



South Bay
WRITERS

Silicon Valley's Premier Writing Group



December Newsletter

The Holiday Season is upon us. I would like to take this chance to wish you all Happy Holidays and thank you all for being part of the club this last year. I hope you are excited for all the great events that Shari has lined up for the coming year and that you have a chance to keep writing. Stay warm and healthy over the coming cold days!

To celebrate the end of the year, please join fellow South Bay Writers for a wonderful and festive evening of food, drinks, and a White Elephant gift exchange at the home of Edie Matthews.



Potluck – Pleaser bring a dish according to your last name:

A – G Main Dish

H – R Appetizer or Dessert

S – Z Salad or Side Dish

Drinks and Beverages provided by the club.

Gift Exchange:

Please bring a \$15-20 wrapped gift to participate

For location and to RSVP:

RSVP to pr@southbaywriters.com

-Ryan Davis-Marsh

P.S. Some email providers will truncate the bottom of large emails; make sure you expand it to see all the news we have to offer!



President's Column Prose, Poetry, or Both? By Una Daly

This month's column is about exploring different formats for your writing. With our 2026 South Bay Writer's Anthology deadline extended into mid-December, it might be the time to break out of your favorite writing format and try something new. Apologies in advance to our dramatists, screen and playwriting is skipped over this time.

Often, writers will choose either prose or poetry to express themselves professionally and don't want or don't feel comfortable switching between formats. I find that prose writers choose to stay in their lane more often than poets who are more likely to work in both formats. I believe that there is a perfectly reasonable explanation for that, but I'd like to encourage you to step outside your comfort zone and try a format that feels less familiar. Doing so could actually improve your writing regardless of your preferred format.

Prose is the everyday language that all of us speak or write, so it is not surprising that all writers use it from time to time even if their preferred mode is poetic verse. Both fiction and non-fiction are primarily prose formats which follow grammatical structures and syntax. Poetry on the other hand is harder to define and often breaks grammatical rules for rhythm and emphasis. Poet and author, Sage Cohen, identifies four key ingredients of poetry: compression, lines and stanzas, music, and imagery.

- Compression refers to using fewer words to convey meaning. Each word in a poem is chosen for its clarity and fit within the poetic verse. Prose on the other hand can add more layers of meaning through expanding into additional sentences and paragraphs.
- Lines and stanzas are well-recognized as the building materials of poetry. They stand alone unlike the complete sentences and paragraphs of prose. The use of line breaks to split an idea between multiple lines creates tension and cadence.
- The music of poetry is easily illustrated in Shakespeare's sonnets although free verse can use sound and cadence effectively. The sonnet below uses the fixed structure of iambic pentameter meter, ABAB rhymes, and ten syllable lines to create its music.

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;*

- Poetic imagery is the description or metaphor that makes the poem "real" to us. It might be sensory or emotional, but it often associates something familiar with the unexpected. Maya Angelou's poem, *Still I Rise* uses the metaphor of oil wells to convey her confidence in spite of tough circumstances.

*Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.*

Although these four are recognized ingredients of poetry, well-known fiction writers encourage their peers to study how poets use these ingredients in order to improve their writing craft, including Ray Bradbury.

"Read poetry every day of your life. Poetry is good because it flexes muscles you don't use often enough. Poetry expands the senses and keeps them in prime condition. It keeps you aware of your nose, your eye, your ear, your tongue, your hand. And, above all, poetry is compacted metaphor or simile."

Hope to see you at our Members Holiday Party on Sunday, December 14!!

Important Dates:

- SBW 2026 Anthology submissions have been extended to **December 15, 2025**. [Click here](#) for the submission details.
- Tickets are still available for the January 24, 2026 Writing Workshop on the “Sound of Story” with award winning author and editor Jordan Rosenfeld. Lunch and a copy of her book included in ticket price.

Purchase your ticket today or at the holiday party, slots are limited.



If you use PayPal you can use the QR code or click below to purchase your ticket today!

BUY NOW

Member News:

- Members Lorraine Gabbert, Tonya McQuade, Shana Moore, and Amanda Senior are reading their original work on December 4th, at the “Finding Her Voice Event” at the San Jose Club House.
- We are still collecting socks for Front Door Communities through the Saratoga Senior Center. If you can, please consider dropping off some **NEW** socks during the Holiday Party

My Path to Writing By Bill Baldwin

Donna (D.M.) Rowell knows about storytelling—she *should!* Growing up as a member of the Kiowa tribe in Oklahoma, she’s listened to stories her entire life! In Kiowa culture, storytelling connects you to the community, its past, and its values. We were honored to welcome Rowell to our club for our November (Native American Heritage Month) meeting!

As a child she heard the stories of her family: grandfather, great-aunts, and others. Her grandfather painted stories incorporating details of daily life: significant details, each with a purpose.



To become a good *writer*, you first must be a *reader*. At a young age, Rowell became an ardent fan of Trixie Belden mysteries; she grew up wanting to write mysteries herself. That took a while (several decades at a tech-related job in Silicon Valley, then extension classes at UC San Diego),

but she achieved her goal in 2022 with *Never Name the Dead* (nominated for the Mary Higgins Clark Award). Along the way she learned some valuable writing lessons.

You have to let your characters *come alive*; then the story will *write itself*. Rowell offered a specific approach to producing a murder mystery.

- First, visualize the murder.
- Next, identify the characters involved.
- Then realize how the story should end.

Know where to *begin* your story. As you proceed, find your rhythm: the length of paragraphs and chapters, the story structure and length.

- Sketch the first draft—let the story flow. Don't fret too much; you're writing this draft for *yourself*. Don't bother with an outline—drive your story to its conclusion.
- In the second draft, expand the characters and setting: add color and atmosphere to the work.
- In the third draft, add depth and shading.

Rowell recommends Stephen King's book *On Writing*. She also recommends joining writers' organizations (like ours!). As you struggle with words, criticisms, and doubts, consider the possibility that *Your Way is the Write Way!* If you're not sure how to proceed with your writing, you may want to *Just Sit Down and Do It!*

Advice to consider—and *try!*
If you want to be a writer, you *have to try!*

Welcome, Donna, to our writers' band!
And thanks!

South Bay Writers Club Minutes — November January Board Meetings: Jan 11, 11:30-2pm

The board is holding a longer, 3-hour strategic meeting in January to review goals, projects, and committee initiatives for the new year. It's a potluck and members are welcome.
Contact pres@southbaywriters.com

California Writers Week

Several submissions were received. Kalpana read her short story at the November meeting. All submissions were printed in the newsletter.

Raffle Planning

"Raffle Reading" — win up to 10 minutes of speaking time during the monthly meeting to read or discuss their work. We will still have some traditional raffles with books as primary award.

November Luncheon

12 members met for lunch at Jack's Restaurant at 12:45 PM immediately following the Nov 8 meeting. Proposal is to make this a regular thing to support networking and community building. Thank you, Tonya McQuade, for organizing this successful get together.

Financial news Payments

- Membership payments for annual dues and events will be available on Square, offering a convenient way for members to join or renew at meetings in 2026. Paypal will also be allowed for advanced payment. Cash and checks are still welcome.
- Amanda Senior offered to help assist our Treasure, Alice, with payment coordination at meetings and to track upcoming workshop income.

Leadership Development

- CWC Leadership Conference: Scheduled for April, with a focus on leadership growth,

club engagement, and membership expansion.

- The board discussed developing training to support onboarding new officers:
 - Club mission and structure (“Who we are and what we do”)
 - Detailed role descriptions and expectations
 - Tips on managing meetings, communications, and finances
 - Reference materials on California Writers Club procedures

Spring Programs and Workshops

- January 24 *Sound of Story* Workshop with [Jordan Rosenfeld](#)
- February 14 [Kathleen Founds](#) - graphic novelist, Cabrillo College instructor
- March 14 [Karen Joy Fowler](#), NYT bestseller including the Jane Austen Book Club.
- April 11 [Peggy Townsend](#) - reporter, novelist, and member of the Rough Drafts writing group
- May 9 [Lita Kurth](#) - flash fiction and story prompt author, DeAnza College writing instructor
- June 13 Publishing Panel

Newsletter & Website

Newsletter for December is digital-only. January newsletter will have print versions for those who have requested them.



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