



August 2018

Suburban Scribe

Newsletter of the Sacramento Suburban Writers' Club

Common Causes of Unmemorable Characters

Vincent M. Wales is an award-winning speculative fiction novelist whose works include the fantasy novel, *Wish You Were Here*, and dystopian future tale, *One Nation Under God*. He is currently working on the final book in a trilogy called *The Many Deaths of Dynamistress*.

He has worn many other hats over the years, including writing instructor, essayist, Big Brother, freethought activist, and suicide prevention crisis counselor. He is currently co-host of The Psych Central Show, a weekly podcast on psychology and mental health.

Raised in the small town of Brockway, Pennsylvania, where he frequently complained about the weather, he now spends most of his writing time in coffee shops—since his cats fail to grasp the entire concept of “writing time.”

Writers often **struggle with character creation**. Wales certainly knows about that, a crucial part of writing fiction. “Good characters need to be fully developed, not flat and simple things. Part of this development is to give your characters memorable traits.” Wales advises writers to be people watchers. “Study the people around you, not just your friends, but strangers, too. You might end up finding characters in the real world. . . Being a good writer means being a good observer.”

“How believable are your characters? If you have made them so real, so credible that your ideas seem to come to you from them, rather than your own conscious decision-making, “. . .it’s usually worth a serious look.”

“For any budding authors out there, I do hope you get to meet your characters, someday,” but you won’t if they are unmemorable.

Following this enlightening presentation on avoiding unmemorable characters, Wales has offered to “answer questions from the group on whatever aspects of writing that they want.” His field of expertise is wide. This will be your chance to learn from him. For example, do you ever get caught up in the domino clout of cause and effect? Can scientific ignorance at times affect the plot? Do you have difficulty writing some of your scenes? Is it important to read a lot? Is it possible for a fictional character to be drawn heavily from our own lives and problems? Does memory mining really allow for a richer storytelling, [and] also a deeper appreciation of an author’s own life? Are there are a lot of reasons for self-publishing, since the advent of print-on-demand (POD) technology has made it easier than ever to do?



check out his website <http://www.vincentmwales.com/>

All of the meetings of the Sacramento Suburban Writers' Club are held
on the 2nd Monday of each month. 7 - 9 p.m.

at the Crossroads Community Fellowship Church's meeting hall,
5501 Dewey Drive, Carmichael (just north of the Madison/Dewey intersection)

All writers are encouraged to attend. Membership is not mandatory but brings privileges.

Say it Again, Only Better

Instead of
NEXT

- ✓ Upcoming
- ✓ Following
- ✓ Closer
- ✓ Nearest
- ✓ Neighboring
- ✓ Succeeding
- ✓ Closest

Instead of
JUST

- ✓ Narrowly
- ✓ Simply
- ✓ Hardly

A Helpful Hint

by Mort Rumberg



Impossible to open a file?

CloudConvert.com. is one of those useful web tools that you may not need immediately. But, the next time you say, "I can't open this file...," give it a try.

CloudConvert.com may be able to convert that file you can't use into one you can.

For occasional use, CloudConvert doesn't charge. If you convert files smaller than 1 gigabyte, fewer than five files at a time, and use less than 25 minutes of file conversion time a day, CloudConvert's services are free of charge. For high volume users, CloudConvert does charge fees as described at

<https://cloudconvert.com/pricing>.

I suspect most writers will never encounter a need for fees.

<https://cloudconvert.com>.

THE ART OF SELF-EDITING

Susan Tuttle (used with permission)

All manuscripts should be professionally edited before being sent to an agent/publisher or being independently published. But there are important steps to take before sending your manuscript off, steps that will ensure it really is ready for a professional to work on it.

1. First, get some space from your work. Put the final draft away for a week or more, and work on something else. This will allow you to view it with fresh eyes and will allow any critiques you've received to percolate in your subconscious.

2. Second, put on your High School English Class hat: Look for errors in the way words are used and strung together, and in the meanings of the sentences.

A. Check for spelling, grammar, punctuation. Keep a reference guide handy to check to make sure you have the "rules" correct.

B. Watch for passive voice.

C. Get as many instances of the word "was" out as possible.

D. Watch for too many adverbs (lazy writing) and strings of adjectives.

E. Look for incomplete sentences (a technique overly-used these days), dangling participles, misplaced modifiers, etc.

F. Be alert for misused words, confusing phrases, etc.

G. Watch for run-on sentences, overuse of hyphenated words, etc.

H. Check for repeated words and/or phrases.

I. Rewrite sentences that begin with dependent clauses; fiction sentences should not begin with dependents.

3. Third, read for the following writing techniques. You can do this on the computer and keep notes in Track Changes or in a separate file, or print out the manuscript and use a highlighter and make notes in the margins.

A. Consider the basic structure of the piece: is there a beginning, middle and end? Are they clearly defined or hidden in shadows?

B. Look at the plot: does it make sense? Is it too simplistic, overdone to the point of cliché, or too convoluted to follow?

C. What, if any, are the inconsistencies and weaknesses in plot structure and flow?

D. Is the ending strong and believable? Does it wrap up the piece in a satisfying way, or is it weak, unbelievable or ineffective? Does it let the reader down?

E. Characters: Are the main characters underdeveloped? Are minor characters overdeveloped? Are all the characters real and vivid?

F. Are the characterizations and the characters' voices consistent throughout the piece?

G. Do characters have mannerisms that repeat too often (ex: shrugging, smiling, raising eyebrows)? Look for variations in reactions and mannerisms.

H. Are character descriptions consistent, or does the hero shrink a few inches, the heroine's eyes change from brown to blue?

Learn more about Self-Editing in next month's Suburban Scribe

Whither Goest Thou

Al Gilding

The continuing story pictures how pre-historic Man might have learned to impose his will over wild herds, which seemed to progress toward a much later domestication

The family had traveled over a long hard day, now almost over. They just managed to keep up with the half-wild bison herd that they could only nominally claim. Abelon's (Abe-elon) father had told him that the learning of this *herding* of such dangerous animals would make a man of him, now less than two days away. It had been a long difficult summer, but Abelon had grown from it, as elder eyes of respect seemed to confirm.

He was cheered by knowledge that it was almost over. The men around him had managed to steer the herd from the sides and rear, but they had known better than to ever get in front of the animals when those beasts were in such an urgently demonstrated near-panic of movement. He knew that it would be some time after the herd bedded down for the night that the women, carrying all the provisions and equipment, would catch up.

He remembered, with only a small unease of mind, that somewhere within that time of movement left to them, there was a place of the "settled people" that they would pass by. Some of the elders of his tribe were certain that each time the herd had passed by, the settlement had grown. These *people* had known the magic of finding water underground and how to bring it to the surface. In years of dryness they'd had the only known supply in that part of the herd's range. The animals could smell it from a great distance and had made it a stopping point on their way instead of waiting until they had reached the river that flowed through their wintering valley.

He would be glad to see his mother and sisters, although he tried to make little of it in front of them. He would be glad to see the others, too, but his father had told him when he had caught him looking that it would be some time before he could take one of those others for himself. There would be much to learn and do before that could happen.

The strong, younger women were the first of the following train to come into the torch-lit circle of waiting men. They carried some of the large storage skins of their water supply, rather easily, over one shoulder. The long, thin, serving end of the storage

skins would be draped over the small skins that the men carried. A spot near the end would be pinched off by their long supple fingers to give a quick refill.

There was a small but noticeable jostling among the women as each sought to align herself with the one whom she had an eye for. Their long hair, looking as though it were made of the sun itself, parted to fall over each shoulder, was such a usual sight it almost passed without notice, except when it was tossed in a certain way.

It was forbidden for females to make eye contact with those whom they served, but many accidents seemed to happen and a quick look away revealed more than a bold stare might. A light touch of a hand to a wrist, to steady the delivery, seemed to go mostly unnoticed by those who might find objection, but a change in the steady rise and fall of young breasts under the exertion of the carry did not go unnoticed by the grateful ones so served.

As the quiet of night settled down upon all, Abelon found a spot with an opening in the overhead canopy. The seemingly endless minutia of the trail had kept his eyes locked on all the meanderings of the herd, but now he could just let the view draw him into its vastness. There were myriad points of sparkle, some brighter, some less so, and then some that just stared without so much as a blink. And these, you could never tell where they would be, sometimes here, sometimes there, then sometimes you could look everywhere and you wouldn't find even one.

The old ones had many times spoken of their God who had created all this and more, so much more. It made him feel good to be a part of such an undertaking, although sometimes it did make him feel rather small, he thought, as he drifted off into a well-deserved rest. Dreaming of the early rising that would take him well ahead of the herd, he looked for the settlement and the water just over a low hill from it. It would be his to see if it was open to their temporary possession, and to warn those who might be there of the approach of the determined herd headed their way.

If this passage whets your appetite, for the rest of the story, see Al

It's time to begin preparations for SSWC's 2019 anthology.

The theme and title for this anthology is

Other People, Other Places, Other Times.

We look forward to seeing your best work.

If you have any questions, please contact any of the committee members: Eva Wise, Ron Smith, Cathy McGreevy, Mort Rumberg, Wes Turner, or Mary Lou Anderson.

Anthology Guidelines

- Only manuscripts from SSWC members will be considered.
- Submissions are accepted now through **February 11, 2019.**
- All work must be original, unpublished, and your own personal work.
- No excessive violence or sex.
- All submitted material must be “clean” — error free, “polished” via critique group(s), and “submission ready” as if sending it to a publisher ... because you *are* sending it to a publisher. Too many errors and the submission(s) will be returned.
- If time permits, submission(s) may be re-entered after corrections, edits, and another critique group review are completed.
- All submissions must be within the specified theme: *Other People, Other Places, Other Times* (any one of the three — all submissions do not have to be the same theme)
- The anthology committee will not provide editing of your submissions.

Stories:

- a. Fiction or non-fiction
- b. Limit of three (3) story submissions
- c. Complete story (not an excerpt)
- d. Only one can be up to 5,000 words
- e. Other two are limited to 2,000 words each

f. Poems:

- a. Limit of five (5) poems
- b. Maximum of 50 lines each
- c. Rhymed, metered, or free verse

Art:

- a. Any medium
- b. Limited to five (5) submissions electronically submitted in high resolution (photo of art)
- c. Will be included in anthology as a black and white photo

Include with your submission(s):

- a. Head shot (2" x 3" jpeg) in high resolution
- b. Bio – 150-200 words
- c. Payment of \$12 (per author – total) to cover the cost of publication

Requirements for stories and poems:

- a. Submissions: electronic only
- b. Spacing: 1½ or double
Do not double space between paragraphs.
- c. Margins: 1 inch
- d. Indent: Auto
(not done by tab key or space bar)
- e. Font: Size 12. Times New Roman

On the first page of EACH submission, include:

- a. Your name (and pen name, if applicable)
- b. Contact info
- c. Category/Theme
(*Other People, Other Places, Other Times* – Pick the theme you are using.)
- d. Word count / line count

OFFICERS

Elected Officers:

President	Cathy McGreevy
Vice President	Wes Turner
Secretary	Mary Lou Anderson
Treasurer	Chris & David Stein

Chairs:

Achievement	Mary Lou Anderson
Anthology	Eva Wise
Chairs Chair	Wes Turner
Coffee/Treats	[open]
Conference Coord.	John Powell
Critique Groups	Brittany Lord
Directory	Jeannie Turner
Historian	Pat Biasotti
Librarian	Ron Smith
Membership	Jeannie Turner
Newsletter	[open]
Nominations	[open]
Publicity	[open]
Raffle	Mort Rumberg
Scholarship	David Stein
Speakers	David Stein
Sunshine	[open]
Website	Westley Turner
Workshops	[open]

Advertise your writing related services in the
Suburban Scribe!

\$3 a month (3-month minimum) for members
\$5 a month (3-month minimum) for non-members

Send your request to newsletter@sactowriters.org

COPY AND DEADLINES

Please submit original written material such as: poems, letters, book excerpts, articles, book reviews, humor, web sites to visit, general information, fun stuff to share—almost anything ***by the 20th of each month.*** Also, share info about other meetings, contests, books, book signings, classes, etc.

Please keep the submission relatively short and submit electronically. There is no pay but byline credit is given—and that looks good to agents and publishers.

This is one of the many benefits of being a member of SSWC.

Send your submissions to
newsletter@sactowriters.org

MEMBERSHIP is paid on a yearly basis. If joining after March, dues are prorated by quarter.

Individual \$40.00/year	Couple \$55.00/year
Full-Time Student \$30.00/year	Platinum Senior (70+) \$30.00/year

Membership is not required for attending meetings but it does provide benefits including

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1) Publication in newsletter | 3) Participation in critique groups |
| 2) Participation in club author events | 4) Grants for conferences ... & more |

More information is on our website: sactowriters.org.

Name: _____ Genres: _____ Published? Y/N
Email: _____ Phone: _____