

September

fresh



ink



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*"Life starts all over again when
it gets crisp in the fall."*

— F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Great Gatsby"

Across the United States, summer brings its bounty of fruits and vegetables and the month of September signals the end of a productive season. I feel the seasons work differently in Southern California. Summer is much too hot. Most of us rest and hibernate with the air conditioning on and when autumn arrives with a cool morning breeze, we feel a surge of renewal. We reboot. September is the beginning of our productive season.

Accordingly, our board has been working hard. Ben Alirez stabilized the branch membership and is signing up new members. Our Fresh Ink newsletter has been launched and redesigned. It is so robust and cheerful. Our presentation schedule has been set for the rest of 2024.

Please note that our September meeting is NOT on the 4th Saturday of the month. Instead, we are meeting on the second Saturday, September 14th. Constance Cassinelli is hosting the critique workshop at the library, in the big presentation room. October's Presentation is from a new member, John McBrearty, "Colonel Mack," who will discuss getting published on Amazon. Our November presentation will focus on craft and how to write compelling antagonists. Finally, the holiday party will be at my house in Claremont, Sunday, December 8th from noon to three pm. That's our plan. Time to start writing all over again!

Write on,
Judy Kohnen

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue was edited using
Canva

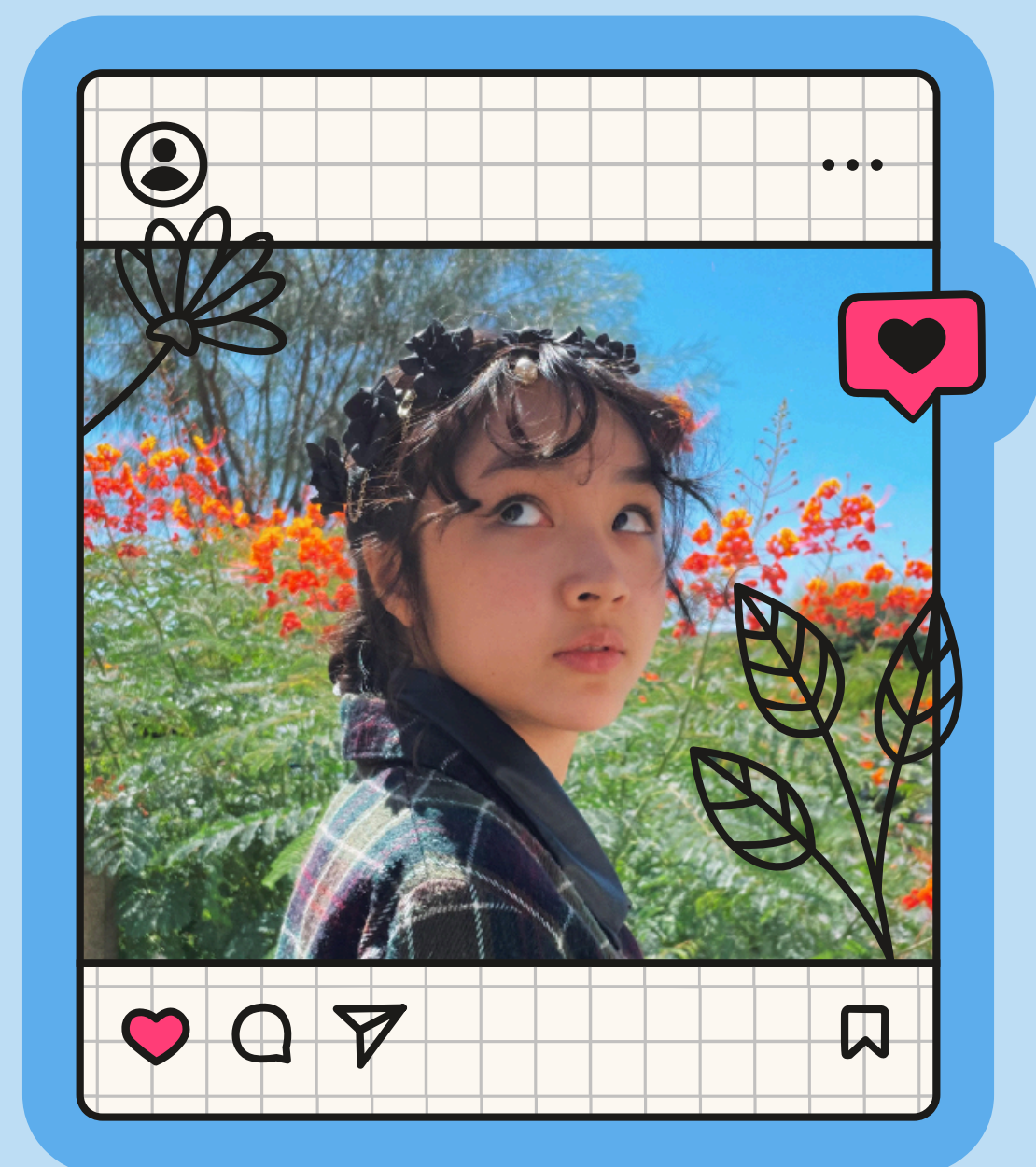
Anything Under the Sun

Hello reader,

School is officially in session which means this newsletter was made out of determination and deadlines. Although I only have August's issue to compare it with, I am proud to showcase more member work this month. Thank you for your submissions!

The theme for September is Resilience. As you will read in my submission, "Dust in the Wind," fires are common in my area every Summer.

For some of us, writing is a dream career or a time-consuming hobby. For others, it's an emotional outlet or art form. But when things hit rock bottom, writing can also be how we retain resilience. We must keep the flame of creativity and inspiration burning within us at all costs.



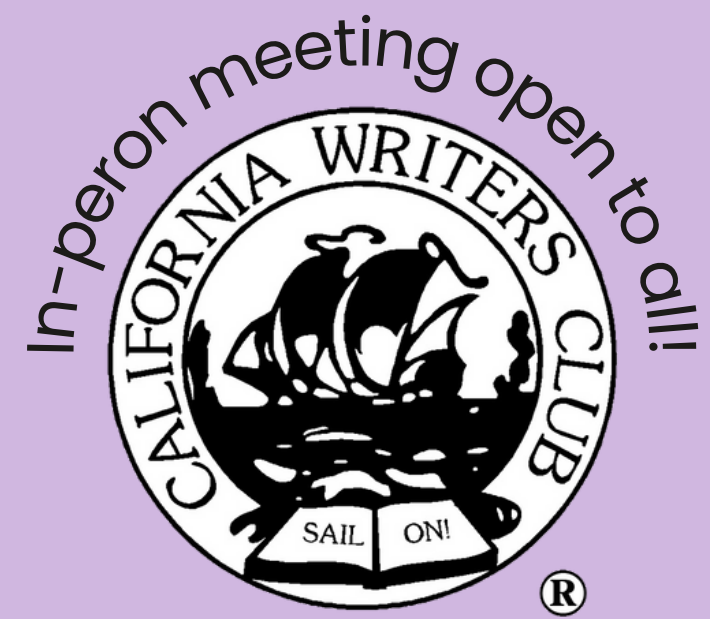
@abigail_handojo

That being said, Autumn cannot come fast enough.

Faith, trust, and eraser dust,
Abigail Elina Handojo



Saturday, September 14, 2024 at 10:00 am
 Ovitt Family Library
 215 E C St, Ontario, CA 91764



Do you have some writing you want feedback on? Join us for a small group critique workshop. We will explain the process and set aside tables for small groups to review any works in progress.

Each table has a moderator to ensure that feedback is commensurate with your writing experience. Bring your own printouts, at least 6 copies of double-spaced manuscripts, no more than 4 pages, or 1600 words. Fiction, non-fiction and poetry. We meet at a public library and all work must be appropriate for a general audience.

Your work will be marked up, discussed and returned to you during the workshop.

Feedback is always a suggestion; the author has the final say.

You are welcome to audit but only give feedback if you are willing to receive it!



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2024 AT 10 AM

Critique Workshop

Public · Event by **California Writers Club - Inland Empire**

Our mission at the California Writers Group is to provide education and support for writers in our communities. Our motto is "Writers Helping Writers" Join us!

SEPTEMBER 2024 MEETING

WHAT'S COMING UP

AUGUST 2024 MEETING

PROGRAM REVIEW

**“Navigating the Bazaar: Marketing My Bicultural Memoir”
by Ellen Estilai**

Presentation Review August 31, 2024 by Elisabeth Anghel

The monthly meeting of Inland Empire CWC took place during the Labor Day weekend on Aug. 31, 2024. Even the weather was exceedingly hot and traditionally people gone on the long week end, the meeting was well attended. The presenter, Ms. Ellen Estilai, was introduced by Judy Kohlen, the club’s president.

Ms. Ellen Estilai built her presentation along her memoir book published by Inlandia Institute on Oct. 15, 2023 titled *Exit Prohibited: A Memoir*. Ms. Estilai opened with a lecture from her book to set the stage of her talk. First chapter is describing the young American educated couple relocating in Iran, the environment and turmoil created by the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the concern and confusion among population, the uncertainty of family to leave their adopted country, the effort to preserve integrity of her family, and the final heartbreaking decision to leave her husband behind.

The reading introduced the public to the major events that modeled the life of a young, educated family during one of the powerful society changing events among many in the last part of the twentieth century. Both spouses had the immigrant experience. Ali, the husband, was a native from Iran and, with big sacrifices from the family, came to study and achieve advanced degrees in United States at UC Davis. Returned back in his country he was awarded a teaching position in the University of Teheran. Ellen, the wife, was from United States and she met her future husband at UC Davis, got married and joined him to her adopted country, Iran. They had a good future together to raise a family. Ellen was received with love by Ali’s family. She on her turn immerse herself in the Iranian/Persian culture by learning the language, cultural society norms, specific family dynamics, and achieved an English language teaching position with the Teheran Museum of Contemporary Art.

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 changed the Imperial State of Iran to the Islamic State of Iran. There was deep change in the society that created large movement among the population at many levels. That brought the decision in Estilai's family to return to United States. The memoir continues with detailed events and the tumult experienced by the family until reuniting in the end.

Ms. Ellen Estilai used the strategy of Micromarketing to promote her memoir. The memoir covers abundantly cultural aspects and customs from her adopted family and country that she appropriated. Sometime this approach could bring questions and reserved approval.

As a vehicle to promote her book, Ms. Estilai consulted with Iranian American organizations, participated in intercultural panels, personal presentations to Iranian communities in United States. The cover of the book was currected by the author. It is an authentic antique painting from the New York Metropolitan Museum available in the pubic domain.

The Micromarketing strategy proved to be a good venue. The memoir is selling on Amazon with very good reviews, Barnes and Noble, Inlandia Institute, and others.

The presentation closed with a session of **Q&A**. Some of the answers:

- Memoir took 2-3 years to write, followed by a 15 years period of copy and development editing to make it ready for publishing
- Audio format is in the works
- Translation in Farsi (Persian) to follow
- Beginner writers should read similar works with ones interest
- Writers Market (Annual Publication) to learn about different publishers and interest topics
- Self publishing is an entry way to traditional publishing

Online resources to buy the memoir:

Vroman's Bookstore: <https://www.vromansbookstore.com/book/9781955969178>

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Exit-Prohibited-Memoir-Ellen-Estilai/dp/B0CJXQ7GLL>

Barnes and Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/exit-prohibited-ellen-estilai/1144127365>

MEMBER

Spotlight

Meet your vice president!

BEN

Ben Alirez retired after working more than 30 years with the City of Los Angeles, much of it writing correspondence, policies, procedures, and report writing. In 2004, he co-authored a young adult paperback with Paul Langan entitled "Brothers in Arms." Four years later, he produced "El Gato's Revenge," a novel about a promising inner-city boxer struggling with tragedy and vengeance. Ben has now dedicated himself to writing encouraging stories of hope and promise, including "Embers of Innocence" on the COVID-19 pandemic, and a continuation of "El Gato's Revenge." His short stories have also been featured in three anthologies and this year's Literary Review. He currently serves as Vice-President, and Membership Chair. We asked him a few questions about his years with the club.



ALIREZ

When did you start attending CWC?

In 2019, I read that the High Desert branch of the CWC was having a book signing in Victorville. Hoping to gain a little insight on the benefits of a writing club, member Beckie Lindsey offered some advice and informed me a CWC branch was not too far from my home—the IECWC. I joined the branch a month or two later. Sad to say, Beckie Lindsey passed away earlier this year. There is no doubt she was a great blessing to me.

To learn all I could about the craft of creative writing. I saw that IECWC had a great deal to offer. For example, guest speakers on a myriad of writing subjects. The Critique Group was also instrumental early on. I found the comradery extremely helpful in my development.

Why, what was your primary objective in joining our branch?

Did you reach that goal?

In terms of improving my writing skills, I think so. I'm far more confident in my ability than I was prior to joining the club. That's not to say I'll ever stop learning or striving to be better, but I recognize IECWC has benefited me greatly.

Well, I find that it's an organization where you get back what you put into it. Being a member of the IECWC means that you are part of a team. Your voice has an audience. Whether it's input on guest speakers, subject matter, creative ideas, Fresh Ink articles, the possibilities are endless. I appreciate that.

What made you stay so long with us?

What have you done besides being our Treasurer for the past years?

I've done a little of the Secretarial duties by producing minutes for the board meetings. I've contributed several Fresh Ink articles since joining the club. I produced and directed a play, a murder mystery, performed by club members last year.

Two things come to mind:

- 1) You really have to enjoy writing to do it. It's too difficult to do unless it's a labor of love.
- 2) There isn't any right or wrong way to be a writer. What works for some, does not necessarily work for others, e.g., plotter vs. pantsers. The process is a different journey for all of us and that's what makes it so special and rewarding.

What are your top writing tip(s)?

What support technology, tools, and/or classes are you currently using?

I approach writing very analytically. I plot. I profile. I keep spreadsheets. I study other styles. While working at LADWP I took all the writing courses they offered. Of course, they were for report writing and business writing. A little different than creative writing. Now, I have a library of writing self-help books and I'm fine with that. I also subscribe to Writers Digest and use ProWritingAid software to help with manuscripts. I'm considering novel-writing programs like Dabble, but I'm not sure I'll make the jump yet.

I'm hoping to complete my next novel, "El Gato's Crusade" by the end of the year. It's a project that started around 2007 about gang violence. After that, I may try writing short stories. I have no shortage of ideas in mind for more novels, too.

What writing are you working on?

Constance Cassinelli prides herself on her determination and resourcefulness. When she was a teen, Constance discovered family letters inside a trunk. They were written in Italian and she made a promise to research her family roots. Her great-grandfather's family lived in a seventeenth-century monastery in Northern Italy and survived the 1848 European Revolutions and the Italian peninsula's Risorgimento. However, the letters disappeared, lost or stolen, for thirty years. For decades, she researched the history of the area and gathered as much information as best she could but without the letters, she didn't have the full details. She truly suffered from a promise she couldn't keep. In 2023, Cassinelli delivered on her life-long quest by publishing *Caro Nicola: Promise Kept*, her most recent book.

Ms. Cassinelli joined the club to figure out how to write that story--and ended up producing many other works! In 2016, she joined the board to serve as the critique group coordinator. Her goal is to encourage writers to help other writers through constructive feedback.



Cassinelli has three tips for successful writing:

- (1) Be persistent and joyful about your research. Good things will happen. Ms. Cassinelli had been told that the letters were lost, but she kept looking for them. She eventually found the correspondence, took a trip to Italy to research, and had a "bucket list" experience!
- (2) Do not accept the word "no." The word should be used with more discretion as often it stifles discovery.
- (3) Join her critique group! It is a fun way to learn about writing and hold yourself accountable.

CONSTANCE CASSINELLI

Ms Cassinelli's first novel, *Cayenne and the Diablo Kid*, a Western melodrama, received nine five-star ratings on Amazon. Cassinelli has published three short stories in the 2019 IECWC Anthology. Five stories are included in the 25th Anniversary Anthology of the Inland Empire California Writers Club. Constance enjoys writing humor. She has worked on a humorous novella-cookbook set in England, some flash non-fiction involving eccentric family members, and numerous comedies-of-errors tales about her poet friend, Jeannie Weenie. Her work has appeared in Fresh Ink thirteen times, SoCal Writers Showcase six times. She also wrote a wonderful obituary for a friend in the Claremont Courier. Her novel and her lifelong quest were featured in The Claremont Courier on March 8th, 2024.

Constance is currently wrapping up the Cassinelli saga with a second volume, *Caro Nicola: Journey to Principio*. She is married with two adult sons. In September, there are two opportunities to meet her in person. She is hosting a critique workshop on Saturday September 14, at 10 am at the Ovitt Library in Ontario. She is one of one of the Claremont authors at an event hosted by The Friends of the Claremont Library on September 28th.



benefits of IECWC

MEMBERSHIP

- ALL AGES are welcome!
- Entrance into monthly meetings
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Access to monthly speakers on topics related to the craft
- Exposure & practice by submitting to our monthly literary newsletter, FRESH INK
- Network with other club members
 - (various levels of expertise, mentors)
- Participation in Critique Groups
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Your OWN PAGE on our Club website at no additional cost
 - Highlight your bio, photo, website, social media, and published books
- Opportunities to serve on the board or on committees of our branch
- Camaraderie among other writers at all levels, all genres, and all ages!
- Partake, volunteer, and/or help plan our Spring and Fall Conferences which are provided at little (or sometimes no) cost to our members
- Annual opportunity to showcase your work at Open Mic events.
- Annual opportunity, each January, to attend/appear on our Panel of Authors
 - Members who were published the year before
 - Learn/share advice on the publication process, ask/answer questions, and buy/sell your books on site
- Annual opportunity to submit, read, and assist with judging the competitive Statewide CWC Literary Review, with readership of about 2,000 members and their readers and associates
- Simultaneous Co-Membership into California Writers Club
 - Our state-level parent organization at www.calwriters.org, with additional volunteer opportunities

- Read/advertise in the Tri-Annual CWC Bulletin available online, free of charge
 - Access to news from the other CWC Branches throughout California, gaining perspective about other serious, mostly published, writers, editors, Web designers, graphics experts, etc.
- Potential for your writing to be chosen to be displayed in the Southern California Writers Showcase at www.socalwritersshowcase.com
- A wonderful addition to your curriculum vitae or resume!
- Access to the monthly IECWC Blind Review Team
- Utilize our FACEBOOK PAGE to get your works word out to the public interested in writing

JOIN or RENEW at:

<https://iecwc.com/membership-meetings/>

Active
\$65

Supporting
\$65

Student
\$15
ages 8-22

Renewal of Membership
\$45

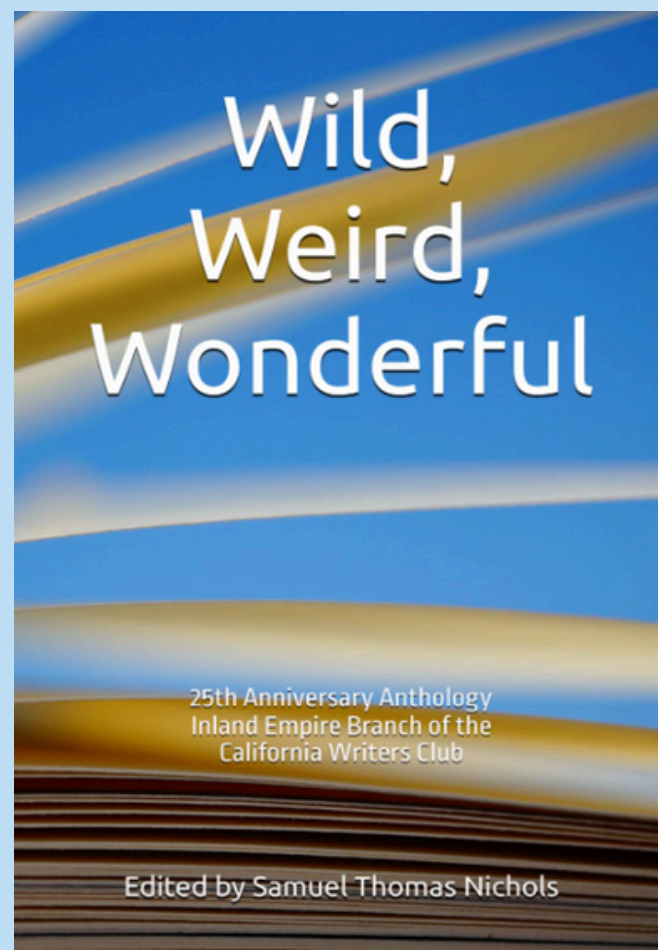
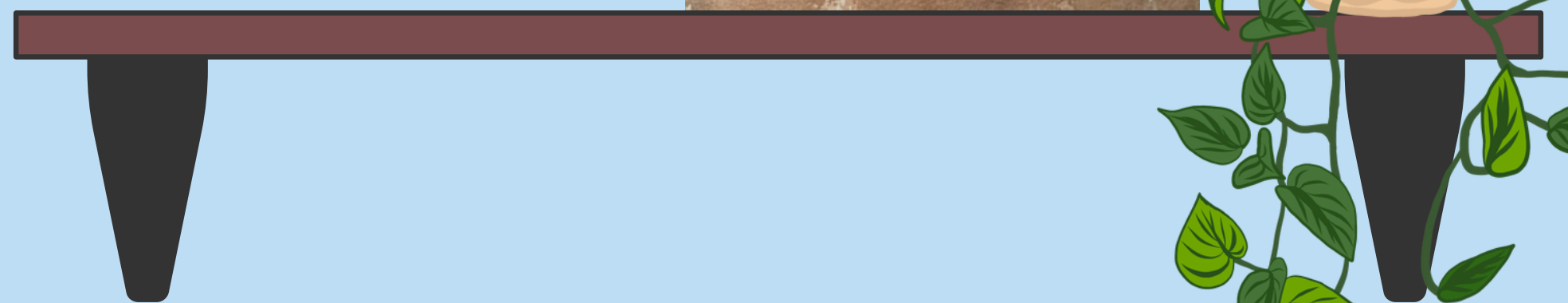
Renewal deadline September 30.
On October 1, CWC shall drop all delinquent members from the rolls. If dropped, you must pay the new \$65 member enrollment fees.



CWC's Best of the Best: 2024 Literary Review

A collection of poems and stories selected from Branch publications. This 300+ page collection is on sale for **\$15.00** on Amazon. There are stories and poems from 20 of the branches.

<https://a.co/d/45iqsdm>

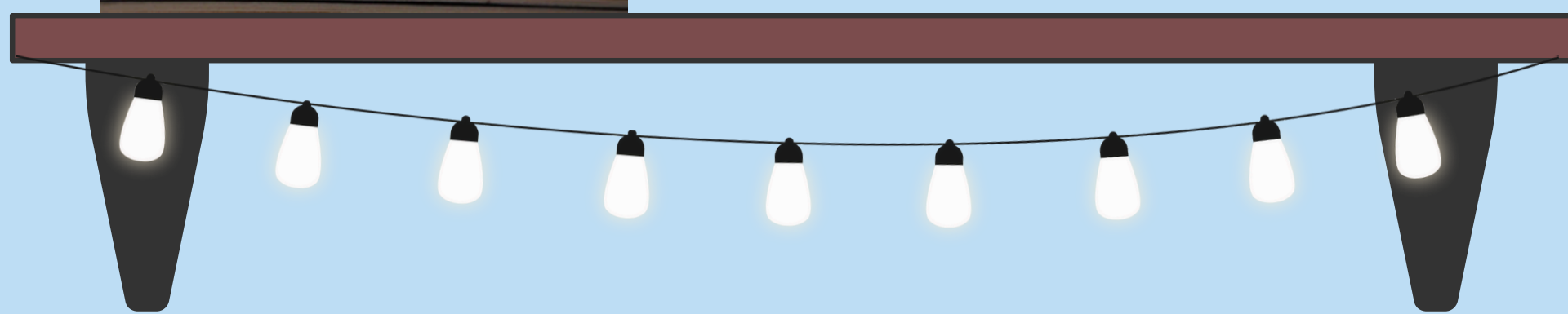


Wild, Weird, Wonderful: 25th Anniversary Anthology Inland Empire Branch of the California Writers Club

<https://a.co/d/0SVxuPT>

This collection includes short stories, poetry, memoir, nonfiction, memoir, original drawings and photographs, and one novelette entitled *Murder in Huckleberry Heights*.

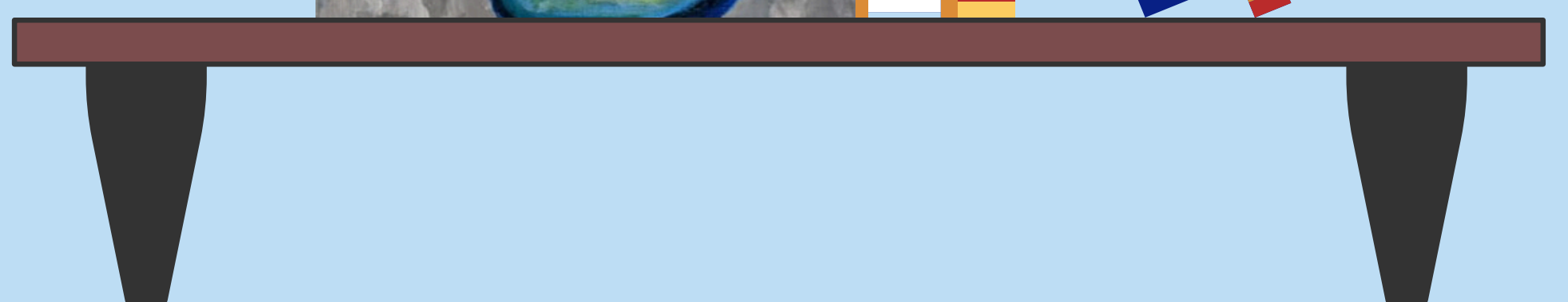
This anthology contains the varietal work of eighteen members of the Inland Empire Branch with several genres being represented.



Vision & Verse: A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry

The multi-talented artists and writers featured within these pages have come together to create a dialogue between their respective mediums. This collection showcases the beauty of visual art married with the magic of the written word.

<https://a.co/d/2zu0Afx>



Kudos Korner

MEMBERS NEW PUBLICATIONS & ACTIVITIES



Congratulations **John J. McBrearty!**

On 8/28, he conducted a book signing at a veterans charity golf tournament in LA and will be releasing his next book on 9/11, conducting a leadership seminar on 9/25, and attending the Military Writers Society of America (MWSA) annual convention in SD 9/26-28.

Congratulations **Leticia Bradford!**

She was accepted into the Community Literature Institute's (CLI), out of LA, Poetry Publishing Program.



HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK TO SOCALWRITERSSHOWCASE.COM

- You must be a member in good standing
 - AKA submitted application & paid your dues
- Maximum length of submissions: 500 words
 - You can add 1 link to your website
- Software: Microsoft Word (.docx) file attachment
- No indents, columns, tables or bullet points
- Subject line must read: SUBMISSION FOR SOCAL SHOWCASE
- In Body of email: list (1) your name, (2) your branch name, and (3) title of work
 - Also in the Body, include this permission: "I am submitting this for use on the CWC South website and confirm that I am a member of a Southern branch of the California Writers Club. I further confirm that it is my original work and all rights to its use belong to me. CWC South may use this on its website, archive it for future use on its website or choose to not use it, however the rights I grant are non-exclusive and I retain the right to sell it, allow its publication elsewhere including simultaneously, and all other rights to its use. CWC South is not paying me for its use. CWC South may not sell it or authorize its use outside of the CWC South website without"
- Send email & attachment to the current branch President, Judy Kohnen.
 - She will verify membership and will forward it on to be published.



Visit www.socalwritersshowcase.com to familiarize yourself with the categories of content.

- Short fiction: "flash fiction" - stories with beginning, middle, end
- Memoir: short memoir pieces or vignettes about our past
- A Writer's Life: ideas, humor, tips to keep your writing going
- Craft: "how-to" articles related to writing or marketing your work

Most work is accepted by the Editor if it is of appropriate quality. The site is updated monthly, but there may be a backlog in a category. Once your work appears on the site, it stays on the site for 6 months. After that, your name and the title of your work will appear on the Archive List page by month. You retain the copyright for your submission. Our website copyright notice: Articles or stories appearing on this website submitted by members are copyrighted with all rights reserved by their respective authors. Note that some contests/publishers will consider posting on a website to mean that the piece has been previously published and perhaps ineligible for a contest or future publication, so keep that in mind.

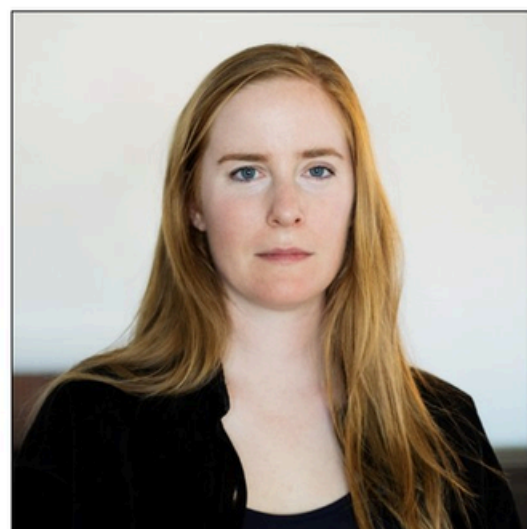
Fourth Saturdays:
Poetry at the Claremont Library

PROUDLY PRESENTS A READING BY

NANCY MILLER GOMEZ & SARA ELLEN FOWLER

2:00 PM Saturday, August 24, 2024

NANCY MILLER GOMEZ is the author of *Inconsolable Objects* (YesYes Books) and the chapbook *Punishment* (Rattle chapbook series), a collection of poems and essays about her experience teaching in prisons and jails. Her work has appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Adroit Journal*, *TriQuarterly*, *New Ohio Review*, *The Rumpus*, *Massachusetts Review*, *VerseDaily*, and elsewhere. With Ellen Bass, she co-founded an organization that provides writing workshops to incarcerated women and men; she has taught poetry in Salinas Valley State Prison, the Santa Cruz County Jails, and Juvenile Hall. She lives with her family in Santa Cruz, CA.



SARA ELLEN FOWLER is the author of *Two Signatures* (University of Utah Press, 2024), winner of the 2023 Agha Shahid Ali Prize in Poetry (selected by Joan Naviyuk Kane). A recipient of a 2023 California Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowship, Sara holds a BFA in Fine Art from Art Center College of Design and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of California, Riverside. Publication credits include: *The Offing*, *X-TRA Contemporary Art Journal*, *Gigantic Sequins*, and *Cream City Review*, among others.

This reading will take place at the Claremont Helen Renwick Library,
208 N. Harvard Ave. in Claremont, CA.

Please check your email and our Facebook page for updates;
[follow local covid protocols](#) (masks, distancing) as needed.

Presented in association with

The Claremont Helen Renwick Library & the Friends of the Claremont Library

Save the date for
upcoming readings:

- Saturday, August 24 @ 2:00pm: Sara Ellen Fowler & Nancy Miller Gomez
- Saturday, Sept 28 @ 2:00pm: Tiffany K. Elliott & Scott Noon Creley
- Saturday, Oct 26 @ 2:00pm: Lory Bedikian & Anna Leahy
- Saturday, Nov 23 @ 2:00pm: Poets About Town open mic

Fourth Saturdays: Poetry at the
Claremont Library

Poetry With Purpose Open Mic
dates for the rest of 2024:

- September 28
- October 26
- November 30
- December 28

All 5-7 pm
Rival Coffee Co.
24865 Hospitality PL Bldg E
Murrieta, CA 92562

\$10 admission fee
Purchase tickets at
[eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com) or at the door.

Poetry With Purpose 
Hope Service non profit

@ Rival Coffee Co. 
24865 Hospitality Pl Bldg E
Murrieta, Ca 92562

5-7 pm
Last Saturday
Every month

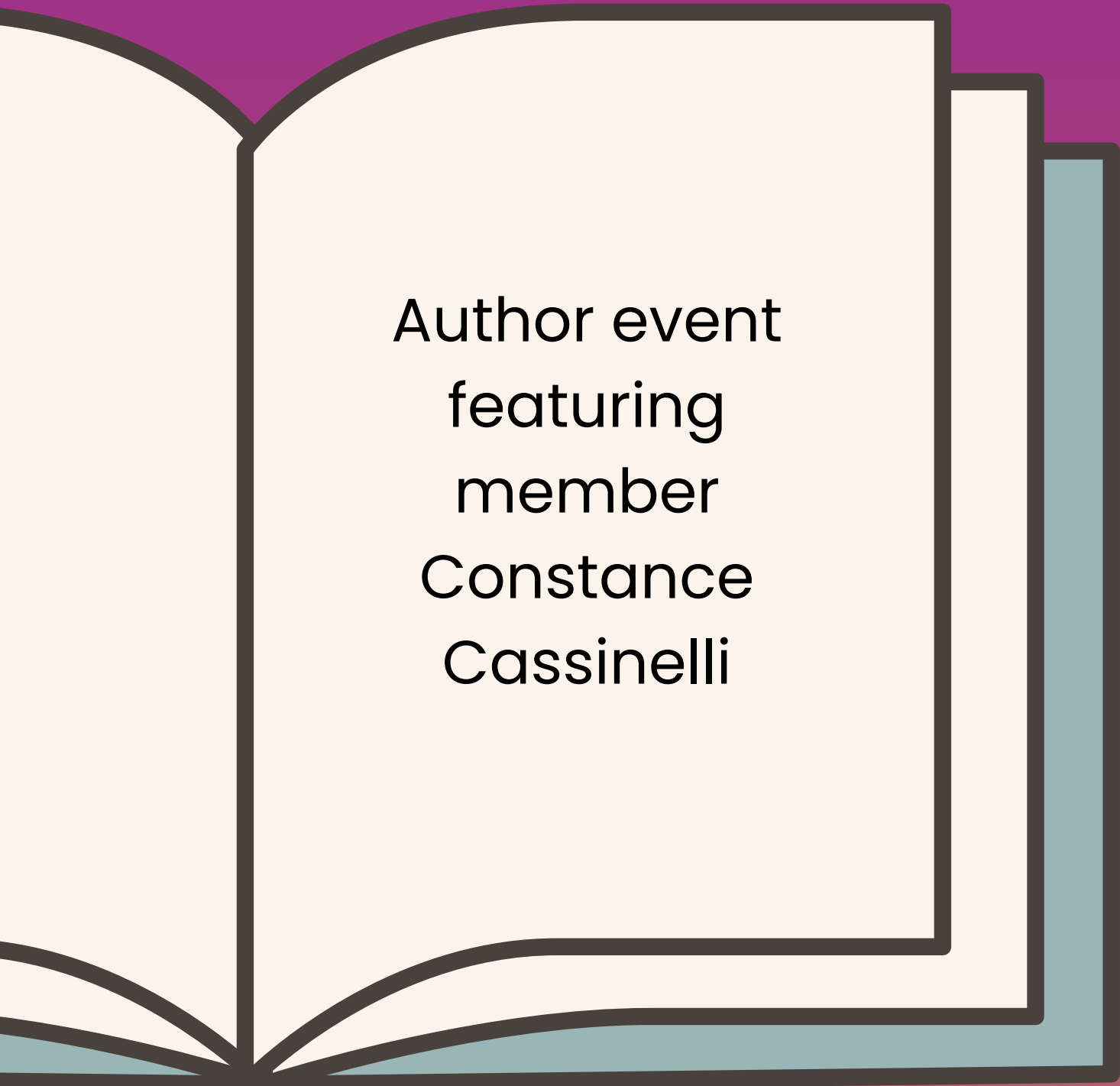
I'LL BE THERE I'LL BE SQUARE

Join us for Poetry Night, an enchanting celebration of the written word where the magic of language comes to life!

Admission is \$10 at the door. All proceeds go towards supporting our dedicated teachers and our Educator of the Month program.

More info: <https://3030publishing.com/poetry-with-purpose/>

POETRY WITH PURPOSE PRESENTS
THE POETRY LOUNGE



Claremont Authors Event

September 28, 2024

Claremont Helen Renwick Library
Meeting Room
208 N. Harvard Ave Claremont

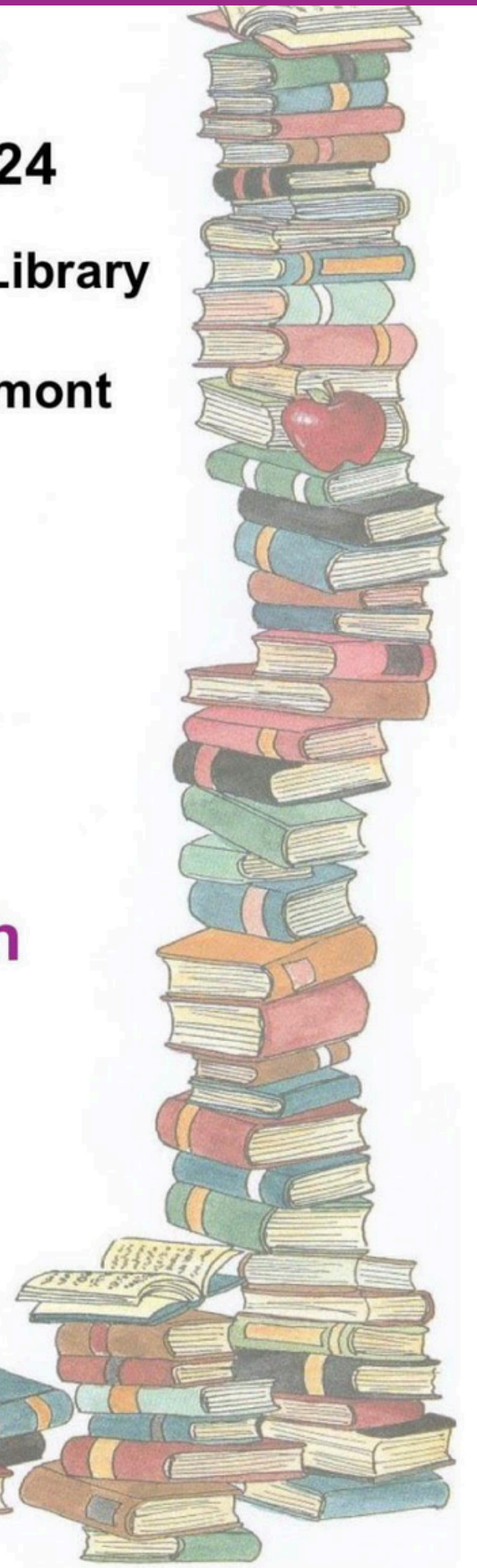
Talks by Local Authors

10:00 – 11:00



Meet and Mingle with Authors

11:00 – 12:00



Friends of the Claremont Library

A poster for a book event. At the top, it says "One Book ONE ONTARIO" and "SEPTEMBER 1 - 30, 2024". In the center is a photo of author Nikki Erlick with her hand on her chin. To her left is the book cover for "THE MEASURE" by Nikki Erlick, which is a "NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER". A blue banner at the bottom reads "BEYOND THE PAGES: A CONVERSATION WITH NIKKI ERLICK" and "SEPT. 25 6PM-8PM". At the bottom left is the Ontario City Library logo. At the bottom right is the Ovitt Family Community Library address and phone number. Social media handles are also listed.

Friends of Ontario City Library

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE MEASURE

NIKKI ERLICK

BEYOND THE PAGES: A CONVERSATION WITH NIKKI ERLICK

SEPT. 25 6PM-8PM

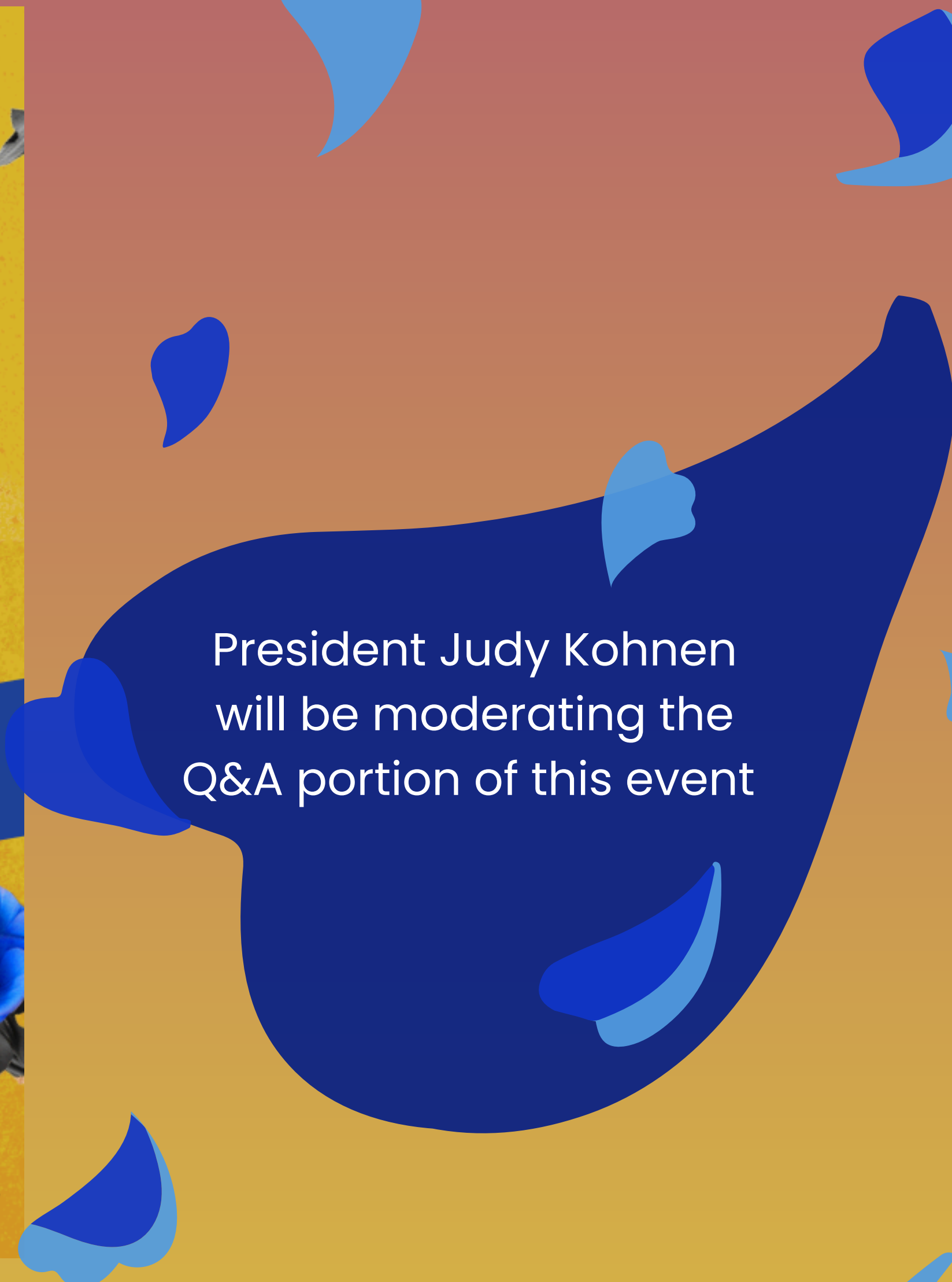
Hear from the creative mind behind the captivating novel *The Measure* during this Q&A with author Nikki Erlick. This evening will be enlightening, filled with insights into the writing process, the inspiration behind the book, and a deeper exploration of the themes that resonate within its pages.

Mayor Paul S. Leon • Mayor pro Tem Debra Porada
Council Members Alan D. Wapner, Jim W. Bowman, and Ruben Valencia

Ovitt Family Community Library
215 E C St, Ontario, CA 91764
For more information, please call (909) 395-2205.

@OntarioCLC @OntarioCLC @CityofOntarioCLC

ONTARIO CITY LIBRARY



Exploring the Art of Character

September 21, 2024
presented by [DiAnn Mills](#)



The purpose of a story is for the reader to hook arms with a character and walk together into an adventure—to imagine, envision, care, and feel. The writer journeys a character from an ordinary world into an extraordinary tale, one in which a challenge is accepted, paving the road for potential growth in one scene after another. The problems encountered along the way initiate a desire for the character to rectify a situation. The writer uses a character to persuade readers to experience life from a different point of view. Not only does the reader enter the character's personality, but also finds a bit of him/herself in the character's pursuit to solve a problem or reach a goal.



In this workshop, utilizing hands-on exercises, the writer will learn how to develop unique, three-dimensional characters.

DiAnn Mills is a bestselling author who believes her readers should expect an adventure. She creates action-packed, suspense-filled novels to thrill readers. Her titles have appeared on the CBA and ECPA bestseller lists, won two Christy Awards, Golden Scroll Awards, Selah Award, and finalist in the RITA, Daphne Du Maurier, Inspirational Readers' Choice, and Carol award contests. She is a founding board member of the American Christian Fiction Writers, an active member of the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers, Advanced Writers and Speakers Association, Mystery Writers of America, the Jerry Jenkins Writers Guild, and International Thriller Writers. She speaks to various groups and teaches writing all over the country.

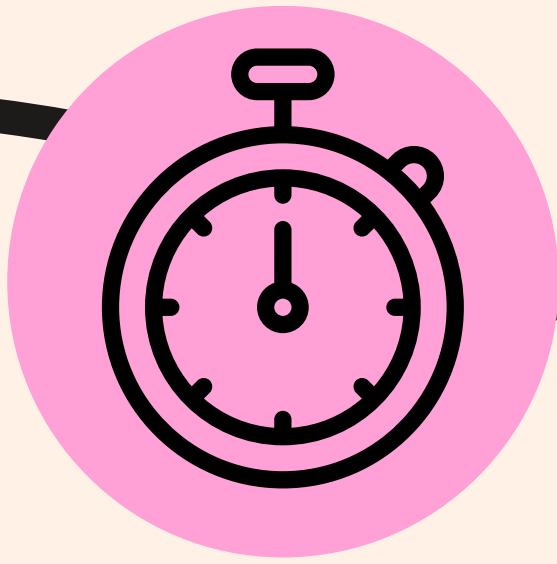
DIAMOND VALLEY WRITERS' GUILD

- Meeting on September 21, 2024
 - 9:30 am (PT)
 - 300 E Latham Ave, Hemet, CA 92543
- Contact featured speaker at dianmills.com

- First pre-conference event at SLO Library on September 28, 2024
- Conference on October 5, 2024
- 18 sessions
- 25 speakers
- Register by October 4, 2024
- More info at <https://www.cuesta.edu/communityprograms/writers-conference/>

Deadlines

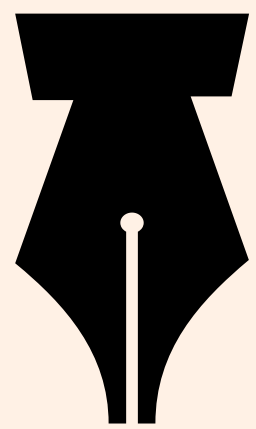
Submissions are due the **15th** of every month



Content Limits

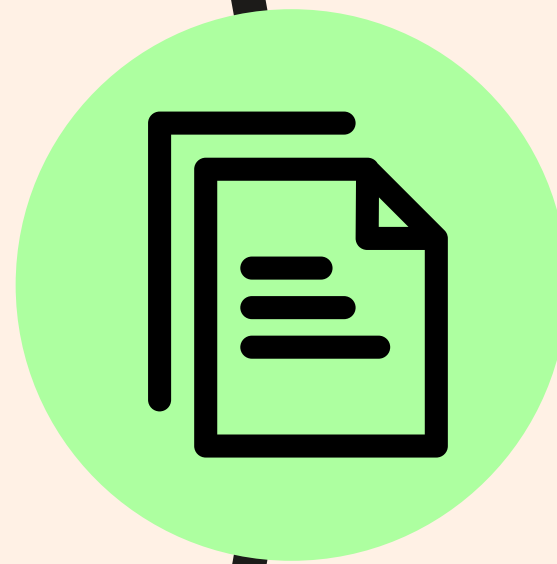
Submissions with the following will not be considered:

- Excessive or gratuitous violence (violence for violence sake)
- Excessive or gratuitous profanity
- Excessive or gratuitous sexual situations or pornography
- Political or religious agendas that are meant to persuade or denounce



FRESH INK

guidelines



Form

- Prose word count <1,200
- No line count on poetry

Send as an attachment
Google or Word document
Times New Roman
12pt font

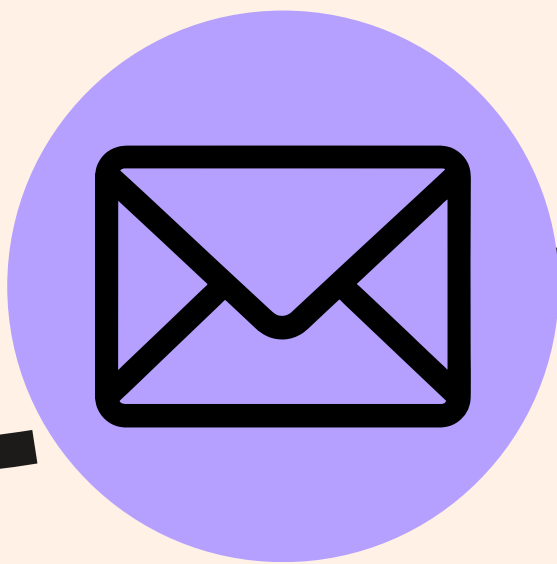


Photos

Accompanying images are optional

We can only publish digital images that **do not violate copyright**

You are encouraged to submit photos you have taken



Email

Share with Abigail Handojo at iecwcfreshink@gmail.com

Subject line must read "FRESH INK - month"

Replace "month" with your target month for publication

Check your email periodically for suggestions from the editor

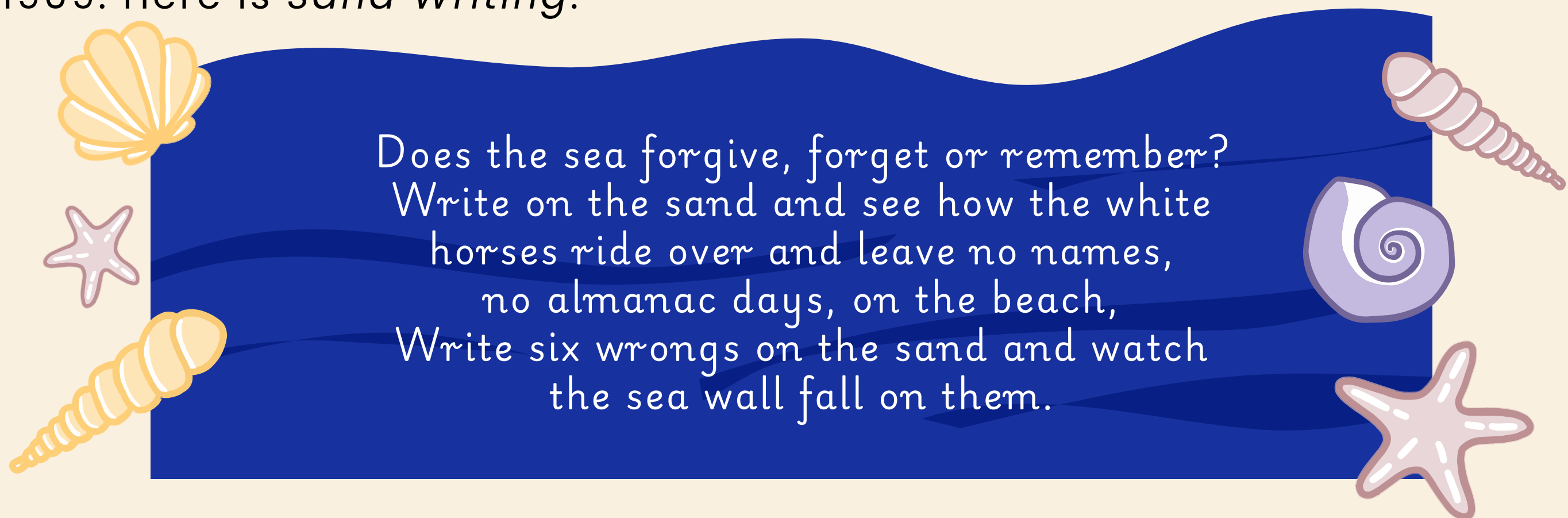
Poetry Musings

SAMUEL THOMAS NICHOLS

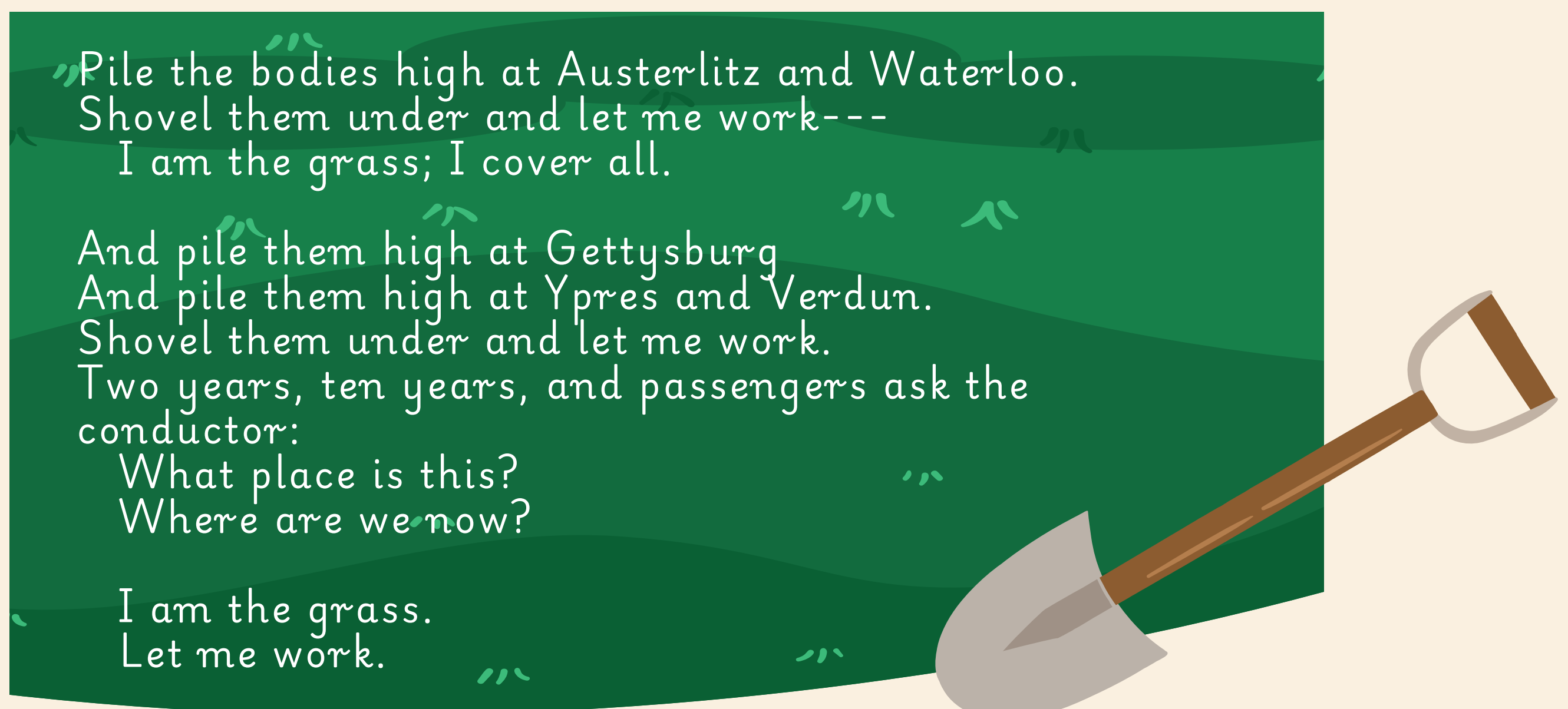
Big Ideas, Wee Packages

My cousin Michele sometimes shares a poem with me that she finds meaningful and I will often send her one in return. Many times when we think of a poem of significance it is often a monumental work of art, perhaps like John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. But there are so many tiny poems that pack a wallop, so to speak.

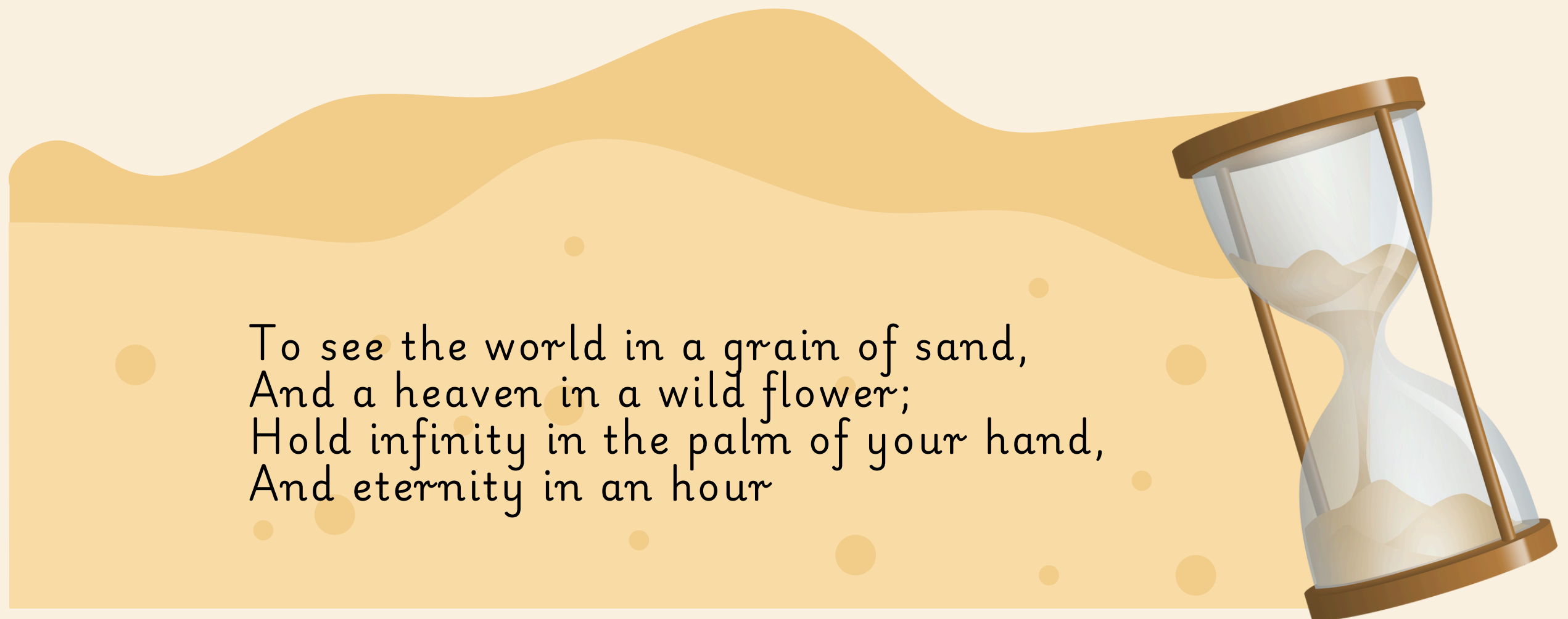
For example, my cousin sent me a poem by Carl Sandburg that I had not seen, before her email to me some years ago, titled *Sand Writing*, composed in 1909. Here is *Sand Writing*:



And maybe, the sea will wash away our sins. Carl Sandburg was an amazing individual. He was a renowned Abraham Lincoln biographer, poet, songwriter, journalist, and a three-time Pulitzer winner. He also collected folk songs to preserve for all of us, such as the *Sloop John B*, famously recorded by the Beach Boys. Well, I had long been a fan of Carl Sandburg, having had a copy of the *Chicago Poems* from an early age. One poem of his that I found especially poignant was *Grass*, from *Cornhuskers* (1918).

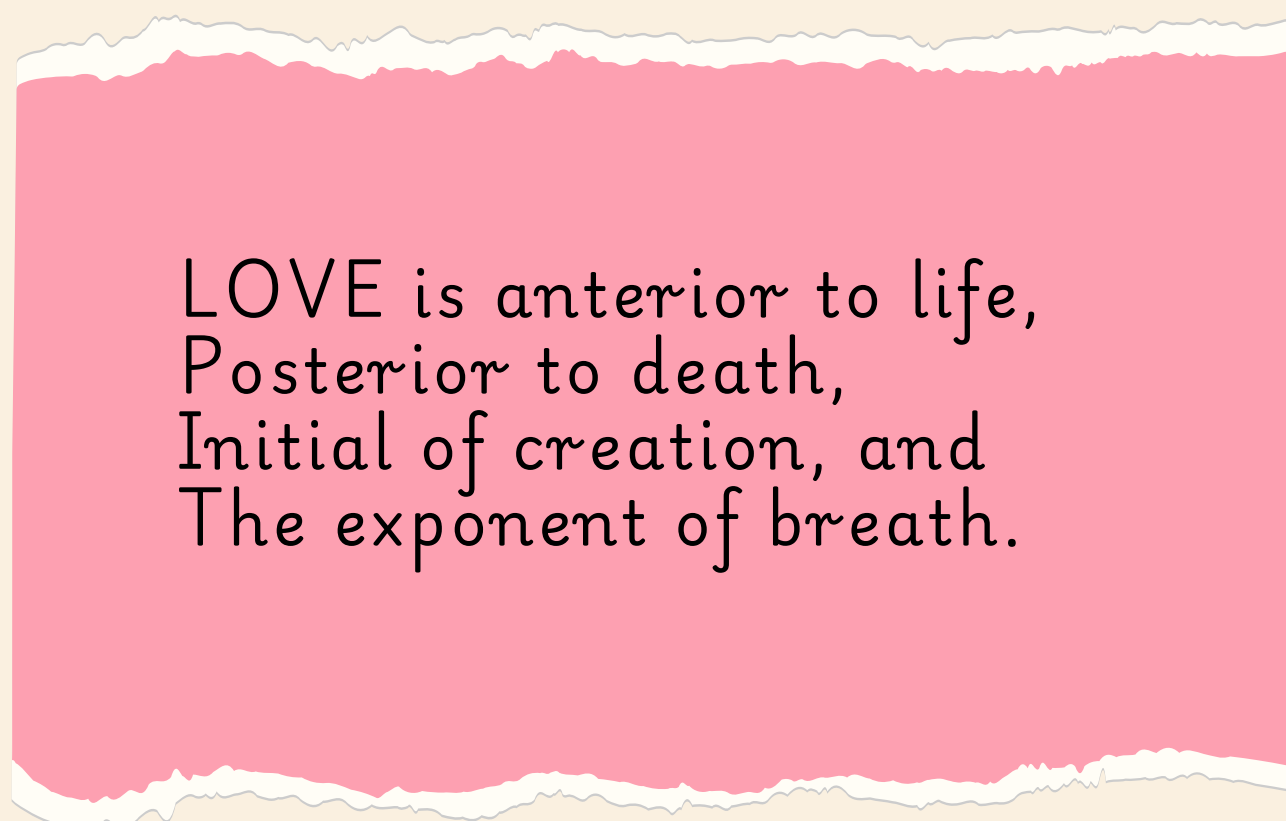


Throughout my life I have had numerous *favorite* poets, which have changed with time and circumstances. One poet, that has remained a favorite for most of my seven decades, has been William Blake. In fact, his wee little package the *Auguries of Innocence* was a poem that I had memorized and carried in my head for a very long time. Here is *Auguries of Innocence* from the 1938 *Collected Poems*, edited by W.B. Yeats:

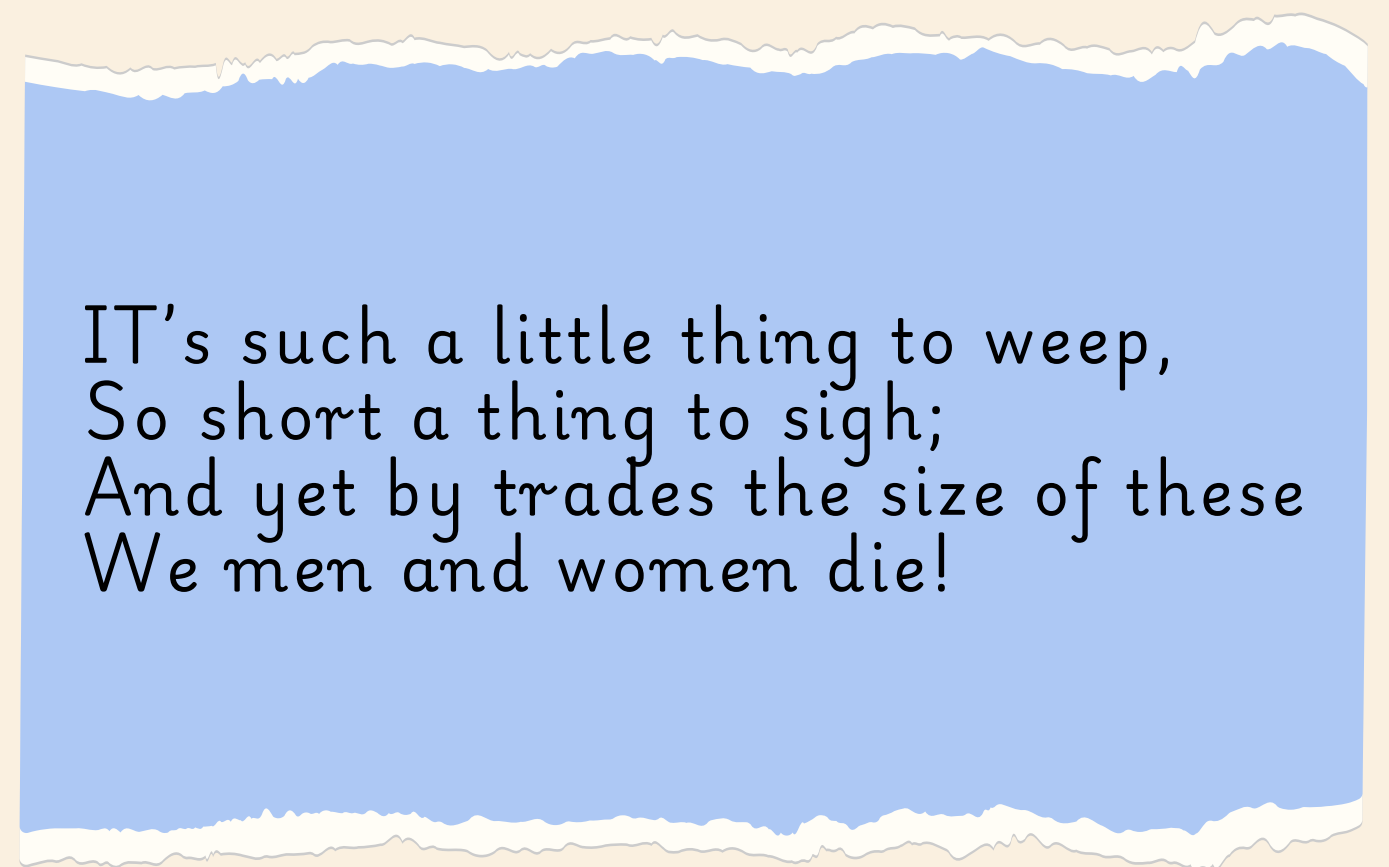


To see the world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower;
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour

So much of Blake to consider. Emily Dickinson was a poet known for her short pithy snapshots of life with a tendency towards death and mortality among her themes. Emily's poems were known for short lines and a lack of titles. She has been anthologized so much that it is hard to ascertain if the title presented is one that Emily chose or was assigned by someone else. Here are two short poems by Emily that I am fond of, *Love* and *Life's Trades* (as edited by Mabel Loomis Todd and T.W. Higginson):

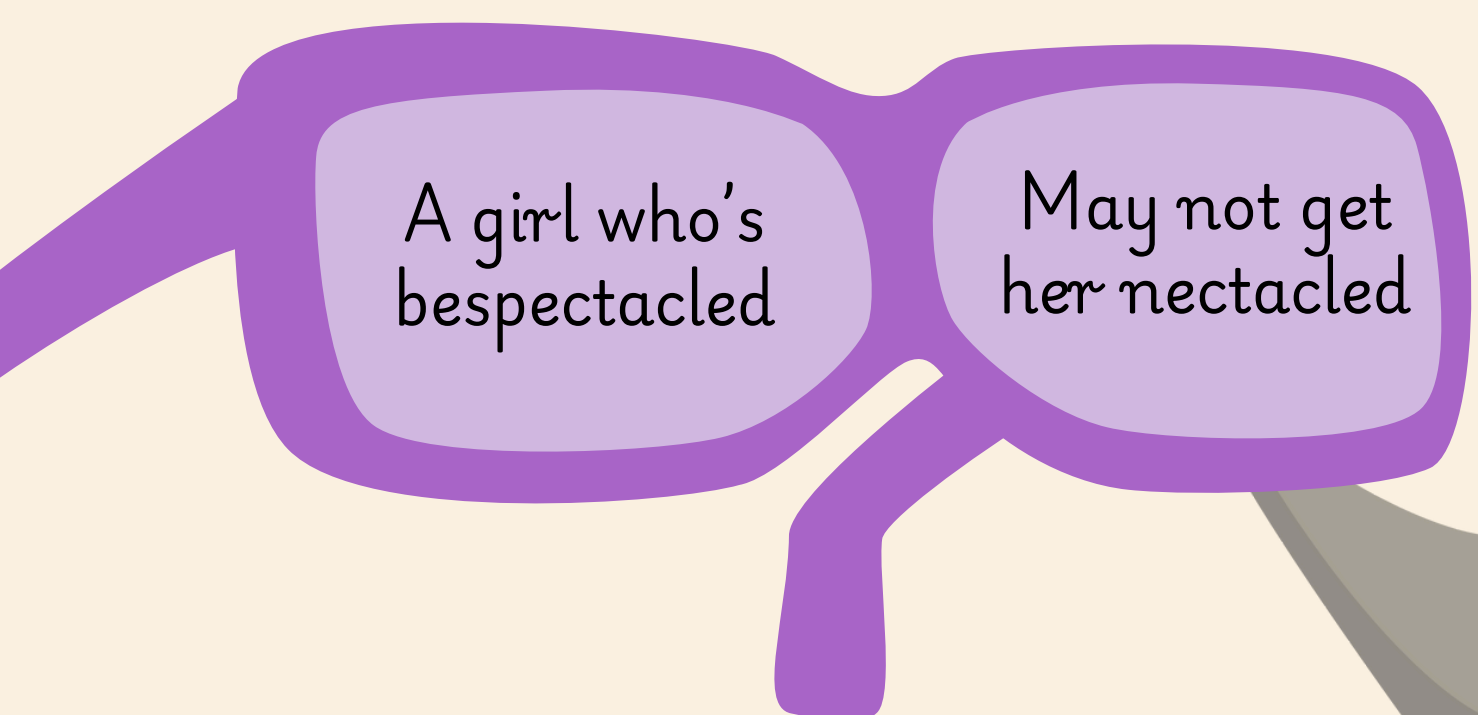


LOVE is anterior to life,
Posterior to death,
Initial of creation, and
The exponent of breath.



IT's such a little thing to weep,
So short a thing to sigh;
And yet by trades the size of these
We men and women die!

Ogden Nash was another poet who was known for his short pithy, and humorous (hee-hee-hee), insights. He was a poet who invented new words to fulfill his rhyme schemes. For example, consider these two novel constructions:



A girl who's
bespectacled

May not get
her nectacled



Farewell, farewell, you old rhinoceros,
I'll stare at something less prepoceros

Girls who wear glasses won't get their necks tickled? I suppose rhinos are indeed somewhat preposterous. Here are three complete, and somewhat short, Ogden Nash poems that I have enjoyed:

Crossing The Border
Senescence begins
And middle age ends
The day your descendants
Outnumber your friends.

A Word To Husbands
To keep your marriage
brimming
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;
Whenever you're right, shut up.

Reflections on Ice Breaking.

Candy
Is dandy
But liquor
Is quicker

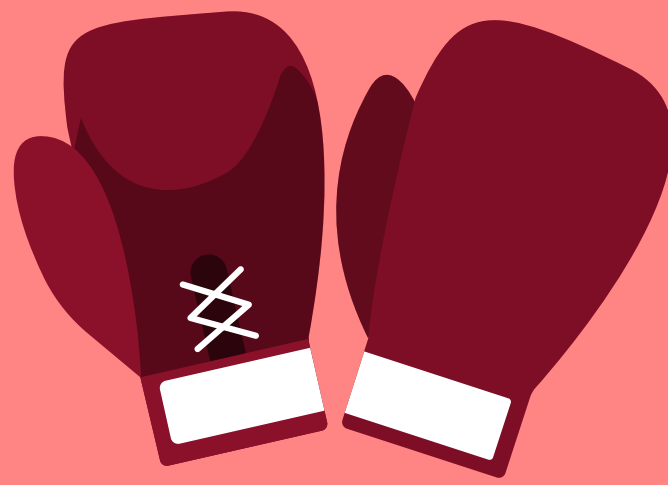
There are so many more nuggets of wisdom, and humorous insights, found within those wee packages of verse. You know, like limericks, those golden wordmines of observation and perception, which, by the way, are not always bawdy, like the ones we learned on those grammar school playgrounds of yore. So, why not share some big ideas in wee packages in the *Fresh Ink*. This month's *Fresh Ink* theme is *resilience*, and so, I leave you with:

Resilience, you are such a peculiar term
To the child who thinks they read, to be silent once again

Until, at last, they're taught to reaffirm
It's all about bouncing back, to where we were, then

Resilience, is that something, that we have all been blessed
with, when we pause to consider that we have, and have
always had, everything we need to make it through this
singular blessing, that we call life, if we only pause for a
moment, to take in Nature's beauty, and her resilience.

THE IMPASSIONED CRIES OF OUR CONSTRUCTS



BY BEN
ALIREZ

Cool, soothing water splashed across my face and washed the cobwebs from my mind. I was used to being splattered with water. It gave me a rush after the constant pounding in the ring. But more importantly, it meant I was about to receive instructions from my corner. It meant I could listen to a plan of attack and make adjustments. This time, however, there was no corner, no one to offer words of wisdom. Instead, I found myself hunched over the bathroom sink alone in my thoughts.

I lifted the towel from the counter and patted my face dry. Red, weary eyes stared back at me from the center of the mirror. I saw a strange emptiness in them.

What now? If only it were all a bad dream. If only I hadn't witnessed my mother wailing in agony over Jesse's casket. If only she didn't have to be peeled away from the coffin by my father as it was being lowered into the ground. If only I could wash away the day's images as easily as I washed my face.

If only ...

It was probably 2005 when the voice of a 16-year-old whispered into the recesses of my mind and demanded an audience. The above narrative takes place not long after one of his brothers loses his life to senseless gang violence.

On the heels of a successfully published novella I co-authored through Townsend Press, I felt I could capture lightning in a bottle, not once, but twice. This time, however, I would go the print-on-demand route and publish a three-part series on the troubled boxer trying to pick up the pieces of a world turned upside down.

“El Gato’s Revenge” was to be book 1 of a trilogy, but my experience with the print-on-demand publisher proved a disappointing endeavor. Discouraged by the experience, I shelved the rest of the project until I felt I could produce a professional exposition and do the story justice.

In the years that followed, the voice of my protagonist prompted me to thread together sentences and chapters like Victor Frankenstein assembled his Frankenstein monster, one precarious piece at a time. But I knew in my heart I couldn’t devote my full attention to the project until I was truly ready to give myself over to learning the craft of writing first.

And that I did once I retired.

Next, I sought to surround myself with like-minded people intent on the same goal. It wasn’t long before I discovered the Inland Empire California Writers Club. Guest speakers, subject-matter-experts, critique groups, self-help books, and writing sources became available, and I poured myself into learning all I could.

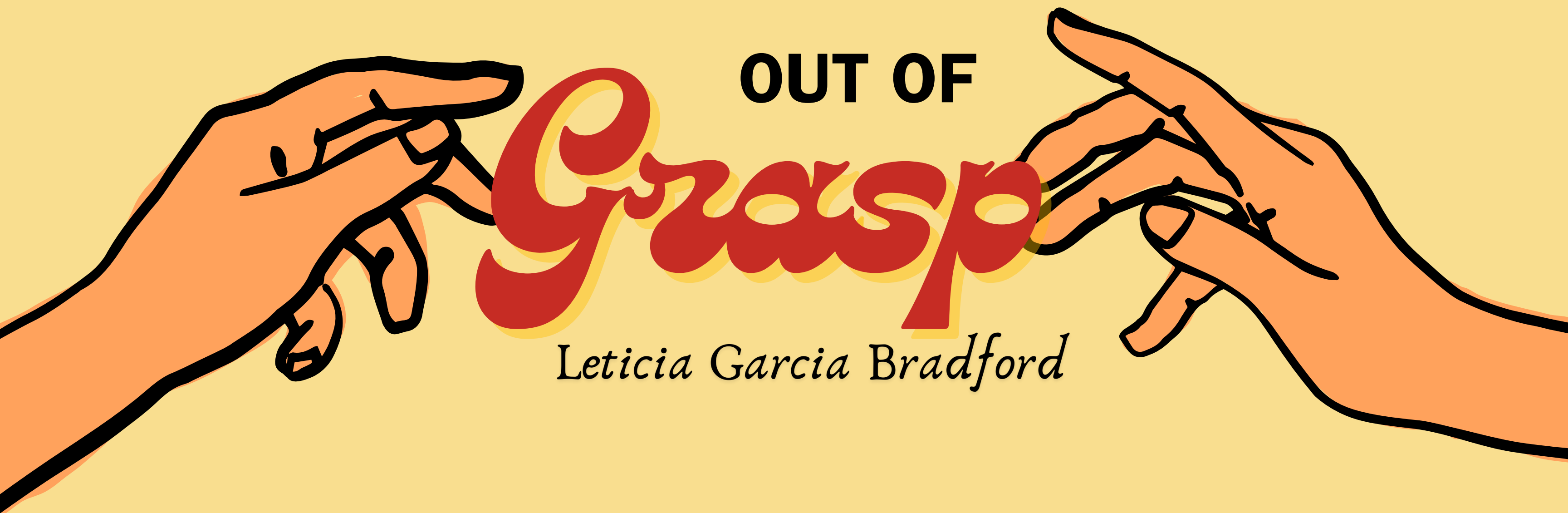
I’ve learned many things in the few years since, like the writing experience is as unique to each of us as the timely stories we produce. One size doesn’t fit all, nor does one method suit all.

I’ve also learned far too many of us believe the measure of success is found only in best-selling books, follows and fanbases, fame and riches. And for a select few, that may be partly true.

But for the vast majority of us, it’s simply about the literary journey and finishing something we set out to do. It’s about learning our craft to the best of our ability. Putting one word in front of the other. Formulating thoughts and themes, apostrophes and perhaps appendices. Recollections and rewrites. Prologues and poems. And ultimately—giving voice to the impassioned cries of our constructs.

I’m determined to complete the telling of “El Gato’s” tale (since renamed “El Gato’s Crusade” in a full-length version later this year or early next). My protagonist is a fighter with an indomitable will to finish what he started. After all these years, can I be any less tenacious than the main character I created?

And so, press on my literary brothers and sisters. Hold fast to the idea you ignited a day ago, a month ago, a year ago, a decade ago. Press on and ... *persevere*.



OUT OF

Grasp

Leticia Garcia Bradford

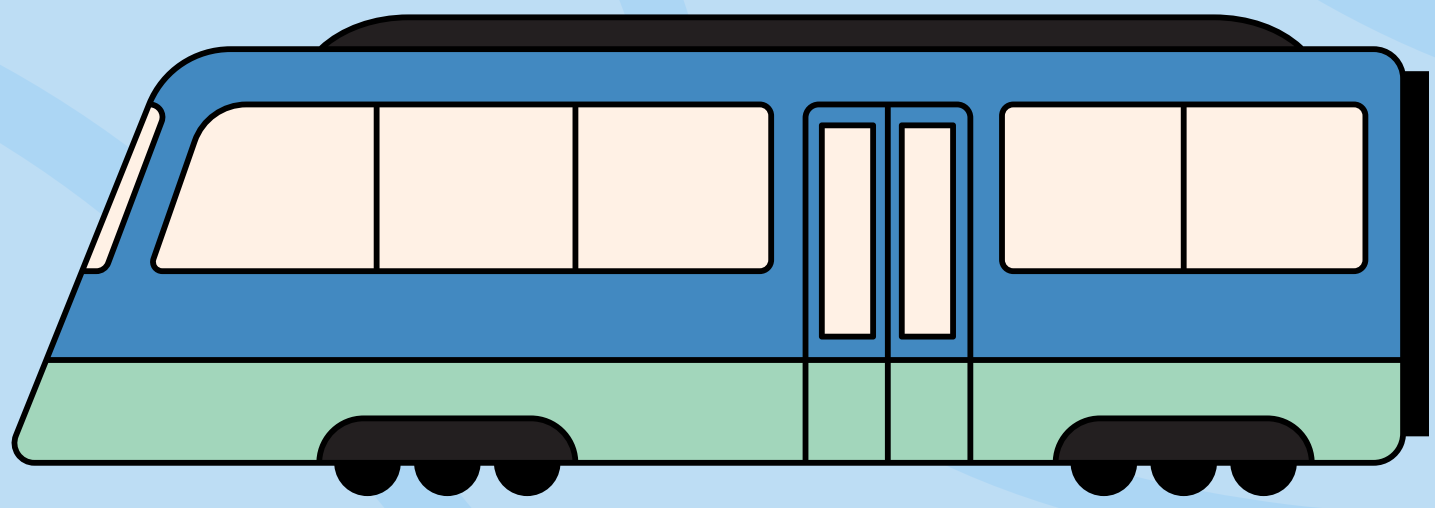
I try hard
to overcome hurdles
fast approaching
Yet in every sense of the word
I feel like a failure
Get closer to the prize
Before it slips away
Buy that lottery ticket
full of hope, fingers crossed
Pinching pennies to pay the rent
Swinging high, but not enough
to release all my troubles
Running to catch the bus
watching it go by
the bus stop, a mere 500 feet away
Grasping a beautiful rose
pricking my fingers
Luscious plump berries
hiding behind a cave of thorns
Extending my hand toward
ripe fruit on the tree
avocados, apricots, pomegranates

The car breaking down
before the next paycheck
Speed reading the library book
finishing after due date
Are late fees a sin?
Needing more drugs
to stave off depression
I feel like I'm running
behind the pack
I wake up each day
to start anew
I put a smile on my face
to fake it
All my insecurities and woes
put into a bottomless pot
shoved up high on the shelf
Yet still within reach
Why can't my uncertainties be
out of grasp?

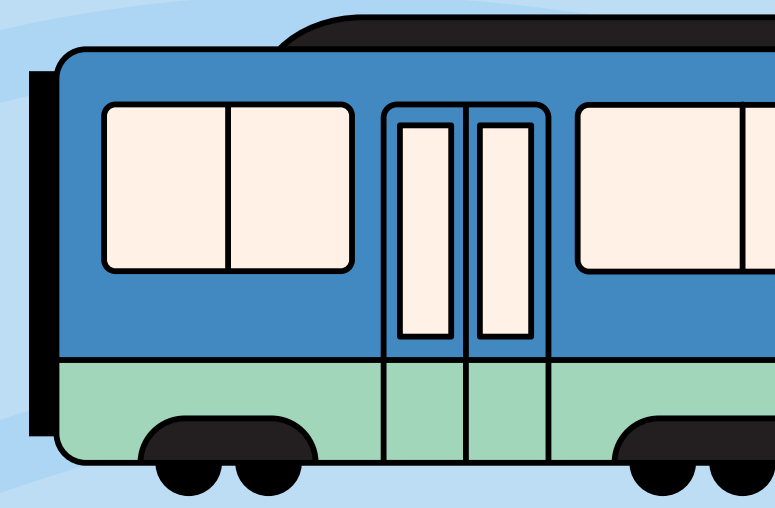
Does the imposter syndrome
ever find a cure?



P e t e r H a l l



My Review for
“Train of Thought”
an original poem
by Abigail Handojo



I really enjoyed your poem that you read at our last meeting, what I particularly enjoyed was your analogy of your mind to a train station; and how you're constantly being stopped and searched by security which are representative of your own fears and doubts about yourself. Your line about carrying baggage that's too heavy but that you can't put down to be especially poignant. I think the feeling of being alone even when surrounded by people is universal, I also thought that your description of feeling like you're impersonating yourself to be one that's universally shared. The Japanese have an expression that everyone has three faces, one they show to the world, one they show to friends and family, and one that they hide from everybody else. We're all pretending to be what we think other people need or want us to be; and not who we really are. The idea that you feel like a prisoner and that you're your own jailer is haunting. It's another universal theme that has been explored many times before because we all are prisoners in our own minds.

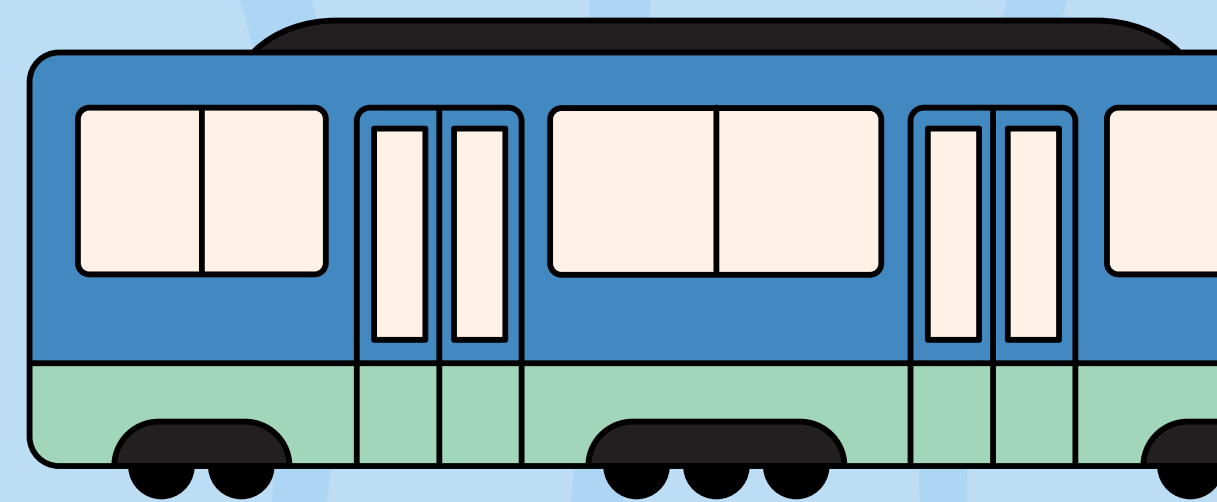
Your use of wordplay and puns was exquisite, I particularly liked the line where you said “Uncertain to socialize, so she lies.” That is another universal feeling that we all have, everybody lies just so they can socialize, we're all afraid that if we show who we really are, people won't accept us. The line where you hopefully exclaimed that you were in the newspaper only to realize that the article in question was being used as lining for shoes was tragically funny, especially the line where you said “Soul under sole, a feeling only the homeless know.” We all feel as if we're being stepped on, and that's why so many people want to do the stepping, either step on, or be stepped on is the logic of the world.

Even though I see myself in your poem, I'm the exact opposite of your personality. You called yourself a try-hard, so you must be a Type A. I'm a Type B, and I struggle to get the motivation to do anything. I also have a hard time doing anything that I don't know how to do, or that I don't have directions for. I may be wrong, but you seem to me to be able to thrive on ambiguity, or at least can tolerate it, whereas I absolutely can't stand it. You also seem to be an avid risk taker, if your line that you have to learn everything the hard way and are constantly throwing yourself into traffic is anything to go by. So, you're an adventurer and performer, and I loved your line where you said that "no matter how anticlimactic, I'll put on a show through the static." Again, I'm the exact opposite, sometimes I wish I could be a performer, but more often than that I'm just too comfortable lurking in the shadows and watching everybody else. Almost every time I work up the courage to speak up and make myself seen, I'm overlooked and ignored anyway so I've stopped trying. In social situations, even in group settings I'm the person that most often just watches everybody else talk instead of being a direct participant in the conversation.

Unlike me who won't say anything unless I have something to say, and even then I'll probably keep it to myself, you seem very comfortable outwardly expressing yourself, even though you mentioned how guilty you feel whenever you talk about yourself in the first person. It's interesting how poetry and writing are how you cope, you seem to have no problem organizing your thoughts and putting down words on paper and making them flow like water. I wish I could write like that, I can't do poetry, certainly not the way you can, I have to bully my brain to organize my thoughts and put them down in a way other people can understand and resonate with whereas it seems to come natural to you.

Anyway I'm gonna end the review here, otherwise I'd ramble on, your poem was one of the few readings I remember and the one I enjoyed best. Looking forward to our next meeting. Talk to you later.

Sincerely,
Peter Hall



Dust in the Wind

English class started with a prompt:

"If you had a superpower, what would it be?"

"Date: 9-1-22"

"If I had a superpower, I would control the elements. If I was only allowed one element, it would be the wind. Taking a photo but the wind is using your hair as a whip and cracking it across your face? Fixed. Too hot of a day, in desperate need of a mini fan? Done. I could be able to levitate and hover objects, clear clouds, adjust sails, and start fires. This could also be used to my advantage when playing badminton. >:)"

Fiction told me quirks make you special

So I told myself I was a character

Whose hands let her control the wind

Some low-budget Brothers Grimm

Telling a story that had never happened

Suddenly it didn't matter how much the world could hurt me

If it was all for the character development

Every challenge - charted

Every fight - for the plot

A character needs tragedy to deserve a happy ending

At least, that's what I was taught.

Tuesday morning the following week:

"There's been a fire.

It's not far from us, but it should rain over the weekend.

As long as the wind doesn't blow it here, we're okay until then."

Wednesday and my parents start packing

Imagine, if you will, being raised by a woman who made decisions for a living and a man conditioned to act in emergencies.

When we first moved in, they debriefed me with the risks:

This city is hot and prone to fires

Choose a window, open the cabinet, use the ladder

In movies, parents magnet their toddler's drawings to the fridge

On ours, there's fire station contact information and a valuables list

Thursday comes the evacuation

My mom says evacuated houses are often raided

After 10 years of forgetting to turn my lights off when I leave my room,

This is the one time I'm told to leave it on

The garage closes behind us and I make a joke that

"the house better be where we left it, completely intact when we get back."

I only half-heartedly mean it.

4 am at my uncle's place

We wake up to the sound of rain.

My mom goes outside to check on the belongings left in the car.

She comes back, eyes blown, and whispers to me in horror,

"That sound. It's not rain, it's wind."

I step out and see for myself. The air seethes. The wind is relentless. It tosses my hair around like a tissue. There is nothing left to pack, nothing to distract.

"It isn't relief. It isn't pain. It's not knowing and then knowing.
It's hesitation followed by confirmation and it feels like a betrayal."

The wind - an element my character can control - controls me

It controls where I'll sleep in a week

What terrors I'll face in my sleep

If the light in my room will ever turn off again

Whether my home deserved its happy end

The same wind that might tear through my home of ten years

Cards through my hair

It's 5 AM.

My mouth is closed, my computer is open

Thoughts raging, fingers typing furiously,

I will blister myself into oblivion

Transcend what makes me human,

I am a house made of ash that is too stubborn to crumble apart

If I don't write, I'll lose it. All of it. Whatever is left to burn. Let the wind try, these words won't disintegrate. My mind can outlive any fire. It was blazing before this started and it will stay long after this stops.



Next month's
theme is...
Missing

