

Keep Those Pages Turning: How to Build a Strong Story Structure

February's meeting was a real treat as Monalisa wowed the more that 50 writers attending her presentation, *Keep Those Pages Turning*. She used examples throughout to drive home how a seven-point story structure organizes your plot progression and helps maintain a great experience for the reader. The classic seven-point structure includes the following points in sequence: (1) the character in a (2) setting with (3) problems that the (4) character tries to solve and (5) their failure or success leads to another problem that (6) puts everything on the line, then (7) ultimately leads to the validation of the book. Monalisa emphasized that this structure may vary in practice, but is useful to know when plotting. In addition, she recommended reading several books such as "Beginnings, Middles & Ends" by Nancy Kress and "Self-Editing for Fiction Writers" by Remni Browne and Dave King. The link to the resources offered during the presentation are here <https://monalisafoster.com/stuff-for-writers/writing-resources/>. Monalisa Foster is a published author of books and articles and can found on [Amazon](#), [Facebook](#) and <https://monalisafoster.com/>.



Monalisa Foster at the February 19th WGT meeting

KATHRYN MCCLATCHY FLASH FICTION CONTEST

The third-place winner of the 2017 Kathryn McClatchy Flash Fiction Contest, Sabrina Chapman's "Goldie," is in issue. The honorable mention winner "Tiny Steps" by Steve McCluer will be published in the April issue of the WGT Mentor. You may download recent issues of the Mentor on our website, www.wgtonline.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS - Mark your calendars!

March 21 Join **Critique Group** on the 3rd Wednesday of each month, and obtain valuable, constructive feedback.

March 24 **WORDfest** offers an all-you-can-meet literary event with 20 North Texas writers organizations and more than 300 writers together at Tarrant County College's Northeast Campus. www.wordwriters.org

April 19 **Nathan Brown** will tell us ways to generate material and organize it into "themes"; techniques for getting a daily writing practice up and running; and how to maintain it through "bite-sized" blocks of time and output. He is an author, singer-songwriter, photographer, and award-winning poet and Poet Laureate of Oklahoma for 2013 and 2014.

April 28 **Spring Workshop** – reserve your seat for this three-hour writers workshop with author Annie Neugebauer. She is a novelist, short story author, and award-winning poet.

Goldie by Sabrina Chapman

Myron banged open the door to his tiny travel trailer, his home for the past year since his mother moved to an assisted living center. He ducked his head as he stepped inside leaving the door ajar to let the warm afternoon air escape. The trailer strained against Myron's massive bulk as he took one long stride, placed his package on the Formica table top and kicked off his sneakers.

At six and a half feet tall, standing upright was impossible once inside his small home on wheels. Myron didn't mind the confinement. His tiny, sparse dwelling suited his simple needs and it was no trouble to keep tidy, the way his mother taught him and his twin brother, Benny.

(continued at www.wgtonline.org)

(Continued from page 1, *A Dark Fog*)

Chin tucked into his chest and hunching his shoulders, he pulled his purchase from the flimsy plastic bag.

"Look, Benny," he said over his shoulder unwinding the packing paper letting it fall to the floor. Myron turned to the framed picture of his twin hanging on the wall next to the open door. Benny was dressed in combat military gear, the American flag behind him. The picture had been taken before Benny's unit had shipped out for Afghanistan. Benny never returned, but Myron kept up his end of the conversation.

"I got Goldie a bigger tank. See." Myron held up the rectangular glass tank in front of the picture for Benny's inspection. He shuffled to the sink behind him and turned on the faucet to clean the aquarium before filling it with water. "Goldie's gotten so big. He needs a bigger home."

Careful not to spill, Myron placed the tank on the kitchen table next to Goldie's small round bowl. At the bottom of the tank sat a resin gate covered with a faux-thatched roof. A green plastic plant next to the little gate fluttered in the water as Goldie swam.

Myron told Benny about all the different fish he'd seen at the pet store after work. How he stopped to pet all the puppies and kitties and talked to the colorful twittering birds. One day Myron hoped to have a place big enough for all those pets.

"Benny," he said, "I believe Goldie will like his new home."

Myron shook some fish food into Goldie's tank then sidestepped back to the sink and cranked open the window. The faded yellow curtains fluttered in the breeze. Lumbering over to the couch he eased himself onto the sagging sofa. The small trailer creaked and strained with his every move as he stretched his long legs out in front of him. He watched Goldie swim; fins fluttering and mouth twitching, biting tiny specks of food out of the water

as they drifted down from the top of the tank.

He rested his head on the back of the sofa and began telling Benny all about his route delivering the morning paper. Myron had delivered newspapers since he was a boy and considered himself an expert newspaperman.

"Getting up at midnight makes a man sleepy, Benny. Gonna rest here for a minute before I go visit mama." Myron yawned and closed his eyes.

"Wake up!"

Startled, Myron jerked to attention, then relaxed again and stretched.

"I must have fallen asleep on the sofa, Benny." He rubbed his neck and blinked his eyes as he sat up stiff and groggy from his nap.

"Get up!"

"Now I'm hearing things," he said rubbing his face.

"Quit talking to that picture and listen to me."

"Huh?" Myron's head jerked. The door to the trailer was still open. "Who's there?" he asked peering into the darkness past the kitchen. He crouched moving in slow motion, his massive hands and arms extended in front of him ready to karate chop an intruder.

"Not that way. Over here."

"Where?" Myron spun around his eyes darted under the table. "Show yourself."

"Here."

"Huh?" Myron looked at his goldfish swimming in fast circles in the small fish bowl. "Nah. Someone's playing a joke on me."

"It's me!" The goldfish stopped swimming, fins fluttering in the water. "Goldie."

"Man," Myron relaxed his arms and grinned. He pulled out a kitchen chair and plopped down causing the trailer to shake. "I get it," he said. "This is a dream."

"Write this down." Goldie began swimming again giving Myron instructions.

"Take all your savings out of First National Bank and buy shares of Ziegler Muse. Ziegler is gearing up for an IPO offering."

"How can you talk underwater, Goldie?"

Myron picked up the pencil on the table and scratched his head with the eraser end. "You're a goldfish."

"Yes, I am, Myron. ZM's financials are through the roof."

"Benny! Goldie can talk." Myron shook his head.

"Listen to me, Myron..."

"Hey! How do you know I have a savings account at First National?" Myron watched bubbles float to the top of the tank as Goldie spoke. "Have you been going through my things?"

"I'm not a flying fish, Myron." Goldie continued giving Myron instructions causing the water to churn.

"How do you know all this?" Myron asked scribbling.

"I'm golden, Myron. Don't forget what I've told you."

Startled, Myron jerked upright. "I had the strangest dream, Benny." He yawned and rubbed his eyes, as he stretched his long limbs and lean back against the sofa. "I dreamed Goldie could talk." He sat upright glancing around the trailer letting his eyes adjust to the afternoon light.

"Oh, no!" Myron jumped up, bumping his head on the ceiling. "No! Not Goldie!"

He picked up the small round fish tank and held it between his massive hands. Goldie floated belly up at the top of the tank. He placed the tank back on the table, pulled out a chair and sank down.

"Goldie was a good friend, Benny," he said rubbing his sore head. "I sure will miss him." Myron laid his hands on the table and sighed.

"What's this?" he said, picking up the pad of paper. "What's Ziegler Muse?"

Can Belonging to a Writers Group Help You as a 21st Century Writer?

By Rainer Bantau

Can belonging to a writers group help you as a 21st century writer? **YES!** I believe it can.

Whether you are a traditional or digital age writer, you will benefit from belonging to a community of writers. There are the traditional writers' groups that you can find in your local area, like the Writers Guild of Texas (WGT) of which I am a member. There are also online writing communities that you can take part in like Scribophile and ProBlogger.

Since rekindling my interest in writing and because I wanted to hone my craft, I joined the Writers Guild of Texas (WGT) in the Fall of 2014 and have served on the Board of Directors since I first joined. Our Guild hosts monthly members meetings featuring a guest speaker discussing writing-related topics, either focusing on the craft or the business aspect of writing. These meetings have taught me critical lessons that have helped elevate my writing skill and sharpen my marketing awareness. The meetings are held on the 3rd Monday of each month (except in January when the meeting is held on the 4th Monday due to the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday).

Writing in the modern 21st century is a two-fold venture: creating and selling. Each writer begins with an idea and weaves a story either on paper or on their computer screen. After a long slow dance of writing, rewriting, writing, and rewriting, the author has a finished work that they now need to sell. Once your book is in print, the second part of the writing life kicks in. This is as hard and challenging as the actual writing. To get people to buy your book you must tell them it exists and that they would be better for reading it. I have found that belonging to a local writers group like the WGT has helped me

significantly by educating me in both of these areas of responsibility.

In addition to the monthly members meetings, the WGT also conducts a monthly in-person critique group. Several members and non-members writers meet in the Basement of the Richardson Public Library on the 3rd Wednesday of each month to read and analyze each other's work. This interaction is critical to helping writers who are serious about developing their skills and producing a publishable work. Hearing your story read aloud and getting immediate reader feedback is invaluable. WGT also facilitates an online critique group on Scribophile that is available to all WGT members. Writers engage in discussions, take part in forums, and post their work for critique by fellow members.

I have found my local writers group has helped me build a sense of belonging by strengthening my writing and growing my writing community. The WGT has helped me discover other writing communities, both in-person and online. Through workshops and group activities, I have met people I would have not met otherwise. Many of these people have played a significant role in improving my writing, including growing this blog.

For example, through participating in WGT, I have been introduced to NaNoWriMo, WORDfest, and Writers in the Field. Last year, I had the opportunity to collaborate with fellow writer/blogger Kathryn McClatchy, and her service dog Gizmo, for a presentation on how bloggers can make their voice heard amid a sea of 150 million blogs. Kathryn and I have also guest-posted on one another's blogs, something that came out of working together on the Board of the Writers Guild.

Through my participation in a local writing community, I have also been able to identify my niche' and hone my writers voice. You will find that everyone is writing a book. Those that aren't, are thinking about it. Thanks to technology and

economics, there are more avenues available to get your work published. You no longer have to rely on the Big Five publishing houses (of course, the other side of the coin is that if you want to be published the old-fashioned way, the Big 5 is who you'll need to impress with your manuscript—and space and time is limited).

Finally, being part of a writing community has grown my arsenal of resources like the blogging website and podcast ProBlogger. Truthfully, I had no real concept of podcasting before joining the guild. Writer/blogger Jeff Goins and the worship blog WorshipMinistry.com are also resources that I discovered through my being engaged in a writing community. Seeking to expand my writing community, I recently joined the Writers League of Texas. Through joining a writing community, you'll discover new opportunities, identify helpful resources, and build lifelong friendships.

It has been my personal experience that belonging to a writers group has opened doors and shown me avenues that I would not have discovered on my own. Best of all, it has introduced me to a ton of great people that I would not have met otherwise. It has introduced me to other writers and bloggers who are passionate about comparable topics—like faith, worship, writing, and recovery—that I am passionate about. You will meet people who share your interests as well. Speaking writer to writer, blogger to blogger—I would strongly encourage you to find a local community of writers near you. I believe you will find it to be a blessing in disguise.

Write On!

Original article posted on The Devotional Guy™ blog on February 27, 2018

Writers Guild of Texas 2018 Board

You can serve the WGT in one of the open positions by talking to any one of the Board members. ***Without a Board, the Writers Guild of Texas cannot exist.***