

**SPRING 2020**



The Quarterly Magazine of the Women's Fiction Writers Association

# **WRITE ON!**

## **BRAVE BEGINNINGS**



**WRITE WHERE YOU ARE**

**HOOK, LINE, AND READER**

**LET'S GET THIS STORY ROLLIN'!**



**PLAN YOUR  
MARKETING PARTY**

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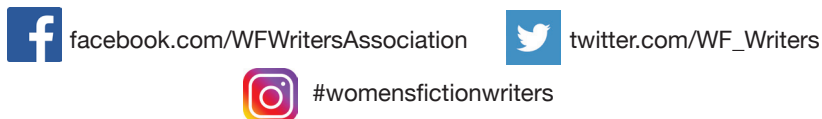
### WRITE FOR WRITE ON!

You love reading Write ON! Now write for it! If you're interested in being a Write ON! contributor, pitch your one-time feature article (2,000 words) or your regular column idea (750-1,000 words) to Managing Editor Kay Arthur at [kdarthur@yahoo.com](mailto:kdarthur@yahoo.com).

# ABOUT THE WFWA

We began this organization in 2013 with the idea to create a safe, nurturing place for writers of women's fiction. The publishing industry is morphing—with new opportunities and, as yet, unknown futures. The founders of the Women's Fiction Writers Association wanted somewhere to amass and disseminate information to and about our chosen genre.

Defining women's fiction has proven as subjective as the types of books we read. For that reason, our guiding statement is broad and comprehensive: Stories that are driven by the main character's emotional journey. Our stories may have romance. Or they may not. They could be contemporary. Or historical. But what binds us together is the focus on a main character's emotional journey.



Join the closed WFWA Facebook group by sending an email to: [membership@womensfictionwriters.org](mailto:membership@womensfictionwriters.org)

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## LIKE WHAT YOU'VE READ IN WRITE ON?

Send us a letter! We'd love to hear your feedback and reactions on the stories and features. Email them to [writeon@womensfictionwriters.org](mailto:writeon@womensfictionwriters.org). Submitted letters are considered for publication and may be edited for clarity or space.

# STAFF

## SHARON RITCHEY Interim Managing Editor

Sharon is WFWA's VP of Communications, a self-described magazine junkie who is excited to direct this quarter's issue of Write On.



## KAY ARTHUR Managing Editor (on sabbatical)

Kay is a retired healthcare administrator who is enjoying early retirement and writing full-time. She lives both in Phoenix and a cabin in the mountains of Arizona with her husband and dogs – a Griff and a Doodle of some kind. She is a featured writer for the online publication Sixty&Me, and is querying her debut novel, *Beautifully Strange* while working on her second novel.



## SHERI TAYLOR-EMERY Art Director

Sheri is an art director who longs to be a novelist. She's still in awe that her Rising Star manuscript, *The Fifty-Week Wife*, landed her an agent. When she's not grinding her teeth from stress, she's rejoicing in seeing her son and daughter turn into amazing young adults, working at a dog rescue once a week, and corralling two dogs and three cats at home. She lives with her husband outside of Atlanta. She's repped by Carly Watters of P.S. Literary.



## BROOKE WILLIAMS Copy Editor

Brooke is a novelist, childcare provider, fitness instructor, and Girl Scout leader. When she isn't writing or devouring stacks of good books, she's helping out at the local elementary school, working on her MFA, or haunting her favorite local taco joint. She lives in Ohio with her husband and four children.



## PATRICIA FRIEDRICH Contributing Features Editor

Patricia is Professor of English at Arizona State University. She is the author/editor of six nonfiction books including *The Sociolinguistics of Digital Englishes* (Routledge, 2016), the award-winning *The Literary and Linguistic Construction of Obsessive-compulsive Disorder* (Palgrave, 2015), and several published short stories. She is currently working on revisions to her first novel-length manuscript, *Artful Women*.



## BARBARA LINN PROBST Contributing Features Editor

Barbara is a women's fiction writer living on an historic dirt road in New York's Hudson Valley. Her debut novel, *Queen of the Owls*, launched in April 2020. Her second novel is slated for publication in April 2021.



## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

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Speaking not only for myself but for the entire Board of Directors, I want to thank each of our nearly 100 volunteers. Whether your role in WFWA is large or small, out in front of members or behind the scenes, we treasure you. Every one of you is making a difference, supporting the community we love, and helping us maintain some normalcy in a changed world.

I'm probably not the only one who feels like I'm living out a hero's journey in a novel right now. Every day seems to bring unwelcome change, more uncertainty, fear for what the future holds, and wonder at how I'm going to get through it all.

On the morning of 9/11, I was at home, an hour north of New York City, with my almost-two-year-old. No one understood what was happening or why. No one knew if more attacks were coming. My husband was across the Hudson River at work in New Jersey. Was he in danger? Would he be able to make it home? What if they closed the bridges between us? There was so much fear, and so much unknown.

The months and years that followed tested everyone. We knew we were living in a new world, and it was scary. But we were doing it together. That knowledge is what brought out the best of everyone as communities stepped up to support one another, and kept each other moving forward.

Over 85 years ago, during the Great Depression, New York City Mayor Fiorello Henry La Guardia named the beloved lion statues that guard the 42nd Street library *Patience* and *Fortitude*, the two qualities he felt New Yorkers needed to get through a difficult time. I love the image of strength those lions represent, still guarding the beautiful library I visited just a few short months ago.

The world is different right now. Things are scary. We miss our old lives, the way things used to be, the things we could count on.

Thanks to our many volunteers, WFWA is one of the things you can continue to count on.

For everyone having a difficult time right now, we see you. You're not alone. We will continue to provide [workshops and webinars](#), our weekly [newsletters](#), and several Facebook groups to support you in your [creativity](#), your [goal setting](#), and your [writing journey](#). We also have plenty of uplifting pictures and virtual hugs to make you smile, if that's what you need most right now.

WFWA remains committed to serving our community through this challenging time.

Be well, stay safe, and come say hello. We're all in this together, and we're here for you.

*Christine Adler*

Christine Adler, WFWA President



**THE WORLD IS DIFFERENT RIGHT NOW. THINGS ARE SCARY. WE MISS OUR OLD LIVES, THE WAY THINGS USED TO BE, THE THINGS WE COULD COUNT ON. THANKS TO OUR MANY VOLUNTEERS, WFWA IS ONE OF THE THINGS YOU CAN CONTINUE TO COUNT ON.**

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# Write Where You Are



By Kay Arthur

The theme of this publication is beginnings. The beginning of your novel. The beginning of your professional career. The beginning of your life as a writer. The beginning of a new way of living. Beginnings are exciting and liberating, no matter the age.

I am a senior! Sometimes I cringe when I see that word. Other times, I happily embrace the connotation and the respect that comes with it. It can be confusing figuring out what it means to embrace my seniority and navigate this phase of life. But most of the time, like now, I feel joy at the *privilege* of being where I am today in my life and in my writing journey.

I always wanted to be a writer, even when I was a little girl. Poems were my thing then. I love the lyricism of language, the expressive and sheer beauty of words. The description of what I feel often comes out far better on paper than when I try to audibly express my emotions. But I put my desire to be a writer on hold for many years, as life often gets in the way of doing the things we love.

Or does it?

For 30 years, I was a healthcare administrator for large cardiology practices, using my left brain to guide my physicians and staff in caring for patients' hearts. Only after I retired was I able to use my right brain to speak from the heart—to tap into words and stories I'd harbored.

But what if the faces I saw, the spirit of courage, the fear of the unknown, the weariness of hard work, the soul of despair that stayed with me. What if those faces were kept like gold coins in my writer's vault, to be pulled out and molded into some of my best work?

**WHAT IF...**all of life leads to the exact place in time that motivates our words.

**WHAT IF...**our writing is our own emotions, bubbling to the surface to overflow onto paper—the loves and losses we've lived, the sacredness of life that's magnified with the advancing of age.

**WHAT IF...**our maturity enhances our senses and our writing with the influence of living.

Laura Ingalls Wilder was 65 when she was first published, and Kristin Hannah was 55 with *Nightingale*. Delia Owens published her debut novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* while in her late 60s. None of them made their mark in their careers as youngsters.

It can be done at any age, and I celebrate your every success with a champagne toast for your words, your courage, and your expressive souls.

Writing is about YOU—no matter where you are in your life or where you are in your writing journey. Beginnings are a joyful marker at any stage. It is truly never too late. Take the step, find the courage, celebrate the lyricism of the words that are individually yours.

So *Write On*, my friends. Write from your heart. Set your childlike spirit free to frolic in your own new beginning. We celebrate you and your writing journey.



# Hook, Line, and Reader

*A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away ...*

*It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.*

Two of the best-known opening lines of all time, but do you suppose they were the first sentences these authors wrote? Probably not! The first sentence of a book might, in fact, be the last one the author wrote. John Grisham, author of 28 best-selling books, advises: “Don’t write the first scene until you know the last one.”

A spin on Grisham’s advice might be: “Don’t *finalize* the first scene until you know the last one.” Those opening paragraphs are likely to change as you work through successive drafts and get to know your story more deeply. That means you don’t have to agonize about making them perfect before you continue writing. You can have a few openings in mind or write a placeholder “page one,” knowing you’ll revisit it later.

After you’ve finished writing the rest of your book, the opening lines might still be the hardest to write, the ones you spend more time on than anything else. Rightly so, because beginnings matter. From agents to potential buyers, people read the first page and decide if they want to continue.

## **OPENING LINES**

You don’t need a gunshot or a storm at sea, but *something* about your opening has to invite the reader into the story. It can be a provocative statement, the evocation of a time or place, or a glimpse into the narrator’s unique way of looking at the world. It might be as simple as raising a question. Take the well-known first line of Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca*. “Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.” What or where is Manderley? Why is Manderley important to the narrator? We want to find out, so we keep reading.

Some novels have successfully employed innovative beginnings, so these are not rules, but rather examples of a few classic ways in which many authors have begun their stories.

## **■ A STATEMENT ABOUT HOW THE WORLD WORKS.**

This is a general statement about a principle the story will illustrate. The opening line of Diana Gabaldon’s *Outlander* is a great example: “People disappear all the time.” In just five words, we know the story will be about someone disappearing, and we’re hooked. Who disappears? How? Why? Then what happens?

The statement might be followed by an exception, as in *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie: “All children, except one, grow up.” The reader is intrigued. Who is this child who breaks the rule about how life works?

## WRITING MATTERS

### ■ A RETROSPECTIVE REFLECTION AFTER THE STORY IS OVER AND THE NARRATOR LOOKS BACK ON WHAT'S TAKEN PLACE.

The events in the story have already happened, and the narrator knows how they turned out. Now he'll tell you, the reader. Here's an example from *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold: "My name was Salmon, like the fish; first name, Susie. I was fourteen when I was murdered on December 6, 1973." I dare you not to keep reading after that!

### ■ AN ACTION OR EVENT THAT IMMEDIATELY IMMERSSES THE READER IN THE STORY WORLD.

This kind of opening starts right in the middle of the action. *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White does this perfectly: "Where's Papa going with that ax?" said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast." No musing about how life works. We're right there with Fern and her mother, anxious to know the answer to Fern's question.

### ■ A STATEMENT IN THE NARRATOR'S VOICE TO ANCHOR THE STORY IN A TIME OR PLACE.

"We were somewhere around Barstow on the edge of the desert when the drugs began to take hold." That's how Hunter S. Thompson begins *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Naming the setting helps pull the reader into the story so she can experience it right along with the characters.

### ■ THE VOICE OF THE PROTAGONIST, ILLUMINATING THE PROTAGONIST'S INNER WORLD.

Some books open with the narrator talking to the reader in his or her particular voice. Think of the irresistible first line of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*: "You'd better not never tell nobody but God."

A "voice" can also be a way of looking at life. Norman Maclean begins *A River Runs Through It* with the words: "In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly-fishing." That sentence tells us something about the person who's speaking; it could never have been uttered by Jo March or Harry Potter!

A good opening might do several of these things. My own novel, *Queen of the Owls*, opens this way:

Everyone had to meet somewhere. If Elizabeth thought about it that way, the fact that she met Richard at a Tai Chi class was no more or less auspicious than a first meeting at—say, a bookstore or bus stop. It was only later, looking back, that everything seemed heavy with meaning.

The first sentence is a statement about how the world works; the second is a retrospective reflection; and the third gives a hint of Elizabeth's character as someone introspective and analytical. The overall effect of the paragraph is to raise a story question about Richard's impact on Elizabeth's life. It also lets us know Elizabeth is the POV character and this is a contemporary, realistic novel.

### HOW DO YOU KNOW WHICH KIND OF OPENING TO WRITE?

Experiment! Try starting your story in different ways: with a bit of dialogue, an observation about something in the immediate environment, a reflection. See what that brings!

If this idea seems daunting, try the exercise with a novel you know well, like *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. The first lines of the book are: "When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow. When it healed, and Jem's fears of never being able to play football were assuaged, he was seldom self-conscious about his injury." The narrator is talking to the reader, or perhaps to herself, as she recalls an earlier time and reflects on how the long-ago event affected her brother.

How about starting *To Kill A Mockingbird* with something that anchors the story in the narrator's adult life, in who and where she is right now? Perhaps something happens to evoke her memory—an interaction with another character, for example, her brother or someone else. Perhaps we watch her moving about her house and observe her interacting with her settings a bit. Even if the opening is perfect as is, it's useful to play with the possibilities!

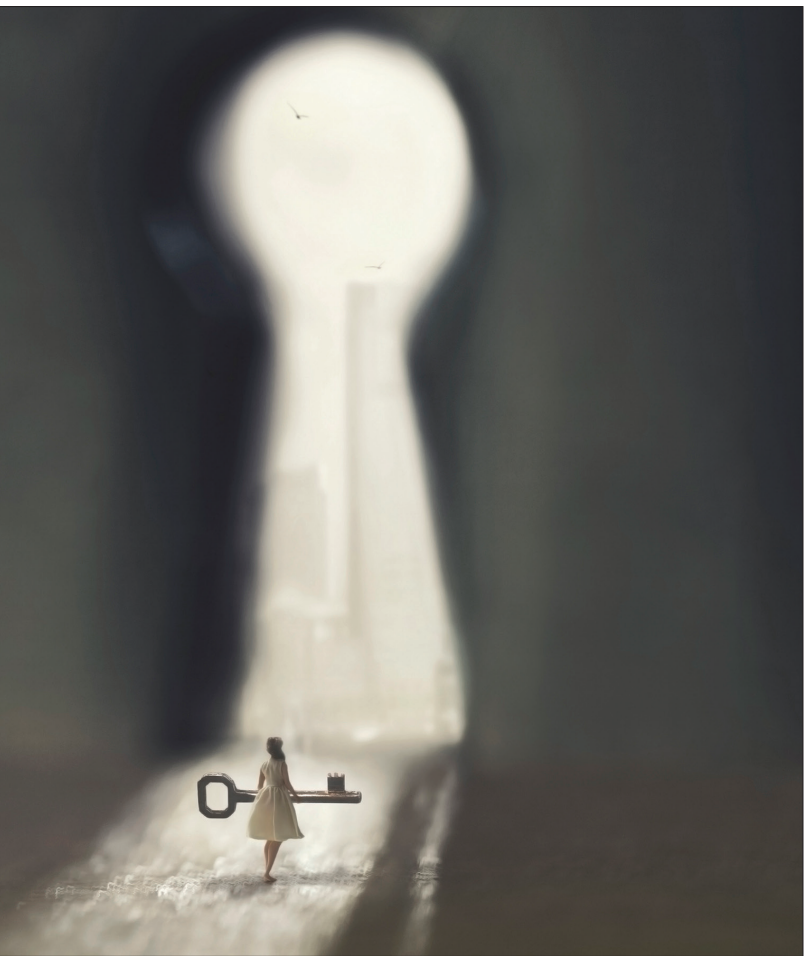
No matter which kind of opening you decide on, remember that the beginning and ending of a book are mirror images. It's only when the reader comes to the end of the story that the beginning will be fully illuminated.

### AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED WRITING THE REST OF YOUR BOOK, THE OPENING LINES MIGHT STILL BE THE HARDEST TO WRITE, THE ONES YOU SPEND MORE TIME ON THAN ANYTHING ELSE.



**Barbara Linn Probst** is a writer, blogger, former teacher, and therapist living on an historic dirt road in New York's Hudson Valley. Her debut novel, *Queen of the Owls* (launching in April 2020), is the story of a woman's search for wholeness framed around the art and life of Georgia O'Keeffe. It has been selected as one of the 20 most anticipated books of 2020 by *Working Mother* and will be the May 2020 selection for the Pulpwood Queens, a network of nearly 800 book clubs across the U.S. Her second novel is slated for publication in April 2021. To learn more, please visit [www.BarbaraLinnProbst.com](http://www.BarbaraLinnProbst.com).

# Let's Get This Story Rollin'!



**W**riters must start somewhere, and so we do.

But is the place we start our story's true opening? Don't worry about that yet.

The best time to write your true opening is once you've finished a draft or two. Only then will you understand enough about your story to fine-tune your story fuel. Only when you know the story's resolution can you tweak the opening to raise just the right question and foreshadow events to come.

At that point, opening your story will be easy because you'll be carrying all of its DNA in your bones.

So why struggle when we can procrastinate? Let's just set your characters in motion to see what they're about. The best way to do that is in a scene.

## THREE TIPS FOR STARTING IN A SCENE

### 1. USE A NOVEL JOURNAL.

Until you've identified a useful scene, I recommend writing "about" your story in an associated journal document. In fact, this journal is a great place to start writing each day, switching to the manuscript only when a scene starts unspooling in your mind.

This will keep your warm-up writing—also known as "authorial throat-clearing"—off your manuscript pages.

#### What you might include in your journal:

- introductory philosophizing about the premise
- research
- character and setting description
- backstory
- the character's inner turmoil
- situations in your own life from which you might be able to tap relevant emotion.

From these details, you can pluck out those that feel "hot," or full of conflict relevant to the type of story you want to tell (such as an evolution in worldview, a buddy story, a redemption story, etc.), and use them to construct a powerful scene.

## GUIDING SCRIBE

### 2. FOR NOW, STAY OUT OF YOUR CHARACTER'S HEAD.

As you write your first scene, to the extent possible, try to reveal your character through action and reaction. Can you picture all those twists and turns that comprise her physical brain? You'll get lost in there, I guarantee it. Inner monologue is best draped over substantial story bones, and you haven't created any yet. Keep in mind the goal of your opening is to raise intriguing questions that point toward the story to come, not explain.

### 3. DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PERSPECTIVE.

At some point, as you write about the story, you will start to sink deep into your character's perspective. You'll step into her skin, feel her sensations, understand how her backstory motivates her, adopt her deepest desires, and feel frustrated by her blind spots. Take all that to the manuscript page: you're ready to begin.

### STARTING IN SCENE: A CASE STUDY IN BRIDGING CONFLICT

Action, exposition, setting, dialogue, a carefully chosen point of view—a scene has everything you need to invest your character in her own tale. (Note I didn't say “hook your reader.” If you can convince your character that *she* must fully commit to her journey, it's likely your reader will follow.)

The story won't really start cooking until the incident that incites your character to set a story goal, as that will launch her trajectory through the story. Let's try to think of a scene that will impel your character toward that moment, while raising questions about the story to come—a “bridging conflict.”

Playing around in your journal pages, you decide that your protagonist, Bonnie, takes “Sketching for Beginners” because one day she wants to see her work hanging in the Louvre. The reader knows this goal is achieved by only a

select few. And it's so far-off—Bonnie is already 40 and may not live to see the day. We don't know why she desires it, or what the stakes are if she doesn't make it. Worse, neither does Bonnie.

Well, shoot: turns out Bonnie is having trouble investing in her own story. How can we goose her along—and win the reader's investment along the way?

### WITH THIS GUIDING IMAGE: A BRIDGE IS STRONGEST WHEN IT SPANS A SHORT GAP.

#### 1. CLUE US IN ON PERSONAL STAKES SHOULD YOUR PROTAGONIST FAIL.

Maybe Bonnie's father, who just died, was an artist and she wants to uphold the family name. A memorial exhibition will go on tour next year and she is desperate to have a piece in that show.

#### 2. CREATE A GOAL THAT IS CLOSE TO BEING MET.

Maybe Bonnie is already technically accomplished, but is floundering for the right approach. Add a ticking clock: If she fails to come up with a good idea she'll miss out—not only on the opportunity to contribute to her father's tribute, but also to gain the spotlight that could establish her as his heir apparent in the national arts scene.

#### 3. CAN YOU ADD PUBLIC STAKES AND FURTHER TIGHTEN THE GAP? DO IT.

Maybe Bonnie not only promised the work, she underwrote the tour, and publicity has already gone out featuring its name, “The Colors of my Father.” And the show is next month, not next year—yet still Bonnie stands before a blank white canvas. She'll be a laughing stock. Her father was right—she shouldn't have spent her life curating his work if she planned to be an artist in her own right; she should have been painting.

### 4. CREATE RELEVANT PLOT COMPLICATIONS AND THEN MAKE THINGS HAPPEN.

Yes, even in these opening, getting-to-know-you pages, we need more than your well-researched exposition on how one learns to paint. Readers can spot fake story like teens smell hypocrisy, so you'll need real complications. If Bonnie wants to honor her father with a painting, show how her best attempt neither exudes her father's passion nor adequately expresses her love for him. Even better, have this judgement delivered by someone whose esteem Bonnie values—her father's good friend, who heads up the museum's board of directors maybe—and time is running out.

### 5. BARREL TOWARD THE INCITING INCIDENT.

What better complication can you introduce than the one that will launch the story you plan to tell? Bring on the antagonist and let's get this party started! Perhaps he's planning a huge heist of her father's paintings at the museum where she's worked as a curator. Once that happens, Bonnie will sweep away her initial goal—who cares about one painting from a middling artist, when saving the entire body of her father's work is like extending his presence on Earth? Maybe her emotional arc will offer the awareness that she didn't need to be “daddy junior” after all, since only her insider info can crack this case—her previously belittled talents as a curator reflect her truer nature and save the day.

Do you now have a sense of who Bonnie is, what her values are, what her life questions are, and what she needs? Good. Use that to drive her pursuit of her goal in the first scene, coloring between the lines with only the most evocative details from your journaling.

At the end of your opening bridge, both Bonnie and your reader will understand the dilemma she brings to the inciting heist: how can she best use her artistic talent to honor her beloved father's legacy?

Then write your draft. In the end, when you circle back around, that scene where you “started” might just be pretty close to your true opening after all.



**Kathryn Craft**, the WFWA 2020 Guiding Scribe and a member of the award-winning marketing collective of women authors, Tall Poppy Writers, is the author of novels *The Art of Falling* and *The Far End of Happy*, and chapters in *Author in Progress* and *The Complete Handbook of Novel Writing* from Writers Digest Books. Her 13 years as a freelance developmental editor inform her monthly posts at Writer UnBoxed. [www.kathryncraft.com](http://www.kathryncraft.com)

# Plan Your Marketing **PARTY**

By Mindy Stockfield

In publishing, there is a secret to heightening your success as a debut author—if you are willing to give it your attention now.

The secret is this: market your first book as you write it. Few emerging authors properly contemplate the marketing and promotion needed for success. Their focus is usually on finishing the book. But this is your moment to gain a head start, and it's not as complicated as you may think. Here's a trick: don't think of it as marketing. Re-imagine it as a fabulous party. You simply need to provide some basic direction in order to encourage people to show up. Here are four simple exercises to kick it off:

## **CHOOSE A PARTY THEME.**

Your book has a theme—so should your party. That theme will form a connection with your readers and entice them to show up to your party. It will also help you define your target audience and enable you to have your readers in mind as you write.

Think about the type of person who will want or need the message you are about to share. Look at the emotional journey you're taking your protagonist(s) on and determine what values, attitudes, interests, and opinions a reader interested in this journey might have. Focus on psychographic details rather than demographic.

Also look at which elements from other genres you're incorporating into your story—whether it is mystery, suspense, science, romance, or historical. Sometimes it feels easier to simply classify your work as literary

or commercial, but readers connect with your theme, purpose, and characters, so it's worth taking the extra time to dig deeper. Your audience definition should also describe the content they consume including other books, television shows, or podcasts.

Your protagonist's traits are another way to connect with your readers. Will they relate to someone who is divorced or a single parent? Will your protagonist be someone your readers aspire to as they work to solve an impossible crime? As part of this exercise, pull out examples from the words you have written in your manuscript that will capture your reader's attention. These will become great quotes to use later on for submissions and especially marketing materials. Finally, fill in the blank: My readers will want to read this book because \_\_\_\_\_.

## FEATURE

### CREATE YOUR GUEST LIST.

Make a list of every person who has touched your life or who you have touched in some way. You can and should invite everybody. I am serious about this. Write down every name and categorize them into how you know them so you can have it nicely organized for seating arrangements.

- Job contacts
- Volunteer work
- College friends and relationships
- Organizations
- Family and friend circles

If you don't have specific names, outline every outlet with which you have a connection. If you feel your list is looking short, add the people you *should* know. Research your local librarian, bookstore, newspaper, radio personality, and regional magazine. Find their names and add them to the list.

### SEND THE INVITATIONS.

Now that you have your guest list, reconnect with these friends, former colleagues, and family and form new connections with those on your list you have yet to meet. Reach out. People want to hear from you. Thank your guests for being part of your life or community in some way and welcome them into your world as an author. Tell them you are writing a book. Share why your writing is important to you and how reading helps you when you need it most. Be thoughtful and recommend books by other authors. Build these relationships. People are listening and responsive in this current climate. They are craving emotional connectivity. Use that to your advantage.

### There are many creative ways you can approach these connections.

■ **Print cards.** Consider making your annual holiday card about your writing journey. Or tap into another holiday that connects with the theme of your book. If your theme relates to mothers, send a Mother's Day card, or if it contains romantic elements send something around Valentine's Day. Create your own greeting cards with your own words. (Vista Print offers many low-cost options.)

■ **Digital Message.** Paperless Post has beautiful, free options for large digital mailings. This is a great option for some of those other media moments such as National Autism Awareness month, National Pet Day, etc.

■ **Social Media.** Even if you are still trying to navigate how to tweet, post, share, or create something "Instagram-worthy," you can follow and connect with your new guest list on social media. You don't have to be a social media pro to start. Take the time to set this all up now. I promise this simple

step of inviting people will result in them returning your gesture and following you—thus building your social media audience early. In addition, the WFWA website has many resources to help you work on other forms of digital outreach to expand your readership.

### PUT ON YOUR PARTY HAT.

As an author, you have assumed an expertise you may not have realized. Now it is time to put on that hat and let the world know. To start, look at the premise or larger message of your book. This message is now the seed to your future platform. While it can take time to build yourself into an expert, you have a narrative that can be used to define a greater role for yourself. Your story may be based on a life event. Your character may have an occupation in your current or prior career field. Your message may lean into a deeper personal experience such as re-invention or starting over. Sometimes your message is the reason WHY you wrote the book. This is the hat you will now wear as an author and the beginning of how people will begin to connect with not only your first book, but also you and your future books.

### DEBUT AUTHOR MARKETING CHECKLIST:

#### Define Your Reader

- Write down psychographic information for your reader.
- Define why they will want to read your book.
- Copy quotes from your manuscript that will connect with your reader.

#### Identify Your Following

- Write a guest list of everyone who has become part of your life in some way.
- Write your dream list of guests.
- Write which people you will want to invite in the future.

#### Connect with Your Following

- Send a printed card at the right moment.
- Leverage digital sources to reach a wider audience.
- Follow your "guests" on social media.

#### Message/Expertise

- Define your expertise based on the premise of your book.
- Write a new bio to reflect your knowledge

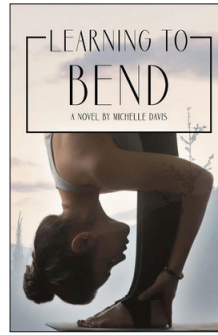


**Mindy Stockfield** has held senior positions in publishing, entertainment, and media with a focus on marketing and digital media. She has led critical launches for a number of new and culture-defining initiatives utilizing some of the latest approaches in digital and social media. Coming fresh from working several years at Scholastic as Senior Vice President of Marketing, Creative, and Digital, she has driven A-list publishing brands and helped build the careers of emerging authors. Prior to Scholastic, she held senior roles at MTV, Disney, and Cartoon Network. In addition to her consulting practice, she is an Adjunct Professor at NYU and teaches at The Writing Institute at Sarah Lawrence College.

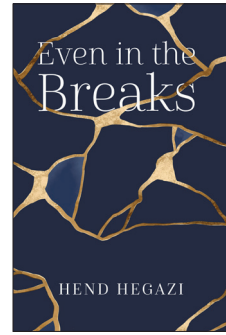
# MEMBER RELEASES



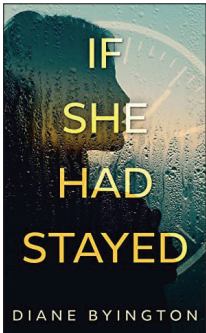
**DONNA KOROS STRAMELLA**  
Coffee Killed My Mother  
1/23/20



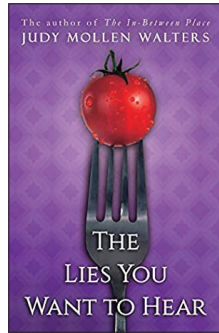
**MICHELLE DAVIS**  
Learning to Bend  
2/10/20



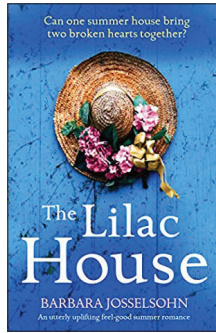
**HEND HEGAZI**  
Even in the Breaks  
2/16/20



**DIANE BYINGTON**  
If She Had Stayed  
2/17/20



**JUDY WALTERS**  
The Lies You Want to Hear  
2/25/20



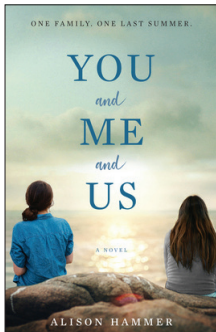
**BARBARA JOSSELSOHN**  
The Lilac House  
3/13/20



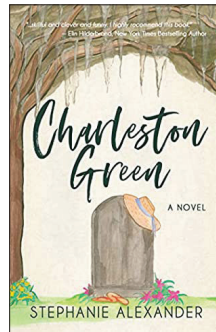
**JOANNE EASLEY**  
Sweet Jane  
3/19/20



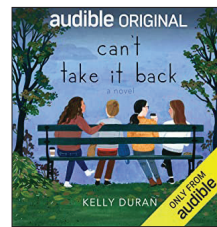
**JAE HODGES**  
The Rose and the Whip  
3/25/20



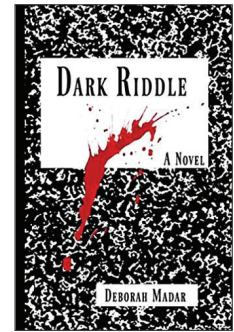
**ALISON HAMMER**  
You and Me and Us  
4/7/2020



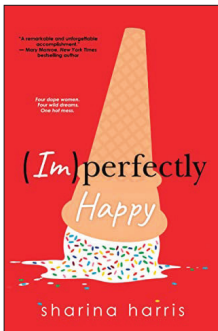
**STEPHANIE ALEXANDER**  
Charleston Green  
4/14/20



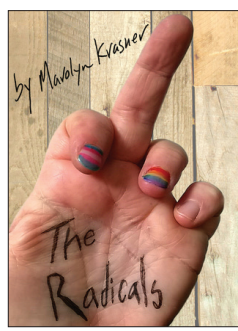
**KELLY DURAN**  
Can't Take It Back  
4/16/20



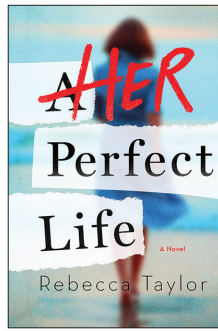
**DEBORAH MADAR**  
Dark Riddle  
4/17/20



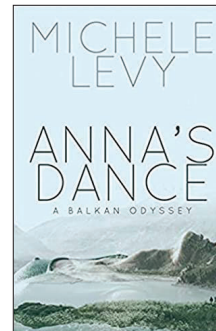
**SHARINA HARRIS**  
(Im)perfectly Happy  
4/28/20



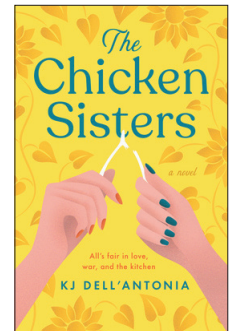
**MAROLYN KRASNER**  
The Radicals  
5/1/20



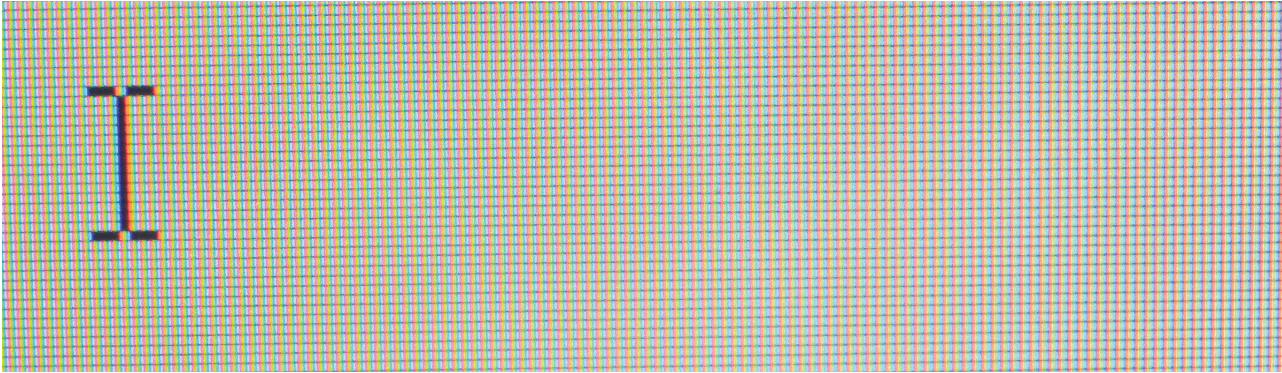
**REBECCA TAYLOR**  
Her Perfect Life  
6/2/20



**MICHELE LEVY**  
Anna's Dance: A Balkan Odyssey  
6/25/20



**KJ DELL'ANTONIA**  
The Chicken Sisters  
6/30/20



## HOW TO START A SENTENCE

When it comes to beginnings, grammar books often have something to say about what to do (and especially what NOT to do) when starting a sentence. Here are some considerations that prioritize a writer's rhetorical purpose rather than the application of prescriptive rules.

### CONJUNCTIONS AT THE BEGINNING OF SENTENCES

If you ask a prescriptivist whether or not you can start a sentence with a conjunction, chances are they will say you cannot. However, there are too many instances where both prescriptively and more rhetorically speaking, you would be perfectly fine to start a sentence with one.

Strictly speaking, a conjunction (as the name implies) brings together two elements. They can be, for instance, nouns (e.g. apples *and* oranges), they can be independent clauses (e.g. I like apples. You like oranges/ I like apples, *and* you like oranges) or an independent clause and a subordinate clause (e.g. I ate the apple *although* I would have preferred an orange.)

Notice that in the case of a subordinating conjunction (e.g. before, although, while), all it takes is for you to invert the order of the clauses (subordinate first), and you will be perfectly fine to start a sentence with a conjunction (e.g. *Although* I would have preferred an orange, I ate the apple).

Additionally, with correlative conjunctions, starting the sentence with one of them is actually more common than not (e.g. *Either* you buy an orange, *or* you will have to eat the apple).

Your best guide to whether to start a sentence with a conjunction or not is to adopt a rhetorical grammar. What this kind of grammar suggests is

that you let your goal be your guide. What is your reason for starting with a conjunction? Even with coordinating conjunctions, the ones prescriptivists usually frown upon, there are many times when contextual reasons make it preferable that you use them to start a sentence, clause, or phrase.

### SEE THIS EXAMPLE:

Anita didn't even want to start thinking about cleaning the house. She would have to do the dishes. *And* dry them afterward. *And* clean the carpets. *And* mop the floors. *And* if that wasn't enough, she would have to look presentable by the time the guests arrived.

You feel her tiredness and lack of motivation more vividly because of the repeated use of "and." The stop-and-go pattern adds to the content here, and to avoid it simply to abide by "conjunction rules," could be counterproductive.

**A note on punctuation:** If you invert the order of the clauses, putting the subordinate one ahead of the independent clause, you should signal it by using a comma between them. Therefore,

e.g. I ate the apple *although* I would have preferred an orange (direct order = no comma).

# GRAMMAR LIGHT

## BUT

e.g. *Although* I would have preferred an orange, I ate the apple.

Be aware that a comma cannot separate the subject from its verb.

Therefore,

e.g. I bought an apple, *and* I found an orange (because these are two clauses joined together by the conjunction).

## BUT

e.g. I bought an apple *and* found an orange (because the same “I” is the subject of both verbs).

## ADVERBIAL CLAUSES THAT START A SENTENCE

Another important consideration is how to start a sentence with an adverb or adverbial clause. The unmarked position for an adverb of time, place, or manner (e.g. yesterday, everywhere, efficiently) is at the end of the clause/sentence. Therefore,

e.g. I arrived *yesterday*.

e.g. I travel *everywhere*.

e.g. I work *efficiently*.

The same goes for adverbial clauses. Therefore,

e.g. I arrived *after you had left*.

e.g. I travel *wherever I please*.

e.g. I work *like a horse*.

When you move the adverb/adverbial clause to the beginning of the sentence, you usually have a very good rhetorical reason for doing so, and you signal to the reader that the position of the adverb is communicating something.

e.g. *Yesterday*, I arrived late (as opposed to today when I arrived on time).

e.g. *Like a traveler seeing her home for the first time in years*, she wept (the comparison becomes highlighted and evident because of its position).

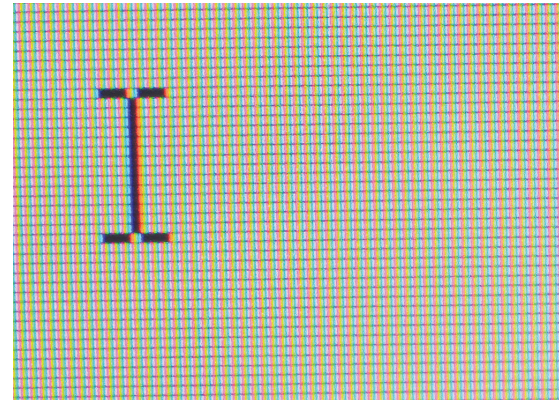
Usually, when the adverb/adverbial clause is moved to the beginning of the sentence, it will be separated from what comes next by a comma (I just did it here). However, there is a school of thought that proposes that, if the adverb/adverbial clause is shorter than three words, the comma is optional. Therefore,

e.g. *Tomorrow* I will travel.

## BUT

e.g. *After the storm has passed*, I will travel.

If you prefer this way of doing things, remember to stay consistent, and always consider that purpose drives form.



**YOUR BEST GUIDE TO WHETHER TO START A SENTENCE WITH A CONJUNCTION OR NOT IS TO ADOPT A RHETORICAL GRAMMAR. WHAT THIS KIND OF GRAMMAR SUGGESTS IS THAT YOU LET YOUR GOAL BE YOUR GUIDE.**

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## WENDY GOLD ROSSI

### WFWA'S GOOD LITTLE WITCH AND OUR OFFICIAL CHEERLEADER



I'm just so chuffed (I love that word) to be selected for this. I love WFWA. I've wanted to be more involved for a long time. While it's a crazy time for many of us, I find that I have the mental bandwidth to give back now. So, I am.

With gratitude,  
Wendy Rossi

When WFWA put out a call for someone to take over the annual February WOW challenge, Wendy Rossi raised her hand, even though she felt it may be a juggle with her work schedule. Wendy went above and beyond her volunteer job and created one of the best WOW challenge communities in WFWA history. When she was asked to help transform WOW to Wribbles, our online social club to support members during the pandemic, she said yes without a second thought. She has been leading and cheering the community while working remotely and managing her own life and family. And she kindly granted us an interview, so please enjoy three questions with Wendy Rossi:

# 1

#### Why did you pick good little witch for your email address?

I wanted it to somehow be memorable and have to do with my first name, Wendy. Mind you, there were a lot of available email addresses back in 1994 when I selected it. First, I picked PeterPanBud, because, you know, Wendy, Peter Pan's buddy. But it just didn't feel right. I chose GoodLittleWitch right after and it has become almost an alter ego. I enjoy it. It makes strangers giggle. And it sort of ties to my interest in herbalism and reverence of nature.

# 2

#### What do you want members who are unable to concentrate and write know?

This too shall pass. As creatives, we're sensitive to things, often more so than others around us. That can be used to our advantage when we dig deep and examine the feelings of our fictional characters, but it's a double-edged sword. We can also be paralyzed by our own depth of feeling. As corny as it might sound, I do two things: I try really, really hard to keep things in perspective. And I also "fake it till I make it." That's kept me going on my first novel for over five years.

# 3

#### What are you writing and how do you find focus?

I'm writing my first work of fiction and have been told by every writing teacher I've had in the past five years (and several published, award-winning friends) that it's a really ambitious book. It's a dual-timeline, dual-POV novel. The main story takes place in late 1969 through around 1972. The backstory is woven in and takes place from 1941-1944. But it's not a WWII book. You'll have to wait until it's an actual book to find out how it turns out. I'm still writing it. I had a lot of setbacks with focus. I give myself permission to not write when what I'm writing comes out like crap. When the story is still churning in my head, but the words won't come through my fingers. So, I stop. And I let the story percolate some more. Then, some days, weeks, or months later (in one case a year), I come back to it and keep going.

**Did you know WFWA is 100% run by volunteers?** That means every WFWA program, newsletter, event, resource and benefit you enjoy is put together by your fellow members on their own time.

# COLOR AWAY YOUR STRESS!

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*Lydia P*

You don't have to  
be great to get started,  
but you have to get  
started to be great.

— LES BROWN

