



VALLEY VOICES

The Newsletter of San Joaquin Valley Writers | November 2024

From the President

Hello, fellow writers! It's that time of year. The Holiday Season is fast approaching—first

Thanksgiving, then Christmas and Hannukah, then the New Year. It's a hectic time for everyone. Indeed, SJVW does not schedule any regular events in November and December. Our monthly second Saturday member meetings won't restart until January along with our fourth Saturday Craft Chats. **Our only event is this Saturday, November 9, our first Celebrating Success!** (Registration closed.) We will see some of you there as we recognize major achievements of our members and special honors earned.

So, does the hectic nature of the season mean we all stop writing? Hopefully not! What we need to do is plan and carve time out here and there. Many if not most of us are working folks with busy schedules, so we're always squeezing in writing time. Writing is like gym time or exercise: you simply have to make time. Consider making your holiday writing goals a little more modest, especially with family and all the parties and gatherings. Instead of trying to make time every day, try making word goals for each week, such as "This week I will get 500 words written" or "This week I will get 1000 words written." In that way, instead of a daily goal, you have a reachable weekly goal. In the end, the best advice is not to fret. We just need to get done what we can get done when days get busier than usual.

With that said, it's not too early to begin planning for 2025. What are your writing goals? Do you have plans for submitting to magazines, for publishing a book? Will this be a year to attend a conference? Do you plan to attend more SJVW events, such as our Craft Chats or monthly meetings? And what would you like from SJVW? Any special workshops or sessions? We are planning to resurrect the special all-day **workshop on self-publishing** for something during the spring or early summer months. We will cover everything from how to get ISBNs to how to upload your books into Amazon to cover and interior design. We are looking to make this a no-cost workshop and host it at a public library, making it easily affordable for all members. Be on the lookout for information.

As 2024 unwinds, the entire Board wishes everyone a happy Holiday Season and a fun and festive New Year celebration. We will see you again in January!

—Bill VanPatten

Upcoming Events

There are no scheduled events for November and December. So, we take this time to remind you of our 2025 anthology, *Beginnings and Endings*. Submissions are due March 15, 2025. For more information, [click here](#) or on the image below. We hope to get some great writing in all areas (fiction, memoir, poetry) from our SJVW members and from CWC members more generally



www.sjvalleywriters.org

News and Info from Our Members

- **June Gillam** is pleased to announce that she is launching the sixth and final installment of her Hillary Broome crime series. Titled *Fallen Kings: Unholy Secrets*, it is available on Amazon by [clicking here](#) or using this link: <https://shorturl.at/1Aa8d>. And, because she never stops, June is working on a new trilogy crime series!
- Congratulations to **Debbie Saarloos** for publishing her first novel, *The Legend of Bigfoot*. Targeted for ages 5-10, this delightful tale for young adventurers will have you laughing! Join Raylan on his horseback journey into the forest, where legendary creatures are said to roam. Available soon on Amazon. In the meantime, check out Debbie's [website](#).
- **Deborah Grochau** traveled to England in September to attend the Historical Novel Society Conference. She spent four days in London before taking the train to Totnes. The conference was held at Dartington Hall and the speakers were fabulous, especially Diana Gabaldon, author of *Outlander*. Great news from Deborah!
- Kudos to **June Gillam, Pamela Pan, Charity Romstad** and **Bill VanPatten**. Each of these SJVW members have a piece in the Redwood Writers anthology *Transitions* that was published this fall. The volume is available on Amazon by [clicking here](#). Go team SJVW!

If you have news or information you would like to share, please contact us by [clicking here](#). We welcome all kinds of news from our members.

Additional News and Notes

- **Do you know of someone who is a writer or aspiring writer but may not be willing to commit to a full year of membership in SJVW?** Let them know that we have ½ memberships that run from January 1 until June 30 at, you guessed it, half the cost (plus one-time membership fee). Tell them it's easy. Send them to our website or send them this newsletter and tell them to [click here](#) or on the image to the right to go to our membership page. SJVW is on the move, growing and expanding in its membership and activities!

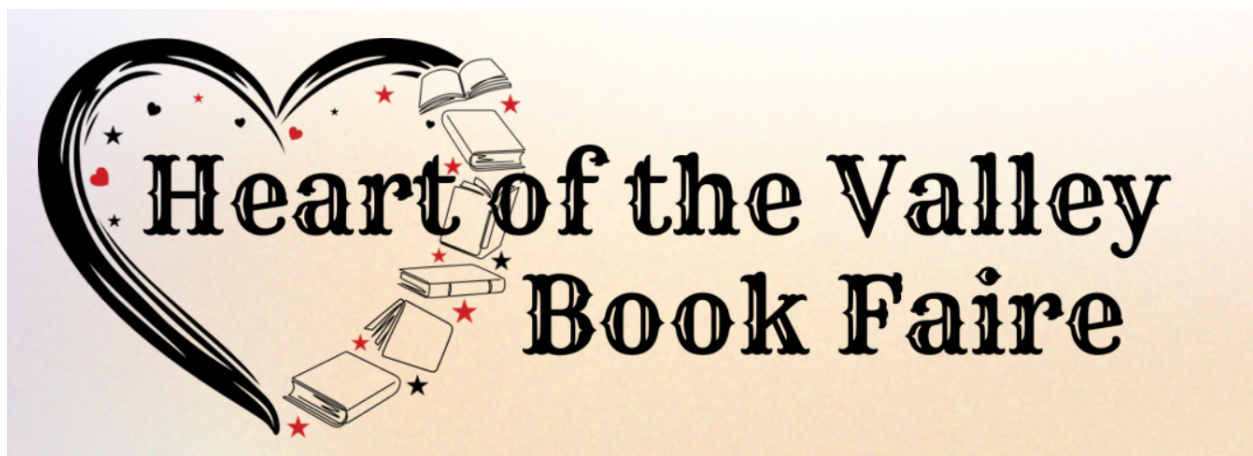


- SJVW now offers a **two-hour intro workshop** for non-members. We travel to a site, present, answer questions, and spread the word. We can use onsite equipment or our own (e.g., projector, computer). The workshop focuses on the basics of story structure, characterization, and showing/not telling. It's interactive, fun, and perfect for students, retirees, homeowner associations, church groups, hospital staff, library groups, and others who are looking to get their feet (pens? keyboards?) wet. We've done workshops with as few as five participants and as many as twenty. If you know of a group or place that might be interested in what we do, [contact us](#) and we'll reach out.



- Beginning December 2024, **the Resources Page of our website will require a password**. While the rest of the website will be open to the public, this particular page will be available to members-in-good-standing only. We want to ensure that the resources our members pay for are for members. This means that videos, information on critique groups, information on editing, readings, and other matters will only be accessible to members. Be on the lookout in December and January for reminders of this via an eblast. The password for that page will be sent to you then.

- **Bookish**, an independent bookstore in Modesto, hosts an **open mic for poets** and musicians once a month. Poets can read for five minutes. Check it out at <https://www.bookishmodesto.com>.
- On Saturday, November 16, the Friends of Madera County Library is sponsoring the **Heart of the Valley Book Fair**. This event will feature some forty+ authors and will prove to be a major event for this part of the San Joaquin Valley. For details, click on the image below.



- **Delicato Wines in Manteca** is hosting a book signing and book talk by local author Carol Sherman. Delicato is hoping this event will be a success with great participation. We encourage all SJVW members to attend. If there is a good showing, Delicato will most likely host an event for SJVW authors for us to sign and talk about our own publications! So make your reservation and join other authors and readers for this first-time event. Information appears below.

Delicato Wine Shop Presents:

Book Talk

with Local Author

Carol Sherman

Pen Name: Anne Carol

We are thrilled to invite you to an exclusive book signing event featuring local author and fellow Wine Club member, Carol Sherman! Join us as she discusses her Faithfully Yours Series. Books available for purchase: \$10 each, cash only.

December 7, 2024

Book Talk Starts at 3:45 pm

Delicato Wine Shop
12001 S. Hwy 99
Manteca, CA 95336

**BOOK SIGNING
&
AUTHOR INTERVIEW**

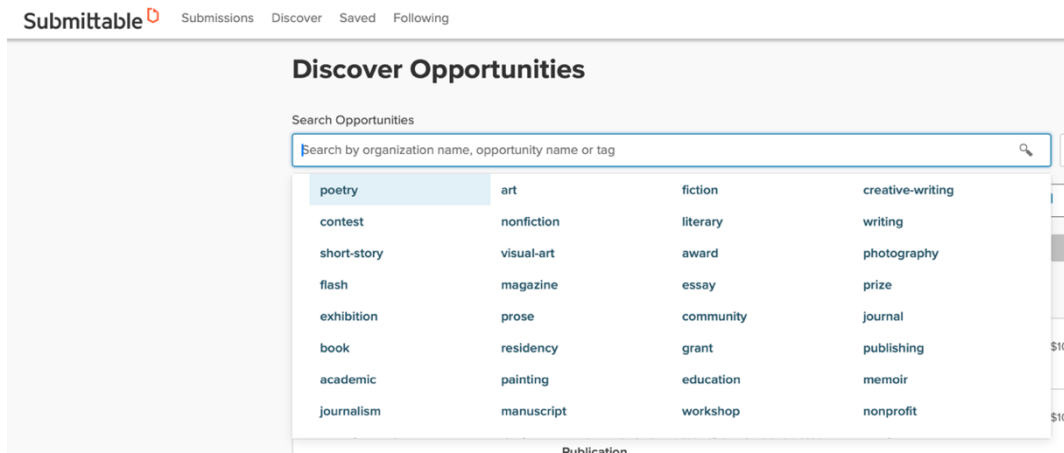
Call: 209-824-3401 to Reserve your Space

Faithfully Yours Series

www.annecarolauthor.com

Writing Tips and Tidbits

- **Thinking about self-publishing?** There are eight common mistakes to avoid. Do you know what they are? [Click here](#) to find out. And don't forget, **SJVW will host an all-day workshop on self-publishing** in the spring or early summer of 2025. Be on the lookout. It will be a free workshop, (no fee, no charge) but open only to members of SJVW.
- This tip came in from a member. **Beware of marketing scams!** There are people promising to help market your book, but will they? As the author of one blog says, some of these marketers are wolves in sheep's clothing. [Click here](#) to read the blog.
- **Curious about Submittable?** Submittable is an online platform that helps writers and artists submit their work to various opportunities, such as literary magazines, publishers, contests, grants, and more. There are two key features with Submittable. One is "Discover Opportunities." You can use Submittable to search for submission opportunities based on keywords, deadlines, and fees. Below is a screenshot of the things you can search for. The other key feature is that once you submit work, the platform allows you to keep track under the tab "Submissions." To check it out, go to <https://discover.submittable.com/> or click on the image below. If you'd like a workshop on how to use Submittable, let us know. SJVW would be happy to host one.



Interested in working on one of our committees? SJVW is happy to accept volunteers to work on various aspects of our organization (newsletter, events, scholarships and awards, anthologies, recruitment/outreach, among others). Time commitment is minimal, and you'd be helping fellow writers in a different way!

Featured Essay

Anthologies: Why They're a Good Thing for Aspiring Writers

by Dorajane Gummer

Do you dream of seeing your name in print? Anthologies might just be your golden ticket to the publishing world! Picture this: a collection of stories, poems, or essays, all bundled up in one delightful book. It's like a literary potluck where every author brings their best dish to the table.

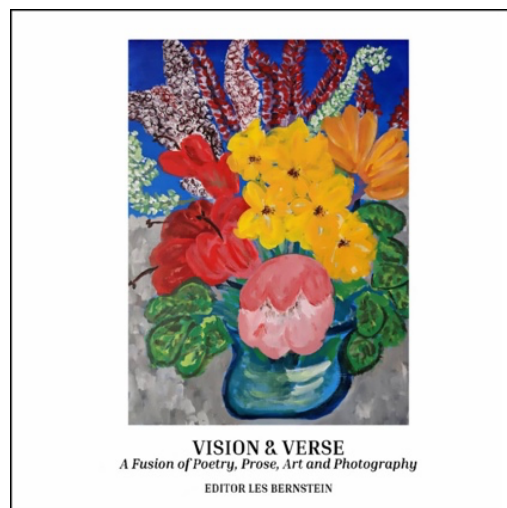
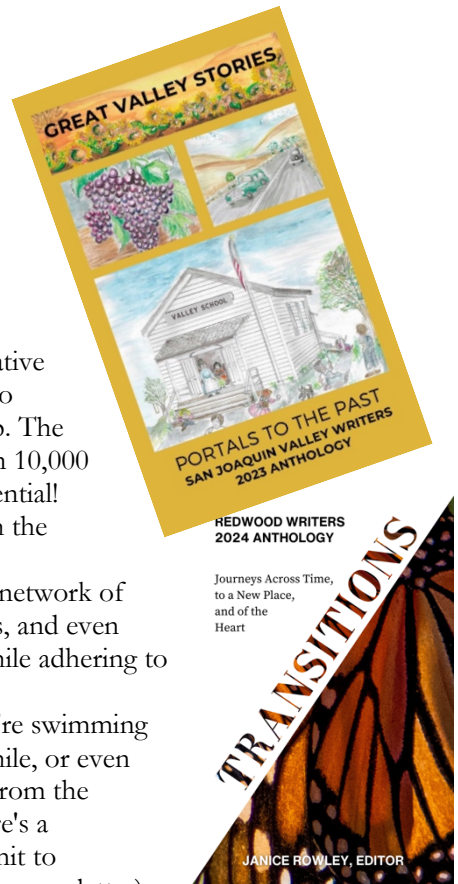
Anthologies are the perfect playground for both fledgling writers and seasoned wordsmiths. They often revolve around a theme, giving you a creative sandbox to play in. For instance, I've had the pleasure of contributing to two holiday-themed anthologies with the Hearts Through History Writers group. The rules were simple: whip up a Christmas tale set in any historical period, all in 10,000 words or less. It's like literary speed dating – quick, exciting, and full of potential! And you might have a piece already finished that fits with the theme or with the slightest of tweaks fits. Even better!

But wait, there's more! Joining an anthology is like crash-landing into a network of fellow word-weavers. You'll rub elbows with other authors, share beta reads, and even work with professional editors. It's a masterclass in honing your craft, all while adhering to specific guidelines that push your creativity to new heights.

Now, before you dive headfirst into the anthology pool, make sure you're swimming with reputable groups. Stick to established platforms like Wattpad, Scribophile, or even Reddit. Or better yet, check out local and state-wide author communities. From the California Writers Club to the Southern California Writers Association, there's a smorgasbord of options waiting for you. And you might find places to submit to anthologies on [Submittable](#) (see above in the Tips and Tidbits section of this newsletter).

So, ready to add "published author" to your resume? Anthologies are calling your name! Who knows, your short story, poem, or memoir might just be the standout in the next big collection. Happy writing, and may the muse be with you!

- California Writers Club: <https://www.hdcwc.com/anthologies-and-books.html>
- San Joaquin Valley Writers: <https://www.sjvalleywriters.org/publications>
- Tri-Valley Writers: <https://www.trivalleywriters.org/anthology/>
- Southern California Writers Association: <https://southerncafwriters.org/uncategorized/its-all-in-the-story-california-the-sequel/>
- Redwood Writers: <https://redwoodwriters.org/publications/anthologies/>



Featured Essay



What I learned writing my first novel ...

by Harrie Walker

She savored the heat of his reaction to her lowcut, tight red dress. Yum. Dark chocolate and caramel. Her eyelids drifted closed over emerald green with vertical pupils. She opened them abruptly. Humans were delicate. Feed too deeply and they died. She didn't want to hurt anyone, but she was hungry.

That character popped out of nowhere in response to a group writing prompt one Wednesday morning. And SHE wouldn't let me alone. I'm a poet! While I spent a year learning to write prose—HER book—SHE morphed from a siren with scruples to a newly hatched dragon.

Now there's a second book in my head and a list—Notes To Self: Lessons Learned.

1. **This is a marathon, not a one-mile fun run.** You'll spend four to six hours daily in your chair. Buy a more comfortable chair. Your back will thank you. Also, get out of that chair and walk around the kitchen occasionally. Your back will thank you. And you can get coffee.
2. **Carry a notebook.** Ideas come at you while you're driving. Keep the notebook by your bed. Before sleeping, ask questions. "Why do these dragons speak English?" Your brain will answer the question in the morning. Ignore the 3 a.m. scribble that says, "sniff and shrug, the seventeenth level of personal vanity."
3. **Cherish the writers in your critique groups.** They will tell you when to explain or describe more and share encouragement when you struggle with information dumps or point of view.
4. **Study the craft.** Good plots don't happen by accident. But give yourself writing time to turn characters loose. It's fun when they speak up and tell *you* what happens next.
Grant P. Hudson – *How Stories Really Work*
Jessica Brody – *Save The Cat! Writes A Novel*
5. **Get good reference books.**
Angela Akerman & Becca Publisi – *The Emotion Thesaurus*
Nancy Kress – *Characters, Emotions & Viewpoint*
Linda Hart – *Thesaurus of the Senses*
6. **Join a community of writers.** San Joaquin Valley Writers offers craft chats and events. The supportive energy will bolster your spirits, help you stick with the demanding work and make the endless revisions needed to produce a good first book. Or a second!

Final Thought



"Write your first draft with your heart. Rewrite with your head."
—Mike Rich

The next newsletter will appear in January. Send us your news, thoughts, and ideas!