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The Window

Official eNewsletter of Texas High Plains Writers

November 2018

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter



HIGH PLAINS WRITERS

Celebrating 100 Years 1920 ~ 2020



From the President

Writing is a solitary activity. Butt glued to your chair, banging out poetry and prose to beat the band, the last thing you want is for someone to come around and interrupt your train of thought. Getting that train rolling is *hard* work!

And most writers are fine with the sequestered life. But there are communities of writers that can provide invaluable benefits to the introvert author. Texas High Plains Writers is one such community. Not just a place to learn craft, but a place to find like-minded artists.

People who speak your artistic language. People who've dealt with the same issues you deal with in your writing, who've had the same struggles. People to bounce ideas off of. People to provide constructive feedback on your latest story or poem. People to cheerlead you on when you get your latest, or maybe your first, novel published on Amazon.

Writing *is* a solitary activity, but too much time in your own head can be detrimental. You can easily lose your way. A

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My writing peers encourage me by their own excellence to raise the bar in my own writing. And they gently remind me that I'm not quite at Ernest Hemingway's level. But I'm working on it!

I've had nothing but positive feedback from other writers on my writing, and a slew of suggestions that have proven invaluable. You don't need to pay a writing coach, just put yourself out there in the community and there are people who are more than willing to help.

And lastly, I've met some lifelong friends through groups like THPW. Friends who've shared their personal stories as well as their craft. My writing would not be where it's at today without this community. I've grown leaps and bounds and you can, too. Just plug in. If there is one thing I know about writers, we are a generous lot. We're all here to offer a helping hand up in any way we can.

Mike
THPW President 2018

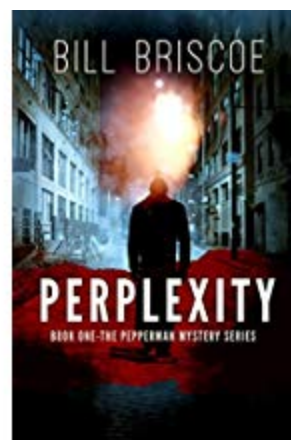
November 17

Clarity in Writing

Bill Briscoe

<https://billbriscoe.com/>

600 S. Tyler Street, downtown Amarillo
Ed Davis Room, 9th Floor
Registration opens at 9:30 AM.
Go to texashighplainswriters.com for
more details about our upcoming
meetings.



We will also have a short business meeting in November to elect and install our

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President - Richard Brown
President Elect - Rick DeVoe
Treasurer - Janet Taylor
Secretary - Ashley Grotegut
Programs - Misti Walser
Technology Chair - Ryan McSwain
Membership Chair - Keith Simmons
Newsletter/Publicity - Kristin Brorman
Past President - Mike Akins

Plan to attend in November and show your support to these THPW members who have volunteered to serve your organization in 2019.

Renew Your Membership

From now until January 31, **SAVE** and pay only \$30

THPW members attend monthly meetings **FREE**. Go to our website and renew online. Click on the **DONATIONS, DUES AND CONTEST FEES** button. Or send your check to the mailing address listed below.

Meetings are open to the public and visitors may attend for a small fee.

Surviving the Cultural Desert

by Richard Brown

Two and a half years ago I left Plano, Texas to return to my roots in Hereford. I had mixed emotions. My greatest regret was leaving my support group of writing friends who were diligently helping me create my first novel. Oh well, the internet would help me survive the cultural desert I imagined I was entering. I could not have been more wrong.

Soon after returning to the Texas Panhandle, I joined **Texas High Plains Writers**. My world exploded with opportunity. I found so many people who were not only smart and talented, they were generous, kind and nurturing as well. There is no

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work with “tough” love, is priceless. Well, there is a price, a pittance at \$40 a year.

With my membership came not only the amazing networking, but also the chance to hear speakers who shared their knowledge with me month after month. I could never have had that opportunity without the power of the club bringing those speakers to me. And after the speakers, the critique groups gave me even more opportunity to learn, both from what others told me about my work, and what I learned by analyzing the work of others.

Being part of **THPW** opened my world and made it a bigger and better place. If we could only get this kind of intellectual jolt by osmosis or from a book. But we can't. Nothing can replace the spontaneity of friends tossing ideas around.

Which brings me to the most important benefit. Friends. Join again next year, come to the meetings and make your world a better place, full of fresh ideas and creative insight. Share war stories and anecdotes and talk about your joys and problems with people who care. Friends. Priceless.

Rick is the 2018 Membership Chair, and will assume the role of President for 2019.

2019 Programs

January 19

Barbara Brannon, Executive Director of Texas Plains Trail Region, will speak on marketing and book promotion.

March 16

Dee Burks will speak about developing a freelance writing career and writing nonfiction.

April 12-14 2019 ~ Canadian Retreat

2nd Annual Writers Workshop in Canadian. THPW will be co-sponsoring the event again this year with the Canadian Arts Alliance. Save the Date!

May 11

Celebrating Amarillo Arts at the Sunset Art Center in conjunction with The Crouch Foundation. We'll post more information as plans for this event are finalized on how you can participate.

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Ways
to
Give

Online thePanhandleGives.org

Participating
Banks

Panhandle Locations:

Amarillo National Bank
Happy State Bank
FirstBank Southwest
First United Bank

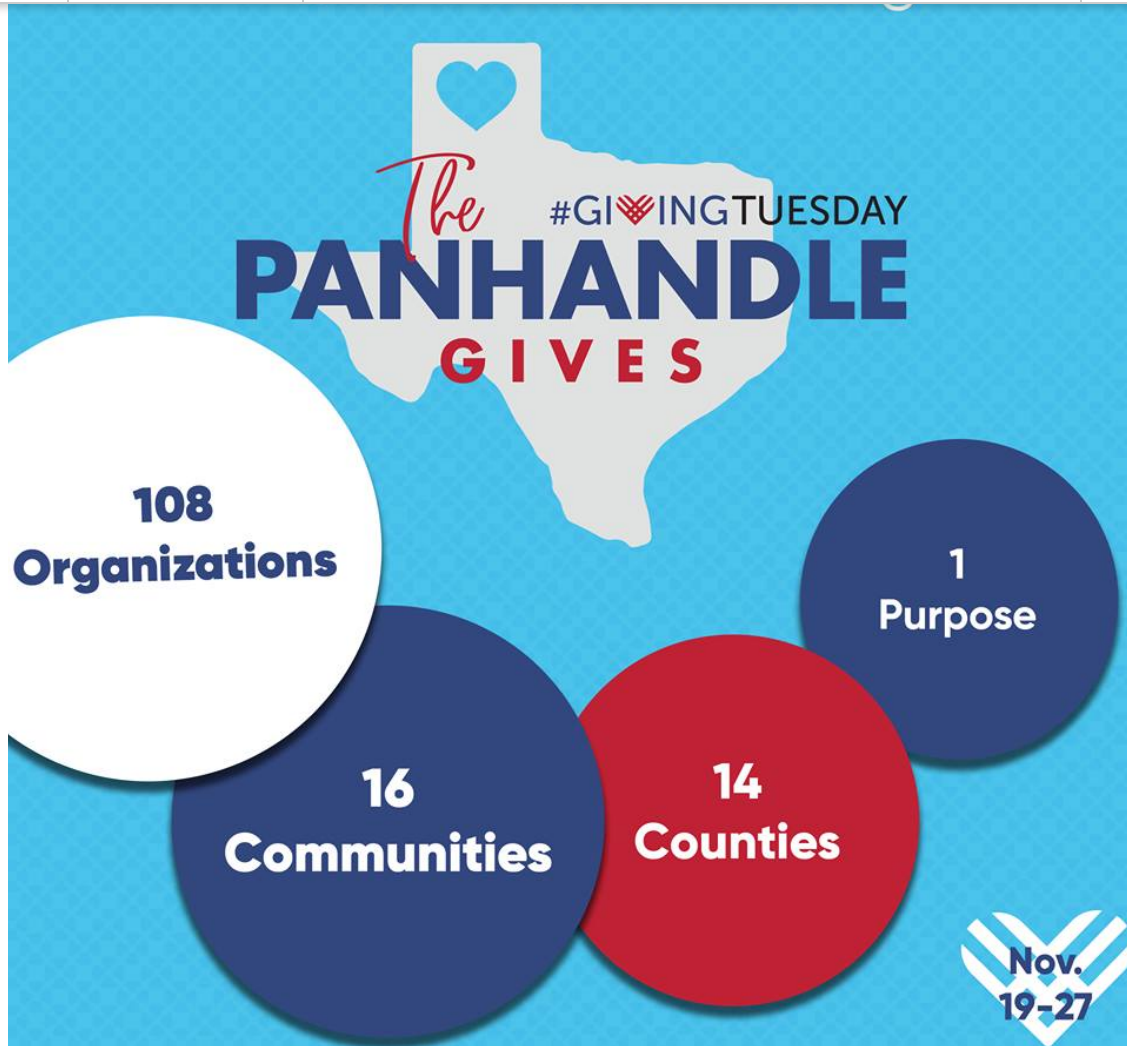
Texas High Plains Writers will participate in this very important Fundraiser

#GivingTuesday The Panhandle Gives

A 9 Day Campaign beginning November 19 ~ 27

Stay tuned for more information on how you can participate.

<http://thepanhandlegives2018.everydayhero.do/>

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Let's Start Here!

by Rory C. Keel

Whether you're just starting to write or you have advanced into the realm of an experienced professional writer, Quality writing is the number 1 reason people buy your books.

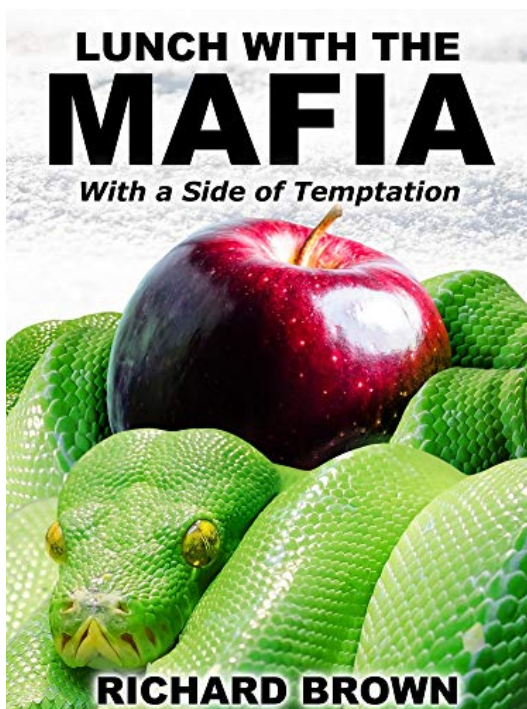
Here are some suggestions to get us started.

1. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Seek advice from other writers, join writer groups and use editors.

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3. Add a different twist to a story. Approach a dilemma differently. Create a new dimension in time.
4. Be realistic in setting your goals. Have you ever wanted to be a Best Selling Author, but you haven't ever finished a book? Write it, Finish it!
5. Write as much as you can—when you can. Schedule reasonable time to write, Publish and promote. Understand that achieving each of your goals for one day, each day, is being successful!

Rory C. Keel is a published devotional writer and novelist. His art is displayed at Panhandle Art Center, and he is owner of Carpe Diem Publishers.



A published poet and short story author, **Richard Brown** announces his debut novel, LUNCH WITH THE MAFIA.

Can you say no to the head of the mafia?

Enter the world of Dan Williams, flat broke financial planner, and his Italian wife, Tess. Their lives turn upside down as they are tempted into a spiral of deceit, decadence and desperation. Hopes and dreams run head long into crime and lust in a suspense thriller you won't soon forget. A story of temptation in all its forms.

Read it on Amazon now!

Available in print and eBook formats.

<https://www.richardbrown-author.com/>

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The King

By Nandy Ekle

Anyone who knows me knows I love to read. And I've realized the older I get, the more analytical I get. I read everything. I've even read things completely all the way to the end even though I'm not that into it at the time. One reason is that I'm not a quitter. I hate the thought of an unfinished book laying around. I may take a break from a book, but I will always come back and finish it.

The other less neurotic reason is that I'm a firm believer there's something to learn from every single book. Simply the fact that a publisher found a nugget worth latching on to means there's something there. You may have to work harder to find it in some stories, and you may decide the whole lesson is more of what not to do, but there is something.

Another thing people know about me is that I love a story with psychological layers. The more layers, the better. And throwing a few ghosts in is the superlative of a good story.

People who know me know that's why I like **Stephen King**. And my favorite Stephen

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Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado. According to the tour guides at the Hotel, they were closing up for the season when the Kings walked in while the blizzard was blowing through the mountains. They were handed the keys to the hotel and told to make themselves at home and lock up on their way out. They were not told about the reputation the Stanley Hotel has as one of the most haunted hotels in the nation. After waiting out the storm with the spirits, Mr. King feverishly wrote *The Shining* in one sitting.

Of course, this is legend, relayed to tourists in a place that keeps the movie playing over and over 24 hours a day. The hotel has their own *Shining* channel which airs on televisions in every room of the hotel. I know because I've been there. I've been on the Stanley Hotel's history and haunted tour and heard the story directly from the tour guide. Chill bumps!

Whatever part of that story is true, Mr. King says the book was a turning point in his writing career. And I know just enough about psychology, ghost stories, and writing to understand exactly why he says that. In the Introduction which he added with the date February 8, 2001, Mr. King states he reached a point where he knew he had to make the decision to reach higher than he had done before. And he did. And the result is a story with so many layers, so many issues, such strong characters, that I believe this novel is easily his masterpiece.

I am re-reading the book for the umpteenth time because this is my Halloween tradition.

Congratulations. You have just received a postcard from the muse.

Nandy Ekle is a published author in horror and psychological thrillers. Find out more at <http://nandyekle.com/index.html>



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Linday Broday & Jodi Thomas Book Signing

November 24 at 12:00 to 2:00
Burrowing Owl Books
on the Square, Downtown Canyon

lindabroday.comjodithomas.com

Labels and Characters

by Natalie Bright

Flipping through the channels late one night, I watched THE OUTSIDERS again, mainly because I couldn't turn it off. You may recall the story about two Greasers who are attacked by a group of Socs. Johnny stabs one of the Socs to save his friend, Ponyboy. While in hiding, Johnny and Ponyboy save a group of kids trapped in a Church fire. Johnny suffers a broken back and severe burns and dies a hero.

As I watched that movie again, it dawned on me how writers embrace the theme of labels. We flip it, crack them open, create intense messiness, and completely disorient readers.

Writers understand how complicated people are and we use that to push the boundaries of society's labels. Using fear, miss-communication, pre-conceived notions, socio-economic influences, surroundings, education; all of these factors add depth and interest to our stories. I love characters who break out of their expected label and do extraordinary things.

What's not to love about the nerdy, unwanted orphan who lives under the stairs and discovers he is a wizard?

Just like real people, our fictional heroes must have complicated pasts, dysfunctional families, depraved souls, and hopeful futures. Characters should not be one dimensional. How boring. Their good qualities and bad habits are what make them real, and hopefully, make them leap off the page for the reader. We know our characters as well as we know our own children and we are fascinated by the awfulness and righteousness of their existence.

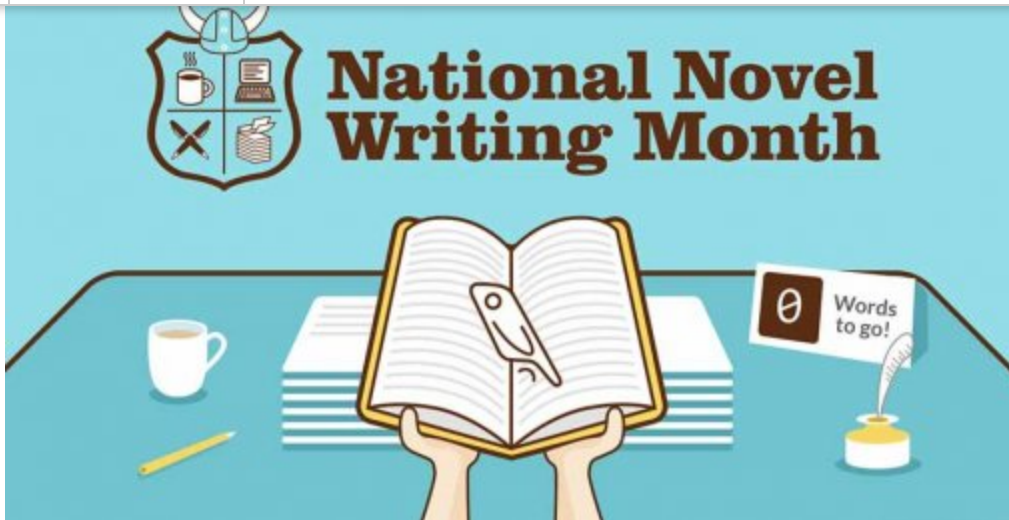
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others know what we choose for them to know, and our private self may be completely different than the public image. Do any of these buzz words of today accurately describe you or your characters: millennial, redneck, liberal, Evangelical, creative, Generation Z, progressive, opportunist, gamer, conservative, snowflake, racist, awkward, anti-social, emo, retard, plus-size? It's an irritatingly endless list. Humans are much more complex. Being defined by one or two words is not a true picture of anyone, real or fictional.

As a writer, I've always been interested in behavior and motivations. I like hanging out with other writers because you are naturally curious and you are great studies of human behavior. Some of my WordsmithSix group's longest critique meetings have involved deep discussions on determining the motivation of why that character would behave in such a way, or why she would not. We can use the dynamics of how labels can grate on our characters and make them behave in unique ways.

Normal is boring. As a writer, we don't fashion characters into a narrow-minded, world view by using one-word labels to describe their motivation or character. We work harder than that. Thank goodness.



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“Easy reading
is damn hard
writing.”

– Nathaniel Hawthorne

“If I waited till I
felt like writing,
I'd never write at all.”

– Anne Tyler

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Published authors, do you have a book you'd like to donate to the fundraiser book table? Proceeds will go toward our upcoming Centennial Celebration in 2020.

Have you read **The Shining**? Out of respect for Nandy and because I love reading her stories so much, I liked the idea of giving Mr. King's book a try last year around Halloween. I read every night, and got half-way through then had to stop. That book kept me awake, which is proof that it might just be a masterpiece of the genre. Maybe I can finish it in the day light at some point. In the meantime, I'm reading Rick's new release, **LUNCH WITH THE MAFIA**. It's full of twist and turns and complicated characters. Fun read. Congrats Rick on your debut novel.



It's a happy/sad feeling as I work on this last edition of THE WINDOW. Many thanks to those of you who have submitted materiel for the newsletters and BUZZ notes. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. I'll be sending out a few more BUZZ notes before I turn over the reins, so if you have any news or upcoming events, let me know. Let's create some BUZZ about our writing community!

Serving on the THPW Board these past two years has been fun and rewarding. As I sat looked around the table at October's meeting, I thought about how I genuinely enjoyed working with these people. I will miss the camaraderie. We shared a lot of laughs. I am super excited though about the slate of officers for 2019. Under the leadership of Rick Brown, it's going to be a great year for THPW as we continue to serve the needs of the writers in the Texas Panhandle and surrounding areas. Remember, renew your membership and think about serving on a committee in 2019. We need all hands on deck as we approach 2020 and our Centennial Celebration.

natalie@nataliebright.com

Critique Session Guidelines

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.

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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.

*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.)*

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.

Lunch On Your Own

12:15 - 1 p.m.

Critique Session, if Announced

1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Need to contact us?

Write to us at:

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Amarillo, TX 79114

Email us:

info@texashighplainswriters.com



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 submission, news, member announcements, and any information that might be of interest to the writing community. We will happily promote new releases and book signing events for THPW members.

Natalie Bright, Publicity Chair/Newsletter Editor
Email | [natalie\(at\)nataliebright\(dot\)com](mailto:natalie(at)nataliebright(dot)com)
Website | <http://nataliebright.com>

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