

Oct / Nov 2020

Heart 2 Heart

Romance Writers of New Zealand

TIPS ON :

WRITING A SHORT STORY

+

CHARACTER DRIVEN BOOKS

+

WRITING A SERIES

+

FREE WRITING COURSE FOR RWNZ MEMBERS

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The deadline for H2H is the 20th of each month. Please have all articles, news, reports, and advertising to the editor at: heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz on or before the deadline.

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NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Susan Sims*

Hi everyone,

I hope that your year is coming to a close as well as it can during summer's approach.

There's exciting news from our connections with the organisers of the Dunedin Readers & Writers Festival as the festival is making the decision to hold at least three romance writing events as part of their programme for May 2021. This will feature a number of our members. It's wonderful to see the growing respect and acknowledgement of our genre.

The organisers are also working with the Friends of the Dunedin Library to incorporate the unveiling of the plaque celebrating Essie Summers on the Dunedin City of Literature Writers Walk.

Our wonderful conference Dream Team, ably headed up by Steff and Linda, have spent considerable time working on options for our 2021 conference. They're focusing on how we can still hold an amazing conference in a time where COVID-19 will restrict our travel options, including who we can have for guest speakers. Make sure you keep an eye out for a survey coming your way in the next few weeks as we work through the possibilities.

I hope you all have the best possible Christmas and New Year that you can and I'll "see" you all in 2021.

Keep safe, keep well, and keep writing!

Love, Susan

PRE-ORDER HELL



Corina Douglas

Ever since I began this indie journey, I've been a pre-order gal. My first real book that was not part of an anthology released on the first of March 2020. I put it up for pre-order two weeks before it launched. At the same time, I put book two in the same series up for pre-order, but releasing two weeks after the first book. The intention was to have book three up for pre-order another two weeks after that but, it never eventuated. Why? Because COVID-19 happened.

As the world fell apart, I was trying to madly finish book one and book two while chasing a refund for our family's first overseas trip. Then my husband decided that he would take up a new job and we would need to move across the country from Hamilton to Oamaru. Given all this, and the fact that book three

was drafted but not self-edited, I made the decision to move the date of the launch of book 3 to the last day of June—some three months later.

I thought three months would have provided me with plenty of time to get it locked and loaded.

It didn't.

I severely underestimated what effect an international pandemic and a relocation across the country would have on my available time, and my muse and I struggled to write and self-edit book three as we waded within these murky waters. It was horrendous. I'm sure many of you have similar stories: The stress of washing food and hands, staying safe, adhering to restrictions, downplaying what was happening with your kids, the enlightening experience of being a first time homeschooler parent etc., and all while trying to write what you hoped would be your bestseller.

Not ideal. Not by any means.

My husband is a priority worker and we were allowed to move earlier than others. It wasn't



a blessing. Aside from the hassle of finding a moving company and trying to get rid of unwanted things as we couldn't drop them off at the Salvation Army or sell them, the area of the country we've moved to has no rentals and hasn't for a very long time. As a result, we had to purchase a house online. Yep, we had to make a decision on a house just like we were on Trade Me buying a \$100 item (which, by the way, is the most expensive item I've ever bought on Trade Me to date). It was odd to say the least.

And in between all this, I had to meet my pre-order deadline and get my third book in the series written, self-edited, then professionally edited in just under three months of launching book two. What was I thinking? Well, clearly I wasn't.

It was hell. Pure hell.

I worked most days between 5 a.m. to 2 a.m., and had limited sleep as any other spare moment was spent packing up a house for six and homeschooling the children. Not to mention the dramas of dealing with sick and dying pets during this time. But lo and behold, I made it. Not less than a few weeks after relocating across country and arriving in our new house (which thankfully wasn't too bad in person, but is very small with a tiny

square of lawn for the kids), I finally loaded up my third book with twenty-four hours to spare, but hey, I made my deadline!

The book launched on a milestone birthday and I celebrated with a glass of red. For some reason, I thought it would be a great idea to put book four up on pre-order. After all, we'd moved across the country, the pandemic had slowed down in New Zealand, the kids were almost settled into their new school, and my youngest son would soon go to kindy for a few days a week. I would finally have some 'spare' time to get some more writing done in between editing clients. I could easily get this done, right? Right? So, up it went, pegged for a release date of October 30th.

Hmmm... well, it appears it was another stupid move.

I hadn't written book four—not even close, so I started cold turkey. I'm a pantsner, I can't outline to save myself. Of course, I do start with something, but it might be a one liner, a few disjointed words, or an image in my head. That's it. Then, off I go. But here's the thing: I write in twin storylines, so every book has not only a present day storyline but also an ancient one set in Ancient Scotland, which means that each book isn't one story, but two. Again, what was I thinking trying to

write two storylines ready for publication in three months?

I spent July easing in given June had been horrific. By August, we were house-hunting as hubby and I couldn't take the fact that we now live in a suburb (we were on a farm prior), and the kids can't survive on a small twenty-five-metres-squared patch of lawn. Long story short, we found the house of our dreams and we put an offer in, which thankfully was accepted, but I'd forgotten one thing: When you buy a house, you sell a house. Therefore, I was soon knee deep in open homes (argh, cleaning the house with four kids in tow is not ideal!), along with the normal crazy life I lead so that by the time August rocked around, I realised I hadn't written much and I needed to button down. Hard.

Subsequently, the first twenty days of September were spent writing the ancient storyline. It came out at some fifty thousand words and I even self-edited it. I felt pretty proud of myself. Back then, I was confident I'd meet my deadline. Then I checked my dates, remembered that the editor also needed my work for at least three weeks prior to launch and understood with a sinking, end-of-the-world feeling that two weeks wasn't enough time to write a present day storyline.

So, I panicked. Severely.

Then, after a few crazy heart papalting moments, I looked at Amazon's KDP help page to see if I could change my pre-order date. I'd heard that you couldn't change it once you'd set it as you would end up losing your privilege to release a pre-order for up to a year. However, that isn't quite true. It appears that you can change your pre-order date, but only once within a twelve month period, and only within thirty days.

I took the out. What else could I do? Book four was pushed out to the thirtieth of November. This gave me six weeks, yes, but it wasn't ideal, not with clients booked for editing and life already pre-planned after the intended release. But, I pulled up my big girl pants, told myself I could do this and got to work.

Long story short, I made my pre-order deadline again with another twenty something hours to spare. However, what I forgot to mention is that at the time I was celebrating the fact that I had written and self-edited the past storyline in mid August, I ended up putting book five up for pre-order.

OMG.

Yes—I did it again.

Are you wondering what the heck is wrong with me? Because I sure am. I've mulled this crazy behaviour over for the last week and the only conclusion I can come to is that I love this game. In some weird, highly stressful way, I love the rush of the self-publishing journey, the challenge of trying to meet these crazy deadlines, and the pressure of ensuring my fans stay engaged in my stories. I mean, who in their right mind would continue to put themselves under this stress? And how the hell do other indie authors publish twenty-something novels in a year?

The answer is simple: passion. We are artists following our muses. Artists do crazy things—even crazier than what I'm doing—and they don't care for the consequences because they can't help it. It's a drive that will not go away, a drive that needs to be fulfilled, and something that has innately been there waiting on us to give effect to it since we were born. In its own way, this crazy behaviour is understandable, right? Right?

Of course it is (I can see you all nodding). This is why we love being storytellers. This is why we impose these crazy deadlines, and this is why we push ourselves. We're furthering our dreams, and what better time to remember that than at Christmas time? What better time to plan our future and make new goals come New Year's eve? Because I know that I'll have a long list of goals to achieve by then, least of all the number of books I want to release in 2021.

And as to whether I will make my next pre-order deadline—well, who knows at this stage, but I'm sure as hell going to try. And I encourage you to come join me. Let's sing in the New Year and raise our glasses to pre-order hell!

DIALOGUE TAGS



Iola Goulton

Last month, I shared my tips for writing believable dialogue. But, no discussion around dialogue is complete without advice on dialogue tags.

Dialogue tags are how we indicate to readers which character is speaking.

There are five main types of dialogue tags:

- Speaker attributions,
- Action beats,
- Body language,
- Dialogue cues, and
- Interior monologue.

Speaker Attributions

The most common dialogue tag is the speaker attribution, and the most common speaker attribution is “said”. Other common speaker attributions include:

- Asked: when the character is asking a question (some authors use “said” for questions, but I don’t always think that’s a smooth read),

- Whispered: when a character is whispering, and
- Shouted: when a character is shouting.

Some authors like to use alternative speaker attributions—something most editors discourage for good reason. Sometimes these alternatives are action beats used as tags, such as:

“Hello,” she cried.

Crying is an action. In earlier days, authors used “she cried” as a dialogue tag and we all understood it was referring to tone and volume. But modern readers might not understand that. When my daughter was about ten, she read a novel which used “she cried” a lot. My daughter took “cried” literally and asked me why Jane kept crying for no reason.

Sometimes the alternatives detract from the dialogue because they are too creative. For example:

“I didn’t do it,” she expostulated.

Sometimes the alternative tags are telling what the dialogue has already shown. For example:

"I'm sorry," she apologised.

Yes, I have seen that in a manuscript. The reader will assume from the dialogue that Jane is apologetic. If she isn't, use an action beat or dialogue cue to show us how she is feeling.

Using "said" all the time can get boring. But this isn't a reason to use creative alternatives. Instead, add variety with action beats, body language, dialogue cues, or interior monologue.

Punctuation of Dialogue

Before we look at the alternatives to speaker attributions, I have a quick reminder about the punctuation of dialogue. If we're using a speaker attribution such as said, we use a comma before the attribution. For example:

"I'm sorry," she said.

We can also use a question mark or exclamation mark. For example:

"I'm sorry?" she said.

"I'm sorry!" she said.

Note that "she said" is considered part of the same sentence, so doesn't use a capital letter unless we're using the character name. For example:

"I'm sorry," Jane said.

Action beats, body language, dialogue cues, and interior monologue always start a new sentence, so use a period and capital letter. For example:

"I'm sorry." She looked at the floor.

Action Beats

In "Self-editing for Fiction Writers", [Browne and King](#) define action beats as:

"The bits of action interspersed throughout a scene, such as a character walking to a window ... Usually they involve physical gestures."

The advantage of using an action beat over a speaker attribution is that the action beat serves multiple purposes because:

- It breaks up the dialogue,

- It tells the reader who is speaking,
- It shows the reader something about the scene, and
- It provides a sense of progression and movement.

There are three common problems with using action beats as dialogue tags. For example:

- Combining speaker attributions and action beats,
- Using boring action beats, and
- Using too many action beats.

There is no need for a speaker attribution if you're also using an action beat, because the action beat fulfils the role of the speaker attribution. For example:

"I'm sorry," Jane said, and looked at the floor.

Becomes:

"I'm sorry." Jane looked at the floor.

Many authors use the same action beats over and over, to the point where they become boring. For example:

- Jack blinked.
- Jack nodded.
- Jack shrugged.
- Jack smiled.

It's not that there is anything wrong with any of these beats. The issue is they tend to be overused—one original smile shows something about the character. One hundred smiles shows nothing. Find your boring actions and delete or improve them.

Sometimes authors turn functional action beats into telling. For example:

- Jack blinked in confusion.
- Jack shrugged indecisively.

These beats aren't visual, but they are predictable. What does a confused blink look like? How is that different from a regular blink? Instead of telling the emotion, it is better to strengthen the action beat to show the emotion.

Some authors pepper their dialogue with action beats, to the point where the dialogue



becomes a ping-pong match. As [James Scott](#) Bell points out in *“Revision and Self-editing for Publication”*:

“Too many action tags will wear the reader out. Variety is called for, and often the best choice is no tag at all.”

Body Language

We don’t only communicate by what we say. We also communicate through facial expressions and body language. Improving the way we write nonverbal communication adds additional layers, which makes our books more engaging for readers.

Dialogue Cues

Writing instructor, Margie Lawson, coined this phrase to refer to physiological reactions that give the reader a subliminal psychological cue. Dialogue cues use vocal cues to force the reader to read between the lines and see the subtext in the character interactions.

Interior Monologue

Interior monologue is what your point of view character is thinking, expressed in their own voice. A line or two of interior

monologue will show the reader who is talking—the purpose of all dialogue tags.

I’ll be back next month with tips on writing strong interior monologue.

About Lola Goulton

Lola Goulton is a New Zealand book reviewer, freelance editor, and writer. She holds a degree in marketing, has a background in human resource consulting, and works as a freelance editor specialising in Christian fiction. When she’s not working, Lola is usually reading or writing her next book review.

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WRITING A SHORT STORY



Deryn Pittar

A short story is a glimpse of life, the capturing of a scene or an event, mostly within a short time-lapse. It's a brief glance at ordinary life, or un-ordinary life if you are writing sci.fi or horror. It usually captures an event affecting the main character; a fail, an achievement, a loss, a conflict, a resolution, something funny, or an event with a strange ending.

Most short stories feature only one character or perhaps, two. Even if other characters are introduced, there needs to be a main character who talks the most, tells the story, thinks about what is happening, and does things you need to stay in his/her head while writing his/her reactions to events.

WRITE IN THE NOW, WRITE AS IF IT IS HAPPENING.

Sometimes a prompt will help you start a

story, or create a scene you can work with. Some competitions or contests give you several words to use, and sometimes they stipulate a location.

A short story differs from a novel in that there are no story arcs. You don't have time to slowly build up tension or plunge your character in a series of disasters and relationship fails. You need to grab the reader's attention and hold it until you can put a twist at the end of a sudden reveal. It's all about concise storytelling and impact, therefore, your choice of words is paramount.

If there is a word restriction, I find it easier to just write until I have the story on the page. Then, I like to slowly read it through, converting two words into one wherever I can. For example, consider if a sentence is necessary and moves the story along. This is also a great tool to teach you how to self-edit when it comes to writing your novel.

CONFLICT CREATES INTEREST:

Conflict will create tension and add interest to your story. Conflict is not necessarily a fight or an argument. It could be:



- A painter who breaks the hand he paints with,
- A truck driver who loses his sight,
- A sky diver who is terrified his parachute won't open, but he needs the money so has to keep jumping,
- A trapeze artist who develops vertigo,
- A gardener who is scared to leave the house, or
- A rugby player who injures his leg.

Conflict can be external (surroundings/other people), or emotional (fear/desire). The character must do something, regardless of their fear.

CONFLICT EXAMPLES:

- Man versus man,
- Man versus nature (e.g., setting),
- Man versus himself (e.g., habits, addiction, fear, dislikes), and
- Man versus society (e.g., rules, climate change, government, authority).

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

- Characters: One, possibly two.
- Point of view: Unless you have a large word count (5-10K), stick to one point of view.
- Conflict: The problem, and where the character needs to be challenged.
- Setting.
- Plot line: This must be short e.g., rescue, redemption, winning, losing, or realisation, etc.

It is important that you start as close to the action/event as possible and the heart of the conflict.

Body language will enrich the portrait of your character. In a short story 'showing' is sometimes too wordy, therefore, you have to 'tell' but do so vividly.

Each sentence should advance the plot or reveal something about the character, therefore, get the story on the page and worry about the word count later.



NOW TO TIDY IT UP.

In one sentence, can you describe what is happening and what is being explored below the surface? If so, you have written the essence of a short story.

If you can replace two words with one, do so. For example:

- very fat = overweight,
- going up = rising,
- falling down = collapsing,
- going round the bend = cornering, and
- frightened out of his wits = terrified.

Doing this will reduce your word count while also giving you a list of extra words you can use elsewhere if you are on a tight word count. I cull heavily, then use the spare words available to enrich the remainder.

I also recommend that you try to include the senses e.g., smell, touch, taste, hearing and sight. Scatter these throughout your story. Even a couple of these will add to the picture you are creating.

TYPES OF FICTION:

There are many types of short fiction, including:

- Traditional: 1000 – 5000 words
- Flash Fiction: 500 – 1000 words
- Micro Fiction 5 – 350 words
- Drabbles: 100 words

Bio:

Deryn Pitar writes fantasy, romance, cozy mystery, Young Adult, Sci-Fi., short stories, and flash fiction. She is published in all of these genres which also dabbling in poetry.

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WRITING CHARACTER DRIVEN BOOKS



Jackie Ashenden

Romance is a deeply personal genre about people falling in love. Often, the external plot takes a backseat to the emotional drive of the story. Because of this, most romance novel plots are character-driven.

So, what exactly is a character-driven plot?

I had a hunt around the web to find a good description and came across this:

"Whereas plot-driven stories focus on a set of choices that a character must make, a character-driven story focuses on how the character arrives at a particular choice. When you zoom into the internal conflicts, you tend to focus less on the external conflicts. The plot in a character-driven story is usually simple and often hyper-focused on the internal or interpersonal struggle of the character(s)."

In essence, character-driven books are—

obviously—all about character. The character is the engine and the decisions the character makes determines how the plot unfolds, rather than external forces directing it. In other words, it's all about internal conflict versus external conflict.

This describes romance perfectly, since in a romance, the character is the focus of the story i.e., how they grow and change, and eventually find love.

How does a character-driven plot work?

Character-driven books usually start with a trigger point or an inciting incident from external forces at the beginning of the book. For example, Luke finding the droids in the desert in *Star Wars*, or Frodo finding the ring in *Lord of the Rings*. From there, the plot follows the decisions they make, the action they take, and the consequences of that action, just like a pinball bouncing off the sides of a pinball game.

It's important to note that when it comes to plot-driven vs character-driven stories, there is no right or wrong. Some readers prefer plot-driven books, while others prefer the focus to be on the characters. And you can

write a book that does both. In fact, if you can do both, then that's perfect, because a good story needs both plot and character.

What's the appeal of character-driven books?

A story can be much more personal and gripping if you care about, and are invested in, the characters, their choices, and the reasons for those choices. There's nothing more annoying when a character makes a choice in a book with no explanation, especially when that choice has far reaching implications. However, some readers prefer plot-driven books because they're not interested in why people make the choices they do. They only care about the immediate story and what happens in it. Plot-driven books are often very immediate, with no backstory, and they tend to be more pacy and fast moving as a result.

It really comes down to a personal preference, but I think purely plot-driven romances are difficult to pull off. Romance is all about emotion, and for the emotion to work, you need to know and care about the characters.

How do you create a character-driven book?

In a character-driven book your character is—obviously—front and centre. You need to know all about them, because if the plot turns on the decisions your character makes, you need to know what decision they would come to in any situation and why.

So, what things do you need to know? Most importantly, you need to know their GMC, A.K.A. Goal, Motivation, and Conflict.

Goals

Why are goals important? Because the goal drives the character; it's the engine of your story. If a character doesn't have a goal, then they're not working towards anything. And if they're not working towards anything, then there's no impetus to make decisions. And if there's no impetus to make decisions, then your book will become slow and bogged down, and your plot will fizzle out. The character becomes reactive instead of proactive and you'll be tempted to throw in

stuff to get the story moving; such as car chases, stalkers, a mystery sub-plot, etc.

However, you don't need all that external stuff. All you need is a goal to turn your character from reactive to proactive. The goal will keep the character moving forward, and if the goal is deeply important to them, then it will force the character into situations that test them, which is also the object of a character-driven story because you want your character in difficult situations so they can grow and change.

Motivation

Why is motivation important? Because motivation helps us understand why a character's goal is vital to them and why they make the choices they do. Motivation is crucial because if we don't understand why a character does things or makes the choices they make, then we lose interest in them. It also becomes important if a character makes some bad decisions. If we don't understand their motivation, then the character risks looking stupid, and when those decisions have lasting consequences, then they end up looking *really* stupid. Bad decisions can be excused if we at least understand why they did what they did.

Conflict

Why is conflict important? The kind of conflict I'm talking about for the purposes of a character-driven story is internal conflict, or the fight the character has with themselves between what they think they want and what they actually want. Internal conflict is made up of the type of person the character is and their backstory, and affects their motivation and their goals, and thus, every decision the character makes. If there is no conflict within the character then there is no struggle or fight, and without that, there is no change. You need internal conflict for a character arc.

How do you tell if your book isn't character-driven?

If your book is full of action or ideas, or happens mostly in the present and your characters have very little backstory, then it's likely your book is plot-driven. Or when you need something to happen, instead of having



a character make a decision and take action, you add in something external, like a shooting or a stalker to increase the tension. Again, not a bad thing if that's your intention.

However, if you're writing a character-driven book and you find yourself adding in something external because you don't know what to do next, that's not making it character-driven. And that's when you get the 'character acting inconsistently' criticisms. For example, if your character abhors violence, but you add a fight because you need something to happen, then that's going to seem inconsistent to the reader. Why did they fight if they abhor violence? If they punch someone in the face without even thinking about how much they hate violence, then how can we believe anything they think and feel?

There is another way to write that fight scene though, so it's not just a cool fight but also a test for your character, full of tension and drama that will make the character grow, and thus, make it way more interesting for the reader. You could have your violence abhorring character be forced into a confrontation. Perhaps they have to be

violent in order to protect someone or something they care about (i.e. a child, a lover, a friend), and if so, how would they feel about it? Would it scar them? Or would they find an inner strength they didn't know they had? That way you still have your fight, but your character now doesn't seem inconsistent because they have wrestled with their inner demon and made a decision. The focus then comes off the fight and onto the character, the decision to do something they swore they'd never do and the consequences.

So, how do you figure out what happens next in your character-driven book?

First: Are your characters making decisions? Second: Are they taking action? Because making a decision is only the first step. The second is having them act on their decisions and the kind of action they take, and how that impacts on the other characters will keep driving that plot forward. It's the difference between reactive and proactive characters.

If your characters are not making decisions then you need to go back and look at the character themselves. Remember their goal.



Are they still working towards it or have they got sidetracked? What decision can they make to get them back on track?

What if you don't know what decision they'll make? Say your character loses their job suddenly and you don't know what to do next. Again, think GMC. Is their job vital to their goal? Why do they need it? What do they do in times of stress or disappointment? Do they shrug it off and carry on? Or do they fall into a pit of despair? Do they get angry? Or are they always trying to find the silver lining?

Once you've figured out your character's GMC, then you can figure out what they would do next. In the above example, the character might decide the job is vital because they need the money to pay for their gran's hospital bills. In times of stress they get angry, in which case they might decide to confront their employer and argue for their job back. Or perhaps they're the type of person who hates confrontation, in which case they won't argue with their employer, they'll just try and find another job, which will take the plot in another direction.

How does this affect plotting vs pantsing?

It doesn't. Either way, you'll have to know your characters in order to write a character-driven book. I'm a pantsier, and yet if I know my characters well enough, I know what decision they'll make and how the story is going to unfold. Conversely, when I run into a problem and I don't know what happens

next, it's usually because I either don't know my characters well enough and have to work out more about them, or one of them won't have made a decision about something.

Note: You don't have to know EVERYTHING about a character in order to start writing. Just knowing their GMC will be enough to get you going.

There's a lot to say about writing character-driven books and this is just scratching the surface, but if nothing else, if you're stuck and you don't know where to take your book next, just ask your hero or heroine. They'll know what to do!

Bio:

Jackie is the author of over 60 books and prefers writing sexy, emotional contemporary romance with alpha heroes who've just got the world to their liking only to have it blown wide apart by their kick-ass heroines.

She lives in Auckland, New Zealand with her husband, the inimitable Dr Jax, two kids, one cat and one dog. When she's not torturing alpha males and their gutsy heroines, she can be found drinking chocolate martinis, reading anything she can lay her hands on, wasting time on social media, or being forced to go mountain biking with her husband.

To keep up to date with Jackie's new releases and other news, you can sign up to her newsletter at: www.jackieashenden.com.

WRITING A SERIES - PART ONE

**Kris Pearson**

Well, it's definitely the way to go—for some of the reasons you suspect, and for one I hadn't anticipated.

I'm sure you can see the advantage of hooking readers with a first book and making them want more of the same (or similar). It might be a family. It might be a group of friends or workmates. Or a collection of aliens on an undiscovered planet. There's something seductive about being able to get more if you enjoyed the first helping. But how do you provide a series?

First, I'd suggest you decide before writing a series that it really IS a series.

This is so basic and I'm not going to make the explanation any longer than it needs to be. But be sure you know enough about your upcoming characters that they'll be viable when you get to write about them so that they don't bore you silly. Ensure you don't set up huge plot-holes you then have to scramble out of. Know your overarching story as well.

For example, 'let's give Peter this girl, and Sarah this guy, and the young widowed aunt with the baby this one'. It gets pretty boring if there's nothing else happening and you don't want people to lose interest.

Seed some clues and characters through the first book for readers to find in the next one. And the same goes through the following books. Let's say your heroine has a brother who will be the hero of book two, and a cousin who you intend to write about in book three. Give them a mention now and again. Set up anticipation for the series ahead of time—then your readers will happily find 'old friends' as they progress through. You could also, of course, have one character who is totally memorable and who misses out every time. People will keep reading to see if Brad *finally* gets his mate. I'm sure you've all seen the cries of joy in reviews when readers have been hanging out for their favourite person to get lucky.

Arrange your timeline and make sure it works.

This is really important. I gave myself endless problems when I wrote the Scarlet Bay books



by setting the second one partly over the top of the first one, timewise. There was an awful lot of backwards-forwards and checking to make sure I could actually write what I wanted to. If Anna had already done 'that', was it possible for Jossy to now do 'this'? Not always! It was a horrible jigsaw to solve. If I'd written the whole of Anna's story to start with, and sensibly got her married off at the end of the book, it would have been so much easier.

Instead, I had Anna's wedding as part of Jossy's story, and then Jossy's wedding as part of book three, and all sorts of associated details to coordinate and control. Things I wanted to include needed a lot of thought. Sometimes there wasn't enough 'time' for them to happen because of what had gone before. I was forced to twist and turn chunks of the plot around to make the stories work, and although I was very happy with the finished series, I'm sure my brain died a little with all the effort I had to put into it.

If you're like Leeann Morgan, you'll be superbly organised. She was talking some time ago about a character in one of her books:

"She's fifteen now," Leeann said. "So in a couple of series time, she'll be just right for a book of her own."

That's planning for you! Of course, it helps if all your books are set in a reasonably close geographic area like hers are.

Start making a Series Bible early.

Having launched the Heartlands books, and the Scarlet Bay books, I decided to turn my hand to cozy mysteries. They seemed to be making quite a big splash, and I thought they'd be fun to write. (Never mind totally splitting my writing personality!) But I wasn't far into the first one before I realised I definitely needed a Series Bible. I'd heard the term bandied about and was fascinated to find that some people were actually happy to make one for you by reading all your books, recording all your characters' details, and charging you for the privilege. No thanks—I'd rather do my own. And surely you need it pretty early on?

I'm guessing it would be possible to spreadsheet this, but for me, it turned out to be an ongoing Word document, and every time a new character turned up, I added

them in at the start. This meant they moved down through the doc as they moved down through the story. By the time I'd written a few scenes with them, I didn't need to check on them at all. However, if they had only a small part, it was much easier to find their details all together in the Word doc than to go searching through the manuscripts to find out if they had brown or black hair, what their dog's name was, and whether it was a blue or grey car they drove. Of course this goes for emerging new details about established characters, too.

Do note down things like Detective Bruce Carver's badly bitten fingernails and over-applied cologne, and Bernie Karaka's window display quirks and his wife's name as they come up in your story. It'll save you so much time. They might not appear again until a couple of books later, so this is an easy way to keep track of them.

And the unexpected benefit I mentioned at the beginning?

Box-sets!

If you have a series, they can be bundled together and released as a set. A larger royalty for you, and probably a saving for your reader.

But Kindle Unlimited has brought box-sets into higher prominence. Readers with a KU subscription can borrow ten books a month currently. But if they're voracious readers, ten isn't enough. How about ten box-sets? Thirty or more books! My box-sets are now racking up many more page-reads than my single titles, and I bet yours will too. I've also bundled non-series titles together like my South & Sexy books, and novellas like my Holiday Magic Christmas stories to make the most of this. Everyone wins. Possibly even Amazon, too.



Check out Kris' box-sets here:

The Merry Summerfield Cozy Set

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08MYRX96C>

The Scarlet Bay 1, 2, 3 set:

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08GBLXLDO>

Bio:

Kris Pearson is the author of 22 novels and novellas, ranging through sheikhs and steamies to flirty cozy mysteries.

PATRICIA KAY WRITING COURSE

- **FREE** TO RWNZ MEMBERS



Patricia Kay

Did you know your RWNZ membership entitles you to access the Patricia Kay writing course for FREE?

Patricia Kay has authored more than 50 books, with four million copies published in 18 countries.

An acclaimed teacher, over the past 15 years Pat has also shared her love of writing with more than a thousand writing students, many of whom have gone on to be successful writers themselves, and **RWNZ has procured the rights to provide the courses to our members for FREE.**

Her courses are focused on the CRAFT of writing and can be done as self learning by downloading each lesson and completing the exercises.

Here's how to access this course:

1) Go to the RWNZ website:

<https://www.romancewriters.co.nz/>

2) Find the **Resources Tab** in the **menu bar**

3) Click on Patricia Kay Courses from the dropdown menu, *as pictured below:*



4) You will be prompted to enter your RWNZ details to sign-in : email and password.

5) Once signed-in you can access the 6 Modules:

Novel Writing 1 Course
Novel Writing 1 Course
Novel Writing 1 Course
Scene and Sequel
Emotional Connection
Making a Scene

Download the course materials to your computer to study at your leisure.

BOOM! Do it now! Thank me later.



Author

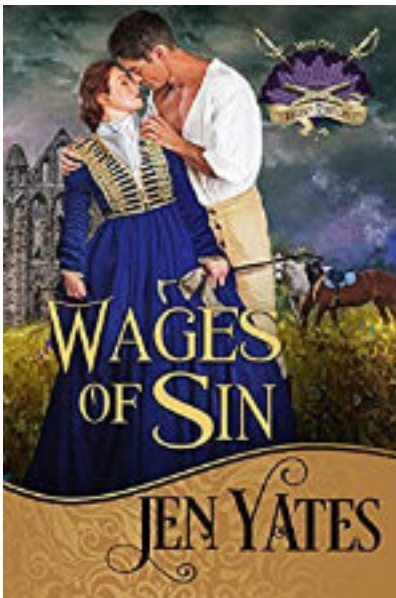
A TANGLE OF TINSEL AND TARTAN

Jen Yates, Leigh D'Ansey and Caroline Bagshaw, all Regency authors, have published three short stories in an anthology, **A Tangle of Tinsel and Tartan**.

We celebrated the launch with a 'launcheon' in the Italian Renaissance Garden in the Hamilton Gardens with a small gathering of family and friends.

It's a bit of festive fun and it's free.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08M945JBR>



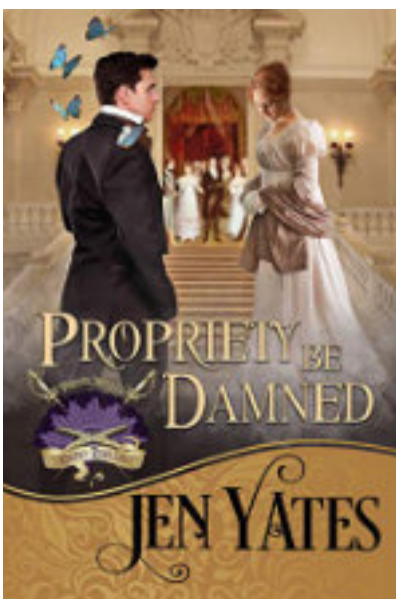
Jen Yates

WAGES OF SIN

Wages of Sin, Book 1 in the 'Regency Rebelles' series by Jen Yates.

A lady may not marry the miller's son. Unfortunately, it does not prevent her from loving him. Lady Liberty learns love has many facets, may manifest where least expected—and demand a sacrifice. Is it worth the price they would have to pay?

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08N5WZ8KQ>



Jen Yates

PROPRIETY BE DAMNED

Propriety Be Damned, the opening novella to the 'Regency Rebelles' series by Jen Yates was published on 29th October. It's available perma-FREE.

Lord Henry is different—but then, so is Helena. When you know a thing is right, there is no need to wait.

Right?

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08N5JTXHJ>



Jayne Castel

MAXIMUS

Jayne Castel has released **MAXIMUS**, Book 1 of an exciting new series: The Immortal Highland Centurions.

A Roman centurion doomed to an immortal life. A courageous Scottish widow with an uncertain future. One night of passion that changes everything. High adventure and epic love in Medieval Scotland—with a touch of fantasy.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08BNH6LM5>



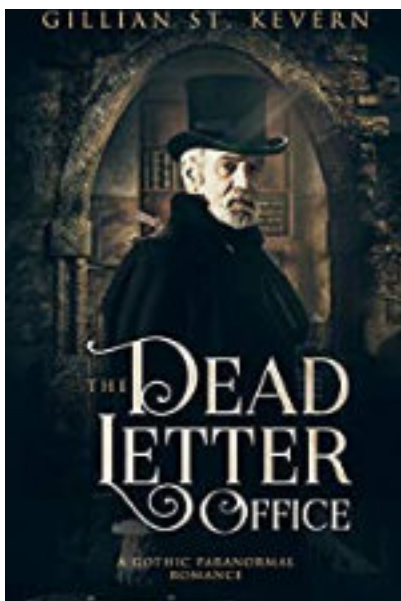
Corina Douglas

WINTER'S LEGION

Corina Douglas has just released **Winter's Legion**, the fourth book in the Daughter of Winter series which is based on the legends behind the winter goddess, Cailleach Bheur.

The series draws you into a world of Celtic mythology, powerful Druids, dark magic, and fated mates.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08BL7SDJ5>



Gillian St. Kevern

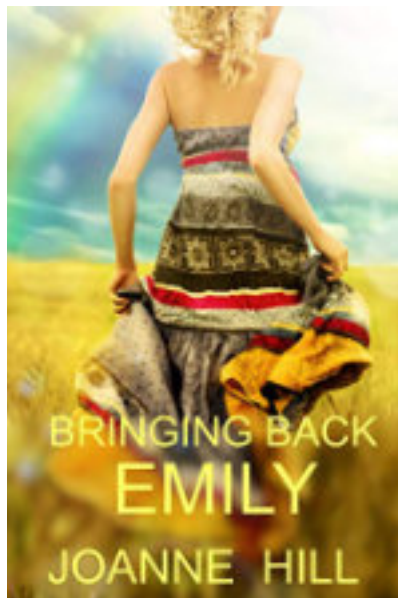
THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE

Congratulations to Gillian St. Kevern on the release of the twelfth book in her Read by Candlelight series of standalone gothic novellas.

The Dead Letter Office features two unlikely heroes, an ungrateful son, and a mummified cat that doesn't seem to realise she's dead.

Delivering the mail has never been more complicated.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07QNMHF31>



Joanne Hill

BRINGING BACK EMILY

Joanne Hill has released **Bringing Back Emily**, the third story in the City of Sails series set in Auckland.

Emily Randall is a doctor, mother, and now ex-wife of a former rugby star, and has enough going on in her life. Then she meets wounded loner Patrick Coulter—a man trying to atone for a past he just can't forget.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B084LV5D7R>



Carole Brungar

GOING HOME

Going Home, historical fiction with romantic elements, has just won its second silver medal.

The first was awarded from Independent Publisher Book Awards and the second was from the Military Writers Society of America. The book is also available in bookstores.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B082WVYHST>



Jayne Castel

CASSIAN

Jayne Castel has released **CASSIAN**, Book 2 of an exciting new series: The Immortal Highland Centurions.

A Roman centurion doomed to an immortal life. A courageous Scottish widow with an uncertain future. A wounded warrior who vows never to love again. The shy lady's maid who adores him from afar. An adventure that will bind them. Unrequited love in Medieval Scotland.

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/B08FJGFHQZ>

How to get your title featured:

Heart 2 Heart is always keen to share news from members:

- new book releases
- news of awards,
- contracts, and anything else that is worth celebrating.

To submit email the editor heart2hearteditor@romancewriters.co.nz or use the form on the RWNZ website.

Supply: 2-3 sentences in the third person, a cover image (no other images will be accepted) and a CLEAN link direct to the retailer.

NEW MEMBERS

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Courtney Stone ~ Blenheim
Giselle Simoes ~ Auckland
Karen Johnson ~ Nelson
Jodie Cawthorne ~ Auckland
Stephanie Clews ~ Auckland
Melissa Massey ~ Auckland

Great to have you all with us!

Don't forget to read the information for new members page on our website. Of course, you'll need to login before you can access the members' area, but you'll find information there about how to join the RWNZ Members-Only Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/RWNZMembersOnly/>

REGIONAL ROUND-UP REPORTS

Coast to Coast

Convenor: Jill Batty

October Meeting:

C2C had an interesting talk from Deryn Pittar, the Queen of the short story in our group. She regularly enters competitions and noted that her prose has improved significantly as she has learnt the ability to edit her short stories for submission. Less is more and that is something we all need to learn! The main takeaways from her notes are incorporated into *Deryn's article featured on page 10*.

The next C2C is in Tauranga. The topic is "cold reads". Bring the start of your latest story (or an old one you are resurrecting) up to 500 words. Starts being the most important and the hardest to get right.

November meeting:

C2C ran a Short Story competition this year in memory of Jeanne Drake, a valued member who died last year. Prizes were awarded at the November meeting. The winner was Lyn Rasmussen with "Love in the time of COVID."

The second prize was awarded to Enni Tuomisalo with "Out of Character", and the third prize was awarded to Julie Gilligan for "Raising Delphi". The stories were wonderful and we are very proud of them.

The rest of the meeting were "cold reads", asking for feedback on the excerpts handed in. Apart from the feedback, it is always interesting hearing your story read aloud by someone other than yourself!

The final meeting for the year will be held on Saturday 12th December at the Enchanted Cafe in Tirau. We will start at 12 noon with lunch, and then Santa will be giving out gifts (to the value of \$10), and a revisit with short stories to hone our expertise. If you are in the area, we would love to meet you.

Wellington / Kapiti Coast

Convenor: Moira Kay + Gudrun Frerichs

October meeting:

Our October meeting was a great example of camaraderie and the generous sharing of knowledge among our members. After checking in with everyone about their progress and the obstacles they've faced with their writing over the last month, we offered feedback following some cold reads, enjoyed some tasty treats, and finished by discussing the topic, "What to think about when writing a series".

It was interesting to see that our members had very different ways of approaching their series. Leeann's system of plotting the full series ahead and how she incorporates it into her marketing was inspirational.

October actually had twice the meeting opportunities thanks to our Spring Writer's Retreat. A dozen of us stayed four days at the Riverslea Retreat Centre in Otaki. It was our third retreat and the feedback was, "It's the highlight of our writing year". Who wouldn't



love great company, tons of inspirational discussions, and delicious food? Not to mention that the hive mind always comes up with invaluable ideas, helpful advice, and practical assistance in knocking down barriers to success.

November meeting:

Roughly a dozen of us met at the Petone Community Centre on the 7th November, for a riveting session! It was lovely to welcome new member Abbie, and catch up with some regular tribespeople.

A round of catching up was followed by a workshop on Amazon Advertising by the fabulous Deb Potter! Since marketing on the giant is something that frequently leaves many of us flummoxed, we were so appreciative of Deb, and also chapter member, Eileen Meuller, and the easy to digest insights they gave. In a group including both unpublished authors and pros, there was something for everyone to consider, and I'm sure many rushed home to reassess their dashboards!

Our next meeting will be a Christmas BBQ at Leeann's house in Paraparaumu, on Saturday, 5th December from 12- 4pm. Come along to farewell 2020, have a laugh with the tribe, and to check in on those end of year goals we made back in August!

Nelson

Convenors: Annika Ohlson-Smith, Lorna Croft

October meeting:

A quick catch-up to start the meeting—and the inevitable detour into what we've been reading and binge-watching on Netflix—led us into a brief discussion about writing in the third-person omniscient point of view.

Then we participated in a workshop prepared by Sally on showing-not-telling. Specifically, using dialogue as a vehicle to show. The resulting sequences were as ever, varied. It's always so refreshing to see the different

responses to these challenges.

Annika treated us to some 'funnies' whilst we enjoyed our cuppa and cake. We finished the meeting by sharing whether we identify as a plotter, pantsers, or planters; and we all agreed that having time (and finding the best place) to just 'think' is so important in the writing process.

Our next meeting will be on the 14th November. We'll have a workshop on the importance of story pacing, presented by one of our members, Donna Capil.

November meeting:

The Nelson chapter met up on Saturday 14th November and enjoyed a fantastic presentation on pacing, led by member, Donna Capil. This was a requirement of a writing course she is undertaking and was well received by all. We also enjoyed a brief discussion about romance tropes and their relevance in today's market over some delicious cake provided by member, Annika. Our next meet-up will be for our annual Christmas party.

Canterbury

Convenor: Emma Lowe

It's All Go in Christchurch

As we wound down from a pretty crazy year, our October and November turnouts were pretty small, but we used the opportunity to discuss a range of things, and despite that, there was still a helluva lot going on outside of the monthly meetings.

October

October saw us discuss First Kiss, predominantly because of the upcoming Daphne de Jong First Kiss Contest. We looked at different examples of first kisses, and discussed a range of craft books that have helped us develop the first kisses in our writing, including our own member Karen Winter's 'First Kiss' book. We discussed the

September release of the Canterbury Romance Writers anthology *One Kiss is Never Enough*, which was also dedicated to first kisses (to coincide with the contest), and the challenge of ordering print copies during Covid times—something that was incredibly educating!

Mel and Amy kept us all in line and managed almost the whole process. All most of us had to do was write! This would be a great time to thank them for it, so thanks both of you, Mel, for being such an awesome manager, and Amy, for the amazing cover! You're both awesome!

We also, for the first time ever, hosted a Canterbury Romance Writers table at the Wham Bam Author Jam, offering our members an opportunity to showcase their books to the wider public. We had a little success in selling, but actually got more from the networking opportunity, with romance writers from all around New Zealand. We're looking forward to doing something similar next year.

November

November saw the beginning of NaNoWriMo, and whilst several of our members participated, our work to develop sustainable writing habits during the year actually just saw a continuation of what we're doing on many levels. However, with myself and Judy being ML's for the region, and co-hosts of Christchurch Writers, we hosted a number of recorded panel interviews with our chapters members including, Ashlee Rivers, Stephanie Ruth, and Amy Paulusen, who discussed writing romance and the difference between women's fiction and romance. Gillian St Kevern discussed her experiences in writing LGBTQ and what the LGBTQ genre is. Sue Kingham (spoke as Beth Beamish) alongside Judy L Mohr (Astronomer/ Social Media Expert/ Editor), and Sean Welsh (AI Ethics

Consultant) discussed writing non-fiction. As well as that, we also ran a number of Ask the Editor sessions. The interviews can be found on www.chchnzwriters.org, under the tab 'Interesting Words from Local Authors' should anyone want to view them.

Mel hosted our November chapter group, which was a relatively informal affair that centred around sustainable writing habits once more. This has been a big focus for the chapter this year, and we're seeing more of our pre-published authors now take that leap to querying and self-publishing, which is really exciting.

In November, we celebrated a handful of new releases, including the Amazon #1 New Release of member, Sue Kingham (Beth Beamish)'s non-fiction book, *Dyslexia: Wrestling with the Octopus* (this is a must for anyone who has, or has children/family with dyslexia), Deone Dane's first release, an LGBTQ Fantasy, *Moonrite*, Amy Blythe's *Within My Reach*, Eva Shepherd's *Aspirations of a Ladies Maid*, the Canterbury Romance Writers anthology *One Kiss is Never Enough*, and Gillian St Kevern's 11th book in her LGBTQ gothic paranormal *Read By Candlelight* series, *The Lady of the Bog*. As mentioned before, it's been a big couple of months publishing wise for our members.

End of Year and New Year

Our Christmas dinner is on the 9th December, 7 pm, at Madam Kwongs on Blenheim Road. For anyone wanting to attend, if they'd like to RSVP either to the Canterbury Romance Writers email or on the event page of our local Facebook group (or message me through Facebook). If anyone is visiting Christchurch that night from any other chapters, you're more than welcome to join us too! Again, RSVP through the channels above!

Christchurch Council has confirmed bookings for the regular meeting room next year from February through November. The event dates will be added to the Facebook Calendar and Google. All will be held on the second Sunday of the month from 2-4pm (except public holidays), and all held at South Library.

We are now being charged for room rental as a result of a new policy with the council, and we are asking those members who are able to, to contribute to the cost, which is \$25.20 per month. I'm aware not all members attend regularly, so it is entirely voluntary. If you need receipts, let me know and I can provide you with one.

Our first meeting for the year will be on Sunday 14th February and as with the last three years, we'll begin the year with a goal setting session (ironic that it falls on Valentine's!). I'll also ensure I have the chapter library book boxes for anyone wanting to exchange books.

If anyone has any ideas for themes they'd particularly like to explore during our chapter meetings next year, please feel free to flick me an email on canterburyromancewriters@gmail.com or message me on Facebook.

For anyone wanting to meet during the holidays, (and I know, it's a long, long break), there are a number of very welcoming write-ins happening around the community, many regularly attended by chapter members. These are advertised on the www.chchnzwriters.org website. If you're an early bird, there's also the 24-hour virtual coffee shop, Jessie's, which is found at <https://jessiescoffeeshop.com/chat-room/> and who host writing sprints from 6-8 am every morning with our ODark30 Club. As with its name, it is open 24 hours, so if people want write-ins, or writing chat at other times of the day, we can organise it—and that's just not open to the Canterbury region, but any region in New Zealand.

From us all at the Canterbury chapter, we'd like to say Merry Christmas to all of the other RWNZ Chapters across the country, and of course to the Exec, and to wish you all the best for a happy, healthy, and successful (not to mention Covid-free) year for 2021. Thank you so much for bringing to us the amazing array of reads you have. I've never had so many books available for me to choose from my to-read list. Hubby keeps telling me no more, but I ain't planning to stop reading RWNZ members books any time soon! (He's gonna have to get used to seeing Amazon pop up on the bank statements!).

Thanks Mel, Judy, and Louise for keeping me organised, it's been more than a little bit of a trying year for all of us and I honestly don't know what I'd do without you.

Happy Holidays.

Otago / Southland

Convenor: Samantha Burton

October meeting:

Six of us met up at our usual venue on 3rd October. We had a catch-up and then discussed the elements that make a 'great beginning' of a story. The next meeting will be held on Saturday, 7th November at 2 pm.

November Meeting:

Our last meeting took place on Saturday, 7th November. Eight of us attended. We had a fun catch-up and then we launched into a discussion on 'audience'. What is it exactly, and why is it important? Our next meeting is a Christmas lunch on Saturday, 5th December.



Knightley
is a 9-letter word.

A divine equation,

**Austen
+
Sudoku
=
Heaven!**

KNIGHTLEY

PUZ # 1

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KNIGHTLEY

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KNIGHTLEY

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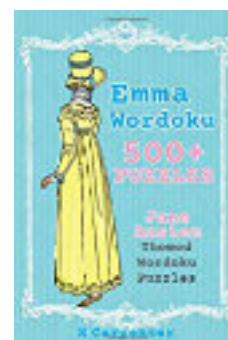
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featuring **500 plus** puzzles.

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<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0473551713>





KNIGHTLEY

PUZ # 1

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K	T	G	I	N	E	Y	H	L
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KNIGHTLEY

PUZ # 2

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KNIGHTLEY

PUZ # 3

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