



Writing Forums info sheet Number 3.2



Double award-winning [AutumnsLeaves](#) by featured artist, Abigail Jones – WF Member [Abby](#)

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Editorial

A newsletter? Writing Forums doesn't have a newsletter, does it?

Well, technically, yes it does. Or at least it did. Though, it is more than a year ago now since the last edition was published.

That gap owes largely to the fact that we have too few staff taking on too many projects in their already limited time.

But, as those of you who are paying attention will have noticed, there have been a large number of changes to WF in recent times in an effort to not only improve the community for existing members, but also to make it appealing to new and potential members.

So, even if our newsletter has been allowed to languish awhile, the rest of the green lady has been attended to studiously and continuously.

Now, finally, after all the other things that have had their time at the top of admin's to-do list, a resurrected newsletter effort has appeared.

Assuming that everything goes to plan and that I do my job around here, this publication should be a monthly affair, so you can expect to see this on a regular basis again.

All things considered, bringing back the newsletter is just one small part of what has gone on in the meantime.

Changes have been going on both inside and outside the forum, including the return of our long-missed Admiral, staff changes and

additions, recent rule changes, forum changes, and alterations to just about everything else you can put a finger on.

For those who missed them, we'll cover all the big changes in this issue and bring everyone up to speed.

Popsprocket



[Rum O'Clock](#) by WF Member [Abby](#)

QUOTE ME!- MJ Preston

I hate arrogant writers. I've met a few in my day, those are the ones who attempt to grind down the spirit of new writers while maintaining a steady flow of zero imagination.

*I remember going to my first writers forum and having someone tear apart a piece of work I'd written. It was in fact the second chapter of my novel: *The Equinox*.*

When I asked the critic what they recommended I do to improve the piece they

replied that rewriting my work was not their job.

I learned something that day. This person represented a group of people who had no interest in fostering creativity or exchanging ideas.

I packed my virtual suitcase and after one more unpleasant forum experience I found myself welcomed into WF, where I might add, I learned a lot and eventually published my first book.

STAFF NEWS

Star Staffer of the Month

WF's loyal staff do a lot of work around the place - the mentors, moderators, and admins all.

So it's only fitting that we offer some acknowledgement here for the staffer whose effort has been outstanding in the last month. Along with a shiny new medal and an extra zero in their pay check, the winner receives a complimentary ego inflation.



[Leo cat](#) by [Abby](#)

Creation of the Media Team

In the world of small business, most outfits tend to be run by a group of people who often do a little bit of everything.

Over time, as those businesses grow, there comes a point where further expansion of the brand requires the application of dedicated effort – a point where the workload must be divided and assigned to ensure that it gets done in the most efficient manner.

Much the same as a small business, WF has seen the roles of its staff both expanded and refined as part of our effort to spread the word about our wonderful green lady.

Despite how far we've already come, once again the time has come again for the creation of new staff roles – enter the Media Team. Wearing a fetching plum colour, the Media Team will be responsible for WF's general media and external presence.

With the aforementioned dedicated effort, the plum team should be able to get the most out

of the significant opportunities offered by sites such as Facebook and Twitter to help further grow WF.

In the very near future we certainly expect the scope of the Media Team to evolve rapidly and are open to any and all suggestions that our members may have to help improve our external image!

If you'd like to follow us on social media or just find out what the Media Team has been up to so far, then take a look our pages:



FORUM NEWS

The changes to the forum haven't just been going on behind the scenes, they've been all over the place.

At the request of our members we added a chat box open to all members down in the Writer's Lounge.

If you're ever down that way, don't forget to stop in and say 'hi', maybe strike up a conversation with anyone else who happens to be viewing the board at the time.

Apart from that, two of the biggest changes in recent times have been the addition of two more official challenges to accompany the long-standing LM Challenge.

Non-Fiction Literary Manoeuvres

Our first new addition is the Non-Fiction Literary Manoeuvres challenge – the NFLM.

The NFLM was added at the behest of some rather excited members and is the counterpart to the popular LM Fiction Competition.

Aside from the obvious differences between the two challenges, the NFLM differs in several ways: the prompt in the NFLM is chosen by the winner of the previous month, winners are chosen by poll – unless enough people volunteer to judge; and depending on the type of entry it may require citations and/or footnotes, such as an article.

But don't let that put you off; the NFLM also accepts other article types such as personal essays and memoirs, which typically do not include citations or footnotes, so they are not required.

All members are encouraged to enter regardless of experience level, and any suggestions or questions concerning the competition can be PM'd to the organiser, J Anfinson, or posted straight to the NFLM Coffee Bar.

>>>> >>>> [Harris Hawk](#) by [Abby](#)>>>>

Colors of Fiction

Slightly more recent than the NFLM, some of our members have banded together to create a third monthly writing challenge: Colors of Fiction.

The Colors of Fiction competition is a new endeavor for a community writing contest with a focus on personal style, voice, and narrative.

Each competition begins with a core story, called the 'firestarter', which the competitors then emulate the details of, while writing their own version of the tale.

Genre, voice, character, setting, and many other elements of the story change from writer to writer while key elements of the story remain, giving judges and readers a glimpse into the personal style and voice of the competitor.

Colors of Fiction puts the emphasis on how the story is told, rather than the building blocks used to get there.

As above, all members are encouraged to enter and any questions may be directed to Bishop or posted to the Colours of Fiction Lounge.



Site Rules Update

Something that may have escaped many is the recent update to the site rules.

Our rule book is a constantly evolving thing, changing to suit the needs of the site as issues arise or are discovered, but our most recent update was a fairly large one, and there are a number of additions and changes worth noting.

The Zeroth Rule.

A reference to Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics, the Zeroth Rule is an overarching idea that says the interests of the community outweigh the interests of the individual.

This reinforces the fact that the site rules are enforced without favour and won't be bent to accommodate any one member's gripes.

Moderation and unwritten rules.

Variouly over the lifetime of the site, the rules enforced by the moderation team have sometimes been unwritten ones.

Given enough time, these rules have made their way into the official book, but exist as rules in the meantime nonetheless.

Even though something may not be included on the Site Rules page, if a moderator messages a member to moderate their actions, then it is still moderation and subject to the existing rules about such.

Of course a moderator's action may still be challenged as before by reporting the PM or by sending a PM to a supervisor or administrator.

Spam.

Spam has always been a constant onslaught for internet forums.

The existing rules have been expanded to include that links included in non-introductory posts by new members, and the use of the PM system to send unsolicited requests for off-site responses (such as phone, email, or links to other sites) may also be treated as spam.

In the case of the latter, members are encouraged to report the message so that the offending member may be dealt with.

Amount of work supplied for review or critique.

One of the aforementioned unwritten rules of the site has always been that members are respectful of one another and the site's purpose when posting their work for review.

In essence, the idea is that members shouldn't be greedy about how much of their work is posted at any one time, or how much work is posted without some sort of reciprocation.

The creative areas are for offering critiques or advice on one another's work and should not be used as a test publishing platform for large tracts of a book or similar.

This issue largely falls under using common sense and good netiquette – be reasonable in how much of your work you think others will or will need to see in order to provide you with constructive feedback.

If you would like to find a beta reader to take a look at a larger piece of your work, then stop in at our [beta reader's group](#).

Posting work as external links and file attachments.

When posting work on the prose and poetry boards for review, please include the body of the work in the post and not as a link to an external location or as a text/pdf file attachment.

There are a number of reasons for this, including streamlining the critiquing process for members and helping to ensure that members aren't directed away to malicious sites.

And in any case, a work that is easy to offer critique on is far more likely to attract attention than one that requires reviewers to visit other locations.

Relaxed language rules.

Not included in the recent rule update but still worth mentioning is the new rules regarding coarse language.

We do of course ask that our members behave like adults and keep their use of colourful language to a minimum, but it is no longer against the rules to swear outside of the creative areas when done sparingly.

Gratuitous coarse language may still result in an infraction.

QUOTE ME! - Gavrushka

Naive self-belief is a powerful cloak that conceals reality until it is ripped away from us, on receiving our first critique, revealing our misshapen bodies beneath. We can then either start working out, or buy one of those funny mirrors that make us look other than we are.

OTHER NEWS

In other, more personal news, the staff of WF would like to once again extend our

Congratulations to WF members

Kyle R and Sunny who, after meeting on the forum several years ago, have married!

Catfish Soup

InstituteMan was served up for [September's Catfish Soup](#).

Thank you for joining us, Tom (aka InstituteMan). Please tell us about yourself.

At the base of it all, I am an overeducated hillbilly.

Okay, so maybe that's not the whole quote. But you'll have [to go and have a read](#) to find out.

Author Interview

Come and take a look at [our latest author interview](#) with [David Rider \(ClosetWriter\)](#):

You recently published, Another Sunrise, what is the book about?

Another sunrise is about my journey. It takes the reader along with me as I battle the demons of living with terminal cancer.

It is an inspirational account of how I was lifted from the depths of depression by looking through the lens of a camera.

I have emptied my soul into its message. I hope that it might help others who feel the same way I did before a gift from my daughter changed everything.

Featured Artist – [Abigail Jones](#); WF member [Abby](#)



“I have had a passion for art since I was very young, I love to paint a variety of subjects but I particularly enjoy painting people and animals.

I strive to create realistic, high quality paintings and drawings that will last for a lifetime.

I mainly work in graphite pencil and coloured pencils but also paint in watercolour and acrylic, as well as sculpting in polymer clay.”

(from [About Me! - Abigail Jones Art](#))

The incredibly talented Abby has been a WF member since September 2012.



Abigail Jones Art can also be found on [Facebook](#).

You Are Rubbish, So Just Damn Well Admit It...

Yes, sorry for the provocative title, but it underlines an important milestone in my writing journey. Somehow, I doubt I'm unique.

In a couple of weeks' time, it'll be my fourth writing anniversary and so I thought I'd indulge myself in a little reminiscing.

So I was talking about writing crap, which I spent two years doing. The problem is, I never knew it was crap and, indeed, I thought I would have literary agents fighting over me.

Why didn't anyone tell me I was woeful? Why didn't they shake me and say "For the love of God, stop torturing us with this drivel!"

The thing is, many people did, but I didn't listen, instead choosing the counsel of those who said what I wanted to hear.

It was a guy off here who finally managed to chisel away a lump off my delusional shell... Well, bugger me, he stuck his head in the hole he'd made and shouted "Mate, you're crap..." If he'd left it there, I'd have repaired the shell and carried on, but he persisted.

Eventually I listened.

I don't regret those two years of writing vomit, as they gave me the opportunity to write stories without fear. - I churned out hundreds of thousands of words of awful offal, but the core stories were passable. Ideas to build on.

And, knowing I was rubbish, I learned patience. Writing is easy, but the journey requires stout shoes.

I see many run out of patience before they've journeyed far enough, and I lament the books that will never be written as a result.

There are very, very few people I have seen who lack the talent to write successfully, but many who lack the patience.

You have write rubbish before you can write drivel. You have to write drivel before you can write insipid. You have to write insipid before you can write passable... I think you see where this is leading.

So, four years on, I write somewhere between insipid and passable, but I can see 'good' a little way up ahead. I've held off the urge to self-publish, as I'm still on the journey. Still patient.

As for you, well, I hope realising you were rubbish is a long way in the past and, if not, I pray you realise it soon so you can journey onwards. You'll find all the help you'll need, right here on this site.

by WF Veteran [Gavrushka](#)



Detail of [Black Jaguar](#) by [Abby](#)

Beta Reading As Its Own Art

Over the course of their writing careers, most people will come to see the ability to edit their own work as a learnable and indispensable skill, but few, I'd wager, will ever consider beta reading as its own distinct or necessary skill.

I recently had my first experience in doing a complete start-to-finish beta read of a book, and it has turned out to be a really good learning process.

Not only have I gained a new appreciation for those who can do a really good job of this sort of thing, but I've had the chance to hone a skill whose importance seems rather obvious in hindsight.

All told, the manuscript as I received it for reading totalled somewhere around 140 000 words. To make it through that easily took at least forty hours of actual keyboard time.

Factoring in my own tendencies for distraction and procrastination, and I spent much longer almost working on my review. So there's that - beta reading takes its own kind of patience.

But it also takes another kind of skill: the ability to separate reading and editing. I think that the review I provided fell somewhere between those, with a large number of line-edits in addition to my holistic comments, but the temptation to do a full edit was something that I found very difficult to separate from the task at hand.

The distinction between these seems to be rather important now that I've a good view of them both.

You see, obviously, beta reading isn't about the little stuff. When we edit our own work, we often focus on the page level, picking up

inconsistencies in sentences and paragraphs, altering minute character actions to seem more natural, making sure that Jane's hair doesn't change from red to blonde in between chapters - that sort of thing.

What's much harder to focus on is the big picture. To be able to read through a book (potentially your own book) looking at the characters and story and progression from start to finish is quite the talent when the temptation remains to get distracted by something that's happening on the line-level.

And, as far as I'm concerned, it's one worth learning.

Beta reading won't appeal to everyone, and I can certainly understand why they might be deterred, but at the end of the day, learning the ability to take a dozen steps back and look at a book from a distance is invaluable because although it's the word-by-word that makes something readable, it's the big things that make something worth reading.

I would put the challenge to everyone who wants to improve their ability to write and edit, that they take on a beta reading project and see what they can learn from the experience.

Chances are you'll come out the other end as a better writer just for having had the chance to take an objective look at someone else's work in progress.

By WF Chief Media Manager [popsprocket](#)

“Based on Mark Coker's Book, "The Secrets to Ebook Publishing Success", he recommends that manuscripts be read by beta readers in order to create a better book.

So, I thought creating a list of people willing to be Beta Readers would be useful.”

[Beta Readers Group](#)

