

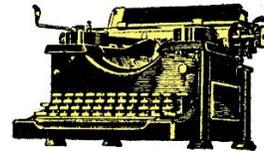


January
2026

SUPPORTING WRITERS OF THE SACRAMENTO REGION SINCE 1955.



*Celebrating our 70th
Anniversary!*



**A new year of story-
telling and sharing.**

Welcome Message

We are a professional association whose purpose is to foster, encourage, and educate writers and independent publishers, representing all genres, from all ages, and writing at every stage in their careers. We offer monthly meetings featuring opportunities to network with other writers, skill-building workshops, and presentations by regionally recognized authors, editors, agents, and publishers. Our monthly meetings are held on the second Monday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at

5501 Dewey Drive, Fair Oaks in the Fellowship Hall (straight back from the road, through the gate in the white fence). Visitors are always welcome. In addition, we offer less formal Writers' Mingles where all writers are welcome. Our Mingles currently meet the third Saturday of every month from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Denny's Restaurant in Roseville (corner of Sunrise and Douglas). SSWC is also known for its well-designed, professional "critique groups" where other writers provide intensive feedback for various creative works while in progress. Critical revision is often an essential step in creating a successful work. Our professional library and monthly newsletter provide additional member resources. Network and share with other writers. Be informed. Be inspired. Join us!



Featuring Bernard Wozny

“Easy Social Media”

Bio –

Bernard Wozny's first experience with a writers club was with the Sacramento Suburban Writers.

He has since moved on to be a past president of the Sacramento Branch of the California Writers Club (CWC), a statewide club of 21 branches. Bernard is currently Treasurer of the central board of the CWC, and vice president of the Northern California Publishers and Authors (NCPA).

While leading CWC Sacramento, he has driven many significant projects, culminating in the Sacramento Book Festival. He believes strongly that all clubs are for its members and supports all efforts to promote creativity.

Bernard's background is in software development, specializing in the digital TV domain. He has traveled the world working for many cutting-edge companies like Sony, OpenTV, and News Digital Systems, he eventually set up a successful consultancy. Most recently he worked for Amino Communications, a British IPTV company, managing the technical support department for North and South Americas.

Bernard is now pursuing a creative retirement. He has published 3 novels and promises many more to come.

Importantly, he promotes and encourages everyone to achieve their creative dream.



"Easy Social Media"

January 12, 2026

7 to 9 p.m.

Crossroads Fellowship Christian Church

5501 Dewey Drive, Fair Oaks, CA

Topic --

A valuable chance to catch not what you miss, but to see what you can have.

In today's world, social media is a common way to communicate to the world. However, many people find it confusing and intimidating, failing to partake and leaving themselves in the dark.

Authors need to use such tools to inform their readers and often explore research.

Bernard will show you simple, fun, and easy ways to employ social media without cost or stress.

These methods can be used to keep family and friends informed.

His method can even be surprisingly powerful when used as a profitable path of promotion.

This presentation will be suitable for the absolute novice and expert alike.

Everyone is welcome!



Do You Really?

M.L. Edson

"You still dream?"

I still dream

Of wondrous things to come

Of stories to be done

Of potential greatness

Of solving our weakness

Of men without armor

I still dream

Of miracles from above

Of true friendship and love

Of lush, greener grasses

Of broad fertile pastures

Of things in full color

I still dream

Of helping all in need

Of planting another seed

Of living without hate

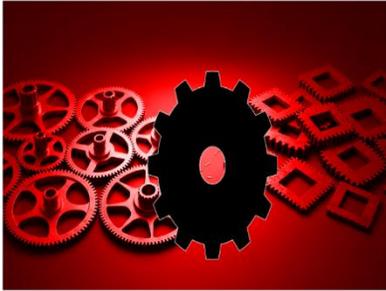
Of finding our own fate

Before it is too late

I still dream—

And you don't?

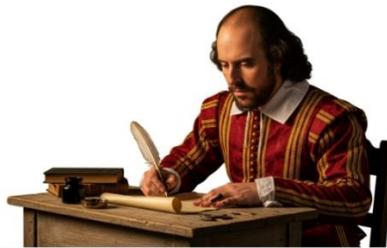
Writers' Mingle



Syncing the end of your story
with its beginning.

Saturday --- January 17
9 to 11 am

Denny's Roseville
(Douglas and North Sunrise)
All Writers are Welcome. No charge.



Writing Tips and Techniques

Ten Rules for Naming Characters in a Fiction Story

Naming characters is one of the most subtle ways to build your world. A name isn't just a label; it's a tool for characterization, cultural grounding, and reader memory. Here are ten rules to help you choose the right names for your cast:

1. The "First Letter" Rule

Avoid giving major characters names that start with the same letter. If you have a **Marcus**, a **Macy**, and a **Mason**, readers will inevitably mix them up. Aim for a diverse "alphabetical footprint" to help the eye distinguish characters instantly during fast reading.

2. Match the Genre and Setting

Names carry inherent "vibes." A high-fantasy story feels grounded with names like **Gendry**

Digital Rights Changes for Kindle Books

Dan Holloway at the Alliance for Independent Authors (ALL-i) reports in the December 13th edition of the ALL-i newsletter that effective January 2026, Kindle will now allow authors to opt to **not** apply Digital Rights Management (DRM) to their e-books and, thus, allow readers to download copies of their books in EPUB or PDF format.

Digital Rights Management is a murky area for many authors. Previously, if an author chose to publish their book using Kindle Direct Publishing, then Kindle placed DRM locks on the book, meaning that the book was confined to the Kindle ecosystem. Allowing a book to be accessed in another ecosystem was a convoluted process requiring multiple levels of permission from Kindle. Very few books were given such permission.

Effectively, this meant that Kindle and only Kindle could sell or share the book.

or **Elora**, whereas a cyberpunk thriller might use sharp, monosyllabic names like **Jax** or **Case**. Ensure the name fits the era and social class of the character.

3. Consider Mouthfeel and Rhythm

Read the name out loud. Does it roll off the tongue?

- **Protagonists** often benefit from names that are easy to say.
- **Antagonists** might have harsher, more guttural sounds (think of the "K" and "V" sounds in **Voldemort**).
- Avoid "tongue twisters" unless the difficulty of the name is a specific plot point.

4. Use "The Telephone Test"

If you were to say the name over a static-filled phone line, would the person on the other end be able to spell it? Overly complex or "unique" spellings (like **Xy'zethia**) can pull a reader out of the story if they have to stop and decode the pronunciation every time.

5. Reflect the Character's Heritage

Unless your character is intentionally disconnected from their roots, their name should reflect their family history and culture. Research naming conventions, popular surnames, and meanings within the specific culture you are portraying to add authenticity.

6. Vary the Syllable Counts

Create a "cadence" within your cast. If everyone has a two-syllable name (**Sarah**, **David**, **Emma**, **Robert**), the prose can feel repetitive. Mix it up with a **Christopher** (3) or a **Seth** (1) to create a more natural-sounding group.

7. Avoid "The Heroic Name" Cliché

Unless you're writing a parody, avoid names that are too "on the nose." A tough guy named **Maverick Steel** or a beautiful girl named **Angelica Rose** can feel cheesy. Sometimes a plain name like **Arthur** or **Ellen** makes a character feel more human and relatable.

8. Be Wary of "Date-Stamping"

Names go in and out of fashion. If your story is set in the 1950s, a teenager named **Kaylee** or **Jaxon** will feel like an anachronism. Use social security databases or historical records to see what names were actually popular during your character's birth year.

9. Check for Unintended Associations

Before finalizing a name, Google it. You want to make sure you haven't accidentally named your protagonist after a famous serial killer, a

Halloway reports that beginning in January 2026, what happens when we don't apply DRM will change. E-books without DRM will be able to be downloaded in EPUB or PDF format. That means they will be transferable across reading devices and ecosystems.

Amazon has some clarification on its help page:

1. This change will only apply to titles published after December 9, 2025.
2. For titles published prior to that without applying DRM, EPUB and PDF download will not be made available.
3. Steps are given for how to update the DRM settings on all your titles.

So, this is a very limited policy revision.

The full news article is available at:

<https://selfpublishingadvice.org/amazon-shifts-drm-rules/#:~:text=Amazon%20has%20just,in%20the%20past.>

Special Request - Scrivener

We have had a member ask about the value of **Scrivener**. If you have used or currently use this software, please consider writing a review of it for our newsletter. We may be able to get a Club discount for our members.

Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg now offers more than 77,000 free E-books that can be downloaded in a variety of formats. It is a great place to start hunting for inspiration for stories. Here are some of our recent finds.

- **Letters of Abelard and Heloise by Peter Abelard and Héloïse**
- **Heimskringla; Or, The Chronicle of the Kings of Norway by Snorri Sturluson**
- **The Sting by William Le Queux**
- **The Last Quarry by Bryce Walton**
- **The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman**

brand of laundry detergent, or a character from a popular franchise that will cause constant comparisons.

10. Meaning vs. Subtlety

It's fun to use names with hidden meanings (like **Remus Lupin**, where "Lupin" relates to wolves), but don't let the meaning override the character. The best "meaningful" names are the ones readers only notice on the second or third re-reading.

(This article was written with the assistance of Google Gemini Flash.)

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\$1000 Writing Scholarship!

Awarded by Sacramento Suburban Writers Club
The 2026 Scholarship for High School Seniors is now open for submissions



Read all the details at:

<https://www.sactowriters.org/2026-scholarship>



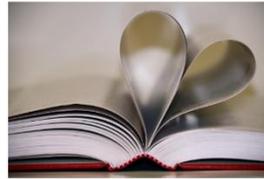
And submit your work early to:

scholarship@sactowriters.org



Awards Banquet: May 11, 2026, Monday eve

Deadline: April 17, 2026



Books that our members have written.



~ by Jim Mounts-Miller ~

The Gym

The old man walked slowly through the glass doors into the gym and headed directly for his preferred machine with its pulleys and weights and set the lever to the lowest level. Years ago, he would have been embarrassed by such a setting, but now it was routine. As he began to move the weights, he noticed that on either side of him were two younger women, both with visible tattoos and wearing skin-fitting spandex. He didn't look, but he knew they were moving heavier weight than he was. Much heavier. He pulled his Dodgers' baseball hat down, covering even more of his bald head. He would not look at the women. Would not attempt to make eye contact. Years ago, when he drove a company car a hundred thousand miles a year and was twice named as the National Salesman of the Year, he would have not only made eye contact, he would also begin a pleasant conversation, making them friends, maybe even intimates. That's what he did. He made strangers into friends, and his friends were always pleased to buy his products. "Never met a stranger, yet!" he once boasted. "Only friends!"

But he was no longer thirty-five or even fifty. Now he was 27 days past his 80th birthday and went to the gym only because his heart surgeon had ordered it.

He pulled his Dodgers' baseball hat down and avoided eye contact. Look straight ahead. Do your full extension. Breathe deeply.

	<p>Maybe he could no longer move the heavier weights, but he could stay at it longer. 49 reps, now 50. 99 reps now 100. 150 reps. He stopped for a moment and then did fifty more.</p> <p>Finally, he looked around. The women had both left. He was glad they had.</p> <p>He left his machine and walked into the locker room. There he pulled on his trunks and headed for the swirling hot tub. Fifteen minutes of soothing water almost eliminated his many pains.</p> <p>Then he showered. As he left the gym, he quietly smiled to himself. "Well, I'm still here. Got another day."</p> <p>Tomorrow he would return to the gym.</p>
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