

WAG Digest

Volume 10, Issue 2

March — April 2020

WAG Digest – March/April 2020

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The Coronavirus had changed all our circumstances. In some ways, this may be a good opportunity for you to get some work done. But in others, it can be considered a difficult situation that causes all events and activities to be put on hold. Remember, the Writers Alliance will be back with assistance to our local writers as soon as we are able. In the meantime, here are some suggestions to fill your time:

Rearrange your office

Finish those old stories you were working on

Listen to some new music – or old music that inspires your creative juices.

E-mail your friends and fellow writers and ask them how they're doing and what they're working on.

Explore some writing websites you haven't had time to look at.

For example:

Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP)

<https://www.awpwriter.org/>

The Florida Writers Association

<https://floridawriters.net/>

Poets and Writers

<https://www.pw.org/>

Writers Digest

[https://](https://www.writersdigest.com/)

www.writersdigest.com/

And of course, your local source for news on writers and writing:

The Writers Alliance

<https://writersalliance.org/>

Want to read some articles about writers and the corona virus? Check these out:

<https://electricliterature.com/ted-chiang-explains-the-disaster-novel-we-all-suddenly-live-in/>

Ted Chiang Explains the Disaster Novel We All Suddenly Live In

The esteemed science fiction author on how we may never go "back to normal"—and why that might be a good thing

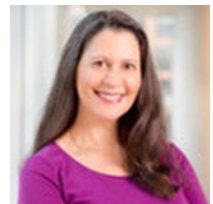
[https://](https://www.npr.org/2020/04/01/822579660/a-matter-of-common-decency-what-literature-can-teach-us-about-epidemics?utm_source=npr_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=20200402&utm_term)

www.npr.org/2020/04/01/822579660/a-matter-of-common-decency-what-literature-can-teach-us-about-epidemics?utm_source=npr_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=20200402&utm_term

[=4497882&utm_campaign=books&utm_id=21926078&orgid=650](https://www.sfwriters.org/2020/04/02/the-reality-of-writing-in-uncertain-times/)

'A Matter Of Common Decency': What Literature Can Teach Us About Epidemics

April 1, 2020 9:00 AM ET



[Melissa Block](#)

<https://www.sfwriters.org/2020/04/02/the-reality-of-writing-in-uncertain-times/>

The Reality of Writing in Uncertain Times



by Kali Wallace

WAG Brags

SF SANTA FE COLLEGE

Note: All Community Education writing classes at Santa Fe College have been cancelled for the spring. But stay in the loop – there is a possibility that classes will be taught online in the summer. More information will be coming as soon as we find out the plan.

Congratulations to Cynthia Bertelson for winning the 2020 Gourmand World Cookbook Award for Culinary History (USA) for her book, "A Hastiness of Cooks."

Remember, this is a good time to submit to our local literary review:

Submit to WAG's Bacopa Literary Review 2020

Bacopa Literary Review will be [open for submissions April 1 – May 31, 2020](https://writersallianceofgainesville.submittable.com/submit) (<https://writersallianceofgainesville.submittable.com/submit>). No submission fee and cash prizes in five genres:

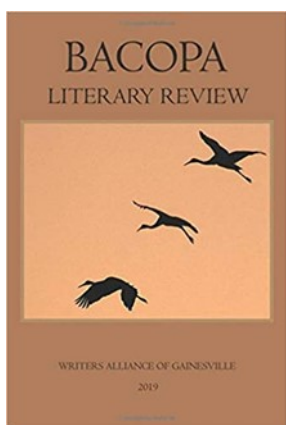
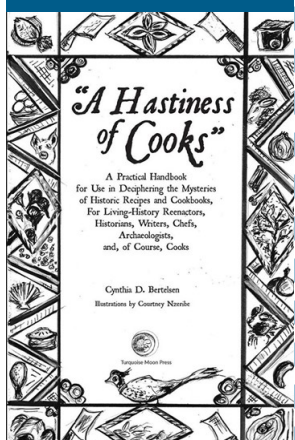
FICTION (Editor **James Singer, III**): Send us the best fiction you can write. We care about well-written stories that make us feel or think and leave us with memories that will stick with us for years to come. No matter the subject, be it genre or literary fiction, what matters is the effect your story has on us.

CREATIVE NONFICTION (Editor **Mary Bast**): We publish creative nonfiction based on the author's experiences, perceptions, and reflections in the form of personal memoir or

literary essay (for example, nature, travel, spiritual, food writing).

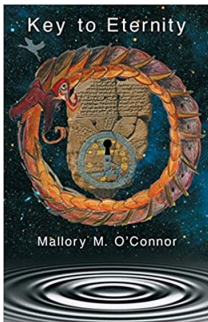
POETRY (Editor **J.N. Fishhawk**): Let us hear your particular voice. Ground your words in the world, or the body, or both. Break genres and bend boundaries, or pour your own cosmos into, and extract alternate universes from, hoary ancestral forms.

SHORT-SHORT (Editor **Kaye Linden**): Writing short is a unique skill. Short-shorts include fiction stories of 750 words or fewer with a clear story line, minimalistic tight writing and compressed story structure. There is no minimum on word count. We love 25-word hint fiction as much as 750-word stories.



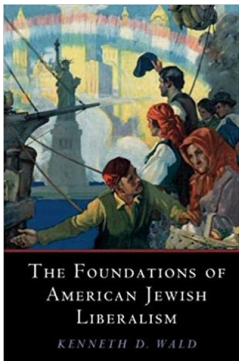
WAG Brags

HUMOR (Editor **Stephanie Seguin**): Make us laugh in any literary form, up to 1,500 words, intended to be humorous. This can include personal essays, satire, poetry, short fiction, excerpts of longer works, grocery lists, manifestos, or modified insurance policies.



Congratulations to Mallory **O'Connor** on the publication of her new book, *Key to Eternity* (Available on Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Key-Eternity-Mallory-M-%C2%92connor/dp/1480888214/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1586035174&sr=1-10)

What is the price of immortality? In *Key to Eternity*, book two of the Epiphany series, psychic Epiphany Mayall and art crimes investigator Maro Gaido find out when they try to keep an ancient ceramic tablet with a potentially monumental secret from falling into the hands of a corrupt art collector. As they follow the artifact's trail from Baghdad to Miami to Geneva, they also find out they aren't the only ones who are determined to locate the prize.



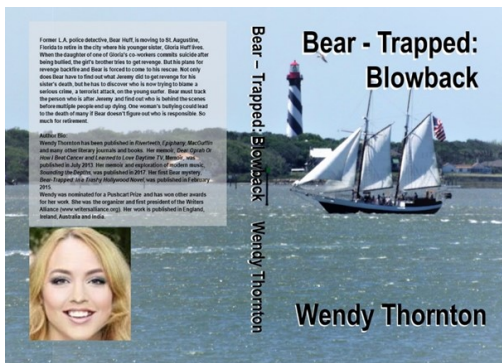
Congratulations to WAG member **Ken Wald**, who writes:

"By the way, my most recent book, *Foundations of American Jewish Liberalism*, just won the 2019 National Jewish Book Award in American Jewish Studies. I think of these as the Jewish Pulitzers which is ironic as Joseph Pulitzer was Jewish.

Ken's book is available on Amazon at [https://www.amazon.com/Foundations-American-Liberalism-Cambridge-Religion/dp/1108708854/ref=sr_1_2?](https://www.amazon.com/Foundations-American-Liberalism-Cambridge-Religion/dp/1108708854/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=Foundations+of+American+Jewish+Liberalism&qid=1586036592&sr=8-2)

[dchild=1&keywords=Foundations+of+American+Jewish+Liberalism&qid=1586036592&sr=8-2](https://www.amazon.com/Foundations-American-Liberalism-Cambridge-Religion/dp/1108708854/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=Foundations+of+American+Jewish+Liberalism&qid=1586036592&sr=8-2)

Congratulations to WAG Member **Wendy Thornton** for publication of her essay, *Blessing of the Birds*, in Sleet Magazine, <https://sleetmagazine.com/>, due out spring 2020.



Also, her new book, *Bear Trapped: Blowback*, will be available for purchase in May, 2020 on Amazon. This is the second in a series about L.A. Police detective Bear Huff, a man who has overcome a tough past in order to be a good cop. Now retired, he is moving to St. Augustine, Florida with his hippy younger sister. He ends up getting involved with a teenage surfer who has responded to bullying by doing some illegal acts, which lead to terrorist attacks. Wendy would like to thank all the beta readers who are currently reviewing her novel. She's already working on Book Three in the series.

WAG Brags

Want to get more involved with the Writers Alliance? We're looking for two people to work together as Treasurer. We will provide extensive training!

We are also hoping to find someone to be the coordinator for the 2021 Book Festival. After the success of our last festival, we anticipate that the new one will be an even bigger event, and we'd be happy to have multiple people work on organizing the new festival.

If you're interested in finding out more information, please contact floridawendy@cox.net.



5 Mistakes When Writing Flashbacks in Memoir (and Fiction)

<https://www.janefriedman.com/5-mistakes-when-writing-flashbacks/>

5 Mistakes When Writing Flashbacks in Memoir (and Fiction)

Posted on [February 25, 2020](#) by [Sarah Chauncey](#) |

Today's guest post is by freelance editor [Sarah Chauncey](#) ([@SarahChauncey](#)).

Flashbacks are scenes that take place prior to the narrative arc of a story. They can illuminate any number of story elements, from revealing the origins of an unusual habit to new information about a relationship. Flashbacks can give the reader a depth of context not available in the primary narrative.

Alternately, flashbacks can help the reader understand your reaction to an event in the primary timeline. For example, maybe you had a fight with your spouse, and the exchange reminded you of how you used to cower in your closet when your parents fought. While you can *tell* with that line, *showing* via a flashback can be more engaging for the reader.

However, flashbacks can be tricky to write. Written unskillfully, flashbacks can leave a reader disoriented and disengaged.

What follows are the five mistakes I see most often in memoir manuscripts, though these principles are also relevant to fiction. If you're writing fiction, just substitute "your main character" for "you."

1. Including irrelevant flashbacks

When used properly, flashbacks can be illuminating. When used haphazardly, they detract from the primary narrative and leave the reader confused (or worse, bored).

You should understand how each flashback enhances the story. If it doesn't, cut it. Flashbacks should be earned, just as any plot development is earned.

Ask yourself these three questions about every flashback in your current draft:

- How does this flashback serve the story?
- Could the information be revealed chronologically within the time frame of the primary narrative?
- Is there a direct relevance to the present-day scene?

Writers sometimes pepper their manuscripts with flashbacks to appear more "literary," though from my perspective, there is nothing intrinsically literary about a flashback. I'm a big fan of chronological structure, because it keeps the reader clearly oriented. However, you may want to reveal certain information from the past at a specific, strategic point in your narrative.

A related mistake is the use of multiple flashbacks to shine light on one particular issue. For example, let's say that you had a job as a dog walker in college. If that's relevant to your (primary narrative) decision to adopt an English Springer Spaniel 20 years later, it *might* warrant a flashback. Write one compelling flashback that gives the reader a taste of your experience, but don't create five or six different dog-walking flashbacks to make your point.

2. Writing a flashback "because it really happened"

Sometimes, especially in memoir, writers want to include everything interesting that happened, and they rationalize including an irrelevant flashback by saying, "But it really happened!"

With memoir in particular, it can be difficult for a writer to discern which events are relevant to the story and

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5 Mistakes (Con't)

which aren't. Implausible, mind-boggling experiences that defy logic happen every day. It's very cool that you (or the character) had that experience, but that alone is not a reason to include it in your story. Often this tendency comes from a well-meaning place: Memoir writers typically want to be as truthful and as clear as possible. Some writers I've worked with have wondered whether omitting X flashback makes the story less honest or clear. It all depends on the bigger context, but in general, memoir is like carving: You start with a huge block of marble (your life experience to date) and then carve the story out from there. There's nothing dishonest about cutting an irrelevant flashback, any more than it's "dishonest" not to mention that you accidentally overfed your goldfish when you were five. In most cases, it's simply not relevant to the story.

3. Forgetting to anchor

One of an author's tasks is to keep the reader oriented in the time frame of your story. Inserting flashbacks randomly, or without "anchoring," can leave readers adrift and confused.

To "anchor" is to use a phrase or sentence to introduce the flashback: "Twenty years earlier...", "Before my sister was born...", "The sound of the fire sirens took me back a decade..." The strongest anchors help the reader follow the narrator's train of thought and connect the dots about why you're transitioning to another time and place: Your new coworker has a vocal tic similar to your abusive mother's. The smell of a clove cigarette takes you back to your semester in Paris. You hear a songbird from that time you went camping in northern Michigan.

Depending on the length of the flashback scene, you may need to anchor on the other side, too, to re-orient the reader to the primary narrative. Better to err on the side of anchoring too much—a beta reader or editor can tell you if you've overdone it—than to leave readers wondering where in your world they are.

4. Leading the reader by the nose

Nearly all of us—myself included—have a strong need to be understood. That often translates on the page into a final, punctuating (and *telling*) sentence that reiterates how you felt or one that explains your actions. For example, "My father's stubbornness that morning infuriated me" or "I figured I was better off without Ben, anyway."

I call this "leading the reader by the nose" and—surprise!—readers, like all of us, don't like being told how they should feel or what they should think.

The trick is to create the scene in a way that the reader's emotional or cognitive response is virtually inevitable. If you write it well, using [characterization](#), action and [dialogue](#) to bring the reader into your experience, the reader will feel what you felt.

Also, no matter how much you cringe at your past behavior or worldview, resist the urge to rationalize or justify your behavior—that only comes across as defensive, and then the reader will wonder why you're so defensive.

5. Writing recollections instead of flashbacks

A recollection is a thought. A flashback is a scene. Reading about a character's thoughts can be less compelling than giving readers the opportunity to have an experience with them. Flashbacks bring the reader into the moment with you, whenever that moment happened.

On the page, what makes something a "recollection" rather than a flashback is point of view. If you're writing a recollection, you retain your present-day POV and reflect on an event that happened in the past. Here's an example of a well-written recollection from Mira Bartok's [The Memory Palace](#):

The last time I visited my mother in a hospital, it was over 20 years ago. She was in a lockdown ward at Cleveland Psychiatric Institute (CPI) and had asked me to bring her a radio. She had always needed a ra-

Continued Next Page

5 Mistakes (Con't)

dio and a certain level of darkness. In her youth, my mother had been a musical prodigy. When I was growing up, she listened to the classical station night and day. I always wondered if her need for a radio meant more than just a love of music. Did it help block out the voices in her head? In a flashback, you create a scene as though it were happening in real time. By this, I don't mean write it in the present tense. Rather, I mean that the scene should [immerse the reader in your flashback experience](#). Flashbacks [retain your POV at the time](#), rather than superimposing your present-day POV onto the memory.

Here's an example of a skillful flashback from Huda al-Marashi's memoir, [First Comes Marriage](#): In the fifth grade, I had a sleepover for my birthday (my parents' rule was that I could have friends over, but I couldn't spend the night at anyone's house). When the conversation turned to my friends' on-screen crushes, I wanted to shush them. In my house, there was nothing innocent about girls discussing boys. It wasn't long before Mama picked up on the topic and called me out of the living room and into the kitchen to ask, "Are your friends talking about boys?" I nodded, mortified and ashamed, and then added, "But they're not real boys. Just actors." She didn't meet my gaze. "Already?" she said, as if she were addressing herself. "These are eleven-year-old girls. What's wrong with this country?"

That I could feel so much shame just being in the company of girls talking about boys made it clear—this was a taboo unlike any others.

Some literary memoirists skillfully weave recollections into their stories in a way that creates the same emotional impact as flashbacks. For the average memoirist—let's say those who have yet to win a major literary prize—I believe flashbacks should be shown, rather than recounted. However, there is a place for recollections in both memoir and fiction, and not every glance backward has to be a fleshed-out flashback.

Sarah Chauncey

[View posts by Sarah Chauncey](#)

[Sarah Chauncey](#) is a creative nonfiction writer, editor and writing coach. She helps narrative non-fiction authors elevate their writing through techniques from literary nonfiction, journalism, theatre, long and short fiction, screenwriting for film and television, and digital media. [Read her blog](#) for more writing tips, or [follow her on Facebook](#).



Upcoming Writing Events

Just a reminder – the Writers Alliance will be back at the Millhopper Branch Library for their monthly meetings as soon as we are able. All writing events that were postponed will be rescheduled. We look forward to seeing you soon.

(Note – these may be put on hold, depending on the current safety situation – check their websites).

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Florida Writers Conference – Oct. 15-18, 2020
For 19 years, the Florida Writers Conference has delivered what writers need and want.

During three days of nonstop opportunities we offer nearly 90 workshops, panel discussions, and events. Truly, there is something for everyone, with a wide variety of sessions concerning writing, publishing, book marketing, freelancing, and including one-to-one meetings with agents and plenty of time for networking with publishing industry professionals and other writers.

Join us in a supportive celebration of the writing world in all its infinite variety.

<https://floridawriters.net/conferences/2020conference/>

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Posted April 01, 2020

Are You a Killer Writer?

The 2020 Killer Nashville International Writers' Conference will take place August 20-23 in Nashville, Tennessee. This is a premier forum for all literature incorporating mystery, thriller, suspense, or true crime. Scholarships are available! Apply today. Killer Nashville is also seeking both published and unpublished works for its annual contests. The Claymore Award is an open competition for unpublished works open to entries through April 1. The Silver Falchion Award is an open competition for works published in 2019 open to entries through June 1. For complete details including prize information, visit

www.KillerNashville.com.

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Calls for Submission

Posted April 02, 2020
Driftwood Press Submissions Open
Submissions accepted year-round.

John Updike once said, "Creativity is merely a plus name for regular activity. Any activity becomes creative when the doer cares about doing it right, or better." At *Driftwood Press*, we are actively searching for artists who care about doing it right, or better. We are excited to receive your submissions and will diligently work to bring you the best in full poetry collections, novellas, graphic novels, short fiction, poetry, graphic narrative, photography, art, and interviews. We also offer our submitters a premium option to receive an acceptance or rejection letter within one week of submission; many authors are offered editorships and interviews. To polish your fiction, note our editing service, too. www.driftwoodpress.net

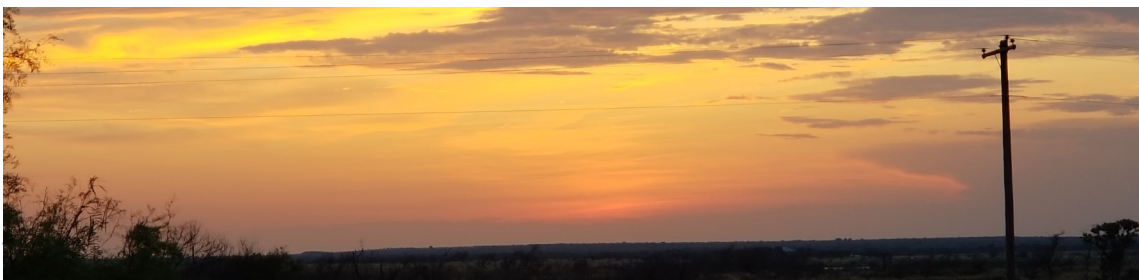


Posted March 30, 2020
Chicken Soup for the Soul Wants Your Story!
Deadline: April 30, 2020

It may be April, but Christmas is already in the air at Chicken Soup for the Soul. Share your winter holiday memories and traditions with our readers, from the heartwarming to the hilarious. Everything from Thanksgiving, to Hanukkah, to Christmas, to New Year's. Be sure the stories are "Santa safe" so we don't spoil the magic for precocious readers! If we publish your piece, you will be paid \$200 plus 10 free copies of the book. Writing guidelines and more info at www.chickensoup.com/story-submissions/possible-book-topics.

Posted March 30, 2020
The Revolution (Relaunch) Wants Your Creative Activism
Deadline: Rolling

Founded in July of 2019, [The Revolution \(Relaunch\)](http://therevolutionrelaunch.com) is a creative resurgence of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's 1868 publication, *The Revolution*, which was the official newspaper of the National Women's Suffrage Association. Like any good 19th century newspaper (or any good 21st century zine), we publish a range of styles—memoir, poetry, cultural criticism, interviews, and profiles featuring activists and grassroots organizations. Our focus is feminism in the broadest sense—in other words, we're interested in "creative activism" that voices the marginalized and/or criticizes corrupt authority. Submit one piece of prose under 750 words, three poems, or 5 images to therevolutionrelaunch@gmail.com.



Calls for Submission

Posted March 25, 2020
Tolsun Books Wants to Read Your Work!
Deadline: May 31, 2020

Tolsun Books, an independent, non-profit press based in the Southwest, is now open for unsolicited submissions. We accept full-length and chapbook manuscripts made from parts: poetry, short-stories, essays, hybrids, translations, and things we couldn't have dreamed of. We value new and experienced, diverse authors with high-energy voices. The submission fee of \$15 will be waived on the 15th of each month to make sure we include all authors. Manuscripts submitted without the fee will be given the same consideration as paid submissions, but please consider paying the fee if you are able as these fees help us make and promote our books. tolsunbooks.com

Posted March 25, 2020
We Want the Best Stories in All Genres
Submissions accepted year-round.



The Blue Mountain Review launched from Athens, Georgia in 2015 with the mantra, "We're all south of somewhere." As a journal of culture the *BMR* strives to represent life through its stories. Stories are vital to our survival. Songs save the soul. Our goal is to preserve and promote lives told well through prose, poetry, music, and the visual arts. Our editors read year-round with an eye out for work with homespun and international appeal. We've published work with Jericho Brown, Kelli Russell Agodon, Robert Pinsky, Rising Appalachia, Nahko, Michel Stone, Genesis Greykid, Cassandra King, Melissa Studdard, and A.E. Stallings. www.southerncollectiveexperience.com/submission-guidelines/



Contests

Flying South 2020 - Poetry, Fiction, Nonfiction Contest Deadline: May 31, 2020

\$2,000 in prizes. From March 1 to May 31, *Flying South 2020*, a publication of Winston Salem Writers, will be accepting entries for prizes in Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry. Best in Category winners will be published and receive \$500 each. One of the three winners will receive The WSW President's Favorite award and win an additional \$500. All entries will be considered for publication. For full details, please visit our website:

www.wswriters.org.

* * * *

Carve Magazine Raymond Carver Short Story Contest Deadline: May 15

Carve Magazine's Raymond Carver Short Story Contest is open April 1 - May 15. Accepting submissions from all over the world, but story must be in English. Max 10,000 words. Prizes: \$2,000, \$500, \$250, + 2 Editor's Choice \$125 each. All 5 winners published in Fall 2020 issue and reviewed by lit agencies. Entry fee \$17 online/\$15 mailed. Guest judge Pam Houston. www.carvezine.com/raymond-carver-contest/

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Black Warrior Review 2020 Contest: Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, Flash Deadline: September 1, 2020

Biannual print journal *Black Warrior Review* seeks 2020 contest submissions. Winners will receive publication and cash prizes (\$500 for flash and \$1,000 for poetry, fiction, and CNF). Judges: Mayukh Sen (nonfiction), Paul Tran (poetry), C Pam Zhang (flash), and Lucy Corin (fiction). Open until 9/1. Submission fee: \$20. Complete information available at bwr.ua.edu.

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Contests

Baltimore Review Summer Contest: Short Shorts Deadline: May 31, 2020

Something new: No theme for our summer contest! Subject matter is entirely up to you. Surprise us. But keep it short. Three categories: flash fiction, flash creative nonfiction, prose poem. We want to be amazed at how you abracadabra a sprinkling of words into magic. And maybe be a little jealous of how you do that. One writer in each category will be awarded a \$300 prize and published in the summer issue. All entries considered for publication. Total word limit for each category is 1,000. See www.baltimorereview.org for complete details. Deadline: May 31, 2020. Fee: \$5.

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Submit to The Fiddlehead's Creative Nonfiction Contest! Deadline: June 1, 2020

The FIDDLEHEAD
Atlantic Canada's International Literary Journal

Announcing our **2020 Creative Nonfiction** contest!

Submissions welcome through Submittable or mailed by the deadline. One essay will be awarded **\$2000 CAD**. Entry fee: \$30 CAD for writers with a Canadian address; \$36 USD for US and International addresses. Visit www.thefiddlehead.ca/contest for full details!

Deadline: June 1

Introducing our judge Ariel Gordon!



The Fiddlehead invites submissions to its creative nonfiction contest! The contest opens on March 1 on Submittable and the deadline is June 1. One winning essay will be published in our Autumn 2020 issue and awarded \$2000 CAD + publication payment. Your entry fee entitles you to a one-year subscription to *The Fiddlehead*, which includes a special 75th anniversary issue (that's 5 issues!). Visit our website for more details: thefiddlehead.ca! Anywhere

The Fiddlehead is celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2020!

In honour of *The Fiddlehead's* 75th anniversary we are publishing a special 5th issue encompassing the theme "Looking forward..." at the future of Canadian literature, edited by members of our Advisory Board: Sharon Bala, Brian Bartlett, Billy-Ray Belcourt, Jo-Anne Elder, Rowan McCandless, Soraya Peerbaye, and Shannon Webb-Campbell. This issue will also include visual artworks by Sophie Hamdovic, April White, and Saman Sarheng.

Order your copy today for only \$10 CAD (Canadian addresses) / \$10 USD (non-Canadian addresses). Or subscribe now, only \$30 CAD/\$36 USD, and receive the special issue for free! www.thefiddlehead.ca/content/subscribe-today

Subscribe today — you don't want to miss this issue!

THE FIDDLEHEAD • Campus House • 11 Garland Court UNB • PO Box 4400 • Fredericton, NB • E3B 5A3

Things to Think About

Things to think about:

- * What if my dog only brings back the ball because he thinks I like throwing it?
- * If poison is past its expiry date, is it more poisonous or is it no longer poisonous?
- * Which letter is silent in the word "Scent," the S or the C?
- * Do twins ever realize that one of them is unplanned?
- * Why is the letter w, in English, called double u? Shouldn't it be called double v?
- * Maybe oxygen is slowly killing you and it just takes 75-100 years to fully work.
- * Every time you clean something, you just make something else dirty.
- * The word "swims" upside-down is still "swims".
- * Intentionally losing a game of rock, paper, scissors is just as hard as trying to win.
- * 100 years ago everyone owned a horse and only the rich had cars. Today everyone has cars and only the rich own horses.
- * Your future self is watching you right now through memories.
- * The doctors that told Stephen Hawking he had two years to live in 1953 are probably dead.
- * If you replace "W" with "T" in "What, Where and When", you get the answer to each of them.
- * Many animals probably need glasses, but nobody knows it.
- * If you rip a hole in a net, there are actually fewer holes in it than there were before.



Writer's Alliance of Gainesville

A not-for-profit Florida corporation

p.o.box 358396

gainesville/florida/32635-8396

[352-336-8062/wagmail@cox.net](mailto:wagmail@cox.net)

The Writers Alliance of Gainesville (WAG) promotes, encourages and supports aspiring and experienced regional writers. This goal is accomplished via WAG monthly meetings, public readings, ongoing small critique groups, a literary journal, writers' contests, and collaborations with schools and civic organizations to foster creative expression through the written word.

