

MENTORING WRITERS NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 04 // JANUARY 2021

Welcome to our New Look Newsletter

PROSE

Monthly feature offering
advice on the writing
process, tips, reviews etc

POETRY

Check out our feature -
POEM OF THE MONTH

NEW YEAR
EDITION

A New Year, a New
Look, New features





Poetry, the art of drawing with words

FREE VERSE

Poetry that doesn't follow any specific rhythm, rhyme pattern, or length.

Free verse may contain rhymes, but they are not used in a certain manner.

POEM OF THE WEEK

LAST RAINDROP

The first raindrop of the unexpected, falling on deaf ears, undetected. A whetting of the insatiable quench, the thirst until one becomes a drench. Lucid pools of freshness soothe footsore paths and fond walkways evaporation of memories in the warmth of the summer's rays. An umbrella deflects fine mists of spray, and a fresh breeze blows the tear droplets away. Animals lap the last reflections of spring, anticipating the showers the summer clouds will bring. The last raindrop falls from the brow. kissing smiling tears goodbye for now.

J Scott c 1986



MENTORING WRITERS A SUMMARY OF OUR YEAR IN PICTURES

American Debut Author
Maureen Edwards was
mentored by MW and
launched her book in
November 2020



Wonderful book
reviewed & edited
by MW for Claire
Donald during the
year.

It's been an interesting year for us all. Not only because of the worries about Covid but because of the side-effects of facing something we are just not used to. And yet throughout these frightening months I have found peoples resilience shining through - especially within the writing community. Where help has been wanting there have been friends and even strangers willing to support. And no matter how small their efforts it was all appreciated. Even through our sad times we have seen successes and so I say congratulations to those who have come through the year to reach this point. We will be writing about this for a long time; recalling both our sad and our happy times. All to be read sometime in the future when we hope the readers will admire our bravery and courage. Well done everyone. Keep writing.

Ann Brady

Super board book
reviewed & edited
by MW for Steve
Guinee during the
year.



Shevon Claire was
overall winner of the
Mentoring Writers
Writing Competition.
New book with all
winning stories due to
be launched shortly.



The Mentoring Writers Mentoring Prize given at
the Page Turners Awards was won by
Emily Macnevin and Peryn Roel
Congratulations

Having a quiet read helps rejuvenate your spirits and refresh your thought processes. Choose wisely where you do it?

PROSE IT'S ALL ABOUT THE WRITING ISN'T IT?



Today we look at what the critics say was poor writing in the successful book... 50 Shades of Grey

Ten years ago E.L. James published her series of 3 books titled 50 Shades of Grey to a mixed reception.

Today's regular readers will find this write up a bit of a departure from the norm. What we should remember, when discussing writing is that we often cover a lot of areas, from children's writing, myths, theology, philosophy, even down to fantasy literature. Fifty Shades of Grey is none of those.

Not even close.

And no, I haven't bought E.L. James' book, for reasons that will become evident.

As an Author and writing Mentor, though, I try to keep my eyes open to what goes on in the book world. It is hard not to be aware that one of the biggest bestsellers in history: is an erotic novel loosely conceived around the Twilight series. It found a voice of its own in the midst of the fantasy writing era. According to statistics, every woman on Earth has two copies. I've heard that five or six men have read it too. These true facts, combined with the release of the blockbuster film, means that 50 Shades is worth at least a little attention.

I borrowed a copy from one of those Earth women who felt that a single copy was one too many. She'd bought the book knowing little about it and decided to give it a read. Within a few pages this excellent reader knew it was not her kind of book, so she decided to throw it away - too embarrassed to sell or return it. Being me, I asked to borrow, what is the fastest selling softcover book. Ever.



My friend suggested the book was filled with bad writing, like awkward strings of infantile descriptions. Apparently others agree. One edgy reviewer took the time to count the repetitive, mind-numbing phrases, and I've added some of my own. "Oh My!" is popular with 79 occurrences, not surprising given the content, I suppose. "Crap" (101), "Holy [expletive/fake swear]" (172), or "Jeez" (82) are the most popular curse words, and "Gasp(s)" (45), "Whoa" (13), or "Sharp Intake of Breath" (4) are key to the characters' respiratory regimes. On every second page the character murmurs (207) or whispers (199), and they occasionally mutter (51). In an erotic novel it isn't astounding that "lips" is popular (71 times), but "Inner goddess" is surprisingly common (58) - betraying what must be a deep, feminist book. We see this depth also from the frequent use of "Subconscious" (82 occurrences). Fortunately, "medulla oblongata" and "yucky" are only used once, but the tall, dark, handsome stranger is thrice described as "yummy" (or "delicious" another three times).

This is high-end writing folks.

In the spirit of my intelligent, and embarrassed book-giver, I've kept her anonymous so she doesn't lose all literary credibility, plus the sarcastic-reviewer quoted above, I thought I would do my own open book experiment. So here are a few quotations I pulled almost at random.

I literally opened the book up at spots, put my finger to the page, and watched the flesh melt from the bone. When something struck me as exceptionally done, I did a quick digital search. I've decided to leave out the naughty bits—you can look it up on Wikipedia if you want more description about things that might be described in an erotic novel.

By the way "Wikipedia" appears twice in the book.

I'm afraid the experiment doesn't start well. This is what I saw when my eye first fell on the page.

He blows gently up the length of my sex (141).

Now, I'm not a medical doctor, but I'm pretty sure "sex" isn't a body part. I looked it up on Google (occurs 6 times in 50 Shades), and I'm right. Assuming I'd simply begun with a typo I began again:

In his bedroom, I hunt through a chest of drawers and find the hair dryer. Using my fingers, I dry my hair the best I can. When I've finished, I head into the bathroom.

I want to clean my teeth. I eye Christian's toothbrush. It would be like having him in my mouth. Hmm... Glancing guiltily over my shoulder at the door, I feel the bristles on the toothbrush. They are damp. He must have used it already. Grabbing it quickly, I squirt toothpaste on it and brush my teeth in double quick time. I feel so naughty. It's such a thrill (76-77).

Does anyone else find that more creepy than sexy? Sure, the character is creepy, but I mean the writing: these clipped inner thought phrases that move from minutia to the thrilling aspects of drying saliva on nylon bristles, and all in the context of a strange set of consequences. And if she did find the hair dryer, why does she need to dry her hair the best she can with her fingers? Why not do it perfectly with the hair dryer? Perhaps I've misunderstood what a hair dryer is for. And why does the guy have a hair dryer in his drawer-chest? Better still, how did she know it was there?

I could go on as there is the inner conversations not to mention the clichés. Overall, the book is a clatter of clichés. Oh, sorry, I could have done that better: a hodgepodge of clichés, a claptrap of clichés.... A potpourri, perhaps?

A mixed bag of clichés? See, Thesaurus.com can be very helpful to serious writers like you and me... and E.L. James!

Mind you, some of the overused word pictures are even more confusing, such as when James writes the “oversteps the mark” phrase. Perhaps that’s just a middle age British writer trying to sound like a 24 year old Seattle ditz, but the clichés wrench my literary sense. I could go on but enough is enough.

50 Shades of Grey is not just fantasy play, and it certainly isn’t some sort of conversion against inhibition. It is a glorification of the hierarchical, the self-driven, and self-fulfilling. It is everything that love is not, and everything that breaks love.

Now before you start thinking that I might be just a little bit jealous of E.L. James’ fame, or that I’m concerned no one will think I’m yummy, or delicious, or husky like a nut fudge Dairy Queen sundae... or whatever. Forget it.

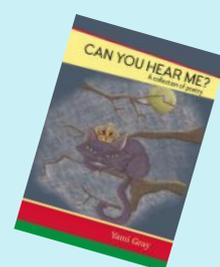
Will I keep the book, or just throw it away? Sorry to say I have already passed it on even though I was tempted to put it at the back of my bookshelf as a kind of sign. Seeing the silk grey tie on the cover was a way of telling me it is the symbol of that which threatens to stop short love’s breath. If there is too much credit given for a bad book, at the very least there are a list of 50 metaphors I’ll suggest other writers don’t use again. And at the heart of it, unlike the authors manuscripts I review typically, 50 Shades of Grey does not tell the truth. For me it is not a good book.

And I have to say my youngest daughter who bought all three in the set when they first came out agrees. She even told me she felt the writer had a real chip on her shoulder regarding what she truly felt about men and they way she treat them in the books. I think she could be right? Oh well, to each their own.



Kids4Kids.org.uk works with young writers up to the age of 17 years old. We help them through the writing journey and each year we offer one or more successful youngster the chance to published under the Kids4Kids Banner.

If you know a youngster interested in writing who wants to try and become a young author then get in touch with us.



Fantasy, Older Picture Book, Poetry

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Presented by
award winning
author and mentor
Ann Brady



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www.mentoringwriters.co.uk



Q&A WITH ANN BRADY



Ann Brady is an award winning author and mentor of over 30 years.

If you have any questions that you would like answering then please drop us an email and we will respond accordingly. We may also use the question in future editions of the Mentoring Writers Newsletter.

Q: Is there such a thing as too much backstory?

A: Backstory is the subtext of the main story. The deeper it is the deeper the subtext can be. So there really isn't such a thing as 'too much backstory.'

However, there is definitely such a thing as sharing too much backstory, within the main story. The best rule of thumb for knowing when and how much backstory to share is to try to refrain from sharing anything but hints about the backstory until the moment the reader absolutely needs to know in order for the main story to work and progress.

Q: Should I edit as I go?

A: As I'm sure you know, there are many opinions on whether writers should or should not edit as they go. Personally, I like to leave it until I have the first draft done. You could of course edit the previous days work allowing yourself to clean it up and to get back in the frame of mind to continue writing.

Q: I want to get my WIP critiqued, but am afraid somebody will steal my plot. How can I make sure it won't get stolen?

A: This is the most common concern for new writers but all your work is copyrighted to you as soon as you write it. So don't worry. You probably have more chance in being run over by a herd of buffalo than that happening to you!

CONTACT US

contact@mentoringwriters.co.uk
contact@kids4kids.org.uk
contact@ann-brady.co.uk

