

**December 2014  
Volume 2, Issue 12**

**The Writers of Kern  
PO BOX 22335  
Bakersfield, CA**

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## ***Writers of Kern Annual Winter Dinner***

### **A Special Event for Members and Guests**

Remember the pleasures of the 2013 Writers of Kern Winter Dinner? What? You didn't make it last year? Well, you certainly don't want to miss out this year.

And, you are in luck; there's still time to make your reservation and pay at <http://writersofkern.com/annual-winter-dinner>. Do it right away **(deadline December 7)** so we can be sure to have seats for you at the table.

Join us at Hodel's on Knudsen Drive on **Saturday, December 13, 2014, at 6:00 PM**. Dinner begins at 6:30. The cost is \$20.00 per person.



We've established some traditions: Announcing the winners of the Fall 2014 writing contest: 1st place - \$200, 2nd place - \$75, 3rd place - \$50. You'll want to be among the first to hear the winning story. Recognizing the participants in the Fall 2014 A-Z Blog Challenge.

Taking part in WOK Book Exchange. Please bring a gently used, wrapped book to share with a fellow writer, and you will be able to take home a gem that someone else brought.



The Annual Winter Dinner -- camaraderie, good food, and fun.

***The Write Way* is published monthly in Bakersfield, California. The deadline for submission of news articles is the first day of the month of publication. Send to [newsletter@writersofkern.com](mailto:newsletter@writersofkern.com)**



**The Writers of Kern website seeks and welcomes submissions of members' writing for the website blog. Prose, memoir, poetry, essays, and book reviews should be sent to [submissions@writersofkern.com](mailto:submissions@writersofkern.com)**

## President's Message December 2014



Although it's hard to believe, my calendar says December. The last month of 2014. I flip

though the previous months and wonder, *Where did the time go?* They say the older you are, the faster the years pass by. I don't know who "they" are, but they're right.

Part of me wants to look back at all the things left undone. The unwritten stories, articles and blogs. The unaccomplished writing tasks. The to-dos still to do. And as much as I want to reflect on what didn't get done, I choose to contemplate on what I **did** accomplish. Things that moved me forward as a writer, both personally and professionally. A pleasant reminder that I didn't waste the entire year as I'd originally sensed. The glass half-full way of thinking.

What about you? When you see December on your calendar do you catch end-of-the-year-itis, the pattern when you look back and think about the things you wanted to start (or finish)? Will you dwell on the to-dos left to do? Or will you look back and focus on what you completed? Another chapter, or 1000 words, or 50,000 words written. Will you reflect on attending our monthly meetings and catching a smidgeon of our guest speakers' energy? Will you remember how proud you were when everyone at the meeting applauded because you submitted your writing?

I challenge you to look back at this past year with the glass half-full

attitude. Pat yourself on the back for what you did do. Raise your hand to the computer screen and join me in a virtual high-five. And congratulations for seeing the best in yourself. Yes, you are awesome!

I urge you to make a commitment to enjoy the rest of December by reflecting on the positive. Expect next year to be your best year ever – both personally and professionally.

On behalf of the board and myself, I wish you the happiest of holidays and an amazing year to come.

~ Joan

### Rebecca Langston-George November Speaker



Rebecca Langston-George was our guest speaker for the November 15 WOK meeting and brought us interesting

information on "Writing for the Children's Market."

Rebecca is the Central-Coast California Assistant Regional Advisor for the SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators). She used her teacher's voice to address the packed house last Saturday. Judging from the questions and comments coming from the crowd, quite a few of our members are interested in this market and her organization.

The SCBWI was founded in 1971 and now claims over 100,000 members. Langston-George and her group are there to help writers break in to the Children's Market and to understand what publishers are looking for right now.

Rebecca defined the various genres currently recognized in this branch

of the industry, starting with **Board Books** (for children under 3). This is the hardest category for newbies to enter because mostly it deals with Classics—and you have to be both the artist and the writer. Since the text requirements are minimal (1/2 to 1 page), you mainly have to be an innovative children's artist in this category.

**Picture Books** (for ages 3-8) are of a larger format and what most parents are familiar with from reading to their children. As such, the writer who can slip in a little humor (that only Mom and Dad will appreciate) can prosper here. Less is definitely More in this category, as the artist/writer is generally limited to fewer than 500 words. *What can pictures say on their own?* is the question to ask.

From there, Rebecca briefed us on **Easy Readers**, **Chapter Books** and **Middle Grade**—the last of which seems to be the "sweet spot" for today's publishers that has bumped the **Young Adult** category off its pedestal despite the continued glut of pretty teenaged vampires and legions of zombies marching ever onward to a dystopian future near you.

More info on all these categories, plus helpful tips about "Ways to Break In," can be found at [www.cencal.scbwi.org](http://www.cencal.scbwi.org) and our speaker's website [www.rebeccalangston-george.com](http://www.rebeccalangston-george.com).

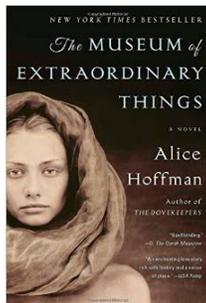


As always, Rebecca says the Number #1 Key to Success is **Persistence**. She was rejected 181 times before her first sale in 2007—so, Keep At It!

~ Phil Berling

## Book Review

By Anna Stewart



*The Museum of Extraordinary Things* by Alice Hoffman is the story of Coralie Sardie and Ezekiel Cohen, observers of life, one as a matter of choice and the other a matter of circumstance. Coralie Sardie is a virtual prisoner in her father's museum, on display as a mermaid with webbed fingers. She watches the world that watches her, envious of the ordinary freedoms others are afforded.

Ezekiel Cohen (aka Eddie), is an Orthodox Jew scraping by as an immigrant worker in New York. Envious of the rich factory owners and dismissive of what he views to be his father's failings, Eddie makes the choice Coralie cannot and turns away from father and religion both to pursue a career as a photographer, observing the world's beauty and its tragedy through his camera's lens.

The book takes its readers on two separate journeys toward the inevitable meeting and romance.

I halfway liked this book. It is well-written, the characters well-drawn. The history of New York in the early 1900s is well researched, brought to vivid life as we witness the plight of the factory workers and the tragedy of the Triangle ShirtWaist Factory fire through Eddie's eyes. Eddie himself is a complex character, full of sorrow and contradiction (as the best characters are), his every choice – good and bad – grounded in his history and moving him inexorably further away from father and religion and toward the realization that he can never truly be separate from either. For these reasons, I liked this book.

Coralie, on the other hand is a pallid and uninteresting character. Her rebellions, so large in her own mind, are small and petty. Her acceptance of life, its cruelties and her own small place within it, is disheartening at best and boring. While the lack of action and personality is understandable in context of her experience under her father's control, I dreaded every section of her story and would, if I could, edit them out entirely.

Given that the book relies a little too heavily on “love at first sight” and that the love story itself seems merely a side-note, I think it's doable.



Anna Stewart

## SoCal Writers Showcase Submissions

Take these steps to submit your 500-word essay, creative non-fiction, short fiction, memoir or poem to the SoCal Writers Showcase. First put in your submission request.

- 1) Identify your branch (Writers of Kern)
- 2) Request a submission form. It will have the guidelines and proper email address for submitting your piece.
- 3) Send the email request to: [submissions@socalwritersshowcase.com](mailto:submissions@socalwritersshowcase.com)

But even before requesting, visit the website at <http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com/> to check out some of the pieces that have been accepted in your preferred genre.

## “From Inspiration to Publication”

**December 13 (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday)**  
Winter Dinner Meeting at Hodel’s, 6  
to 9 PM  
Dinner at 6:30

Fall Writing Contest winners  
&  
WOK Blog Challenge recognition

**January 17, 2015**  
Guest Speaker  
“Editing”

**February 21, 2015**  
LeeAnne Krusemark  
“How to Write an  
Irresistible Query Letter”

**March 21, 2015**  
Nancy Curteman, Mystery Writer  
“How to Increase Tension in Your  
Novel”

**April 25, 2015**  
Our annual Spring Conference  
9 AM to 3 PM

**May 16, 2015**  
WOK Honors Dinner  
Hodel’s

Young Writers of Kern Competition  
Peggy Connelly Scholarship

## Getting Ink

*Currents*, the in-house publication of Grand Circle Tours, published **Phil Berling’s** travelog piece, “A Walk Back to the Danube” in their Fall 2014 issue.

**Robert Hargreaves’s** story “The Chicken Wars” was published in the November issue of *Knee-Jerk*

*Magazine*, an online ‘zine that can be found at <http://kneejerkmag.com>.

“The Purple Nightgown” by **Joan Raymond** appeared in the latest issue of *Tower Journal*.  
[http://towerjournal.com/fall\\_2014/fiction/raymond.php](http://towerjournal.com/fall_2014/fiction/raymond.php)

Read an interview of **Reggie Ridgeway**, author of medical thriller, *In the Midnight Hour*, on Lorna Suzuki’s blog, *all kinds of writing*.  
[http://www.newmobileme.com/magochronicles9/IMAGO\\_FANTASY\\_REALM/Blog/Entries/2014/11/29\\_Reggie\\_Ridgeway\\_Interview.html](http://www.newmobileme.com/magochronicles9/IMAGO_FANTASY_REALM/Blog/Entries/2014/11/29_Reggie_Ridgeway_Interview.html)

## Holiday Gift Giving Lessons

Presents are a distraction. Holidays are filled with memories of food and family, but what matters is love. I embrace my family and remember Mom and Dad.

~ **Terry Redman**

I remember the thrill of receiving the Tiny Tears doll I wanted so badly, but nothing compares to the pleasure of another’s face -- alight from a gift I gave.

~ **Janet Skibinski**

## Critique Corner

At the moment we have a few openings for critique groups: 1st and 3rd Monday evenings, 2nd and 4th Wednesday evenings and Clarissa’s intensive group, the 2nd and 4th Wednesday mornings.

Have a great holiday, and we can deal with the critique groups after January 1. ~**Terry Redman**

## Volunteers



From our hearts and tummies, thanks to **Gay Chambers, Sue Jennings, and Lou Medina**, all of whom volunteered to help out with WOK refreshments for our meetings.

## Official WOK Email Addresses

**Go to the website, or email to the following addresses. Thank you.**

**Events:** [events@writersofkern.com](mailto:events@writersofkern.com)

**Information:**  
[info@writersofkern.com](mailto:info@writersofkern.com)

**Membership:**  
[membership@writersofkern.com](mailto:membership@writersofkern.com)

**Newsletter:**  
[newsletter@writersofkern.com](mailto:newsletter@writersofkern.com)

**President:**  
[president@writersofkern.com](mailto:president@writersofkern.com)

**Submissions:**  
[submissions@writersofkern.com](mailto:submissions@writersofkern.com)

**Sunshine Committee:**  
[sunshine@writersofkern.com](mailto:sunshine@writersofkern.com)

**Treasurer:**  
[treasurer@writersofkern.com](mailto:treasurer@writersofkern.com)

**Webmaster:**  
[webmaster@writersofkern.com](mailto:webmaster@writersofkern.com)

**Critique Coordinator:**  
[critiques@writersofkern.com](mailto:critiques@writersofkern.com)

## ***THE BACK PAGE***

### ***Editors' Inkwell***

Annis Cassells



We're writers. It's what we do. Sometimes we share our work with family members for feedback or appreciation. Sometimes they really don't care to read what we write. After all, it's **our** thing, not theirs.

Then we write a piece that is especially for them or shows how we feel about them. It's a one-of-a-kind gift -- a poem, story, or letter -- that is received and cherished like none other. It may summon tears or smiles or precious memories. Our writing is an expression of love.

So, in the aftermath of Black Friday and Cyber Monday, and in the spirit of caring and closeness that the Holiday Season invokes, I encourage you to put your gift-giving energy into writing. Compose a poem, print it on special paper -- even frame it. Write a memory of a happy or touching time, featuring the family member to whom you will present it. Create a joyous holiday tale or parody of a familiar poem or song. Whatever you write, it will be a treasured gift that will far outlast anything you could buy. We're writers. It's what we do.



*Save the Date*  
*and stay tuned for more information*  
*on the WOK Spring Conference*  
***Saturday, April 25, 2015***  
***9 AM to 3 PM***