



The Report

FALL 2017

#weareowfi

owfi.org

OWFI Report, Fall 2017

In This Issue

- 3 Letter From the President
- 4 2018 Conference volunteer & support opportunities
- 5 Interview with Cathy Collar, the 2017 Creme de la Creme winner
- 6 2018 Conference information—speakers and registration
- 8 Social Media: Productive or Procrastination?
- 9 How to Build an Author Platform
- 10 Affiliate Spotlight: the Oklahoma City Writers
- 11 2018 Contest Rules
- 13 2018 Contest Categories
- 18 Watching Your Language

The Report is the newsletter of the Oklahoma Writers' Federation, Inc., and is published three times per year. Submission guidelines are available upon request and questions or submissions should be directed to the newsletter editor.

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OWFI is a non-profit federation of writers' groups dedicated to promoting higher standards for the written word.

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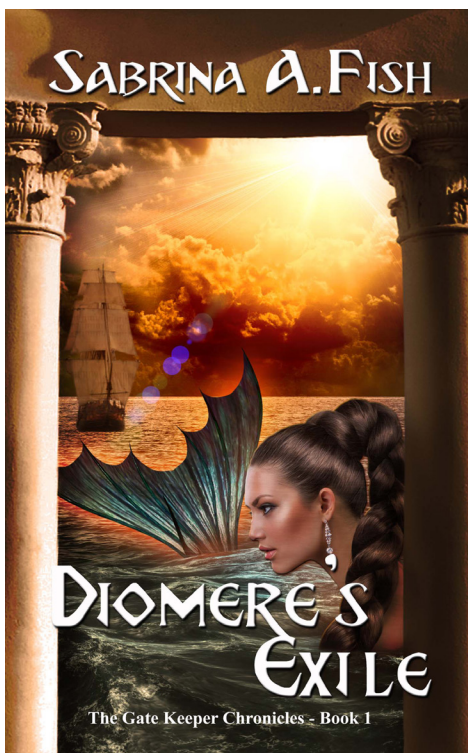
It's time to renew
your membership!
New rates this year:
\$30 for members
at large and
\$25 for affiliate
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Visit www.owfi.org today!

From the President

If you're as serious about being a professional writer as I am, you'll do what's necessary.

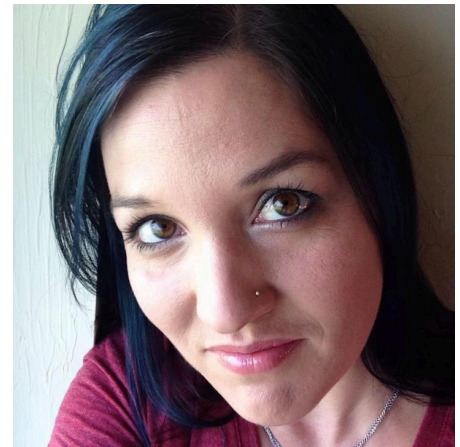
Hello OWFI! Has anyone else looked at the upcoming holiday season with a mixture of anticipation and dismay? Anticipation because...holiday activities & parties, yummy food, and seeing family you only get to see once a year. Dismay because...too many activities, too much food, and interruption of writing time. If you're nodding your head yes, know that I am right there with you. So in this article, I'm going to talk about how to make progress on your current project (Or OWFI contest entry prep, *wink, wink*) despite distractions.

I'm currently working on the sequel to my recent release, *Diomere's Exile*, which is



book one of five in a series. My goal is to publish one book a year. So this book has to be done by the end of this year in order to make that goal a reality. (Note: I did this same thing to myself last year during the holiday season and succeeded in meeting my goal, so I know it's possible!) Here are a few things that I did, and will be doing, to reach my goal.

1. Make a schedule. If you've ever heard me speak or really known me very long at all, you'll know that I'm a list fanatic! And a schedule is really just a glorified list, isn't it?! So make a schedule AND INCLUDE YOUR WRITING TIME IN THAT SCHEDULE! For reals, folks. If you're serious about this writing thing like I am, then schedule in that writing time and don't allow it to be sidelined, though it may have to be a shortened writing time on days when other activities are planned.
2. Adjust your weekly word count goals to give yourself more flexibility for those holiday activities. Usually it means lowering the daily goal. This does two things for me: A) I ensure that meeting my goal is attainable so I don't feel the utter disappointment of failure at the end of the week. B) I have a realistic view for when I can expect my project to be finished.
3. Be prepared to pass on any unnecessary events. Missing deadlines can have serious negative consequences for your writing. If a deadline is looming and you're running behind, you may just have to miss one of those holiday events you really want to attend. So use that thought as incentive! I love spending the day at the fairgrounds during the fall Affair of the Heart. It isn't something I have to do, but just something I like to do. So, this year, one of the consequences for being behind my deadline will be missing that event. Talk about some incentive. *stretches fingers*



4. Look at the things you do that cut into your potential writing time: TV, daily social outings, reading. I'm not saying get rid of these things, but if you're really trying to make a deadline like I am, limiting these things down to an hour a day or less for the holiday season could garner you HOURS of extra time. I'm a social butterfly, but social outings with friends were one of the first things that I limited when I became serious about my writing. Sorry friends! I already don't watch much TV, but I read voraciously, sometimes for hours. During the holiday season, I'll be cutting this down to an hour at bedtime. (My heart just gave a painful thump.)

So there you go. I hope my little list helps you beat the distraction of the holiday season. If you're as serious about being a professional writer as I am, you'll do what's necessary. If not, well, enjoy the Affair of the Heart for me, won't you?!

Sabrina Fish is the OWFI President for 2017-2018.

The 2018 OWFI Conference needs YOU!

OWFI's Banquet Table's Reservations

There is a MAJOR CHANGE in TABLE RESERVATIONS this year!

- All table reservations will be made ONLINE ONLY.
- Reservations will open online on Nov 1, 2017.
- The maximum number of tables a group or individual may reserve is a total of TWO.
- Table reservations are \$20 per table, per night.
- You do not need to reserve a table to be seated at the banquet.
- You may want to reserve a table if you have several people in your group who wish to sit together.
- For questions or more info please contact vck@cox.net

OWFI Contest Category Sponsorship

Please help Sponsor an OWFI Contest Category.
All contributions are sincerely appreciated.

- Full sponsorship for each unpublished category is \$105, and \$55 for partial sponsorship.
- Full sponsorships for the trophy awards for the published categories are \$60.
- Full sponsorship for The Crème de la Crème category is \$500.
- The CDLC category also has a trophy sponsorship of \$70.
- The group or individual sponsoring the Crème de la Crème category receives one free banquet table, front and center, for both nights.
- Sponsorships can be made online beginning Nov. 1, 2017.
- You can snail-mail sponsorships at any time.
- Make checks payable to: OWFI

Mail to: Contest Category Sponsorship Chair
vickey malone kennedy
721 East Boyd Street
Norman, OK 73071

- List your top 3 category choices on a separate paper—not on the check.
- Include your contact information.
- Please indicate if the sponsorship is in honor or memory of someone.
- For questions or more info contact vck@cox.net

2018 Conference Committee Chairs

We rely on our volunteers to help make our conference a success. If you want to join us—and make some great friends while you're at it—check out our list of Committee Chairs below. You can email them or you can contact our Conference Chair if you have any additional questions.

Shepherd Chair
Eric Reitan,
eric.reitan@okstate.edu

Pitch Room Chair
Traci Schafer,
traci1@hotmail.com

Registration Chair
CJ Miles

Basket Wars Chair
Jayleen Mayes

Buzz Sessions Chair
Ruth Weeks ,
witchywoman2@sbcglobal.net

Scholarships Chair
Myloe Yaeger

Contest Sponsorships Chair
Vickey Kennedy,
vck@cox.net

Banquet Table Reservation Chair
Vickey Kennedy,
vck@cox.net

Book Room/Signings/Fair Chair
Christine Jarmola
cdjarmola@gmail.com

Famous Author Banquet Chair
Jennifer McMurrain, jennifermcmurrain@gmail.com

Costume Contest Chair
Ruth Weeks,
witchywoman2@sbcglobal.net

50th T-shirt Committee Chair
Ariel White
mandarinblues@icloud.com

Meet the 2017 Creme De la Creme Winner

OWFI member Cathy Collar won the best of contest award this year, the coveted Creme de la Creme award with her picture book, *The Purple Problem*. What's her secret?

OWFI: How did you feel when you heard your name called as the Creme de la Creme winner?

Cathy Collar: Complete surprise. To be honest it is still a little surreal. I have my beautiful trophy sitting on my desk to remind every time I write that it is real and I can do this. It is a fantastic motivator.

OWFI: Tell us more about your winning entry.

CC: My winning entry was a rhyming picture book "The Purple Problem." It is about a little girl who was born with purple hair and her struggles to fit in. In the end she learns that finding true friends that accept you just the way you are is more important than fitting in with people who want you to be like them.

OWFI: How long have you been writing?

CC: I started writing at about the age of ten. Traditional poetry has always been my first love when it comes to my writing. My mind talks in rhyme to me all of the time so most it comes naturally. I love seeing the words

flowing onto the page with perfect rhythm. Humor is my other love. I feel too much of the writing I see today is about pain and sadness. I would rather try to bring a smile to someone's face than a tear to their eye.

OWFI: Are you in a writing/critique group? Are you a member of an affiliate group?

CC: I am a member of Bartlesville Wordweaver. Since I live in Texas, most of my activity with the group is online. They are a fantastic group of people to work with.

OWFI: How do you keep yourself accountable to your writing?

CC: Unfortunately I am not very good at keeping myself accountable. I try to focus on one writing project at a time. I am a pantster so whenever my muse starts chattering in my head, I write it down. Sometime it is in notes but most of the time it will be a full chapter or maybe even two. I usually write late at night when everything is quiet.

OWFI: Best writing tips?

CC: I think the best writing tip I could give is to keep your focus on your WIP. It is wonderful to have thousands of ideas for stories in your head, but if you were to write them all at once, you would lose the quality that is important to your work. Focus on the one you want or need to get out there first. Make notes for the others so you can get them out of your head and not forget them when you are ready to start that next adventure.

OWFI: What are you planning next?

CC: I am finishing up my second book in The McCory Chronicle series "Katie McCory and Destiny's Diamond." I plan to release it in November or December. I will start on the next book in the

series after that. I also have started a book of stories from my dog, Tessy's, point of view. I would like to have that book ready to publish by next year. I have at least six children's picture books written and ready to be published as soon as the illustrations are completed.

OWFI: What do you do for fun when you're not writing?

CC: I love having beautiful flowers all around me and eating food that I have grown, so gardening is one of my favorite things to do. I also like horseback riding, camping and fishing. I make jewelry for the nonprofit organization that my family founded for my daughter, Anna, who passed way from leukemia at the age of twenty four. I enjoy going to the craft shows where we sell this jewelry and donate profits to charity. I also have seven dogs and one cat to take care of. I stay fairly busy.

OWFI: What is your favorite OWFI memory?

CC: Well besides winning this award, which is really hard to top, I would say it was watching my daughter, Jennifer McMurray, win so many awards for her hard work. I am very proud of her and all of her accomplishments.

OWFI: What are your past published or not yet published works?

CC: I have two novels published, A middle grade fantasy adventure, *The McCory Chronicles: Katie McCory and the Dagger of Truth* and a book of thirteen fairy tales and fairy tale poems, *Finding Fey*. I also have one short story published, an inspirational fairy tale, *Into the Light*. All of these are available on Amazon.

OWFI: Who is your favorite author?

CC: I really don't have one favorite. I love J.K. Rowling, C.S. Lewis and Nora Roberts.

OWFI: Anything to say to the next Creme de la Creme winner?

CC: Just one thing. When your name is called, be ready to receive the full love that this organization has to offer. I am not only talking figuratively but also literally. These people not only love writing, but writers as well.



Only on the OWFI Website:

OWFI Conference Registration

Register for the conference and all the additional activities at www.owfi.org/register. The OWFI annual conference consistently brings you the best bargain for your dollar!

FULL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION includes Fri/Sat seminars and both Friday night and Saturday night banquets. Refunds granted only if requested on or before March 15, 2017; a \$50 processing fee will be charged.

- Non-member full conference registration: \$200
- OWFI Member Full Conference Registration (\$175)
- Full-time Student with ID Full Conference Registration (25 years or younger; \$125)
- Non-member Single Day Friday Seminar and Banquet (\$125)

SINGLE DAY SEMINARS include banquets.

- Non-member Single Day Friday Seminar and Banquet (\$125)
- OWFI Member Single Day Friday Seminar and Banquet (\$110)
- Non-member Single Day Saturday Seminar and Banquet (\$125)
- OWFI Member Single Day Saturday Seminar and Banquet (\$110)



Extra Banquet Tickets

- Additional ticket to Friday or Saturday Banquets (\$50)

PRE-CON and LUNCH WORKSHOPS require a ticket. They are not included with any registration. Learn more about the Pre-Con and Lunch Workshops by clicking here (this link will open a new window).

- Pre-Con Workshop (\$20)
- Friday Box Lunch Workshop (\$25)
- Saturday Box Lunch Workshop (\$25)

NEW THIS YEAR! OWFI 50th Anniversary T-Shirt

**Available for PREORDER only.
Must be ordered via the OWFI website by April 1st.**

**NO extra shirts will be ordered.
Shirts WILL NOT be sold at conference.**

**Sizes Small through X-Large \$12.50
Size XX-Large \$14.50 / Size XXX-Large \$15.50**

Only on the OWFI Website:

Updates on 2018 Conference Faculty

Find the full list of conference faculty at www.owfi.org/conference2018/faculty.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

JAY ASHER

PRE-CONFERENCE SPEAKER:

DIANE DRAKE

Sessions:

What's the Big Idea:
Creating a Strong Logline

Get Your Story Straight:
Structuring Your Screenplay to Sell

AGENTS:

MELISSA EDWARDS

Session: Contracts, Copyright, and
Intellectual Property... Oh My!

STEPHANIE HANSON

Session: Traditional Publishing: Insight
from an Agent

RACHELLE GARDNER

Session: Book Proposals that Sell

EDITORS:

REBECCA GOBER

COURTNEY KNIGHT

RHONDA PENDERS

ALLY ROBERTSON

MELISSA ANN SINGER

VIVIAN ZABEL

SPEAKERS:

MARK ALPERT,
author

LINDA APPLE,
author

WILLIAM BERNHARDT,
author

JACK BURGOS,
author

HENRY CLINE,
author

ARLENE GALE,
writing coach

TAMARA GRANTHAM,
author

VICKEY MALONE KENNEDY,
author and editor

MARIANA LLANOS,
author

SAMANTHA MARCH,
author, editor and publisher

ADRIANA MATHER,
author, producer and actor

BJ MCMINN,
author

ADREAN MESSMER,
author

BRIAN ROE,
designer

TARA LYNN THOMPSON,
author and reporter

HANNAH JOY WILKINSON,
writer and book reviewer

ERIN YORK,
author and editor



Social Media: Productive or Procrastination?

Marketing. It's hard and in some ways, I think it's harder for authors. We don't want to market, we want to write. Unfortunately, in today's world whether you are traditionally published or going down the indie road, you will have to market and every marketing professional agrees on one thing: you have to have a social media presence.

This is true, love it or hate it, you have to be present in some form on the internet. This does not mean you have to join every social media site known to man, but you do need to find at least one and learn it. Learn it in a way that makes it work for you.

Now, how do you make social media work for you?

1. Find Balance

Be proud of your books and post book links, especially when you have new releases, but also make sure your readers are getting to know you. Give them an inside scoop on

your writing routine, what you're working on next, and if you feel so inclined your hobbies, vacations, and daily life. How much you share is up to you, but if you only post book links, then people are going to stop reading what you have to say.

2. Stay Neutral

Your social media presence is your face in this world. Now, you can use that platform to demand justice for everything you find awful in this world, but that may turn off some of your readers. Odds are you're going to upset someone. You may feel that those are just not your readers, and that's fine, but especially when you're starting out my advice is to stay neutral on the web and be active to make changes in your community.

3. Set a timer

The best way to make sure your promo time on social media doesn't waste your time is to set a timer. Give yourself about ten to fifteen minutes. Five to actually do your promotion and then five to ten minutes for that time you get distracted by the shiny things on internet. It happens to the best of us, but once that timer goes off it'll remind you that you have writing to do.

Hopefully, these three tips will help you turn your social media time into productive time. For more tips, join me at the Tulsa Night



Writer's Craft of Writing Conference, where I'll be giving a workshop on productive use of social media, on Oct. 28th. For registration information contact Donna Jones at sky744sky@yahoo.com.

*Jennifer McMurrain is a full-time mother, wife, and writer. She has won numerous awards for her short stories and novels, including hitting #1 on the Amazon Best Seller list with her debut novel, *Quail Crossings*, being a 3rd place finalist in the Amazon Breakthrough Novel Awards for her paranormal romance novel, *Winter Song*, and winning Best Book of Fiction with the Christian Indie Authors Network for *Return to Quail Crossing*. She has six full length novels and five book collaboration published. She lives in Bartlesville, Oklahoma with her husband and daughter. You can find more information at www.jennifermcmurrain.com.*

**SAVE THE DATE:
NEXT OWFI BOARD
MEETING SUNDAY,
DECEMBER 10**

How To Build an Author Platform



It's 2017, so naturally, many of us are legitimately terrified of our social media posts coming back to haunt us. And if you're a writer trying to build your author platform while holding down a day job, getting social media followers can feel impossible.

Can you tweet consistent and on-brand content while working 8 hours a day for someone else? Can you build your following online while still staying under your boss's radar? Can you become the perfect online superhero while maintaining your mild-mannered Clark Kent persona at the ol' day job?

The answer to all of these is yes. And while it's not easy to balance it all, you're a writer. You didn't sign up for easy in the first place. You've already chosen a life of rejection, caffeine-fueled keyboard bashing, and skeptical glares from new acquaintances who want to know just exactly what it is you do all day. Compared to all of that, your online platform is the easy part.

So what exactly is it that you need to focus on? You need to build. You

need to be yourself. And you need to make friends.

Build

At the very least, every writer needs a website. I highly recommend every writer buys their name as a dot com. So, I own MarisaMohi.com. This serves two purposes. One, in the event that I suddenly become the famous and revered writer I believe I ought to be, I'm ready to greet my adoring fans online with a website that is 100% me. And two, it prevents anyone from buying your name as their domain in the event your name becomes a hot commodity.

As for what to do with the website, that is up to you. I like using my site as a blog where I talk about writing, and work-life balance. Others may prefer to just put up a static page with links to social media. There is no right or wrong way to have a website. Just focus on what works for you.

And when it comes to social media, you want to take the same approach. Picking your name as your social media handles makes it easier for your audience to find you, and prevents anyone else from taking your name. In the event that your name is already taken, you can get creative. For example, on Twitter, a porn bot already had my name. (This is not ideal, and I've actively tried to get that account shut down to no avail.) So instead my handle is now @theMarisaMohi.

Pick a few social channels that work for you. I'm most active on Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, though I also have a Facebook page, Pinterest, and Google Plus. If you're looking to connect with agents, you can't

beat Twitter. It's the social medium of choice for the majority of folks in the publishing industry.

Be Yourself

So, once you set everything up, what do you do? You be yourself. There are plenty of authors who use social media incredibly well. I highly recommend looking at the Twitter profiles of Stephen King, Rainbow Rowell, Chuck Wendig, and Delilah S. Dawson.

And while I truly believe you can post whatever you want online, keep in mind how others will perceive you. If you only tweet local high school football game scores, you're really only going to attract locals, and your platform should be so much bigger than that.

Focus on things you're interested in. Post links to articles that were interesting to you. Retweet other writers. Blog about that great book you just read that inspired you. Let people know what you're working on or reading or thinking.

Make Friends

Now, here's the fun part. You remember how you were the nerdy kid in high school who struggled to find a date to prom? Well guess what? EVERYONE ON THE INTERNET IS JUST LIKE THAT!

The best part of social media is finding people like you. So even if you live in the smallest small town and have nothing in common with the people you've met there, you can find your tribe online. This is why it's so important to be yourself. Seriously.

Tweet about Cthulu. Post pictures of your Agatha Christie collection to Instagram. Do a Facebook Live video discussing your favorite Nora Roberts books. If you are yourself online, your friends will find you.

Marisa Mohi teaches writing (not the creative kind) at the University of Oklahoma, and blogs at MarisaMohi.com. She spends way too much time on Twitter and Instagram where she is @theMarisaMohi. In her spare time, she walks her crazy pit bull-beagle-boxer mix four times a day.



Affiliate Spotlight: Oklahoma City Writers



One of the best benefits of OWFI are the many affiliate groups that are associated with us. This month, we're taking a closer look at the Oklahoma City Writers affiliate group. Thanks to Shelley Pagach for answering our questions!

OWFI: How long has your affiliate group been active?

Shelley Pagach: Oklahoma City Writers has been around since 1914. We've had 3 names. OK Author's Club from 1914 to 1941, OK State Writers, Inc. from 1942 to 1984, then finally Oklahoma City Writers, Inc. from 1985 until now.

OWFI: How many members are in the Oklahoma City Writers?

SP: It fluctuates from year to year, but we average about 90 members.

OWFI: How should prospective members contact you?

SP: By phone or email. Both can be found on the website, www.okcwriters.org

OWFI: How often do you meet?

SP: We meet the 3rd Saturday of every month from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

OWFI: What do you do when you meet?

SP: We have a speaker every month but November, which is set aside to announce the winners of our annual contest.

OWFI: Describe the structure of your group; do you have officers, do you feature guest speakers at your events, do you publish anthologies or hold contests?

SP: We have appointed and elected officers. We also have delegates for OWFI. We send out a monthly newsletter and an annual yearbook usually in May. We have an annual contest every fall. We like to promote it as getting ready for the OWFI contest, which is held a few months later.

OWFI: Best thing about the Oklahoma City Writers?

SP: The members of course! We have a wide range of writers, from just learning the business all the way to published. Our meetings cover a variety of topics. We always look forward to our fall contest. One of my favorite moments is arriving at the meeting early to set up, and a member or two are already waiting for the doors to open.

OWFI: What are the biggest challenges you've faced?

SP: Making sure we have a place to meet. We are in a fantastic location and should be here for a while, but when it's time to move, it's always an adventure. Keeping our speakers on a timeline can be difficult, especially when people keep asking questions (which is always a good sign). Hiccups are inevitable, but we've got a great group that rolls with the punches.

Thanks to Shelley Pagach for all the OKC Writers photos and for answering our questions! Contact owfinews@gmail.com if you'd like your chapter highlighted in a future issue of the Report!



The 2018 OWFI Writing Contest Information, Rules & Entry Procedures

General Contest Information

The 2018 OWFI writing contest will open for submissions on January 1st. Entry fees, online entry forms, and individual manuscripts must be either sent or uploaded on or before February 1, 2018 at 11:59 p.m.

The annual OWFI contest is only open to paid OWFI members and full-time students. For information on joining OWFI, visit our Become a Member page.

The contest offers cash prizes in twenty-nine (29) unpublished manuscript categories, and trophies in five (5) published book categories. Unpublished manuscript prizes are \$50 for first place, \$35 for second place, and \$20 for third place in each of the twenty-nine (29) categories. All entries are judged by published authors, agents, editors, or other publishing professionals. Judges are asked to provide feedback on each entry.

Eligibility Requirements (Published and Unpublished Works)

- Entrants must be paid members of OWFI or full-time students.
 - Students must provide verification of student status by taking a picture or otherwise obtaining an image file of the student's school-provided ID card and uploading with their main contest entry form.
 - OWFI membership dues are \$25 per year for Affiliate Club Members and \$30 per year for Members at Large and can be applied for here.
 - If entries are co-authored, all members of the writing team must be eligible by OWFI membership or student status. The team will be considered a single entrant and must pay a separate entry fee for their co-authored entries.
 - *This entry fee is separate from any fees that the members of the writing team must pay in order to enter as individual authors.*
 - *Published anthologies and compilations of works by multiple authors entered in the Trophy Award categories are considered co-authored entries.*
 - No manuscript that has won a cash prize (first, second, or third place) in a previous OWFI contest may be entered again. EVER.
 - Contestants who win first place in an OWFI Contest Category may not enter that same category the following year.
 - Unpublished entries for Categories 1 through 7 and Categories 9 through 29 must have been unaccepted for publication at the time of submission.
 - If accepted by a publisher after entry, the submission will be considered valid.
 - Works that have been posted on a blog, website, or other online venue (except for critique purposes) are considered published and are not eligible for entry in this contest.
 - *Submissions to Category 8 – Blog that have been posted on a blog or website are eligible, however; the entry will be treated as if it were unpublished.*

- Books entered in Published Book Categories 30–34 must have a copyright year of 2017.
- Judges may not enter the category that they are judging.
- Category Chairs may not enter the category that they chair.
- Contestants, whether entering as a team or as an individual, may enter a category only once.
- No manuscript may be entered in more than one category.

Entry Procedures

- Entrants must pay a \$30 NONREFUNDABLE entry fee, which covers administrative costs and awards. This entitles participants to enter once per category (e.g., you can enter one piece into each of the 34 categories, but you cannot enter more than one piece into any one category).
- ALL submissions must be entered via the online entry form. An automated confirmation email will be sent as a receipt of your entry.
 - Electronic manuscripts should be attached to the online entry form and will be sent to the indicated Category Chair.
 - For printed books submitted to Categories 30-34, this online form will alert the indicated Category Chair that an entry is on the way via snail mail and will provide the contestant with the appropriate mailing address.
- Print books entered in Categories 30-34 should be snail-mailed in an envelope the correct size for the book to the address provided in the confirmation email along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE).
 - Entries submitted without the SASE, and not picked up at the conference, will not be returned.
 - *Contestants who plan to pick up their printed books at conference may omit postage, but still need to include a self-addressed envelope.*

The 2018 OWFI Writing Contest

Information, Rules & Entry Procedures

- *The addressee and return address on the return envelope should both contain the contestant's mailing address.*
 - *Paperclip the return envelope to the entry, along with a printed copy of the confirmation email.*
 - All entries, electronic and printed, must be postmarked by February 1, 2018. OWFI is not responsible for lost entries. If an entry is submitted via the online form and an acknowledgement is not received within 24 hours, please contact the webmaster. Contestants are urged to upload entries at least two weeks prior to the deadline to assure that entries are received on time.
- ### Manuscript Preparation and Formatting
- No author's name, pen name, or other identifying information may appear on any page of a manuscript entry. Doing so will result in disqualification and no refund of entry fee.
 - Electronic entries for Categories 1–29 must be in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format.
 - E-books for Categories 30–34 must be .pdf, .mobi, or .epub formats.
 - All unpublished manuscripts must be editor-ready. This includes the following:
 - Manuscripts should be double-spaced.
 - *Exceptions: Poetry and book synopses may be single spaced.*
 - Spacing for book outlines, overviews, and tables-of-contents should follow industry standards.
 - Headers:
 - *On the first page, every manuscript must have the category number in the upper right-hand corner. Directly beneath the category number should be one of the following:*
 - *For poetry entries, the number of lines.*
 - *For book-length prose entries, the number of pages entered.*
 - *For short works of prose (e.g., picture books, short stories, articles, etc.), the word count. You can calculate the word count either using a word processor or by multiplying your number of pages by 10 words per line by 25 lines per page.*
 - *For entries in multi-genre categories (see Category Descriptions), it is highly recommended that participants note the genre of their entry in the upper right-hand corner of the first page, below the word, line, or page count.*
 - *On all other pages, place a header listing the title and page number.*
 - Use an easy-to-read 12-point font such as Times New Roman or Courier New that results in approximately 250 words or 25 lines per page. Fancy fonts other than italics are not allowed.
 - Play, film, or TV scripts must follow industry-standard formats.
 - For more information on manuscript formatting, consult a recent edition of *Writer's Market* (available at most libraries), or search the words "Format" online.

Filename Requirements

Before uploading your manuscript, follow these guidelines for naming the manuscript file that you intend to upload. Several examples follow.

cat[category number][manuscript title without spaces or accents]

Suppose that you are entering a piece entitled "The Rats of Penzance." This is a short, humorous piece, and you are entering it in "Category 18 – Prose Humor." Your file is in .docx format. You would therefore save your file as cat18theratsofpenzance, and your file extension will automatically attach, naming your file:

cat18theratsofpenzance.docx

Suppose that you are entering a poem entitled "Morning's Dew." This is a long, rhymed poem that has formatting you want to keep just right, so of course you used .pdf format. Your category is "Category 3 – Poetry, Rhymed (Long)." You would therefore save your file as cat3morningsdew, which will name your file:

cat3morningsdew.pdf

Say you have a .mobi of your published thriller, *Le Murder Café*, and you want to send it to us. Your category is "Category 34 – Published Fiction Book." You would therefore save your file as cat34lemurdercafe, which will name your manuscript file:

cat34lemurdercafe.mobi

If you have any trouble with this, or have any questions, please contact the general contest chair.

Good luck and happy writing!

Oklahoma Writers' Federation, Inc

2018 Writing Contest Categories

Cats 1-4: Poetry

Cat 5: Essay

Cats 6-7: Articles

Cat 8: Blog

Cat 9: Inspiration

Cats 10-18: Short Fiction & Non-Fic

Cat 19: Script

Cat 20: Picture Book

Cats 21-29: Novels

Cats 30-34: Published Books

Categories 1-29: Unpublished Manuscripts

CATEGORY 1 POETRY, UNRHYMED-SHORT

Any theme, any form. A poem is characterized by intense, compressed language. Every word is carefully chosen. A poem can tell a story, create an image, or evoke an emotion. In all cases, it is an artform and should go beyond plain prose to evoke something deeper. Sixteen (16) lines or less.

NOTE: Epigraphs and spaces are not part of the line count.

CATEGORY 2 POETRY, UNRHYMED-LONG

Same description as Category 1 at left, but longer. Seventeen (17) lines or more.

NOTE: Epigraphs and spaces are not part of the line count.

CATEGORY 3 POETRY, RHYMED-SHORT

Same description as Category 1 above, but written in rhyme. Any rhyming form may be used. Sixteen (16) lines or less.

NOTE: Epigraphs and spaces are not part of the line count.

CATEGORY 4 POETRY, RHYMED-LONG

Same description as Category 1 above, but longer and written in rhyme. Any rhyming form may be used. Seventeen (17) lines or more.

NOTE: Epigraphs and spaces are not part of the line count.

CATEGORY 5 ESSAY (ANY SUBJECT OF CONTEMPORARY INTEREST)

Essays are personal opinion pieces using narrative form to convince the reader of a certain point of view or, at least, to better understand the author's point of view. There are formal, fact-driven essays (George Will) and informal, lighter essays (Erma Bombeck). Bear in mind the quality and logic of the argument and how well the author uses facts, reasoning, and literary tools such as analogy to convince. Sometimes an opinion can be presented, a point of view expressed, or an argument driven home in a novel or unusual way by telling a story, seeming to take the opposite point of view, or constructing a fable with a clear moral at the end. Limit 2000 words.

CATEGORY 6 TECHNICAL AND/OR HOW-TO ARTICLE (ANY SUBJECT)

This category is made up of two different genres that both aim to educate readers in different ways. Each style presents a problem, describes why it matters, then provides the solution—and sometimes offers a call to action. Technical Articles are generally longer and cover a narrow but serious subject in great depth; they rely on more than one expert (often including the author) to

2018 OWFI Writing Contest Categories

provide information that educates and informs a specific target audience. While the article may be scientific, it should also be readable and easy to understand and absorb. The reader should come away with useful information. How-To Articles are often shorter edutainment—1500 words may be too long!—lighter fare that may rely on the expertise of the author alone. These articles not only educate and inform, they also provide specific and detailed steps for the reader to accomplish the stated goal (e.g., how to bake cookies, make a craft, prepare a devotional, or write a novel). A central theme follows through to the end. Help the judge by noting “Technical Article” or “How-To Article” on your manuscripts. Limit 3000 words.

CATEGORY 7 FEATURE ARTICLE: NONFICTION (ANY SUBJECT)

These are the articles listed prominently in a publication (e.g., magazine, newspaper, online, etc.) covering a subject of great interest to that medium’s target audience. The article must clearly have a reason to exist and not simply serve as a vehicle for advertising. Nor should it be a vehicle for presenting the author’s opinion about a particular topic. (For opinion pieces, see the “How-To,” “Inspirational,” or “Essay” category descriptions.) More than just the facts, a feature article uses a great hook, expert quotes, and a bang-up conclusion to convey its topic. The author’s voice and style give the piece life. Limit 2500 words.

CATEGORY 8 BLOG: NONFICTION

Personal reflections, comments, opinions, or even journalistic pieces posted to a website. Entries can be published or unpublished; however, all active links must be removed. Limit 1100 words.

NOTE: All entries in this category will be treated as unpublished.

CATEGORY 9 INSPIRATIONAL ARTICLE

Entries to this category should concern a personal experience or struggle that provides inspiration or hope to others. A profile or personal story should touch the reader in some way, impart a valuable message, and/or educate the reader in some way. While this piece can be religious in nature, it is not mandatory. The piece should strive to inspire and motivate the reader. It may be a vehicle for presenting the author’s opinion about a topic that has personally affected him or her and may also include a call to action. The author’s voice and style give the piece life. Limit 3000 words.

CATEGORY 10 MEMOIR/NOSTALGIA: SHORT STORY

Memoir is first-person, narrative nonfiction that focuses on one specific aspect of the writer’s life or experience. Nostalgia focuses on down-home occurrences reflecting the past; these pieces evoke a fond remembrance of a time gone by, or memories of childhood. Limit 4000 words.

CATEGORY 11 FLASH FICTION

An extremely short but complete work of fiction. As with longer stories, a flash fiction story must contain the four elements of fiction: setting (which is usually implied rather than fully described), one or more characters, a conflict, and a resolution. Because of length limitations, these stories often make use of suggestion and innuendo. This is fiction in its barest, most essential form; every word must move the story forward. Stories submitted in this category should be targeted to an adult audience. Limit 500 words.

CATEGORY 12 SHORT-SHORT STORY (ADULT): FICTION

A short short story is a brief piece of fiction pointed and more economically detailed as to character, situation, and plot than a novel. They often revolve around a single theme or one climactic event, developing a single character in depth. Narrower than a novel, a short story contains these basic elements: characters, setting, plot, conflict, resolution, climax, dialogue, protagonist, and antagonist. All short stories should present the major character with an important problem that the character must struggle to solve and engage the reader in caring about whether the character achieves that goal by the story’s end. Limit 2000 words.

CATEGORY 13 JUVENILE SHORT STORY: FICTION

A juvenile short story is a brief piece of fiction pointed and more economically detailed as to character, situation, and plot than a novel and with a subject matter aimed at children. They often revolve around a single theme or one climactic event, developing a single character in depth. Narrower than a novel, a short story contains these basic elements: characters, setting, plot, conflict, resolution, climax, dialogue, protagonist, and antagonist. All short stories should present the major character with an important problem that the character must struggle to solve and engage the reader in caring about whether the character achieves that goal by the story’s end. For readers ages 7–9. limit 600 words. For readers 8–12, limit 1000 words.

NOTE: Entries must have the target audience’s age range below the word count on the first page of the manuscript.

2018 OWFI Writing Contest Categories

CATEGORY 14 YOUNG ADULT SHORT STORY: FICTION

A young adult (YA) short story (subject matter aimed at readers 13–18) is a brief piece of fiction pointed and more economically detailed as to character, situation, and plot than a novel. They often revolve around a single theme or one climactic event, developing a single character in depth. Narrower than a novel, a short story contains these basic elements: characters, setting, plot, conflict, resolution, climax, dialogue, protagonist, and antagonist. All short stories should present the major character with an important problem that the character must struggle to solve and engage the reader in caring about whether the character achieves that goal by the story's end. Limit 2000 words.

CATEGORY 15 SHORT STORY (ADULT): FICTION

A short story is a brief piece of fiction pointed and more economically detailed as to character, situation, and plot than a novel. They often revolve around a single theme or one climactic event, developing a single character in depth. Narrower than a novel, a short story contains these basic elements: characters, setting, plot, conflict, resolution, climax, dialogue, protagonist, and antagonist. All short stories should present the major character with an important problem that the character must struggle to solve and engage the reader in caring about whether the character achieves that goal by the story's end. Limit 2000 to 4000 words.

CATEGORY 16 SCI-FI/FANTASY SHORT STORY: FICTION

Science fiction includes stories in which futuristic technology or otherwise altered scientific principles contribute in a significant way to the adventure. Often the novel assumes a set of rules, principles, or facts and traces their logical consequences. Fantasy includes stories in which magical, otherworldly, or supernatural elements are a central part of the plot or setting. Many fantasies take place on imaginary worlds. Characters may be something other than human or may possess magical powers. A sci-fi/fantasy short story (genres limited to sci-fi and fantasy) is a brief piece of fiction pointed and more economically detailed as to character, situation, and plot than a novel. They often revolve around a single theme or one climactic event, developing a single character in depth. Narrower than a novel, a short story contains these basic elements: characters, setting, plot, conflict, resolution, climax, dialogue, protagonist, and antagonist. All short stories should present the major character with an important problem that the character must struggle to solve and engage the reader in caring about whether the character achieves that goal by the story's end. Help the judge by noting "Sci-Fi" or "Fantasy" on your manuscripts. Limit 5000 words.

CATEGORY 17 HORROR SHORT STORY: FICTION

A horror short story (subject matter aimed at scaring the reader) is a brief piece of fiction pointed and more economically detailed as to character, situation, and plot than a novel. They often revolve around a single theme or one climactic event, developing a single character in depth. Narrower than a novel, a short story contains these basic elements: characters, setting, plot, conflict, resolution, climax, dialogue, protagonist, and antagonist. All short stories should present the major character with an important problem that the character must struggle to solve and engage the reader in caring about whether the character achieves that goal by the story's end. Limit 5000 words.

CATEGORY 18 PROSE HUMOR: FICTION OR NONFICTION

Prose humor is exactly that—a piece of writing meant to evoke humor. Everyday experiences can resonate with the reader, and common interest stories, when written in a clever and entertaining voice, bring forth a smile. The humor piece should also meet the criteria of its form: column, short story, article/feature, or essay. Manuscripts submitted in this category should be targeted toward an adult audience. Limit 2000 words.

CATEGORY 19 PLAY, FILM, OR TV SCRIPT

One, two, or three acts. As in all categories, entries must be unaccepted and never optioned or produced by the time of submission. Help the judge by noting "Play," "Film," or "TV script" on your manuscripts. Formatting must follow accepted industry standards. Submit complete synopsis and opening scene(s). Complete submission limit 30 pages (or less).

CATEGORY 20 PICTURE BOOK: FICTION OR NONFICTION (FOR AGES 1–8)

Picture books are large, art-filled books for children, which are primarily targeted to ages 1–8, but are also appealing to older kids and even adults. They are designed to bring information and/or entertainment to life for young eyes, and the text must be minimal. These books have a beginning, middle, and end. Picture books do not necessarily feature a character, but when they do, the protagonist must solve his or her own problem, and the problem should be something significant. Often a picture book portrays a concept such as numbers, letters, the weather, colors, etc. Picture books may also evoke a mood, such as a bedtime story. These books should be engaging and present the topic in a fresh, childlike way. (Show, don't tell!) Limit 750 words.

2018 OWFI Writing Contest Categories

CATEGORY 21 MIDDLE GRADE BOOK: FICTION OR NONFICTION (FOR AGES 8-12)

Same as Category 20, yet written for children ages 8–12. For fiction, think Hank the Cow Dog. Submit the first consecutive chapters; a complete synopsis or outline; prologue, if any; and/or a nonfiction proposal (per industry standard). Limit 20 pages (or less).

CATEGORY 22 YOUNG ADULT NOVEL: FICTION OR NONFICTION (FOR AGES 13 AND OLDER)

This category has the same rules as all books. For novels, write compelling stories with beginnings, middles, and ends. For nonfiction, provide accessible and interesting content that informs, inspires, and/or educates. For novels, think Harry Potter; the main character should have an important problem he/she struggles to solve. The story should engage the reader in caring about whether the character achieves that goal by the story's end. These often deal with the tribulations of growing up. Nonfiction should focus on providing information that educates and informs the reader. Review the various novel and nonfiction book categories for further descriptions. Help the judge by noting "Novel" or "Nonfiction" on your manuscripts. Submit the first consecutive chapters and prologue, if any, with a complete synopsis or outline, and/or nonfiction proposal (per industry standard). Limit to 20 pages (or less).

CATEGORY 23 MAINSTREAM NOVEL: FICTION

A successful mainstream novel tackles subjects of universal appeal, driven by characters and plots that find acceptance in the "mainstream" of readers. This category is large and diverse. Think Jodi Picoult, John Grisham, Harlan Coben, etc. Genre novels such as science fiction, mystery/suspense, romance, and historical fiction should be entered in their appropriate categories. Submit the first consecutive chapters and prologue, if any, with a complete synopsis. Complete submission limit 25 pages (or less).

CATEGORY 24 ROMANCE NOVEL: FICTION

The romance novel follows strong, vivid characters on their journey of discovery and emotional conflict to a shared and satisfying conclusion. No plot point, setting, or event takes precedence over the one central theme: the relationship between the two main characters. The end must leave the reader believing the protagonists' love will endure for the remainder of their lives. This category includes all forms of romance, including historical romance. Submit the first consecutive chapters and prologue, if any, with a complete synopsis. Complete submission limit 25 pages (or less).

CATEGORY 25 HISTORICAL NOVEL: FICTION

Historical fiction encompasses novels set anytime in the recent or distant past, such as ancient Greece, the Middle Ages, or World War II. These novels are time capsules of an era and/or culture—the setting serves as a character in itself. Submit the first consecutive chapters and prologue, if any, with a complete synopsis. Complete submission limit 25 pages (or less).

CATEGORY 26 MYSTERY/SUSPENSE NOVEL: FICTION

This category is made up of two broad categories. Mystery novels are all about "whodunit." These books have a strong hook/murder and a cast of suspicious and compelling characters, and readers compete to solve the puzzle before the author reveals the answer. Whether told in first person or third, mystery novels showcase the main character as he/she follows a maze of clues and incidents leading to the Big Reveal. Detective and police procedural, espionage/spies, amateur sleuth, series or stand-alones, a winning mystery novel is a tightly-woven question from beginning to end. Suspense novels and related thrillers also require a strong hook that often includes a murder/death involving a strong main character and a compelling cast. But unlike mysteries, suspense/thrillers more often focus on "how-dunit." The antagonist may be an individual, organization (government), or thing (virus) known to readers from the beginning but often hidden from the protagonist. Suspense novels and thrillers may be first person but are more often third person, and often employ more than one viewpoint character. The main character may be the good guy or the bad guy. Whether a medical, psychological, techno, legal, or other sub-genre, the winning suspense novel is action-driven from beginning to end. Help the judge by noting "Mystery" or "Suspense/Thriller" on your manuscripts. Submit the first consecutive chapters and prologue, if any, with a complete synopsis. Complete submission limit 25 pages (or less).

CATEGORY 27 SCI-FI/FANTASY NOVEL: FICTION

This category is made up of two totally different genres. A science fiction novel is one in which futuristic technology or otherwise altered scientific principles contribute in a significant way to the adventure. Often the novel assumes a set of rules, principles, or facts and then traces their logical consequences; A fantasy novel is one in which magical, otherworldly, or supernatural elements are a central part of the plot or setting. Many fantasies take place on imaginary worlds. Characters may be something other than human or may possess magical powers. Submit the first consecutive chapters and prologue, if any, with a complete synopsis. Complete submission limit 25 pages (or less).

2018 OWFI Writing Contest Categories

CATEGORY 28 HORROR NOVEL: FICTION

Fiction intended to scare, unsettle, or horrify the reader. Historically, the cause of the “horror” experience has been the intrusion of an evil or, occasionally, a misunderstood, supernatural element into everyday human experience. Any fiction with a morbid, gruesome, surreal, or exceptionally suspenseful or frightening theme has come to be called “horror.” Submit the first consecutive chapters and prologue, if any, with a complete synopsis. Complete submission limit 25 pages (or less).

CATEGORY 29 NONFICTION BOOK (ANY NONFICTION BOOK)

This category is made up of an enormous range of divergent topics, all of which seek to educate, inform, entertain, and sometimes inspire. Narrative nonfiction follows the form and style of various fiction genres (think *The Perfect Storm* and *First, Do No Harm*). Depending on style, biographies and autobiographies or family histories may fall under the narrative nonfiction umbrella, which basically consists of any “true” subject told in a narrative form. The author often has a personal stake or shared experience in the story.

This form requires a strong viewpoint character(s), story problems, and satisfying resolutions. The length of the complete work parallels similar works of fiction. Memoir is first-person, narrative nonfiction that focuses on one specific aspect of the writer’s life or experience. Nostalgia focuses on down-home occurrences reflecting the past; these pieces evoke a fond remembrance of a time gone by or memories of childhood. General nonfiction more commonly presents technical, self-help, or how-to information; inspirational works; or otherwise fact-based material derived from an author’s own expertise and research and outside expert sources. Style varies widely, but in all cases content must be presented in a pleasing and accessible format. Chapters are typically broken up with sidebars, bulleted lists, photos/illustrations, tables, and other value-added materials and may include direct quotes, footnotes, etc. The length of a finished work varies widely, from short, illustrated gift books (under 20,000 words) to encyclopedia-length reference books (over 150,000 words). Help the judge by noting “Narrative” or “General” on your manuscripts. For narrative nonfiction submit the first consecutive chapters and prologue, if any, with a complete synopsis. For general nonfiction submit any representative chapters and include a chapter outline or book proposal per the industry standard (i.e., overview, market analysis/competition, table of contents, etc.). Limit to 30 pages (or less).

Categories 30–34: Published Books (Trophy Awards)

All entries in the following categories must have a copyright year of 2017. Ebooks, self-published books, and traditionally published books of any length are eligible.

CATEGORY 30 – BEST JUVENILE BOOK AWARD

Published book of fiction or nonfiction for readers ages 1–12.

CATEGORY 31 – BEST YA BOOK AWARD

Published book of fiction or nonfiction for readers ages 13–18.

CATEGORY 32 – BEST NONFICTION BOOK AWARD

Published nonfiction book.

CATEGORY 33 – BEST BOOK OF POETRY AWARD

Published book of poetry (chapbook or full-length collection).

CATEGORY 34 – BEST BOOK OF FICTION AWARD

Published book of fiction (novel or short story collection)

Crème-de-la-Crème Award

A “Best of Contest” award will be chosen from among the first-place manuscripts in all 29 unpublished categories. The winner receives a trophy and an additional cash award.

Watching Your Language: Swarms of Swarms

their = belonging to them

there = adverb or function word

they're = contraction of "they are"

your = belonging to you

you're = contraction of "you are"

its = belonging to it

it's = contraction of "it is"

to = in the direction of

too = also

two = one + one

It's just a theory, of course, this notion I have about how grammar errors, like viruses, develop and proliferate, then sweep over a place to disable clear communication the way swine flu or mono can take out a student body or a work force.

One year it's Strain A, infecting correspondence, signs, brochures—publications of every kind—with a rash of misplaced apostrophes, black and ugly, that cling to every final s except the ones that need them. Or Strain B, an even more virulent pest that presents in several different ways: the blithe switching of *then* for *than* and vice versa, and the wholesale mixing of *their* (belonging to them), *there* (an adverb or function word), and *they're* (contraction of they and are). And can we forget *your* (belonging to you) and *you're* (contraction of you and are) and the definitions of *two*, *to*, and *too*?

Don't text and tell me these bugs are nothing new. I know they've been around forever. It's the sudden intensity, the frightening frequency with which they've appeared in a single week of my not-even-intense or wide reading. Why, I ask, must all those English-class flunkies get jobs as sign painters or devote themselves to creating web pages, endless email, and all-too-revealing FB notes?

The main functions of the apostrophe, by the way, are to show possession (Tom's ears) and point to where at least one letter has been left out of a contraction: *can not* becomes *can't*; *it is* equals *it's*. And *who is* (Who's at the door?) or *who has* (Who's been eating my porridge?) uses the apostrophe to become *who's*. And *who's* is not, I insist, the same as *whose*, which means belonging to whom or what (The puzzle whose corner pieces are missing is Lulu's. He's the boy whose dog died.) or an interrogatory pronoun (Whose car is this?) That error seems to be a flaming rash all its own.

One breeding ground of apostrophe mistakes is the small group of special cases that take an apostrophe to show plural because they would spawn confusion without some mark. Many of us just didn't learn what's in that special group. Here's your chance. Watch your p's and q's. Notice *p* and *q* are lower-case letters. Drop the apostrophe for capital letters and numerals used as nouns: The three Rs. You dealt me two 10s. The practice of writing 1950's or 1800's has been changed: 1950s, 1800s. The apostrophe no longer applies to TVs, RVs, IRAs, and dozens of similar abbreviations along with the periods that once separated them. Note especially academic degrees: MAs, BSs, PhDs. But not all abbreviations. And it never was correct for making a family name plural, so you might have to repaint your mailbox. Don't write *The Johnson's!* Or anything like it with an apostrophe. More than one Johnson is *The Johnsons*. And next door are the Joneses or the Martinezes. Unless you mean The Martinezes' daughter or the Johnsons' house. And this last one grows the biggest fuzzy error because we leave off *house* or *place* when we say I'm going over to the Johnson's _____. See how that works to infect our writing on the mailbox? Or the invitation to a wedding, baptism ceremony, or other formal event?

Finally, here's one of special interest to us writers: MS stands for manuscript; MSS means manuscripts.

The present trend is to use fewer and fewer punctuation marks in general, but it pays to check an up-to-date authority like *The Chicago Manual of Style* or *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Usage does change, and lexicographers and other usage watchers reflect those changes only when enough educated writers adopt or drop punctuation and other conventions.

Kathleen Park, M.A., calls herself an escaped English teacher and a forever lover of words. Send her your grammar-related question: katie.talks@gmail.com..



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*The Registration desk will be open
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Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.*

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