



The Next Chapter

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The Roving Pen

by Tamara Kratzer

If stress is your thing right now, then you're in luck. For a writer stress is a creativity killer. But you are in the perfect time for bucking the stress. A walk outside or a hike in a natural area is perfect for calm, and who could not enjoy the flowers blooming right now. And if your stress is writer's block, take a pad and pencil with you. A little free writing in front of the flowers for inspiration or on a hike in the woods will help free up some creativity. At least nature tends to be fun and creative for me.

Don't forget to come online to the meetings. It's good to see everyone. We have another interesting speaker this month, too. Holly Rand, the owner and lead progress planner at Project Progress, helps businesses create their brand presence and achieve their goals and will be talking to us about marketing and web presence. Sounds quite useful for us authors.

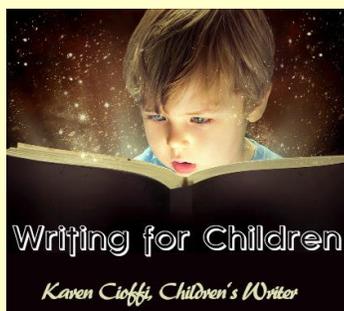
Another Year—Another Story

by Renee' La Viness

Gene and Renee' La Viness are from Northeastern Oklahoma, where they are members of a few different writing groups and attend as many as five or six area conferences each year. For nearly a decade, they have been heavily involved in the Oklahoma/Arkansas/Missouri writing crowd. It was time to add East Texas to the list.

This year, Renee' has taken a position with a new e-magazine, *Writers Monthly PDF*, which is delivered to inboxes once a month. She has a regular column about cozy mysteries, and she will also be the April 2021 cover story. If anyone is interested in learning more, the magazine's webpage is at <https://www.jespiddlin.net/writersmonthly>.

Please see *Another Year—Another Story* page 3



Which Comes First, Characters or Story?

by Karen Cioffi

Many articles about writing for children and other genres suggest knowing your characters inside and out before beginning the story. In fact, information suggests that the author build the story around the characters after they are fully developed.

While this is good advice, and many experienced authors recommend this technique, there are some authors who occasionally watch their characters unveil themselves right before their eyes.

This is such an interesting method of writing.

Your character introduces himself and gradually reveals bits and pieces, and blossoms as the story moves along. Sometimes a story doesn't begin with this intent, it just happens. This is known as the seat-of-you-pants method of writing.

You do need to be careful with this method though - you may lose track of all the bits and pieces that make up the character.

So, a good way to keep track of those quirky telltale marks, expressions, behavior patterns, and physical features is to note them on a separate page or character card as they become unveiled. You wouldn't want your character to have brown eyes in one chapter and blue eyes in another - unless of course, it's a science fiction or paranormal and part of the storyline.

So, is there a right or wrong answer to the question of which comes first, characters or story? That depends on the writer.

While it may be important to know your characters, and even have a family and background established for them, even if they are not used in the story, you can also become acquainted as you go along.

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Submitted by Marvin Mayer and used with the approval of 4RV Publishing, LLC. From the 4RV Reading and Writing Newsletter.

Karen Cioffi is an award-winning children's author and a working children's ghostwriter/rewriter and [writing coach](#). She is also the founder and editor-in-chief of Writers on the Move as well as an author online platform instructor with WOW! Women on Writing.

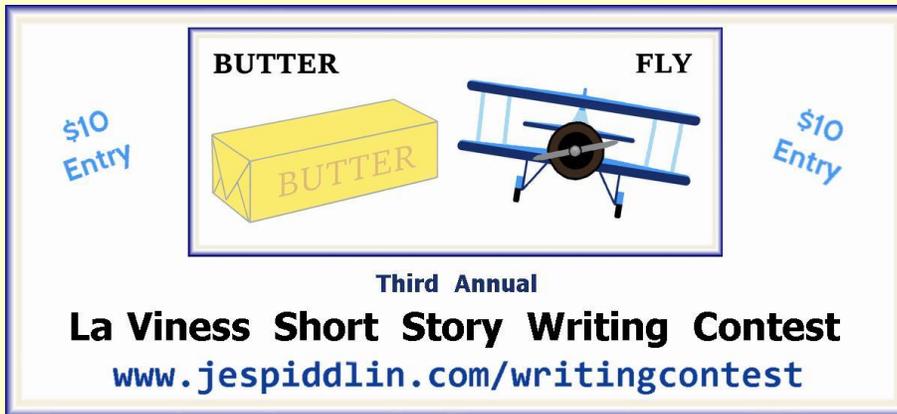
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You can check out Karen's books

at: <https://karencioffiwritingforchildren.com/karens-books/>



Another Year—Another Story

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Renee’ also offers multiple writing contests each year, mostly attached to conferences. She has a handful of judges who work with her. In this year’s La Viness Short Story Writing Contest, the “compound” subject is Butter/Fly. Check out the website to learn more.

<https://www.jespiddlin.com/writingcontest>.

On Saturday, April 24th, Renee’ will be part of the Read.Write.Share. Writers Weekend conference, which will be held online for the first time. It is free this year, and they are capping the attendance at 100. There are very few spaces left, so sign up today, if you’re interested.

<https://www.rwsweekend.org>

Renee’ also shares a long list of area and online conferences on her author website at <https://www.reneelaviness.com/links.html>. If you know of others in the Central/Southern Plains area, she’d love to add the info.

Conference Tip

by Renee' La Viness

Have you considered attending conferences, but not wanted to go alone? A big event full of strangers can be intimidating. I know what it's like to return to my room and cry due to the overwhelming anxiety and loneliness. At my first conference, while sharing my motel room with my tears, I took my parents' advice from long ago: Chin up and move forward. Without realizing what I was doing, I found a way to make it easier.

First, look for someone who seems to know their way around and is glad to answer questions. This will be your informant. Learn their name and something that will help you spot them in a crowd. Next, find someone who looks more lost and confused than you. (Trust me, they exist.) This will be the person who helps you feel useful, and you will be able to help them because you have already connected with someone in-the-know. Share notes and discuss the sessions, even if you attend different ones. If you get along okay, exchange email addresses and/or connect on social media. If you return next year, you already have two people you will feel comfortable around, and you will no longer be the newcomer.

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As your story develops you may find out if the character is fearful in certain situations, or if he is heroic. Sometimes it's impossible to know this about a person, let alone a character, until circumstances create the possibility of the question.

It is one's environment and circumstances that help develop his or her characteristics, fears, hopes, and so on. The same holds true for your character.

Using an example:

How would a child who never saw a mouse before react to one?

There's no way to answer that question until it happens. So, having the story help develop the character can be a useful tool. But, again, be sure to keep track of all the new features your character unveils along the way.

TNC Newsletter and ETWG Information

TNC Submission Guidelines and deadlines

All submitted data must be received by the 20th of the month prior to the month in which art/ad/etc. will appear.

Length—up to 500 words (ask if more)

Format—single space, no indent

Fonts—12 pt. Times New Roman

Photos—jpeg with caption instructions

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ETWG



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