

Topics by Speaker – 2020 Cedar Falls Christian Writers Workshop

Shelly Beach

Opening Session: When Do You Call Yourself a Writer?

Writing, like anything else we do in life, must be learned. This means we must give ourselves permission to be beginners, to fail, to make mistakes, to not be as good as people who started the process long before us. Every other writer has gone through the same process.

So, when do you call yourself a writer? When you're willing to jump in and learn the trade. When you're willing to accept feedback and make mistakes. When you can't wait to learn the next thing about your craft. If you've failed and are still writing, if you've learned from a stinging critique and moved ahead, if you've stuck with it in spite of your fear of failure...then you're a writer! Welcome!

Skills that Separate the Men from the Boys: Active and Passive Voice, Dangling Modifiers, Citation, Attributions, and other Fun Stuff

One of the most important skills in writing is knowing how and when to write in active voice. Editors immediately flag passive voice and dangling modifiers as signs of weak writing. Attendees will learn how to identify passive voice sentences and rewrite them in active voice. They will also learn how to identify dangling modifiers and integrate them correctly into sentences.

Many authors are also unsure when to cite sources and how to do it. This session will teach writers when to cite sources and the most popular formats to use when doing so.

From Oral to Written

Many pastors and teachers are interested in publishing their sermons or lessons. However, it can be very difficult to make materials that were created to be delivered to audiences orally effective in written format. This session presents some techniques, strategies, and recalibrations that must be made to make an effective transition from oral communication to written format.

Save the Cat! Fiction Format Effective fiction delivers a compelling plot amid the main character's journey of personal transformation during their dramatic crisis. The Save the Cat! fiction format is a 15-beat (section) structure for creating A Story (events) and B Story (character transformation). The structure is the same as the 15 beats used to structure all screenplays. Learning the Save the Cat! format helps fiction writers understand both the important role of character transformation while showing how to achieve it through plotting.

Closing Session: Becoming Unstoppable

Successful writers are unstoppable. No matter their circumstances, they continue writing. How do we achieve this mindset? Six virtues or mindsets can help us become unstoppable. Shelly talks about these characteristics and how they have played a role in her writing over the years. With the appropriate mindset, every writer has the ability to become unstoppable!

Mary Potter Kenyon

Have You Googled Yourself Lately?

Do a google search of "Mary Potter Kenyon" and thousands of results pop up, the majority of the first several pages related to the author in some way. Just as an employer might google the name of a prospective employee, you can bet an agent, editor, or publisher is googling yours when you approach them for representation or to consider your work. So how does a writer make sure their name appears in an

online search? Mary isn't famous and has never appeared on the New York Times bestseller list, so why does her name appear so frequently, including a Redbook magazine and four Reader's Digest appearances in 2019? You don't have to have half a dozen books published before you begin cultivating an online presence. Mary will share tips and insider secrets, along with concrete examples of getting your name "out there" before and after your book is published.

Blackout Poetry (optional creative activity during consultation times)

You don't have to be a poet to create a poem. It's time to turn out the lights and grab a flashlight while you work on "Blackout Poetry." Not really; no flashlight needed. Blackout Poetry focuses on circling and arranging words that are already on a page of previously published work, such as a newspaper section or book page. The practice entails using a permanent marker to cross out or eliminate words, keeping those words you choose. Author Austin Kleon hit on the technique as a way of overcoming writer's block, working with copies of *The New York Times*. His resulting blackout poems posted on his blog led to the release of his first book, *Newspaper Blackout*. Search the page of text, emphasizing chosen words by blacking out the ones around them. It's not necessary to actually read the page before you cross out words since the idea is to create a new work, your blackout poem.

Divine Inspiration

Inspirational presentation on reconnecting with your innate creative side. Includes a brief overview of pertinent creativity research and eight ways to tap into the power of the miraculous to collaborate with God.

Jean Vaux

Faith Writing Mastermind

Spring boarding from Mary's Divine Inspiration session, Jean will share a method of communing with God and discerning his voice. We will engage in a small groups mastermind sharing our approaches to writing about faith and transformation. This session is not about getting your writing out into the world, but getting the message out of you, as you hear and express The Master's Mind.

Sue Schuerman

Praying with the Elements

Being present to the gifts of creation helps to give us insight into paths for our spiritual growth and into ways in which God is present in us. Water, wind, earth and fire each offer ways of understanding the sacred. Join Sue in a prayerful walk outside as we respond to what God is revealing to us through the natural elements.

Wanda Sanchez

Grow Your Platform through Social Media

Learn foundational social media strategies for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram that will help you multiply your numbers, engage targeted readers, expand your audience, and grow your platform. These strategies translate to other social media platforms. Bring your computer as we put what we learn into practice.

Maribeth Boelts

One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, YOU Fish!

Do you have an original idea for a children's book but feel unsure about how to get started? Or maybe you have a finished manuscript but don't know how or where to submit it? Writing for children is a unique adventure. Local author of 35 published children's books will share her firsthand knowledge and industry insight to help you along your journey. You will learn about idea generation, manuscript creation, children's book formats, potential markets, and what to expect should a publisher accept your manuscript.

Gail Kittleson

Researching Fictional Characters

Discovering important facts and trivial ones about our heroines and heroes can be a daunting task, and the single most significant factor in our search is ATTITUDE. We must be relentless, as if searching for hidden treasure. By reading widely about the setting and plot points, we may discover far more than we could have imagined.

How to Stress Out Your Reader

Regardless of having a great plot and characters, a story goes nowhere without the element of tension. Learn the difference between tension and conflict and the four areas to create or increase tension in writing fiction.

Anne Fleck

Scrivener: Software for the Writing Process

Scrivener is software for the writing process that offers solutions for an author's stickiest problems. It simplifies revising, re-ordering, cataloguing research, and storing character sketches. It also makes meeting deadlines and tracking progress easier. Beginners will learn the basics of Scrivener, while intermediate and advanced users can come with questions about how to get the most out of their favorite writing software.

The First Three Chapters: More than Exciting

The first three chapters of a manuscript need to "grab the reader." But what does that mean? Every story can't start with a gun fight, and sometimes even that isn't enough to get readers, editors, and publishers interested. In this workshop, fiction and memoir writers will learn to use the first chapters to lay a foundation for their story and get readers invested, even if there are no explosions.

Kim Harms

Writing Devotions that Sell

In this talk, we will walk through the steps of writing quality devotions that will catch the eyes of acquisition teams. Kim will provide submission information for a number of organizations that accept and publish non-solicited devotions (some paying, some non-paying.) Her devotions have been published in The Upper Room, The Secret Place, Devotions.us, Devokids, Keys for Kids, Chicken Soup for the Soul: Devotional Stories for Wives and a devotional booklet published by Christianity Today. Writing devotions is a great way to break into the world of published writing, and it can lead to bigger things.

The Self-Motivated Writer

Finding success as a writer is nearly impossible if you are not self-motivated. Kim will provide tips and resources for becoming self-motivated as well as share her story of moving from newspaper reporter, to writing devotions, to magazine writer to agented author.

Doug Shaw

Social Nonsense: Collaborative Creativity to light a spark

Collaborative writing and storytelling can inspire authors and non-authors alike, often unlocking surprising truths, and showing people they are more creative than they thought they were. In this workshop, we will play some fun writing and storytelling games, you will have cool stuff to take home that was made by all of us, or none of us, depending on your point of view. We'll also laugh, feel satisfaction out of proportion to what we actually did, stumble on truths, and maybe wind up doing this again when next we meet. Outside of this conference, these activities are great for any time people are together and their hands are moving dangerously close to their phones.