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# The Window

Official eNewsletter of Panhandle Professional Writers  
d/b/a Texas High Plains Writers



## HIGH PLAINS WRITERS

July 2017

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter

### July 15 ~ New Location

Edward Davis Room, Ninth Floor, Chase Tower  
600 S Tyler St, downtown Amarillo, Texas

### *How to Publish on Amazon like a Pro!*

## You've finished your book...

...and you've decided to become an Indie Author and self-publish your novel. There are so many options and steps, it can be overwhelming. What about the cover design? Editing? How do you navigate through the Amazon uploading process?

THPW member **Ryan McSwain** will calm your fears and answer your questions. The focus of his talk will be on how to use CreateSpace and KDP to publish and sell your book. Learn to create both digital and print books that you'll be proud of.

### Author Q&A

#### 1. How do you juggle writing time along with being a stay-at-home dad?

*Not as well as I'd like! I wrote MONSTERS ALL THE WAY DOWN after everyone went to bed, but that just wasn't sustainable. For a while I had a designated weekly work day, which is how I finished my second book. These days, both kids are a little older, and they're nice enough to let me type away when the sun is still up.*

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*I'd never thought about that before, but it actually made a big difference. When I write now, I keep in mind that I'll have to mold it into a publishable form. So, now I keep things a bit more organized, and I try to avoid giving myself extra work at the end.*

### **3. Do you write to a specific market, or do you try to be more original?**

*I'm not as strategic as I could be. I write the kind of books I want to read, and I'm just thrilled other people love them too. My plan is to eventually have multiple books in several of my genres, including sci-fi, fantasy, and horror.*

### **4. What was an early experience where you learned that language has power?**

*I remember my dad telling the kids a ghost story at a Cub Scout camp out. He tried to keep it light, but it was enough to scare the snot out of us. Along with my mom's love for horror novels, it's no wonder I sometimes like writing the scary stuff.*

### **5. What are some of the most influential authors in your life?**

*This is a tough one. As a kid, I devoured L. Frank Baum and Lewis Carroll. As I got older, I couldn't stop reading Ray Bradbury, Spider Robinson, Stephen King, and H.P. Lovecraft. I eventually discovered Neil Gaiman, Philip K. Dick, and Patricia McKillip. Add in some comic books written by folks like Alan Moore, Grant Morrison, and James Robinson, and you've got a pretty good idea where I'm coming from.*

### **6. Have you read anything that made you think differently about fiction?**

*All the time! Grant Morrison opened up my mind to metafiction, or fiction that is heavily self-referential. It was Philip K. Dick who showed me how I could use my own feelings of anxiety to connect with others. Kurt Busiek inspired me to try and create my own little comic book reality, which turned into *FOUR COLOR BLEED*.*

### **7. What is your favorite childhood book?**

*This is a hard one, because there are so many I read over and over. I'll go with *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*, which showed me you can be okay even if the world doesn't make sense. My wife bought me a beautiful edition that I've shared with my own kids.*

### **8. What is the most difficult part of your artistic process?**

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*especially complicated with **FOUR COLOR BLEED**, which became a more ambitious novel than I expected. Sometimes changing one thing is like pulling out the building block that topples the whole tower. I'm lucky to have friends to help me polish it for publication.*

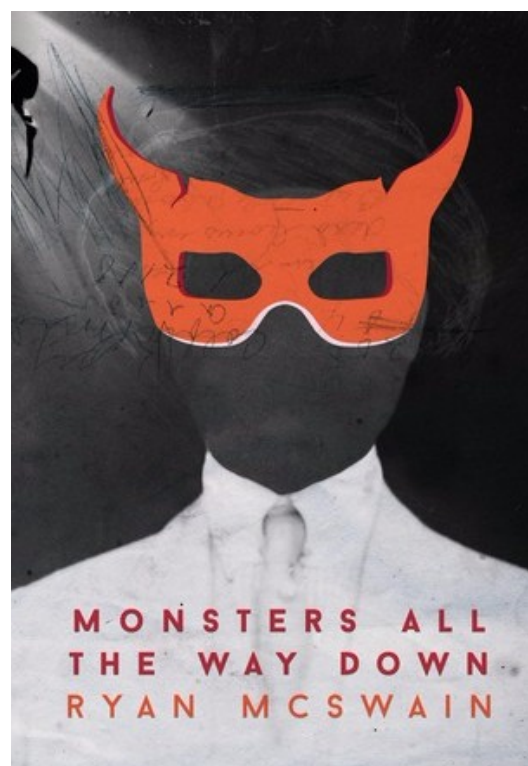
#### **9. Why did you decide to take the self-publishing route?**

*Several agents and publishers expressed an interest in **MONSTERS**, but it didn't lead anywhere. I felt the book deserved to find an audience, and I'm thrilled that it has. When I finished **FOUR COLOR BLEED**, I wanted the control that only comes with self-publishing. After seeing how it's turned out, I'm confident I made the right decision.*

#### **10. What advice would you give someone wanting to write a book?**

*Just keep moving forward, keep putting words on paper, and you'll eventually finish. It's tough work, but you can go back and fix problems during editing. Some writers are able to make everything perfect as they go, but I think trying to do that stops many authors from reaching the finish line. Just as importantly, get plugged into a local writing community. The encouragement and assistance makes a world of difference.*

**Ryan's first novel, *MONSTERS ALL THE WAY DOWN*, is a horror-thriller released to positive reviews. His second novel, *FOUR COLOR BLEED*, should be available by the July meeting. You can learn more about his work and connect with Ryan through his website at [ryanmcswain.com](http://ryanmcswain.com).**

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### Authors ~ Show Us Your Swag!

Meeting attendees are invited to bring bookmarks, pens, brochures, and promotional material about your work to our meetings.

Post a book review or two for your author friends on Amazon. Let's

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## Tweet & ReTweet

Did you know that Texas High Plains Writers is on Twitter? We are almost to 1000 Followers! You can help by following us @TexasHPWriters and retweeting our posts. It's a simple click of one icon, but huge in spreading the word about our organization. Tag us in your post and we'll be happy to ReTweet and share as well.

[Tweet on...](#)



## From the THPW President

Something is coming, and it's big. One hundred years of anything is a magnificent accomplishment, and our writers' group is almost there. Panhandle Pen Women was established by Laura Hamner in 1920, and we will celebrate our Centennial in 2020. That's less than three years away.

As you read this, our Board of Directors is working on ideas for our One Hundred-Year-Event. We are researching Book and Art Festivals from all around the country. We are gathering ideas. Making connections. Looking for volunteers.

Some of our decisions throughout the next few years will be motivated by our celebration plans. One example is our meeting location. We plan to hold the 2018 meetings at the Edward Davis Conference Room in Chase Tower downtown. While we enjoy our time at the Oasis Activity Center, we are outgrowing the room. [Hooray!] Meeting downtown will also place us within the new Arts District, which may offer a little pull when we look for venues for our Centennial Event and seek additional publicity.

**YOU can help!** Do you know someone who writes, paints, sings, or performs that is not a member of our

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Center City, the Chamber of Commerce, or the Arts District? Chat with them about our organization. Have you ever attended an Art or Book Festival that you really enjoyed? What made the event memorable for you? Do you have an idea for a location for such an event? Do you have an idea for a Festival activity that you'd like us to include? Please let us know. The Board would appreciate any input from our members. We want our Centennial Celebration to be fantastic. I'd hate to have a few people working hard to make it happen, and later hear, "I wish they'd have done something like -- " **If you have any input at all, PLEASE TELL US!**

An excellent way to get involved is to volunteer to be on the planning committee for our event. But even if you cannot commit to monthly meetings, if you have a connection that could help us get going, your call could make a big difference. Thirty months from now is not the distant future. A big event will take every bit of that to plan, and everyone to play a part. Please consider what role you will play.

Kim Black, THPW President  
<http://kimblackink.com/>

## Upcoming Programs

**July 15, 2017**

*How to Publish on Amazon like a Pro!*  
 @ryanmcswain

**Special Event: August 19**

Special workshop with Dallas author Tex Thompson!  
*Word Alchemy*

How to pick the best words to make your story shine.

**thetexfiles.com**

Fee \$48 for THPW members / \$58 non-members

9:00 Registration, 10:00 - 3:00 Workshop (box lunch included)

Chase Tower, downtown Amarillo



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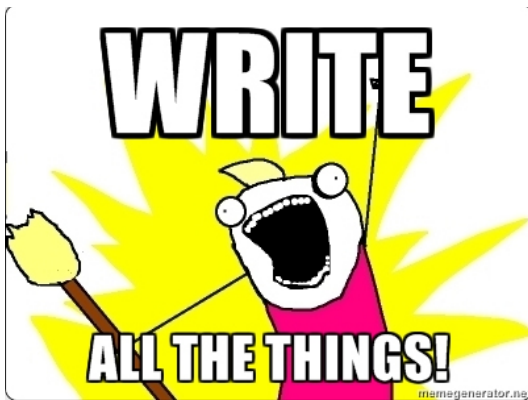
### September 16:

Rosa Latimer, is an author, consultant, & instructor from Post, Texas.

### November 18:

Alan Bourgeois, is the founder and president of Texas Association of Authors.

**Our members represent all genres. Hope you can join us!**



## *Say Hello to your 2017 Board Members*

*President: Kimberly Black  
President-Elect: Mike Akins  
Secretary: Audrey Massingill  
Treasurer: Janet Taylor  
Technology: open  
Membership: Molly McKnight  
Hospitality: Ryan McSwain  
Publicity and Newsletter: Natalie Bright  
Conferences and Workshops: Board  
Programs: Linda Broday*

## **From the Editor's Desk:**

**Have you narrowed your book down to a Story-In-A-Sentence?**

Here are a few examples:

#1 A kind-hearted girl is tricked by an evil, hungry wolf.

#2 A lovable beagle who doesn't talk, but conveys philosophy on life with flamboyant imagination through thought bubbles in a comic strip.



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#4 A 16-year-old girl volunteers to take her sister's place in an arena where twenty-four teens will battle each other to the death.

### What's your story in one sentence?

This is a great writing exercise. If you've lost site of your theme or you seem to be stuck in that saggy middle, work on re-discovering the heart of your manuscript by describing it in one sentence. If you've been crafting 140 character tweets for very long, it might come easy for you. The concept is that your characters are so unique and your story-line is so dynamic, that you can write this brilliant plot in one sentence. The situation becomes your one sentence story synopsis. In only a few words you can define the compelling plot, theme, character journey, or story-question of your book.

This one sentence then becomes your marketing tool for creating memes or ads, and for posting on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest.

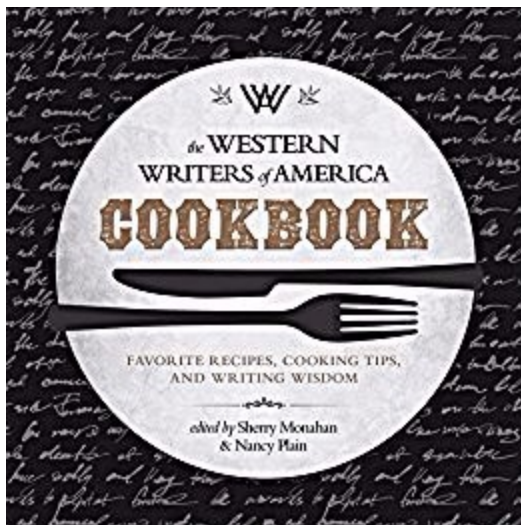
Below is a writing exercise to help you narrow down the important details of your story.

**Situation:** A kind-hearted girl is tricked by an evil, hungry wolf.

**Problem:** Should she trust her instincts?

**Solution:** Little Red Riding Hood outsmarts the wolf.

Hope you are having a productively awesome summer!



## Maw's Cherry Salad

by Natalie Bright

The **Western Writers of America** have collaborated on a cookbook with over 150 recipes. From unique regional dishes to family favorites that have been passed down for generations, the recipes come from all across the nation. Edited by WWA members Sherry Monahan and Nancy Plain, the book is published by Two Dot Books in Montana. WWA was founded in 1953 to promote the literature of the American West.

As an added bonus specific to **writers**, WWA members have shared their wisdom about the craft of creating stories. You'll find writing tips sprinkled throughout the book.

I'm particular excited about this one because my grandmother's cherry salad recipe is on page 67, which she made



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The WWA Cookbook is available now as eBook or paperback. Click on the book-cover for a link to Amazon.

Natalie / nataliebright.com

## Critique Session Guidelines

***Our heartfelt thanks to Board Member and THPW Treasurer Janet Taylor for her work in fostering young writers through her work with the THPW Youth Writing Contest. This is Janet's last year as Chairman. If you might be interested in serving the writing community in this capacity, talk to Janet about the rewarding work she has been doing.***

***The July meeting will include an awards ceremony for our youth writers to be held at 1:30 following lunch. THPW members are invited to stay.***

*To participate in the critique session, you do not need to have a piece to be critiqued. The sessions begin at 1 p.m. and, depending on the number of those who have a story or a poem needing to be critiqued, can last up to a couple of hours. We suggest that your material not exceed approximately 750 to 1,000 words. Please bring at about five copies of your story or poem. If possible, it is helpful if you bring a short synopsis of your story so those critiquing have some background. We ask that you format your manuscript as follows:*

- 1. Use white 8.5 by 11-inch paper.*
- 2. Double space using either Times New Roman 12 or similar font.*
- 3. In the header, give your last name, a slash (/), and a short title on the left and the page number on the right (at the top of each page).*
- 4. Use one-inch margins.*
- 5. Use one side of the paper only.*
- 6. If possible, use line numbering.*
- 7. Note: Your synopsis may be single-spaced.*

*Each person, in turn, will read 1,000 words or less (15 to 20 minutes) or the author will read their own writing, based on preference; then, the group facilitator will ask for discussion from the group. While each person is reading, we urge all other participants to offer written comments on the manuscript. All copies will be returned to each author.*

*The goal of every critique is: "How can we make it better."*

*Meetings are held on the third Saturday in odd-numbered months: January, March, May, July, September, and November.*

*Meetings are open to the public and everyone is welcome. There is no fee for members of Texas High Plains Writers to attend our regular bi-monthly meetings. A \$10 fee may apply to nonmembers.*

*You may order a box lunch from our*

*Our meetings/programs follow this schedule:*

*Check-In and Meet & Greet  
9:30 - 10:00 a.m.*

*Business Meeting  
10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.*

*Program/Presentation  
10:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.*

*Box Lunch*

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	<p><i>Unless otherwise specified, 2017 meeting location is: Oasis Church 8201 Canyon Drive Amarillo, Texas (Note: We must occasionally switch our meeting location, or we may need to change the date to avoid conflicts. So, please check the address and date for each meeting.)</i></p>	<p><i>1:00 - 3:00 p.m.</i></p> <p><i>Need to contact us? You can write to us at: Texas High Plains Writers P. O. Box 19303 Amarillo, TX 79114 or email us at: panhandlewriters@gmail.com</i></p>



Byline and credited articles represent the views of the authors. Publication neither implies approval of the opinion or the accuracy of the facts stated. We welcome submissions, news, member announcements, and any information that might be of interest to the writing community. We will happily promote booksigning details for THPW members. Natalie Bright, THPW Newsletter Editor/Publicity Chair / [natalie@nataliebright.com](mailto:natalie@nataliebright.com)

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