

KEYNOTES



The newsletter of the Romance Writers of America / New York City Chapter #6 FALL 2021

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 12pm

AGENDA

12:00 pm – Chapter Business Meeting

12:30 pm – Author of the Month

1:00 pm – Historical Romance Panel

Moderated by: Ursula Renée

SPEAKERS:



RUTH A. CASIE is a *USA Today* bestselling author of historical swashbuckling action-adventures and contemporary romance with enough action to keep you turning pages and have earned her several

coveted Crowned Heart Awards.

Her stories feature strong women and the men who deserve them, endearing flaws and all. She lives in New Jersey with her hero, three empty bedrooms and a growing number of incomplete counted cross-stitch projects. Before she found her voice, she was a speech therapist (pun intended), client liaison for a corrugated manufacturer, and vice president at an international bank where she was a product/marketing manager, but her favorite job is the one she's doing now—writing romance. She hopes her stories become your favorite adventures.

Find her at: <https://ruthacasia.com/>



The author of *SWEET TEA* by Hallmark Publishing, **PIPER G. HUGULEY** is a two-time Golden Heart® finalist and author of two historical romance series: “Migrations of the Heart”, about the Great Migration and “Home to Milford College.” She will make her historical

fiction debut in June 2022 with *By Design: the story of Ann Lowe, society's best-kept secret* (William Morrow Publishing) who was the Black fashion designer of Jackie Kennedy's wedding dress.

She blogs about the history behind her novels at <http://piperhuguley.com>. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia with her husband and son.



“The role of the writer is not to say what we can all say, but what we are unable to say.”- Beatrix Potter

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Ursula Renée



“First Draft”

After two months pounding away at the keyboard until my arms were sore, I typed the last sentence to my historical. Though there are things that can be more exciting, i.e.

signing a contract or seeing the book in print on release day, there is still a euphoria that comes from getting a plot out the mind and onto paper. Therefore, I danced around and relished the joy that comes from completing a novel.

I know without reviewing my latest novel that the first draft is crappy. There are typos, grammatical errors, and problems with the plot. I will need to add more descriptions in some places and trim dialogue in others. I will also have to add another scene or two to make the plot more realistic and flow better. Finally, I will have to verify facts that, if not correct, would pull a reader out of the story.

People may wonder how I can be excited when there is still so much work that has to be done before the manuscript can be submitted to an editor. For me, writing the first draft is the hardest. For every completed novel, I have two unfinished projects.

It is easy for me to begin a novel. However, halfway through I may not be able to continue because I'm no longer excited about the characters or I do not know what direction to take the story. Or another idea that seems more exciting may pop into my mind.

I jumped into my current novel determined to get the foundation of the story down on paper. As I worked, I forced myself to move forward and not look back. Even when the scenes felt sluggish or the dialogue was not riveting, I reminded myself that I will always need to edit

a story before I submit it and that process cannot be done if I did not finish.

I encourage authors having problems completing a work-in-progress to sit down with their favorite writing medium (whether it is a computer, voice recorder or pen and paper) and simply write. Do not worry about errors or how the sentences flow. You can always go back and change things later. As the saying goes, you cannot edit a blank page.

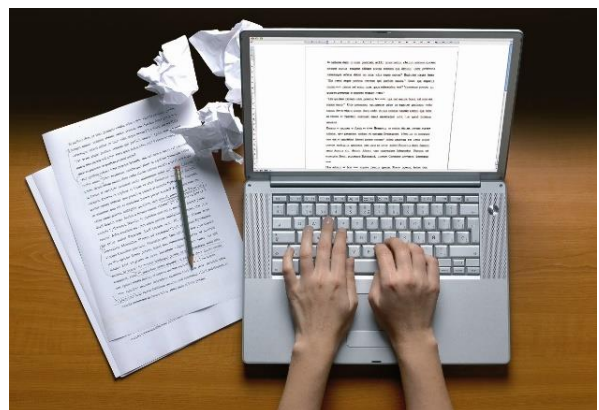
Ursula Renée writes historical fiction set in the early to mid-twentieth century, when people began challenging society's conventions and expressing their individuality. Her first novel, SWEET JAZZ, has been called “a sweet romantic story that like jazz has propulsive rhythms played out in harmonic freedom” and its sequel, BITTER BLUES, is considered “a realistic plot that a lot of people can relate too.”

When she is not writing, Ursula enjoys stone carving, photography, drawing and model building. She loves to travel. After each adventure she returns to New York where she lives with her son, two cats and a betta.

Facebook.com/ursularenee.author

Twitter: @Ursula_Renee

Website: ursularenee.com



“Every first draft is perfect, because all a first draft has to do is exist.” – Jane Smiley

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Publicity:	Maria Cox Anna DePalo Jean Joachim Michael Molloy Tee O'Fallon Ursula Renée

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Upcoming Chapter Meetings:

October 2, 2021 (Sat)

“We Love Our Heroine. Warts and All.”

November 6, 2021 (Sat)

Special Edition!

“Writing workshop with Kristan Higgins!”

December 4, 2021 (Sat)

Holiday Party



Q&A Series:

September 15, 2021 (Wed)

“Interview with Radish Fiction”

October 20, 2021 (Wed)

November 17, 2021 (Wed)

December 15, 2021 (Wed)

CHAPTER ELECTIONS



We want YOU To run for Chapter Office!

Give back to the chapter by running for office.

ALL POSITIONS OPEN!

All Members in good standing are eligible to run for office, as long as they meet the necessary qualifications*. If you are interested in running for President, Vice President (2 spots), Secretary or Treasurer, please email President Ursula Renee directly at President@rwanyc.com. These positions are open and need to be filled. Nominations will be accepted until September 31. Voting will occur in October.

*Please refer to the bylaws for eligibility requirements for the President and Treasurer positions.

SOCIAL MEDIA HELP WANTED

We are looking for a savvy volunteer to handle our Social Media channels: Facebook, Twitter and the Blog. You will need to post a minimum of once a week. If interested, please contact Maria Ferrer at ferrerm@aol.com.

MEMBER NEWS

Arthur Costigan writing under the name A C Inwood, has accepted a contract with NineStar Press for the publication in 2022 of *THE HELLGATE CLUB*, a story about gay vampires living in New York City. Website <https://www.acinwood.com/>

Ursula Renée has signed a contract with Level Best Books for her first romantic suspense, *SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY*.

Candace Lucas has signed a contract with Black Rose Writing for her romantic comedy *THE CANDY CAPERS*. Paperback and epub are slated for issue the end of May 2022.

Tee O'Fallon has a book out in September; Book 5 in **Serve & Protect** series.

Barbara James released her new novel, *HELENA*, August 2021.

Mageela Troche is back with the chapter. She is blogging about historical couples and historical fashion at <https://trocheauthor.wordpress.com>

Rose A. Jacob's short story, *Zane*, was published in a charity anthology, *LIKE SUNSHINE AFTER RAIN*.

NYC BIG APPLE CONTEST



Good luck to all who submitted to the Big Apple Contest. Although the submission date has closed, we can't wait to see who our finalists are and who will be crowned this year's Big Apple Contest winner.

Heather Howland, Co-Founder and Senior Editor at Entangled Publishing is the final judge.

Finalists announced: **October 22, 2021**

Winner announced: **December 4, 2021**

CONTESTS

Rose A. Jacobs, Stiletto Contest WINNER, Contemporary Romance Long category *A PROMISE KEPT*.

Jean Joachim, Book Buyer's Best 2020 Contest, 3rd Place, Erotic Romance Category for *YOU BELONG TO ME*.

Shirley Hailstock, Holt Medallion, 3rd Place, Novella, *RUNNING WILD IN RENO*.



EXCITING WORKSHOP EVENT!

Join us at our November 6th Chapter Meeting where we will have a special editing-writing workshop with best-selling author, **KRISTAN HIGGINS**. You ***DON'T*** want to miss it!



Kristan Higgins is the *New York Times*, *USA TODAY*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly* bestselling author of 19 novels, which have been translated into more than two dozen languages and sold millions of copies worldwide. Her books have received dozens of awards and accolades, including starred reviews from *Kirkus*, *The New York Journal of Books*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal*, *People* and *Booklist*. Her books regularly appear on the lists for best novels of the year. Kristan is also a cohost of the Crappy Friends podcast, which discusses the often complex dynamics of female friendships, with her friend and fellow writer, Joss Dey.

Kristan lives in Connecticut with her heroic firefighter husband. They own several badly behaved pets and are often visited by their entertaining and long-lashed children.

BROOKLYN BOOK FESTIVAL RETURNS!

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2021

The Brooklyn Book Festival is back! After a year of inactivity due to the pandemic, the Brooklyn Book Festival returns on Sunday, October 3rd, from 10 am to 6 pm, at the grounds of the Kings County State Courthouse at the corner of Court and Montague Streets. And I am proud to announce that our New York City RWA Chapter will be part of it.

We will be having an eight-foot long canopied table whereby eight of our chapter authors will be given the long-awaited opportunity to sell their books. The cost for such a spot will be \$40.00 for two hours. But the chance to interact live with readers once again is priceless. We will also be seeking volunteers to promote our chapter and help recruit new members, maximum two per shift.

If you are interested, please go to our chapter website for more details to sign up. If you have any further questions, please feel free to write to me at michaeljmolloy@aol.com. Come experience a readers' paradise like no other: the Brooklyn Book Festival.



INDUSTRY NEWS



CONFERENCES

The RWA Conference will be held virtually from **November 18-20**.

Don't miss it!

Registration opens September 8th at 10am CT.

Emerald City Writers' Conference

October 15-17. Event is completely online.

To register, go to www.rwa.org, under Events, for more details.



POWER UP SESSIONS

A program featuring a series of 45-min Zoom meetings that accelerate professional development and education in two separate tracks: PAN or PRO. Although each track is targeted to specific communities, both are open to either community.

To register, go to www.rwa.org, under Events, for more details.

Upcoming PAN Sessions:

September 7th, 7pm CT

September 25th, 11am CT

Upcoming PRO Session:

September 14th, 7pm CT

Topic: What I Wish I Knew Before I Was Published

UPCOMING CLASSES:

Webinar: "From Page to Script with Lindy Miller"

Many authors dream of seeing their characters fall in love on the big screen. However, achieving this goal requires more than just a great story or a good dose of luck - it means knowing how to craft a compelling pitch, establish the right visual language for your story, and understand how to hit the notes producers are looking for.

Price: \$15

Date: **September 17th at 12pm CT**.

For more details and to register, go to www.rwa.org, under Events.

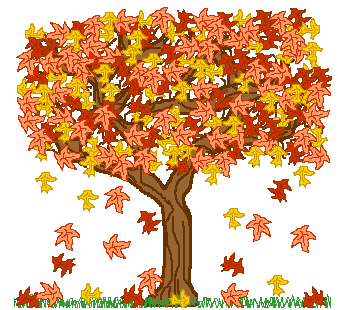
Webinar: "Author Success and the Million Dollar Gaze"

The most common topic among author circles in the last decade has been: "how can I become a successful author?" And the second most common question is: "why am I not successful?" Author success coach and psychometric success alignment expert, Becca Syme, also happens to be a fiction writer, herself, and believes that demystifying success systems is the most important thing we can talk about in author circles. Becca has coached thousands of authors from the newbie to the midlister to the seven figure bestseller. Let's be real about author success. Join us now!

Price: \$15

Date: **October 13th at 12pm CT**

For more details and to register, go to www.rwa.org, under Events.



THE WRITE CORNER

“Giving and Getting Support: Responding To Romance Writers’ Drafts”

by **Arthur Costigan**

The myth of a lonely writer huddled over a manuscript in some garret loft, writing on a manual typewriter under the yellow light of a kerosene lamp is—well, it’s exactly that, *a myth*. The general public may think of writing as a solo profession, but those of us who are writers, that is, those of us who *practice* writing, know that this is false. Writing, in fact, is the least lonely profession. We are, after all, kept company by our characters. And, we write, after all, for an audience. But, equally as important, we quickly learn that anyone who wants to be a good writer knows that feedback is essential. Writers need readers. And they need those readers to give them feedback.

But for writers, getting proper feedback is a precious and rare commodity. And giving good feedback as a reader, like anything of value in life, is not easy. It needs to be practiced.

Other types of writers have it easier. Journalists, for instance, have a whole staff of editors, copy editors, and proofers. And, if you are an academic writer, for example, you send the manuscript out to a publisher who is usually allied with a national professional organization.

Of course, for romance writers this doesn’t happen much at all. Most rejections state something relatively opaque like, “Unfortunately, after careful consideration of your manuscript, we have determined that it’s not a fit for our current publishing program. We wish you the best of luck...”

You’re more lucky in the rare case that you get a sentence or two with some concrete feedback. Something like, “Although this book is not right for us, I did enjoy how supportive the relationship is between Joachim and Taylor, and we’d definitely be interested in seeing more work from you...”

I’ve spent many decades, first as an English teacher, and then directing an English teacher education program. Educators and teachers talk a lot about how to comment on students’ papers, and perhaps more importantly (and more difficult), how to get students to comment on each other’s papers. It’s a huge journey to move a kid from a “this sucks” response (more usually rendered, “this *suck’s*”) to reasonable and helpful reader’s response.

I’ve covered “how to comment” in two books, *TEACHING AUTHENTIC LANGUAGE ARTS IN A TEST-DRIVE ERA* (2008) and *AN AUTHENTIC ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM* (2019), both with Routledge, so there are some things I’ve learned (and borrowed and stolen) about how to comment on drafts. And, yes, there is nothing really new here. These are self-evident to romance writers. But—and here’s the rub—not all of us do them all of the time. And, as we do not write alone, and as we value like platinum any feedback, there are some things we can remind ourselves to do when we comment on each other’s drafts.

1. “A+!” is useless. Words like, “This is great!” “An excellent story,” or, “I really liked this draft,” really doesn’t tell the writer anything at all, that is if there’s not a “because...” explanation that follows about why you think this is great. This is just as if a teacher wrote “A+” on the top of a paper. The student-writer may feel good, but she learns nothing about why the high assessment. So, I believe that every supportive comment requires an explanation, a *why* or a “because...”

Continued from previous page...

2. Why “+” “~” “-” judgements don’t work. The point is that once a reader (or editor) makes any judgement, that’s the end of discussion. *Finis*. On a school essay, an “A+” is the end, just as much as is an “F,” after which the kid throws the paper in the trash and swears at you under his breath. Words like, “This is a great story,” or, “I really liked this...” are useless unless there’s a “why,” or a because...” explanation.

3. Speak “from the I.” These are *your* perceptions. You can speak only for yourself as a reader, not for all readers. There is no “universal reader,” there is no “The Reader,” there is only *you* as a reader. You may be right, wrong, or somewhere in between, but these are *your* judgements, evaluations, thoughts, feelings, and comments, and the writer always has to decide whether to include your assessment or not. Comments should begin “I find...” “I see...” “I feel...” “I think...” “I understand/don’t understand...” “A question I have is...” In fact, you can’t “speak from the I” too much.

If the author didn’t value your opinion, she wouldn’t have asked you for your input. Compare this to how you talk in your normal relationships. Which is a better conversation starter?: “Honey, you left the ice cube tray empty again, why can’t you just fill the damn thing?” Or, “Honey, *I* feel that we might try to come to an agreement about filling the ice cube tray.”

4. Proofing is not editing. And correcting is not responding. We shouldn’t mix up the function of proofing (correcting) with responding (editing). Proofing is about errors every writer makes—anyone can make these corrections, though some of us (like this writer) are not good proofers. Some are, some

aren’t. Rather, editing and reviewing is about responding, giving feedback. If you’re really only proofing and correcting usage errors—and this is often needed—are you giving the manuscript your full attention? Is this what the writer really needs? Proofing is a small thing. Editing is a very big thing.

5. Use both marginalia and end notes. Give comments in-text (marginalia, call-out boxes) and at the end. Comments at the end, even if only a sentence or two, provide a wrap-up for the writer, something to hang on to, something to move the writer forward, and thus are essential: “So, all in all, I really liked the way Jessica is developing, finding her voice, and taking care of that awful Jeffrey. I look forward to reading more about her emotional growth...” This brings up a minor but important point—

I remember a saying I read years ago, “A critic is not one who *evaluates*, a critic is one who *explains*.” (Sorry, can’t remember the author) In this sense, providing a proper critique—or, better put, a *reader’s response*—is really the most professional and helpful thing we can do.



But responding properly is not necessarily automatic, nor is it easy. It takes practice. After all, we want our writer to take away something useful from what we tell them. Every comment or question we share with our reader should be to allow them to make the draft better. For a writer, a meaningful reader’s response is perhaps the most valuable tool for writing better and better stories.

Arthur Costigan, a longtime academic writer, is new to writing romance novels under the name A C Inwood. He recently signed a contract with NineStar Press for his first published novel, THE HELLGATE CLUB, coming out in 2022. You can check it out at <https://www.acinwood.com/>

THE WRITE CORNER

“Writing Intentionally And With Purpose” by Barbara James

We all have very busy lives. If we don't have any writing deadlines, it's very easy to write as we can, whenever we can, and not think about our goals for finishing a full first draft.

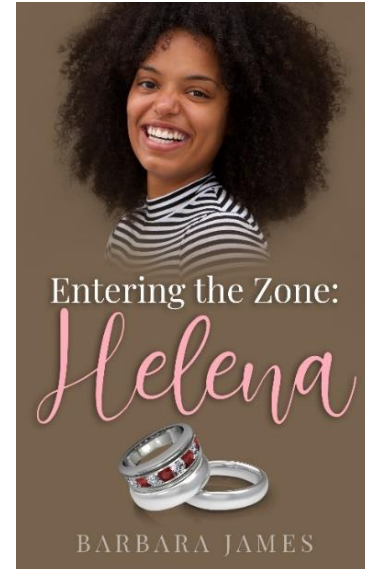
National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) is ideal for many people who are intent upon finishing a 50,000 word first draft in thirty days. That type of focus is impossible for me, thus my goals have been more modest. Now that I'm done with Helena, the last book in my current series, it's time for me to start thinking about my next writing project. A writer friend I follow on Twitter, Rose Rey (@rosereywriter), inspired me to think about the Pomodoro Technique of writing. Take a block of time, something like twenty-five minutes, and write as much as you can as you keep track of your word count. I suddenly realized that it had been ages since I did something like that.

What if I were more purposeful whenever I sat down to write? Writing intentionally and with purpose means I'd have to know how long my final manuscript should be. Category romances of the type published by Harlequin are 55,000 words. What would that mean in terms of a daily word count? A weekly word count? A monthly one? The average NaNoWriMo word count is one thousand seven hundred words per day. Working with the RWA-NYC chapter critique group in revising my works in progress has pushed me to think about deadlines and revisions. We have deadlines each month to submit two chapters of about 3000 words each. It's easier to submit chapters if the full draft is done.

Happy writing!

Barbara James has been a member of RWA-NYC since the summer of 2017. She writes sweet and inspirational romances.

Website: www.barbarjames.net.



“Top 5 Hot Key Topics from the Thrills and Chills Panel” by Maria Cox

During the August session, Karen Rose & Geoffrey Wells shared their writing experiences and individual writing processes. Topics that ran the gamut from character development to tips and tricks, and key topics as outlined below. The Thrills & Chills panel discussion was led by moderator, Michael Molloy.

Key Topics

- Make the villain compelling.
- Surprise the reader!
- Set the mood – listen to music, meditate, read.
- Author inspiration: Lisa Gardner
- Attend professional forums.

Join us in September for the historical panel!

THE WRITE CORNER

“Welcome to My Writing Den!” by Maria Cox

(*This article is a reprint of the Keynotes October edition)

In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, I present to you five world renowned Hispanic authors you should get to know. Please see below in alphabetical order:

Isabel Allende is a Chilean writer who also pens in the “magic realist” tradition. In 2004, Allende was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and she received Chile’s National Literature Prize in 2010.

Jorge Luis Borges was an Argentine short-story writer, essayist, poet and translator. But he was much more than that. Borges contributed to the so-called philosophical literature movement, and he became a literary icon beyond frontiers, though never recognized with a Nobel Prize.

Carlos Fuentes was a Mexican novelist and essayist. This great author was honored with the Miguel de Cervantes Prize as well as Mexico’s highest award, the Belisario Dominguez Medal of Honor. Fuentes, like Borges, never won the Nobel Prize.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez also known as ‘Gabo’, was a Colombian novelist, short-story writer and journalist. He was one of the most significant Latino writers of the 20th century known for popularizing a literary style labeled as ‘magic realism.’ Garcia Marquez was awarded with the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982.

Mario Vargas Llosa is a Peruvian-Spanish writer, a politician, a journalist, and essayist. He won the 2010 Nobel Prize in Literature and is one of Latin America’s most significant writers.

Hispanics have had a profound positive influence on our country through a strong commitment to family, faith, and hard work. If you would like to learn about our unique culture and about prominent Hispanic Americans who have helped to shape our nation, please visit <http://hispanicheritagemonth.gov/>

Happy writing!

Maria Cox is an award-winning romance writer. Maria is also a PRO member of Romance Writers of America and Chapter Secretary for RWA/NYC. Maria served two terms as President of the Phoenix Writers Club.

Maria has been writing stories since she was a young girl. She picked up her first romance novel when she was just eleven years old and has loved the genre ever since. Maria writes sensual romance, stories that showcase strong, sassy, and sexy characters. When not writing fiction, Maria works as a technical writer. She lives in Queens, New York.

Website: www.mariacox.net

Twitter @AuthorMariaCox



“No one succeeds alone. Never walk alone in your future paths.” – Sonia Sotomayor

THE WRITE CORNER

“Big Press, Small Press”

by: **Jean Joachim**

Are rejections from big publishing houses getting you down? Have you considered submitting to small, independent presses? Indie publishers have much to offer, for example:

- Most small presses do not require an agent to submit your book. They take submissions directly from authors.
- Most small presses are not sitting on a huge slush pile, so they have more time to read your work.
- Because they may not be deluged with submissions, yours has a better chance of being read.
- Small presses offer many of the same services as large publishers, like professional editing and proofing of your book, and a cover designed by a designer.
- Some small presses will put your book into audio at their own expense.
- They may have contacts with foreign publishing houses and will negotiate deals for those companies to translate and publish your book.
- If they believe enough in your book, they may pay for Kirkus and Publisher’s Weekly professional reviews.
- Small presses have reviewers they work with regularly and can most likely get you more reviews than you could garner on your own.

As with all things, there are cons to indie publishers as well. Services most indie publishers don’t provide include:

- Most cannot get you on bookstore shelves.
- They may not put your book out in hard cover, but most put it in paperback, print-on-demand, and ebook.
- Most small presses do not offer advances on royalties. If you write a bestseller, you

might be able to negotiate an advance on your next book.

- A small press will have less clout with marketing. They may not be able to get you into Oprah Winfrey’s Book Club or provide big write-ups in newspapers and national magazines or get television interviews.

If you’re not having any luck with the Big Five publishers, look for a small press. Be sure to check them out thoroughly. Research them on the Internet. Speak with their current authors to find out the pros and cons of their publisher. Ask questions. Read the information on their website. Study their book covers --are they alike or do they reflect the flavor of the books?

Our chapter, RWA/NYC, has two authors who have recently signed with small presses. At last speaking, they were both very happy with their new partners. I spent five years with a small press and can confirm it was an excellent decision. Investigate indie publishers. You may find your match. Good luck!

Jean Joachim is an award-winning, USA Today best-selling romance author whose books have hit the Amazon Top 100 list in the U.S. and abroad since 2012. She writes sports romance, small town romance, big city romance, and romantic suspense. A music lover, especially classical, she’s married, has two grown sons and lives in New York City. Find her books on her website: www.jeanjoachimbooks.com





Chapter Meetings

On the first Saturday of each month (except when that Saturday falls during a holiday weekend) we have a chapter meeting to update the membership on upcoming events. We also offer each attendee a chance to share their news during the Round Robin. Finally, we have guest speakers who offer tips on craft, marketing, etc. In the past, we have also invited editors, agents and booksellers to speak about the industry.

RWA/NYC Members Only Q&A

On the third Wednesday of the month, we invite industry professionals for a one-hour RWA/NYC Members Only Q&A.

Weekly Writing Sprints

To encourage members to write, we offer a Wednesday evening writing sprint. These are hosted by Michael Molloy on the chapter Facebook page. If you are not a member of our Facebook group, please email rwanycweb@gmail.com.

Monthly Critique Meetings

As of January 2021, RWA/NYC hosts monthly critique meetings for members to receive and offer constructive feedback on works-in-progress. The instructions, date and time will be posted on the chapter's forum.

Writers Support Group

Between the ever-changing publishing industry, finding the right words to put on paper and dealing with our audience, writing is not an easy profession. RWA/NYC has formed a support group to give members a chance to discuss problems they may have in the

industry; air grievances or find a shoulder to cry on. The gatherings are informal. The dates and times will be posted on the RWA/NYC forum and on the chapter's Facebook page.

Contests

Yearly BIG APPLE contest.

Quarterly Keynotes Newsletter

Have a new book out? Entered and won a contest? An event, book, conference you'd like to review? Have an interesting topic, research, tips you want to share? We welcome all writing and publishing subjects.

Send your good news to

keynoteseditor@gmail.com

Articles will also be published on the Chapter Blog for DOUBLE the promotion!

Published quarterly.

Social Media

Opportunities to be featured on the chapter blog

rwanycblogginginthebigapple.blogspot.com/

Twitter (@RWANYC) and

Facebook

www.facebook.com/RWANYC/

“Reading is like breathing in. Writing is like breathing out.” – Pam Allyn

