



Our Mission ~ Support Local Writers

Newsletter for Gold Country Writers, P.O. Box 5991 Auburn, CA 95604

July, 2016 Issue

Inside this Issue:

Page 1- The Theme of a Story,
GCW Retreat

Page 2- Promoting your Darlings

Page 3- Prose from the Pres

Page 4- Special Events, Club
Officers & Board Members

July 6th Meeting
New Officers Sworn
in ~ Theme
Gilligan's Island

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www.GoldCountryWriters.com

The Theme of a Story

From *Literature Structure, Sound,
and Sense* by Laurence and
Thomas

Many fictional stories have themes that the authors want to convey, but not all stories have themes. The purpose of a story may be simply to provide suspense or to make the reader laugh, or to surprise them with a sudden twist at the end. The purpose of a horror story may to scare the reader. ***The theme of a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or its central insight.***

The theme of a story can be stated very briefly or at great length. The theme is what gives a story its unity. Writers must never think that once a theme is stated, the whole purpose of the story has been to yield up this abstract statement. The function of an interpretive writer is not to just state a theme, but to verify that theme with their story.

Sometimes the best way to determine the theme of a story is to ask, "In what way do the main characters change or grow in the course of the story?" Sometimes the title provides a clue to its theme.

Continued on Page 3



Gold Country Writer's Retreat

at Betsy's home
for details see page 4

Maryellen & Lawrence “Promoting Your Darlings”

Reported by Betsy

Once you're close to finishing writing your book, marketing is essential, said publicist Maryellen and graphic artist Larry at our June GCW presentation. “(Marketing is) not about you; it's about your audience,” they said. Ask yourself, “What can I do to help the readers or to solve their problem?”

They gave dozens of practical ideas, including:

- + Use the resources within GCW, such as book abstracter Kathy and librarian Myrna.
- + Have more than one “elevator speech:” 30 seconds or less about the story (not the book). Introduce the character. Use images.
- + Make sure you get a Library of Congress Number. It's required to get your book in the “Books in Print” database, which goes around the world. It also makes it possible for libraries to pick it up.
- + Start with a great idea, and then think about how to tell your story in a compelling way.
- + Create a Marketing Plan. Where will you promote the book, for which readers, by which vehicles? Plan ahead for events; bookstores need 4 to 6 months in advance to book events, and libraries need 5 to 6 months.
- + Set up a budget to sell your book. How much money and time will you invest? What marketing tactics will you implement first?
- + Have a graphic artist do your cover; it's a key marketing tool. Order the same art on flyers, business cards and bookmarks.
- + “Organize your luck,” strategically working your network of people. Talk to all the groups you can. Use Facebook, Twitter and the Internet. Have your blog info on every piece. Advertise previous work in everything you do.
- + Start promoting locally, letting people know your expertise. Submit to competitions (award stickers are impressive). Use the book theme, location and time period to market. Tell bookstores and libraries about your book when you're on vacation.
- + Go for radio shows across the country. Have a compelling story. Give the interviewer 10 possible interview questions. Read book excerpts.
- + Join national organizations that will help move your next book forward. Send event updates to their newsletters. Use Facebook pages for your schools from elementary age on up.
- + 150 influential readers will publicize your book for 10,000 sales. Make that a goal.
- + Have your own publishing company with a name different from your own.

Below Maryellen & Lawrence chat with Cathy



Join the **Gold Country Writers** each Wednesday from 10 a.m. to noon at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 1279 High St., Auburn 95604. Our regular monthly schedule is:

First Wednesday: Business meeting to discuss administrative issues for the club. All members are welcome to come and contribute. This is followed by a short meeting of the club's Board of Directors.

Second & Fourth Wednesday: Drop In Critique. This is the time when members present samples (a maximum of five pages, double-spaced) of their writing to the group and everyone gets to offer their critique.

Third Wednesday: Special Program of general interest to the club members. This changes each month. In Dec. it is our club Holiday Special. See Page 4 for the Speaker of the Month.

Fifth Wednesday: On the rare occasion that there is one, we meet at Mel's Diner (at corner of Hwy. 49 & Luther Rd.) for breakfast/lunch and socializing with others.

The Theme of a Story

There are six governing principals when dealing with themes:

1. The themes should be expressed in the form of a complete sentence with a subject and a predicate. It is insufficient to say the theme of a story is motherhood. It should be stated; e.g., Motherhood sometimes has more frustrations than rewards.
2. The theme should be stated as a generalization about life. Do not use names or refer to specific dates or places. The theme of the book "*The Emperor was Divine*" should not be stated as "It was wrong to intern the Japanese Americans in camps during World War II." Instead it should be stated "It is wrong to punish a whole race for the actions of just some of the members."
3. Do not make the generalization larger than is justified by the terms of the story. Terms like *every*, *all* and *always* should be used with caution. Terms like *some*, *sometimes*, *often* and *may* are usually better. The theme of "Everyday Use" is not "Habitually compliant and tolerant mother will eventually stand up to their bullying children." There is only one such occurrence in this story. The theme would better be expressed like this: "A person whose honesty and tolerance have long made her susceptible to the strong will of another may reach a point where she will exert her own will for the sake of justice."
4. A theme is the central and unifying concept of a story. Therefore (a) it accounts for all the major details of the story. (b) The theme is not contradicted by any details of the story. (c) The theme cannot rely on supposed facts, not actually stated or clearly implied by the story.
5. There is no one way of stating the theme of a story. Using the example of the book "*The Emperor was Divine*," the theme might very well be stated, "Retaliation is not sufficient justification for the surprise actions of other members of a group."
6. The theme should not be expressed as some familiar saying that we have heard all our lives, like "A stitch in time saves nine" or "You can't judge a book by its cover." Although the saying may express the theme accurately, it is all too often a lazy shortcut that impoverishes the essential meaning of the story in order to save mental effort. When you force every new experience into an old formula, you lose the chance for a fresh perspective or a different perception.

Summarized by Michael

Prose



From the Pres

Our critique meetings (1st and 2nd Wednesdays) are doing quite well. The only problem we are having is predicting just how many are going to show up. As an example, our last meeting started at 10 AM. We only had two people who said they had something to be critiqued. Since we only had a very few people there, I decided to have everybody sit at one table and we would do a group critique. Well by 10:30 AM, yep you guessed it; we had 5 readers and had more than doubled our attendance. Thus we were unable to get to Michael and LJ's work. I promised them that they would go first the next critique Wednesday. I appreciate their sacrifice.

I would like to welcome two new members to the club: **Norma** and **Heike**. Both are very interesting people who have a lot to offer to GCW. Please get to know them and welcome them to the club.

A reminder that we are having a party on July 6. It's a potluck (my favorite). So contact either Susan or Joyce to say what you can bring. We are hoping to have several guests who might want to join our club, so bring a friend or someone who has a desire to be a writer. It will be a fun time!

Skip

Special Events

July 6, 2016 10-Noon at the church

GCW Installation of Club Officers, Social, Theme:
Gilligan's Island Castaway Party Beach Eats Potluck

July 18, 2016

GCW Writer's Retreat at Betsy's home - 4441 Wintun Ct.,
Garden Valley 10 AM – 5 PM. Bring a sack lunch & your latest
writing project. Drinks & snacks will be provided. To RSVP and
for any questions along the way: 530/333-0852.

July 20, 2016 10-Noon, at the church

GCW Special Presentation – **Babette Donaldson**
“**Keys to Writing Children's Books**”
Author of Emma's books

Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest, Deadline July 23, 2016

Prizes: for 1st, 2nd & 3rd in each category-. Maximum of 3 poems,
one category each. Poems can be in rhyme, free verse, Haiku or
any accepted poetry form. Maximum of 60 lines/poem. Young
poets 18 & under encouraged to enter; they will have a special
Young Poets category. Entry forms can be picked up at the Lincoln
Library at Twelve Bridges or downloaded from
www.librayatlincoln.org Entry Categories:

- Things My Parents Taught Me,
- The Best Gift I Ever Received,
- It Happened One Night,
- If I Were Rich & Famous &.
- You Can Count on Me
- (Not a GCW Event)

Shut Up and Write

1st – 4th Tuesdays of each Month
at Bake & Brew Coffee Shop, 958 Lincoln Way, Auburn
You must register in advance through Meet-Up Website
(Not a GCW Event)

Placer's Gold Toastmasters

Meets each Tuesday from Noon to 1 at 2929 Richardson Dr. at the
Placer County Justice Center, Community Meeting Room.
Visitors are always welcome, Contact Michael
(Not a GCW Event)

NEW as of 7-1-16 Officers & Board Members of Gold Country Writers

President

Skip

Genre ~ Science Fiction

Vice President -

Internal Affairs:

Betsy

Genre ~ Christian Nonfiction

Vice President -

External Affairs:

Chery

Genre ~ Storytelling

Treasurer:

Joy

Genre ~ Self Help
& Inspirational

Secretary:

Michael

Genre ~ Christian Children's
Books & Poetry

Assistant Secretary:

Kathleen

Genre ~ Short Stories

Mentor Coordinator:

Susan

Genre ~ Self-Help
& Corporate Culture

Marketing GCW:

Joyce

Genre ~ Short Stories

Author Opportunities:

June

Genre ~ Suspense
Thrillers & Poetry

Newsletter Editor:

Michael

Submit newsletter material by
the 15th of each