

WRITER'S INK

THE WRITER'S WORKSHOP OF

BLOOMINGDALE

NOVEMBER 2008

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Our November workshops will be on November 8th and November 22nd, from 9:00 a.m. until noon.

Format rules are: Minimum, 12-pt. font and double spaced with one-inch margins on all sides.

Information about the 2009 Inside Writing and Publishing series of seminars will be available on the Dec/Jan Bloomingdale Library newsletter. Go to www.mybpl.org. Click on "about the library" and then "library newsletter", starting in December if you cannot make it to the library for a brochure. The brochures should be available in December.

SIMILE SPOTLIGHT

"McIntire spotted Arnie Johnson headed in his direction, threading his way through the crowd **like a trout swimming upstream.**"

"Mia watched the skinny shoulders (**alliteration**) disappear into the crowd, which parted **like the Red Sea** for his passing."

"The engine roared and the wagon trembled **like a spirited horse eager to charge across field and forest leaping everything in its path.**"

This novel is set in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Notice the author's use of nature in her simile vocabulary.

Source:

Hills, Kathleen, Hunter's Dance, Mystery Worldwide Library, 2006, pp. 8, 20 and 49 respectively.

HYPERBOLE

(Pronounce all four syllables.)

"Hyperbole is a statement that exaggerates in order to impress (it is used in comedy as well):

✚ It must have snowed for about forty days straight.

✚ There were a million people at your party."

Source:

Glatthorn, Allan A., Willa F. Spicer, 1983, The Young Writer's Handbook, Science Research Associates, Inc., p. 49.

THOSE CONFUSING COMMAS

“Use a comma to set off informal, direct quotations:

- ✚ “Wherever I am needed,” declared the volunteer, “there I will gladly go.”
- ✚ The doctor remarked, “I haven’t seen many cases like yours as yet this season.”
- ✚ “Let us reason together,” I urged.

Note that no comma is needed in an indirect quotation:

- ✚ The supervisor told us that all chronic absenteeism would not be tolerated.
- ✚ We asked what the price for the larger refrigerator would be during Saturday’s sale.
- ✚ Experience has shown how best to manage exit interviews.

Source:

Shertzer, Margaret, 1986, The Elements of Grammar, Collier Books, p. 87.

CAN YOU HAIKU?

Matsuo Basho (1644-1694)

“Basho the seeker”

In the last nine years of his life, Basho is credited with reinventing the haiku form, transforming it into one of the great lyric

forms in human culture. Examples of his poems are:

The whitebait
opens its black eye
in the net of the law.

A crow
has settled on a bare branch—
autumn evening.

The crane’s legs
Have gotten shorter
In the spring rain.

(Haikus are always about nature. Please note that the syllabic count—17 syllables--is lost in the translations.)

Source:

Hass, Robert, Editor. 1994. The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson & Issa. Harper Collins Publishers, pp. 3, 11, and 13.

COLUMN TWO PERSONALS

Congratulations to John Flaherty, a member who won third place in the *Emerging Writers’ Short Story Contest* for his “BUMS” short story. The contest is sponsored by the Center for the Book, State of Illinois. It was critiqued by the Bloomingdale workshop earlier this year.

How to Snag a Literary Agent

Any of us who have gone through the effort of sending our work to those few publishers who accept unsolicited manuscripts or query letters or one-page synopses, may often wonder if anyone ever gets anything accepted.

In the January issue of *Poets and Patrons*, Literary Journal, Sandra Hurtes wrote an article titled “Calling All Agents”. She started off by saying that there are a few publishers out there willing to accept unsolicited work but not many. Most publishers now rely on the keen eyes of the literary agent to preview material. As stated in my previous article in our October 2008 monthly newsletter, *Writer’s Ink*, Editor Steven Cory of the *Georgia Review* said he has received over 270,000 pieces in the last 25 years and most were pretty bad.

So it appears that if we wish to get published, we are probably going to have to find an agent to represent us to publishers. In Sandra Hurtes’ article, she tells how to attract a potential agent’s attention.

One of the things is to be able to mention in our query letter a common connection. For example, someone in the field who has made a nice comment about your work. The literary business, and it is a business, is built on relationships. The agent, after all, has to be able to get the publisher’s ear so they might consider your work. Their connections are vital for their success in the publishing world.

You can start by going to writers’ conferences and talk to authors that you

have read and, hopefully, write in your style. Introduce yourself and try to get to know them. Tell them you are an unpublished writer. Have a one-sentence synopsis of your stories memorized so you can blurt it out if asked what you write about. Record what they say. Then when you approach an agent, mention the authors by name and the fact that they said nice things about your work. (Don’t lie but only mention the ones with positive comments.) If you have had a teacher who liked your work, mention that as well. Even if you have had rejections but the reviewer said something nice about your work, mention that to the prospective agent.

Another way to get started is to go after the Literary Journals. Get your short works published in these journals, or even in newspapers, and refer to them when talking to the agents. You might even get a phone call from an agent who has read your material in a newspaper or journal, asking about your other work. It is tough to get published in prestigious newspapers, but if you do, it is a good start. Also, try the smaller community newspapers; generally it is easier to get accepted.

There are several ways to find agents. One way is to go to the various listings in the published Writers Guides. Books like Jeff Herman’s Guide to Book Publishers, Editors, and Literary Agents, published annually by Three Dog Press; Writer’s Markets, published annually by Writer’s Digest Books; or Writer’s Handbook, published annually by Kalmbach Publishing Co. These and other similar books are available in libraries. You can search for other titles by searching the Internet with the keywords, “Writers’ Guides”. You might

also find the names of agents in the flyleaf of a published book. If an author writes in your style, be sure you mention this in your query letter to the agent.

When you send query letters to prospective agents, be sure to follow the published guidelines that apply to them. Most just want a simple letter describing your work with very little detail. You can find the agents guidelines on their website, or in one of the author guides. Follow the published guidelines and do not send the prospective agent your manuscripts unless they specifically ask for them. Do not send the material through the post office if they ask for e-mail submissions. Conversely, do not send via the Internet if they ask for postal submissions.

Remember, this is a buyer's market. There are thousands of aspiring writers these days so you have lots of competition. Have faith in your work; be persistent and you will make it!

John J. Flaherty

Source:

Hurtes, Sandra, "Calling All Agents." *Poets and Writers*, V36:1, Jan/Feb, 2008.



HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

From Mary Ann Lufkin
malufkin@comcast.net



Writers Workshop of Bloomingdale
2007-2008 all rights reserved. Materials
here are the property of the author(s).