

Rambling Rex



Beginning Anew

by Rex Griffin

President

www.nightwriters.org

It's the New Year. Time to replace the 2020 calendars. I do so with relish, as I'm sick of 2020, and I love calendars. I keep six (don't judge!) on the walls of my master bath, each one historical, most for practical value (so I tell myself). The top Civil War one is my appointment calendar, where, at a glance, I can keep track of daily responsibilities. (Or who OU is playing next.) On the Legends in Gray calendar below it I have marked the dates of significant events in the era of my stories, handy both as reminders and as #OTD mentions on Twitter. The World War II calendar by the big mirror is my activity log, where I mark my weight (lucky it doesn't collapse) and daily exercise. The other three, Winston Churchill, another Civil War, and a General History calendar, are. . . interesting. (Did I mention I also have a daily Military History desk calendar by the sink?)

Now my office. I once read where Jerry Seinfeld recommended X-ing out daily blocks on a calendar as a way of motivation-reward. So I print a two-month-a-page calendar, and pin it to the wall. Across the top I write a reminder from my friend, Griff Hosker: *A DAY WITHOUT WRITING IS WASTED*.

Unfortunately, I ignored that admonition for a good part of 2020. I really thought the COVID lockdown would give me more time to write, but I succumbed to malaise, lack of discipline or focus, or plain laziness. I didn't write nearly enough.

Good riddance 2020! Hello 2021! Time to shake off the malaise, become focused and disciplined, and kick Killjoy, my internal nemesis, in the behind. Time to begin anew!

So I could use a plan, not for the whole year, but for right now. What is a plan, anyway? It is having goals and knowing what specific steps are needed to achieve those goals. We've all heard the Chinese proverb that says, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." Another friend, Frank Hicks, pointed out an alternate translation, "A journey of a thousand miles begins under your feet." I can't change the past, so I have to start from here, from under my feet.

So let's KISS—Keep It Simple, Stupid—and start by *PRIMING THE PUMP*. When I don't write for even a couple of days, my creative "well" goes dry. I need to re-ignite my imagination. Some writers seek inspiration, but for me it's a matter of getting my head out of somewhere else and into the game. Prompts can be effective. Analyzing your own or other's writing can work, too. But writing exercises never fail to wake up KITA, my Kid in the Attic. There are innumerable valuable writing exercises, from countless great writing teachers. One of these days I'll put together a column of my favorites, but for now I'll pick one or two and get going.

Once I've kick-started my imagination, and my creative juices are running hot, I'm ready to produce some quality writing. So I just dive in, right?



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Yes. . . and No. Dive in, by all means. But like a mountain climber who always plans an escape route, I need to be prepared when problems inevitably arise by building on my plan.

SMALL STEPS, BIG GOALS. My goal is to finish my second novel. The next small step I have to take toward that goal is to write every day, which means setting up a routine. Psychologists say if you do something every day for 3 weeks, it becomes a habit.

For me that means setting my alarm to get up at the same time every day (except Sundays—I need a day off), planting myself at the keyboard while my mind is still fresh, opening the Word doc, and *writing*—no reading e-mails first, nor allowing other internet distractions. (While still working I would rely on a cooking timer to carve out a measly hour to write every day—you do what you’ve got to do.)

Then keep my butt at the keyboard—minus necessary breaks—until I’ve reached my daily limit of 1,000 words. I’ve found that my imagination hits a natural stopping point at 550-750 words. If I push beyond that, it stretches my imagination (much like my waistline—bad example) and, magically, keeps the story closer in my thoughts throughout the rest of my day and night.

Over time, as my imagination becomes stronger and my writing more nimble, I often find myself pushing past 1,000 words. (Griff Hosker, my friend mentioned above, pumps out 5,000 words a day—about 20 pages—a Herculean number. He says he’s,

“Living the Dream.”)

But after the malaise of the COVID year, 1,000 words is a good start, because I am Beginning Anew.

Yes, it’s a New Year, and a blank slate for the *Tulsa Night Writers*. Until further notice the library is not open to reservations, so we’ll have to rely on Zoom meetings for a while.

Our first Zoom meeting of the year will be at 7 PM, Tuesday, January 19, with Lorin Oberweger. Lorin will validate the raincheck she gave us last August, when she was too sick to give her presentation.

The OWFI contest is open until the last of the month! With 35 categories, there is plenty of opportunity to submit! For further information, look on their website, OWFI.org.

Dear NightWriters,

I have loved being your treasurer for the past five years. Please forgive me for the times I’ve been wrong. With your patience, I have learned from so many of you about the art of writing. Thank you for everything. I know the club is in very capable hands with Susan Badaracco taking the reigns as our new treasurer. I know you will give her the same affection you’ve given me.

Marion Grace

Please send all new and renewals for membership to:

Susan Badaracco

4735 S Wheeling Ave

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The Write Touch

By Kathryn Helstrom, Vice-President

WHO IS YOUR PROTAGONIST

Some tales have one protagonist, some have more. *Romeo and Juliet* has two, but most of our stories will have only one. You may have several Main Characters, but whose fate matters most to the story? Who has the most to lose? The most to gain? That is the protagonist.

The Greeks are the ones who came up with the word for their plays: *pro-* meaning the first in importance, and – *agonists*, meaning actor. So, the protagonist is the most important actor in your drama. She defines the plot and moves it forward based on her decisions and actions. It is her cause or purpose that drives her choices.

The cause is the commitment your character has to an idea (Atticus Finch's idea of justice) or a belief (Benjamin Franklin Gates' belief in the existence of the *National Treasure*) or a goal (Frodo's mission to destroy the ring).

Your protagonist's goals are the story goals. His character arc is the plot. He could be the "good guy" (Luke Skywalker). He could be the "bad guy" (Captain Ahab). He could be an unlikely or unwilling protagonist (John McClane in *Die Hard*). He could be a surprise. Your plot twist can kill off a False Protagonist to reveal the true defining actor in your novel, as Hitchcock did in *Psycho*.

When creating your protagonist, you want to avoid absolutes. A protagonist should not be too powerful or too weak. This leaves him with nothing to gain or nothing to lose, in other words, no conflict. If he is a good guy hero, be sure to mix in some traits that aren't so positive. Maybe he is too forgiving, or maybe he secretly gambles and his finances are in trouble. If he is a bad guy, paint him with sympathetic strokes—he loves his cat, or he gives money to the homeless guy on the corner.

Provide physical details to underscore the personality details of your protagonist. Dark brooding eyes, or whimsical smirk, or thin stringy hair, or expensive clothes, or slumped posture, or clumsy feet—all of these evoke a picture of a personality. Let your readers see him as you do.

Point of view will have a lot to do with the portrayal of your protagonist. A first-person POV works well, as the narrator is the protagonist like Uhtred is in Bernard Cornwell's *Saxon Tales* series. Third person POV is the most common method for authors to use because it works so well. Multiple POVs are efficient too, as George Washington, Aaron Burr, and other characters spin their views about *Hamilton*. Think carefully about how you want to approach this part of the craft for your drama. Do you want your reader to see it through your protagonist's eyes? Through the antagonist's? Or maybe through another, subordinate character, such as Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*?

Of course, every protagonist must have an antagonist. They must impede her progress with conflicting goals. Antagonists can lie about her, thwart her plans, or make her question her purpose, or even her own sanity (*Gaslight*).

Next time, we will talk more about Antagonists.



January Meeting: January 19 (Via Zoom)

Loren Oberweger on Deep Dive into Scene Structure

Lorin Oberweger is an award-winning author of at least eight traditionally published books, and is an independent book editor. She publishes under the pen name Noelle August.

With more than 25 years of experience in the publishing industry, Lorin produces workshops with Donald Maas and others at Free Expressions <https://www.free-expressions.com/>

This month, we are honored to have her present her workshop, *Deep Dive into Scene Structure*. Although many writers know the basics of scene structure, they fail to make their scenes do all the work they can do, taking the path of least resistance instead of challenging themselves—and their characters and stories—to greater heights. In this class we will dig into the foundational element of story construction, the

scene, and examine ways in which every aspect of the scene can perform multiple functions, creating richer and more dynamic moments that lead to a much more satisfying work.



Noelle August's books include *BOOMERANG*, *REBOUND*, and *BOUNCE*. Her work has received glowing reviews from the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and others. Most recently, she co-authored *THANK YOU FOR COMING TO MY TED TALK* with Chris Anderson, director of the renowned TED organization.

We are extremely proud and grateful to have this outstanding instructor as our guest speaker. Don't miss it!

Our new Communications Director, Jim Laughter, will host the Zoom meeting. A couple of days beforehand, you will receive an email with the Zoom link. At 7:00 on November 17, click on the link and connect to the meeting.

If you have not downloaded the Zoom app onto your phone and/or computer, please do it now. It is really easy. From your computer, go to the Zoom website <https://zoom.us/> and sign up for free. There, you will find short videos to show you how to use the app. You can also download the Zoom app to your smartphone from your app store.



Poetry Corner

with Carol Lavelle Snow

Parallelism

Parallelism is commonly used in poetry and is one of the most effective devices you can use to hold your poem together. Parallelism is using similar types of words or phrases in succeeding sentences. For example, here again is the excerpt from “Mending Wall” by Robert Frost with the rhythm marked:

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen ground swell under it
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.

Frost also uses parallelism. That is, he uses the same kind of phrase (a connecting word and a verb) in each of these opening lines.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen ground swell under it
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.

Try writing something using Frost's rhythm and this form of parallelism. For example,

Music there is that lifts me out of now.
That takes me to another time and place
That soothes away the present and the past.
And makes me yearn to dream throughout the day.

T.S. Eliot also uses parallelism in his poem “The Waste Land.” In fact, it is the parallelism that gives the poem cohesion.

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

Try using a technique similar to this one. This time instead of using Elliot's rhythm, just use the same number of syllables he uses in every line.

Dark clouds built up in the west, rolling (9)
Out across the horizon, rumbling (9)
As in discontent, seeking (7)
Union with the land. (5)

Some editors are picky about using verbs that end in “ing.” Someone must have taught against “ing” verbs at some time. However, they can be very effective, as in this poem by Walt Whitman:

A Noiseless Patient Spider

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musings, venturing, throwing, seeking the
spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile
anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my
soul.

Notice that while Frost and Elliot start every poetry line with a capital letter, Whitman does not. Most poets only use capital letters at the first of new sentences now—if they use them at all.

Finally, write a poem in which you use a variety of kinds of parallelism.

TULSA NIGHTWRITERS' YOUNGEST MEMBERS

BY

M. CAROLYN STEELE

As a writer's club, the Tulsa NightWriters' boasts a variety of talents, from novelists and poets to script writers and journalists. The area of expertise of each writer runs the gamut of all genres. Though no one confesses up to being the oldest member, the club is proud to shine a spotlight on its two youngest members.



Cayden Henderson, a ninth grade student at Owasso High School, is fourteen-years-old and rose to the challenge of writing a story for the club's COVID-inspired anthology with a fictional piece entitled, "The Great Storm."

Q. Cayden, how did you first become interested in writing?

A. Probably just by reading, early on the likes of Harry Potter, and then it evolved into Stephen King and H.P. Lovecraft, writers like that.

Q. What genre of stories or poems do you enjoy writing?

A. I would say more suspenseful, or all around weird stories. I also enjoy writing about people who live in the big city, like Woody Allen. I like that NYC aesthetic, as well as smaller regional locations.

Q. What is your favorite thing about writing?

A. It's hard to say. I think it is a subconscious thing. Maybe it's an art thing. For sure, I enjoy seeing my name on something I've written. It was exciting to be included in the club's anthology.

Q. Who is your favorite author and why?

A. I like Stephen King because of his descriptions. He has such skill with sculpting characters, getting inside their minds, and, of course, scary world building. King also gives most of his stories a small town America feel. Maybe I like that because I live in a small town.

Q. Do you see writing as a career option?

A. I see writing as more of a side career, if anything. To be honest, I think actual books will be a thing of the past in the next thirty years. People are becoming more visual, seeing the story acted, not actually reading the story and imagining it in their own heads.

Q. Besides writing, what are your favorite hobbies or activities?

A. I can't imagine a world without music. I like to listen to, as well as make, music. Right now, my favorite artists are Frank Zappa, John Coltrane, Daniel Johnston, and others. I can play a number of instruments, but I prefer the guitar. When the weather is tolerable, I like getting outside on the skateboard.

Q. What do you want people to know about you?

A. Just that I like music and writing stories and don't really want to be seen as the "teenage author," but rather just a published author like everyone else in the anthology.

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Xaundra La Viness is a sixteen-year-old in eleventh grade, who loves poetry and submitted a piece entitled, “2020: The Challenge of a Lifetime,” which highlights the pandemic of COVID-19 through the eyes of a student.

Q. Xaundra, how did you first become interested in the craft of writing?

A. In the seventh grade, my best friend, Madison, invited me to a creative writing class. The group was doing an interactive murder mystery that day. That’s when it clicked for me. Ever since then, I’ve been writing.

Q. What genre of stories or poems do you enjoy writing?

A. I like all sorts of writing. It depends on my mood and the environment I’m in, and if my brothers are around.

Q. What is your favorite thing about writing?

A. My favorite thing is I can put my emotions on paper and nobody will judge me.

Q. Who is your favorite author and why?

A. Stephen King is my favorite author because he writes exciting chases, cool horror, and believable characters. I can feel what they are experiencing.

Q. Do you see writing as a career option?

A. I hope to work in the veterinary field. I can also write, because that is a release for me.

Q. Besides writing, what are your favorite hobbies or activities?

A. I love singing and dancing, playing with animals, reading and watching horror, being an eco-activist, and working with different kinds of art.

Q. What do you want people to know about you?

A. I like to think of myself as a normal girl who likes to do extraordinary things.

Q. Is there anything else you’d like to share with your fellow NightWriters?

A. I learn most of my writing skills at school, at conferences, and while researching on the internet. It’s good to go to writing conferences because you learn so much, like different writing styles and techniques. You might not think it applies to you, but it often does. You also make good friends at conferences.

My Pandemic Playlist

By
Susan Badaracco

Last year, when a pandemic was a subject for a sci-fi and not our reality, I made a vow to read more books to improve my writing. In Stephen King's book *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, he reported that he read between 50-70 books per year. He encouraged different genres and assured the reader/author-wannabe that a bad book teaches a writer as much as a good book. Since I found his memoir helpful (and understand why it makes the list for most author's "must read" books), I set a goal of fifty books.

I divided my list into two categories: books on writing and everything else. I started strong and after finishing King's book, I read *Writing down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg and *Big Magic* by Elizabeth Gilbert. I listened to *Dear Writer, You Need to Quit* on audiotape and I can heartily recommend listening to Becca Syme's soothing voice as she points out the pitfalls associated with this infatuation of mine. I read Nikki Hanna's *Listen Up, Writer: How Not to Write Like an Amateur* and *Capture Life-Write A Memoir* and was both impressed and inspired.

In between, I started the books King recommended in the back of his memoir. Pat Barker's *Regeneration* is a superbly written fictional account of the psychological effects of war and not a book I would ever have normally picked to read. Stoically, I read another of Barker's books, *The Silence of the Girls*. The writing is excellent, but I started to find myself morose and frustrated so I dropped King's list and took a shotgun approach to literature.

I read: *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, *How Not to Die Alone*, several Virgil Flowers books by John Sandford, *The Swallows*, and *Nanaville: Adventures in Grandparenting*. I was impressed by Emma Donoghue's descriptions of a man in his seventies, contrasted with a young boy left in his charge. (*Akin* is the name of the book.) I read several cozy mysteries to understand the genre better, and I read *Bedding Mr. Birdsong* when I discovered it was written by another Tulsa NightWriter. (Good job, Deborah Camp!)

As the pandemic wore on and on, I gave up reading books to make my writing stronger and focused on reading books that would help me escape: *The Cactus*, *To Best the Boys* and more Virgil Flowers. I reached my goal of fifty books and reflecting back, as King predicted, I learned a lot. But here's something I didn't expect...the more I read, the more insecure I became in my own writing. How could I ever expect myself to rise to the level of these authors?

Stephen King was very clear that I won't ever be as good as some of the authors I've read. You know what I'm taking about...prose that holds you spellbound and descriptions that make you want to weep from the originality and sentiment (*The Water Dancer*). I'll never be that virtuoso, but I can improve.

This year, instead of a resolution to read fifty books, I'm going to remain resolute (*adj: admirably purposeful, determined, and unwavering*). I'm going to keep practicing my craft: improving my plots, adding more tension, and squeezing out more emotion. I'll continue to admire what others have written, but I'll be running my own race. I hope you'll do the same.

I look forward to reading more books by fellow NightWriters and getting to know all of you better. *Here's to more fun in 2021!*

Tulsa NightWriters of the Year

In 2020, The Tulsa NightWriters Club has named two NightWriters of the Year:



Blake Collier & Cindy Rose



Golden Circle Award Winners

In addition to Blake and Cindy, nominees for Tulsa NightWriter of the Year 2020 included Rex Griffin, Joshua Danker-Dake, Renee' La Viness, Kathlyn Smith, and Marion Grace. These members received the Golden Circle Award for 2020 in recognition of their valuable contributions to writers and The Tulsa NightWriters Club.

Congratulations to each of these members.



WINNER PROFILES: TNWC'S 2020 FLASH WRITING CONTEST

The 2020 Flash Writing Contest comprised 15 submissions by 13 NightWriter Members. The winners were:

1 st Place	“Red Meadows”	Janet Yeager
2 nd Place	“Five Seconds”	Joshua Danker-Dake
3 rd Place	“A Sporting Chance”	Julie Kimmel-Harbaugh
Honorable Mention	“A Look Forward”	Kathleen Smith

Meet the winners:



A childhood by a mountain lake in a small Montana ski town, surrounded by storytellers, has shaped the creative non-fiction stories **Janet Yeager** likes to write. Her story, “Red Meadows,” is based on an actual event – the avalanche and its aftermath *were* real, but the point of view is an exercise in imagination. A graduate of the University of Montana, Janet is a happy member of the Tulsa NightWriters, OWFI, and now part of Bill Bernhardt’s Red Sneakers group. Winning First Place for her Flash Fiction story is the first time she has won anything. Ever. Her hobbies include travel and genealogy. She lives in Tulsa with her husband Greg and is the mom to two wonderful sons and two wonderful daughters-in-law.



Joshua Danker-Dake is a sci-fi writer by night and an editor by day. He lives in Tulsa with his long-suffering wife, their three irrepressible children, and a tank full of cannibal guppies. Non-writing-related things that he gets excited about include health and fitness, bombastic European power metal, *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, and St. Louis Cardinals baseball. He’s also a former President of the Tulsa NightWriters. His entry, “Five Seconds,” combines baseball, time travel, and greed to explore what a man might do—or do over—if he could relive any moment.



Julie Kimmel-Harbaugh thanks the TNWC Officer Board for its hard work putting together the 2020 Flash Writing Contest. What a great opportunity for members to practice the craft and get some feedback on their writing! She was surprised, thrilled, and honored that her story, “A Sporting Chance,” placed third out of all the entries submitted by the club’s fine writers. The recognition made her year a whole lot brighter. She wrote in a subgenre she’d never attempted—political thriller—and it turned out to be the most fun she’d ever had with a pen.

A freelance editor, J. A. Kimmel (aka Julie Kimmel-Harbaugh), is also an award-winning writer and a certified educator. Her published works include songs, lesson plans, articles, and short stories. Julie served as Communications Director and Editor of Tulsa NightWriters Club for four years. She is a three-time recipient of the club’s Golden Circle award, and in 2015, the membership honored her with the NightWriter of the Year award. Originally from Texas, she now lives on Grand Lake o’ the Cherokees, in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains.



Kathlyn Smith has been writing since junior high days just for fun. She started learning about the craft of writing in 2005 in earnest. She has three stories published in two anthologies and has won recognition for her writing from both OWFI and TNW. The main focus of her writing has to do with light romance, how faith works in the lives of her characters, positive outcomes and hopefully some humor. This flash fiction idea came to her prior to the presidential election and all the scenarios that were projected to happen depending on which party won the election.

Braggs & Announcements

Carol Lavelle Snow had two poems accepted by *The Lyric*: "Historical Art" and "A Seal Upon My Heart."

Bob Avey's publisher, Black Rose Writing, has accepted his latest novel, *Sandcastle for Pegasus*, for publication. It is a time travel novel and is scheduled to be released August 2021.

Margaret Lee is happy to announce that her first poetry collection, *Someone Else's Earth*, has been accepted for publication by Finishing Line Press. The chapbook contains 20 poems built on the fragments of Sappho, as translated by Anne Carson.



Chuck Sasser's book, *Patton's Panthers*, is being contracted for a major movie by Hollywood.



Deborah Camp has a new contemporary romance out on Amazon. *Nailing Mr. Nasty* book #2 in her Campy Romances series. Book #1 is *Bedding Mr. Birdsong*, which came out earlier this year.



Michael Koch has a horror short story titled, "Witch Is It?" published in the *Midnight Tales* book, Fall issue, #3. Copies can be purchased at midnightmagazine.bigcartel.com for \$6.99.

Tulsa Night Writers Club Hall of Fame



*Peggy
Fielding*

Romance Author
and Writing Instructor



*Charles W.
Sasser*

Freelance Writer,
Journalist,
and Photographer



*Jackie
King*

Cozy Mystery
and Short Story Author



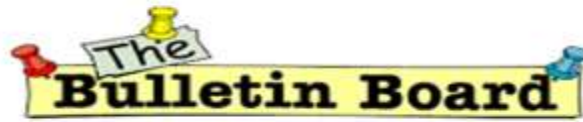
*Deborah
Camp*

Romance Author



*M. Carolyn
Steele*

Journalist, Genealogist,
Author of Historical
Fiction and Nonfiction



EDITING SERVICES

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Contact Julie Kimmel-Harbaugh

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918-720-4866 (cell)

Deniece Adsit Copyediting Services

I have completed a months-long course in copyediting through Writers' Digest University. In October, I passed the final certification exam. If you are looking for a certified copyeditor for your work, I would be happy to do a free sample edit of up to five pages to see if we are a good fit. Rates will vary depending on the degree of editing required.

Please contact me with your questions or comments at

denieceadsit@gmail.com

Attention NightWriters Members:

NightScripts offers free advertising for any Member with a writing-related business.

Send your ad to Cindy Rose, Editor, at cindy-rose@cox.net

We'd love to welcome you as a member!

If you'd like to join Tulsa NightWriters Club, please contact our treasurer, Marion Grace, at jnmgrace@att.net

FROM YOUR EDITOR

***NightScripts* Submission Guidelines**

- Deadline:** 1st of the month (May- December)
- Specifications:** **Please do not format your text.**
Times New Roman, 12pt
Single-space
Attach graphics and/or photographs
- Send To:** Cindy Rose
cindy-rose@cox.net

CURRENTLY ACCEPTING ARTICLES

Do you have an idea for strengthening Tulsa NightWriters Club?

Send any ideas, speaker recommendations, etc.,
by e-mail, to the officer of your choice.

GENRE FOCUS GROUPS

The Genre Focus Groups program is an opportunity for NightWriters who write in the same genre to connect on an ongoing basis to support each other, exchange ideas, talk about marketing, read each other's work, and offer feedback. If you'd like to be listed for a genre or to connect with other writers, let us know—we'll be glad to help.

WE'RE ON THE WEB

WWW.TULSANIGHTWRITERS.WORDPRESS.COM



Click on these links to connect with TNWC on Facebook:

[TNWC Facebook Group for Club Members Only](#)

[TNWC Facebook Page \(public\)](#)

Please note: Only Tulsa NightWriters Club members may join our TNWC Facebook group. Our public Facebook page is open to non-club members.

Visit the [TNWC website](#) for club membership information.

FOLLOW TNWC ON TWITTER

You can follow TNWC on Twitter: [**@TulsaNightWrite**](#)
Please tweet our meetings and other events, and we will do our best to retweet your writing-related tweets.

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