle in nature and believed that houses built using the golden mean are like flowers.

The golden rectangle is closely related to the Fibonacci numbers 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, but how this is so is beyond the scope of this short note. Mystics love the golden ratio and the Fibonacci numbers; see Dan Brown's bestseller, *The Da Vinci Code*. WT



Did you know?

There are 43 (I counted) books listed up at the South Bay Writers website, all written by SBW members?

Thirty-one of the authors have their own website.

Any active or associate member of South Bay Writers in good standing may post his/her books on this page. To do so, please send the following information to:

webmaster@southbaywriters.com

- * full title of the book
- * author's name (if you use a pen name, please include your real name so we can verify your membership)
- * web link to further info about the book and/or where to purchase it
- * attach a digital image of the book's cover to the email (jpg or gif files, please) WT

Books on craft - continued from page 3

Writing On Both Sides ... Brain-creativity - Henriette Klausner

Writing Open The Mind - creativity - Andy Couturier

A Writers Coach - craft of writing - Jack Hart

Writing Tools - exercises for writers - Roy P. Clark

Steering the Craft - craft of writing - Ursula K. LeGuin

The Key - plot arc and myth - James Frey

At a Glance Sentences - easy grammar - Brandon

You Can Write A Novel - Kit - James V. Smith

It was the Best of sentences, it was the worst of sentences - Casagrande

10 Glaring Mistakes Amateur Writers Make and How to Avoid Them - Nora Profit WT

The Adventures of Wilby
in

BRINGING DOWN THE WALL

episode #1: Introduction



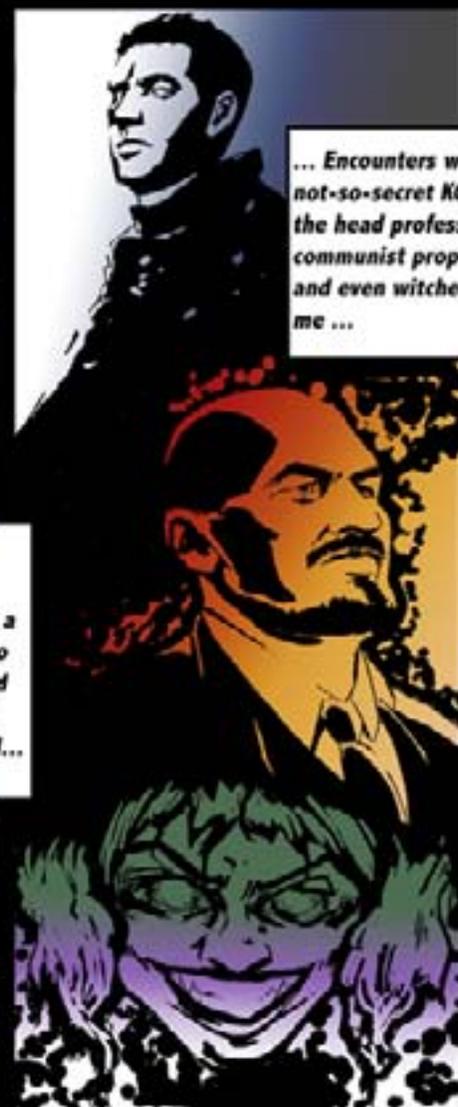
A Truthgiver should not ask him or herself what their purpose in life is. Rather, he or she should ask themselves what it is they want to accomplish for Truth's sake. Given the resources, the circumstances, and the opportunities, the Truthgiver should pray, think hard, pray, take action, pray, and trust the Giver of Truth to use them as they make themselves available.

Story by WCB, Art by BB



My name is Wilby.

I have just set foot onto a land I had never dared to come to till this day, and into an adventure that I could not have imagined...



... Encounters with the not-so-secret KGB forces, the head professor of communist propoganda, and even witches await me ...



I grew up hating the Soviet Union and all it stood for. The country killed people I knew and cared about. Yet there was a contradiction going on in me; I wanted to befriend the people of the USSR, particularly the Russians. Walls are built to separate things. Sometimes walls separate rooms, lands, even people and their hearts. Think Great Wall of China. The story is based on factual events with just a bit of spice added. It's my story about what it takes to bring down a wall, the Berlin Wall.

Wilby

"The Wow Moment"

by Pat Bustamante

It's something that reflects our "busy age" -- poetry that makes it into print in a magazine or anthology has what writers now know as The Hook, or the Wow Moment.

Poetry doesn't have to rhyme. Meter gets relaxed. If you can use one of the standard forms -- with metric feet or words that rhyme -- and still fit in the "wow" you are an acrobat among poets. Just remember, showing off is less important than having a sincere message. Showing off gets in the way.

Here are some venues where you find attention and get bragging-rights when you get published. It's easy to look up on the internet.

Rattlesnake Review, International Poetry Review, The Iowa Review, Medusa's Kitchen and there are many more including the best-known monthly or weekly magazines, such as Harper's or the New Yorker who -- bless them all - still have room on their pages for poetry.

It will always be true, however, that the kindest audience for your poem will be yourself. Write it, love it, realize you've cut out a tiny piece of your heart and put it on paper. I have poems, still, that I wrote at age 10 or 11..and ever since. They aren't all necessarily "good poems" but they are all pieces of my heart. And the humorous ones: there is always a message and (or at least, should be, for the author) some value there. Whimsy is a reflection of this strange world we are still making discoveries about!

So please put some words down-- short poems that will fit on this page-- and send to WritersTalk. You can thank yourself later!

January Chant - Pat Bustamante

Wish I may, wish I might
Take the "bushel" off my light--
Catch new wind
and write-write-write:
Won't mind if big pay-check's
In sight!

Poet's Page Terse on Verse

by Pat Bustamante

A magazine I will be referring to often is "The Sun." They publish short fiction and poetry and bless 'em, such people are rare.

Dec. 2010 issue, 420, has as its lead article: *Written On The Bones, Reclaiming the ancient Power of Poetry* by Alison Luterman.

Needless to say, I found it to be a "wow" and something I hope to reach the standard of!! I recommend The Sun to all writers.

HAIKU:

Haiku is what I picked for my theme in January. I think everybody knows the most popular form (there are several) contains 3 lines, 5 syllables (in the first and third) 7 syllables (in the second).

Here is one sample of mine:

Reason For Thanks

Look all around you
Open the eyes of your soul
Beauty is so near.

For more samples, go online.
volweb.utk.edu/school/bedford/harrisms/haiku.html
has some very good samples and history and explanation.

Haiku originated in Japan and is meant to be decorative the way a beautiful painting is the most famous are to be found on sketches or watercolors in celebration of nature.

So you "paint" with the minimum of words...

I note in passing that our poet Steve Wetlesen is into haiku, got an Accolade! Way to go!

There is fusion in poetry between music, words, visual arts. Send us (WT) poetry! Even if you have never written one before...



Buzz

Poet Page Editor -

Pat Bustamante writes novels, poetry, short fiction and articles. In 1959 she sold her first "romance" (precocious, she was!). Last year she placed 6 paid-for poems.

An on-line novel (no longer available) sold well for a few years under the title "A Book Of The Dead" but bestseller novelist Patricia Cornwell did better with a version of that title in her Scarpetta series...she's been (reluctantly) forgiven..

Pat continually sharpens her "free lance" and sends ms's all over the world, encouraging her friends to do the same: advice is free, you get what you pay for.

WritersTalk is an excellent forum, WRITE ON!

Holiday Bash 2010



CWC President Bob Garfinkle and state anthology editor Kelly Harrison.



The party started upstairs in the bar. After hors d'oeuvres, wine, and schmoozing, the crowd moved downstairs for food and the gift exchange.



Gift-stealing rules are in full effect. Gary Dow draws a really nice wine kit – but he doesn't keep it for long.



This year's Holiday Bash was made possible by Gisela Zebroski. Thank you, Gisela, for inviting us into your home.



Nina Amir and Betty Watje.



Lisa Eckstein, Suzette Gamero, and Marjorie Johnson.



Woody Horn opens his gift with all due caution.



Diana Richomme displays her heated travel mug.



The last thing Alex Leon needs is a bottle of coconut shampoo.



Karen LaRoche (left) and Kathy Garfinkle admire Bill Baldwin's collapsible candle holder.



Andrea Galvac and Meredy Amyx.

Words and pictures by Dick Amyx

President's Challenge

by Bill Baldwin
President, South Bay Writers

Putting Words in My Mouth

Here's a quick list of 30 writing prompts, titles, ideas to give you, the reader something to write about:

What do __, __ and __ have in common?
Can you pass this __ Test?
Top 10 Tips on __
Don't Buy the New __ - Here's 5 Reasons Why
How Oprah Does Her Laundry: Secrets Revealed
Who Else Wants [blank]?
The Secret of [blank]
Here is a Method That is Helping [blank] to [blank]
Little Known Ways to [blank]
Get Rid of [problem] Once and For All
Here's a Quick Way to [solve a problem]
Now You Can Have [something desirable] [great circumstance]
[Do something] like [world-class example]
Have a [or] Build a [blank] You Can Be Proud Of
What Everybody Ought to Know About [blank]
Give Me [short time period] and I'll Give You [blank].
If You Don't [blank] Now, You'll Hate Yourself Later.
The Lazy [blank's] Way to [blank]
Do You Recognize the [number] Early Warning Signs of [blank]
See How Easily You Can [desirable result]
You Don't Have to Be [something challenging] to be [desired result]
Do You Make These [types of] Mistakes?
How to [Mundane Task] That [Rewarding Benefit]
How to __
How __
How I __
What You Should Know About __
Do You Recognize/Know __?
10 Ways to __
[Number] Types of [Category of People] – Which Group Are You In?

8 New Year's Resolutions.

Weigh less.
Spend less.
Work less.
Eat less.
Drink less.
Stress less.
Think about self less.
Write more.

Hmm... Something different about writers in the resolution list, eh?

So, how do I write more? What do I write about?
Go back to the top. WT



Bill Baldwin

California Writers Club
South Bay Branch
— o —

Executive Committee

President—Bill Baldwin
pres@southbaywriters.com
408 730-9622

Vice President—Colin Seymour
vp@southbaywriters.com

Secretary—Sylvia Halloran
secretary@southbaywriters.com

Treasurer—Richard Burns
treasurer@southbaywriters.com

Members-at-Large—Danita Craft and Vacant

Central Board Rep

Dave LaRoche

Directors

Programs—Colin Seymour
vp@southbaywriters.com

Publicity and Public Relations—Edie Matthews
publicity@southbaywriters.com
408 985-0819

Membership—Marjorie Johnson
membership@southbaywriters.com

Hospitality—Danita Craft
Networking—Vacant
networking@southbaywriters.com

Open Mic—Bill Baldwin
408 730-9622

Meetups - Bill Belew -wcbelew@gmail.com
408-712-3268

Webmaster—Rosanne Davis
webmaster@southbaywriters.com

Workshops—Nina Amir
workshops@southbaywriters.com

Join Us

We have a membership category that fits you. Dues are \$45 per year plus a one-time \$20 initiation fee. Contact the Membership Chair, Marjorie Johnson.



View from the Board - not received

WritersTalk

is the monthly newsletter of the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club.

Managing Editor

Bill Belew
newsletter@southbaywriters.com
408 712-3268

Contributing Editors

Danita Craft
Carolyn Donnell
Lisa Eckstein
Richard Scott
Nina Amir
Victoria M. Johnson
Jackie Mutz
Pat Bustamante

Submissions

Members of the South Bay Writers Club are encouraged to submit their creative works for publication in WritersTalk. Suggested word limits are not absolute; query the editor. Electronic submissions should be text or attached MS Word file sent to newsletter@southbaywriters.com; or mail double-spaced, typewritten copy to

Bill Belew
111 W. Arques Ave
Sunnyvale, CA 94085

Guest Columns

Sage Advice (400 words)

News Items

 (400 words)

Letters to the Editor

 (300 words)

to Bill Belew
newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Creative Works

Short Fiction (1800 words)
Memoir (1200 words)
Poetry (300 words)
Essay (900 words)

Accolades

accolades@southbaywriters.com

Announcements and Advertisements

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

An announcement is information of interest and value to writers that does not provide direct economic benefit to its originator. Announcements are published free of charge.

Advertising is accepted on the basis of its interest and value to writers. Advertising rates for Club members, \$7 per column inch; non-members, \$10. We will assist with layout.

Authors retain all rights to their works; *WritersTalk* gratefully acknowledges the authors' permission to publish their works here. Contact individual authors for permission to reprint.

Change of Address: Send changes of address to the Membership Chair at membership@southbaywriters.com

Subscriptions: Nonmember subscriptions are \$20/year; send a check payable to South Bay Writers Club to the Membership Chair.

Circulation: 225

Copyright © 2010 California Writers Club South Bay Branch.

by Bill Belew

Editor



Bill Belew

I like what I learned that Thomas Edison said about Henry Ford. It went something like, "We cannot be sure that what Ford has done has made the world a better place, but we can be sure he did not leave things the way he found

them."

I am inclined to be equally apt to not leave things the way I found them. (No, I am not leaving. I am just getting warmed up.)

It is not a self-serving desire on my part to leave 'my stamp' on a project and in this case, WritersTalk. I do, however, have ideas and am inclined to push the envelope, resist the status quo, think way outside the box, and try the untried.

I have been at the helm of WT for just a few months and already some things are different. We have more dedicated contributing editors. Added to the previous Monthly Recap, Accolades, New Members, Writing craft and upcoming speaker column editors, WT now has contributing editors for Writing Craft for fiction, Blogging, Non-fiction, Workshops and Poetry. If everyone sends me their regular contributions WT fills up quite nicely, thank you. But, but...there is yet another new feature for this month's WT. It lacks a name because I haven't seen it anywhere else. Perhaps Graphic Novel works. It's a combination of a novel (in episodes) and hand drawn images. Way different, way cool. And it shows what other avenues there are available for writers old and new, um, young.

There is, however, still plenty of room for submissions from you, the SBW members. The guidelines are in the sidebar and I am eager to show the club your stuff. Keep in mind that content is important as is the quality of the writing. Too many typos? Don't even expect a response. Oh, and did you know, that not only do our members get exposed to your writing, but WT gets sent to all the other clubs for potential exposure to those members

as well. How cool is that? And there is a link at the South Bay Writers home page for anyone on the web to stumble upon our newsletter.

All that being said, it is my goal going forward in the second decade of the third millenium to produce a newsletter that all the members look forward to receiving. I want our members to learn something, to be entertained, to have something to anticipate and have those items they can reflect back on. There will be announcements of upcoming events, workshops, and contests. There will be milestones to celebrate and be encouraged by. Above all, I hope SBW members find that the WT is something they, too, want to participate in.

Send me your stuff...or not. But be sure, WT will have something for you to look forward to each month, beginning now. Read on.



Wilby

Directory of Experts

Do you have specialized knowledge that might help a writer bring authentic detail to a scene? Send a message to networking@southbaywriters.com or to the club post office box and we will add your listing to our directory of experts.

Asia, Japan, China, Russia, Blogging

Bill Belew
wbelew@gmail.com

Astrology, Singing

Sara Aurich
saraaurich@comcast.net

Astronomy, History of Astronomy

Bob Garfinkle
ragarf@earthlink.net

Character Development

ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D.
ArLyne@DiamondAssociates.net

Engineering: Mechanical,

Aero, Aerospace

Jerry Mulenburg
geraldmulenburg@sbcglobal.net

Hospital and Nursing Environment

Maureen Griswold
maureengriswold@sbcglobal.net

Internal Medicine/Addiction Disorder/

Psychology

Dave Breithaupt
dldbmlb@comcast.net

Library Science

Molly Westmoreland
mulcarend@hotmail.com

Marketing and Management

Suzy Paluzzi, MBA
jomarch06@yahoo.com

Mathematics: Teaching and History; Fibonacci Sequence

Marjorie Johnson
Marjohnson89@earthlink.net

Knitting

Danita Craft
blueize@me.com

Teaching and the Arts

Betty Auchard
Btauchard@aol.com

I am an expert too, in...

Your Name
Your email address

Ongoing Critique Groups

The Arm Wavers

Meets downtown San Jose on Wednesdays
Contact: Georgia Platts – gplatts@comcast.net

Closed to new members at this time

Writers' Salon

Meets in Santa Clara
Contact: Edie Matthews – edie333@sbcglobal.net

Closed to new members at this time

Le Boulanger Writers

Meets at Le Boulanger
Pruneyard Shopping Center, Campbell
Contact: Karen Hartley – Sew1Machin@aol.com

All genres; open to all

Northpoint Critique Group

Meets in Cupertino
Contact: Valerie Whong – valeriewhong@att.net

Closed to new members at this time

Our Voices

Meets in Santa Clara
Meets every other Tuesday
7:15 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Genres: Fiction, nontechnical nonfiction, memoir

Contact: Dave LaRoche – dalaroche@comcast.net

No openings at this time

Valley Writers

Meets: Valley Village Retirement Center, Santa Clara
Mondays 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Contact: Marjorie Johnson – marjohnson89@earthlink.net

All genres; open to all

New Critique Group forming in Campbell

62. S. San Thomas Aquino

Mondays 6:30pm

Contact: Danita - blueize@me.com



CWC Around the Bay

These are the published meeting times and locations for the other CWC branches in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. If you're thinking about attending one of their meetings, be sure to check the website first for details.

Berkeley: Meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month, except for July and August, at 1:30 at the Oakland Public Library Main Branch. cwc-berkeley.com

Central Coast: Meets on the third Tuesday of each month except December at the Casa Munras Hotel, 700 Munras Avenue, Monterey. The dinner hour begins at 5:30 p.m. and the program begins at 7 p.m. centralcoastwriters.org

Fremont: Meets (except in July, December, and on holiday weekends) from 2-4 p.m. on the fourth Saturday of the month at DeVry University, 6600 Dumbarton Circle, Room 204, Fremont. Contact: Richard Scott, rikscott@yahoo.com; (510) 791-8639

Marin: Meets on the fourth Sunday of every month at 2 p.m. at Book Passage in Corte Madera. cwcmarinwriters.com

Mount Diablo: Meets the second Saturday of each month, except July and August, at 11:30 a.m. at the Hungry Hunter Restaurant, 3201 Mount Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette (corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Highway 24). mtdiablowriters.org

Redwood: Meetings are held on the first Sunday of the month (except for holiday weekends), from 3-5 p.m. at Copperfield's Books, 2316 Montgomery Dr., Santa Rosa. redwoodwriters.org

Tri-Valley: Meets the third Saturday of each month, except July and August, at 11:30 a.m. at the Oasis Grille, 780 Main Street, Pleasanton. trivalleywriters.com

Sacramento: Meets at 11:00 a.m. the third Saturday of every month, except July and August, at Luau Garden Chinese Buffet, 1890 Arden Way, Sacramento 95815. sacramento-writers.org

San Francisco/Peninsula: Meets on the third Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon at the Belmont Library, 1110 Alameda De Las Pulgas, Belmont. sfpeninsulawriters.com

Stay Informed!

Sign up for the SBW Email List to receive meeting and event announcements.

southbaywriters.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
January 2011						1	
						2	3
		7-9p Meetup - Campell 7:30-9:30 Mark Twain Westmont			7:30p Open Mic Barnes & Noble Almaden Plaza		
9	10	Monthly Meeting	11	12	13	14	15
			7:30p OpenMic Borders Santana Row, SJ				
16	17	7-9p Meetup - Campell 7:30-9:30 Mark Twain Westmont	18	19	20	21	22
					7:30p Open Mic Barnes & Noble Pruneyard	3-5pm Mega Meetup Potluck Campbell -WMC	
23	24	7-9p Meetup - Campell	25	26	27	28	
					7:30p Open Mic Borders Sunnyvale		

South Bay Writers Open Mic

What's a Meetup?

A meetup is a weekly, sometimes twice a week meeting for SBW members and other writers who want to discuss and learn about writing and blogging related topics.

The topics, places, and times can be discovered in detail at:

<http://www.meetup.com/Silicon-Valley-Bloggers/>

&

<http://www.meetup.com/South-Bay-Writers/>

&

<http://www.meetup.com/Silicon-Valley-Bloggers-and-Writers/>

Read from your own work, from your favorite authors, or just come to listen. See calendar for schedule.

Contact Bill Baldwin

Other Open Mics

10Ten Gallery

Last Friday, 6:30-10:00 p.m.
1010 E. Taylor St., San Jose
Al Preciado's home

Poets@Play

Second Sunday 1 p.m.-4 p.m.
1650 Senter Rd., San Jose
Markham House History Park

Check out the
South Bay Writers
Blog
southbaywriters.com
Click SBW Journal—Blog

South Bay Writers Anthology



\$10

At the meeting.
On the website.

southbaywriters.com

2011 Sandy Writing Contest

www.thesandy.org.

Deadline is February 13, 2011



California Writers Club
South Bay Branch
P.O. Box 3254
Santa Clara, CA 95055
www.southbaywriters.com

MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

Monthly Meetings
Every Second Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.

Lookout Inn
605 Macara Avenue, Sunnyvale
At the Sunnyvale Golf Course

Did you know that first-time visitors to our monthly meeting who learn about it from Meetup pay the member's price?

