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*Breaking through writer's block is like thinking out of the box: Both require an ability to imagine a world outside your four walls or rearranging them to get a better view.*



~Susan J. McIntire

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# The Written Word

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## Spring Conference 2023

The UPPAA Spring Conference is scheduled for June 10th, 2023 at the Peter White Public Library in Marquette, Michigan. Our keynote speaker will be poet Marty Achatz, He is an adjunct assistant professor at Northern Michigan University. He is also events coordinator at Peter White Public Library, has been the UP Poet Laureate twice, leads writing/poetry workshops, and was recently featured in a documentary about his interest in writing poetry about Bigfoot. His work has appeared in numerous poetry anthologies including most recently the award-winning *Superior Voyage* from the Marquette Poet's Circle (ed. by Rick Rastall).

### Conference sessions include:

Marty Achatz: Keynote

Terri Martin: Infusing humor into your stories

Tyler Tichelaar: Self-Publishing 101

Brandy Thomas: Getting started with audiobooks

Carrie Pearson: Working with an illustrator for children's books

Laura Smyth: Cover design

Amy McKay, Jessica Bays, and other panelists: Working with bookstores

The exact schedule will be posted in March 2023. Watch the UPPAA.org site or the UPPAA mailing list for forthcoming details. A hot lunch buffet is included for all attendees.

As always, **attendance is free to 2023 UPPAA members** in good standing. If you have yet to renew, please do so now at <https://www.uppaa.org/join-or-renew/>. Attendees are required to register in advance so that we can properly plan the lunch menu and space usage at the library. A link to do so will be announced in March 2023.

The Board is still in need of a volunteer Catering Coordinator to plan the menus, negotiate with vendors, and arrange delivery of the conference lunch.

# U.P. READER CONTENT CHOSEN

*Congratulations to the authors whose works will be included in the 2023 edition of the UP Reader:*

Sharon Kennedy: *Janet and Quale and Agnes*

Ellen Lord: *Memory Trails and Two Riders*

Deborah K. Frontiera: *The Giant Flower and Spring Haiku Trio*

Bill Sproule: *From Calumet to a Career in Hockey and Figure Skating*

Maria Mazetti Matson: *Michigan's Dogman*

Tamara Lauder: *Captive Spirit, The Wonder of Snow, and Expanding Horizons/Seeking Harmony*

Tyler Tichelaar: *Victorian Nightmare*

Emelie Lancour: *Worth Fighting For*

M. Kelly Peach: *Dying Autumn White and In Echoless Regions*

Richard Hill: *Best Seller, Robin's Nest, and White Knuckles/Black Wheels*

Roslyn McGrath: *Mail Order Ministry and Recipe*

Becky Ross Michael: *Shelf Life*

Julie Dickerson: *A Call in the Night, Lost and Here/House of Autism*

John Adamcik: *Michigamme Grades, Onward, Inward, Upward, Home, and Softer Echoes of a Frozen Roar*

Austin Whitney: *The Bottom of the Cider Barrel and Free in the Harbor*

Tricia Carr: *Final Irony*

t. kilgore splake: *soft forest symphony, we love it, and those who stayed*

Elizabeth Fust: *Astronautical: A Yooper Translates the Song of Space Whales*

Ninie Gaspariani Syarikin: *A Yooper Wonder in My Back Yard*

Mack Hassler: *Two Sonnets and History*

Donna Seawright Simmons: *Ghosts in the Calumet Theater*

Leigh Mills: *Vicarious Vacationer*

Raymond Luczak: *Bricks Across West Oak Street, Colonial Skateland, and Gogebic County Fairgrounds*

J.L. Hagen: *Two Bells*

Nina Craig: *The Frost Line*

Art Curtis: *Letters to Harrison: #11 Trout, Letters to Harrison: #32 The Fitz, and Letters to Harrison: #37 Birthday*

Brandy Thomas: *Way Leads to Way*

Kathleen Carlton Johnson: *Art Fair Summer and April in the U.P.*

Chris Kent: *Keepsakes*

Ben Bohnsack: *Massive and Dead Tree Standing*

Edd Tury: *In Camp*

Allan Koski: *The Gift*

## This Year's U.P. Notable Classics

The U.P. Notable Books Committee continues their initiative called *U.P. Notable Classics* that highlights significant U.P. themed literature that has remained essential for at least 10 years. It is the committee's hope that these books can bring enjoyment to a new generation of readers.

*Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers: Folk Traditions of Michigan's Upper Peninsula* by Richard M. Dorson (University of Wisconsin Press, 2008)

*Ice Hunter: a Woods Cop Mystery* by Joseph Heywood (2nd Ed; Lyons Press, 2008)

The U.P. Notable Books List will appear in the upcoming 7th volume of *U.P. Reader*, UPPAA's own annual literary anthology featuring short stories, poetry, and essays by its members. This successful publication helps spread the word about the organization, raises money for educational programming and encourages people in the Upper Peninsula and beyond to read U.P. writers. Complimentary copies of the *U.P. Reader* are available to all U.P. educators and media for the asking. The on-sale date is scheduled for April 15th. Consult your local bookseller for availability or purchase at Amazon. For more information, visit [www.UPReader.org](http://www.UPReader.org).

## U.P. Notable Books Announced

UPPAA announced the 4th Annual U.P. Notable Books List on January 3rd 2023. UPPAA Notable Books chairman Mikel Classen initiated the effort in 2019 as a response to the lack of representation of U.P. writers in other Michigan state literary circles. Classen said, “Traditionally, recognition of Michigan books has been dominated by the university presses downstate and we would like to take this opportunity to highlight literature that focuses closer to home for us.”

To build this fourth annual list, UPPAA consulted with Upper Michigan booksellers, book reviewers, writers, and publishers to winnow down the notable books to a bare ten titles. These titles demonstrate the wide reach of U.P. literature as they span juvenile, middle-grade, YA, and adult audiences. You can find reviews of many of these books on the UP Book Review. The award committee emphasizes that the list is unranked, each title deserves equal merit as U.P. Notable Book. These ten books have been deemed essential reading for every U.P. lover, and we highly recommend you ask your local librarian or booksellers for them today!

*The Big Island; a Story of Isle Royale* – Julian May and John Schoenherr (UMN Press reprints, 2022)

*North of Nelson: Stories of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula* – Hilton Everett Moore (Silver Mountain Press, 2022)

*We Kept Our Towns Going: The Gossard Girls of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula* – Phyllis Michael Wong (MSU Press, 2022)

*Dissecting Anatomy of a Murder* – Eugene Milhizer (Ave Maria School of Law Press, 2019)

*Shipwrecked and Rescued, Cars and Crew: The City of Bangor* – Larry Jorgensen (Fresh Ink Group, 2022)

*Dorothy is Moving Mountains, a True Story* – Dorothy Paad and Matthew Forgrave (DEPBooks 2022)

*The Biting Cold* – Matthew Hellman (Beacon Publishing Group, 2022)

*Superior Voyage* anthology – Marquette Poetry Circle (self-published, 2022)

*Empire Mine - Cascade Range: Michigan’s Largest Iron Mine* – Allan Koski (self-published, 2022)

*Cady and the Birchbark Box: A Cady Whirlwind Thunder Mystery* – Ann Dallman (Modern History Press)

## WEBMASTER WANTED

The election of Board members for the 2023 - 2025 term is coming up quickly. This will happen in the month of April 2023. The Board is seeking a new webmaster, as we are shifting board member roles around in 2023. As far as “technical requirements”, the ideal candidate would be familiar with basic WordPress operations such as adding pages and posts, linking pages together, and working with a few plug-ins we already have in use.

All our Board positions, including webmaster, are voting positions so you would have an opportunity to shape the future direction of the organization. You would attend approximately 5 meetings a year which are held on the 1st Thursday of meeting months at 7pm Eastern and are capped at one hour.

If interested, please write to [president@uppaa.org](mailto:president@uppaa.org) and be sure to include a list of websites you have previously managed.

The Webmaster’s duties include:

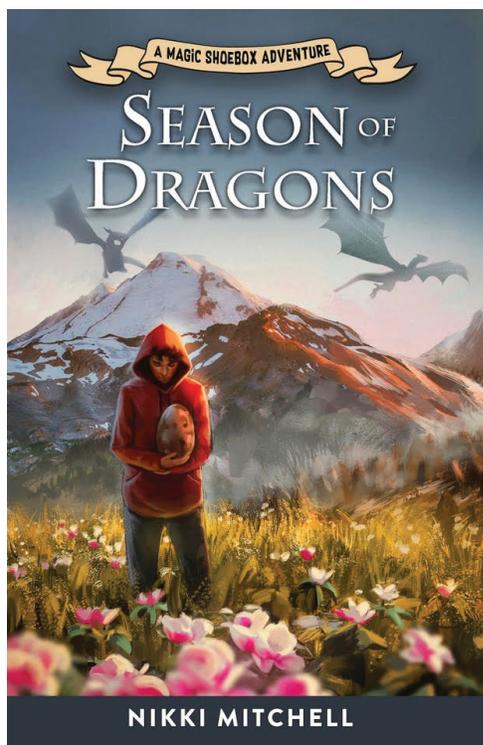
Managing submissions for [www.UPPAA.org](http://www.UPPAA.org), including new book announcements, author events, and listings of resources.

Managing social media accounts such as Twitter and the UPPAA Facebook pages.

Sharing management of the online discussion group with the Membership Secretary.

## Member News

**Nikki Mitchell** has a new book releasing February 18! *Season of Dragons* is book 1 in The Magic Shoebox Adventures.



Synopsis: What would you do if you found a dragon egg at your bus stop?

Ichabod Surname never imagined he'd be spending a Friday afternoon cross-country skiing with a grandma dragon—but that's exactly what happens when he finds a giant egg on the way to school.

For as long as he can remember, he has been at war with his siblings because he thinks outside of the box. He stays invisible at home and school, but for the first time in his life, he may be the key to restoring the weather and happiness in the village of Hasir.

Can Ichabod and Gran fix what has gone awry and end the sibling war before Ichabod's science teacher notices he is gone?

The Magic Shoebox Adventure books feature:

- Easy-to-read chapters for all readers
- ADHD representation
- Fun adventure for the whole family

New from **Bill Sproule** is the book *Michigan Tech Football: The First 100 Years*.

Synopsis: Football is a special part of Michigan Tech history. Michigan Mining School students played local high school and community teams in the 1890s, but it was not until 1920 that a club team played another college when it scheduled two games against Northern State Normal (now Northern Michigan University). That season marked the start of intercollegiate football, and then prior to the 1924 season, football was “officially” recognized as a varsity sport. The book explores Tech football history, teams, coaches, players, awards, and records, and will bring back many memories of Husky football.



## Upcoming UP Book Review Books

Here's a list of upcoming reviews. Many thanks to the UP Book Review team who have done an outstanding job this year! We have exceeded our goal of three books reviewed per month and most months we hit four books per month. That is an amazing statistic for a group this size. In total, more than 120 books have been reviewed in about three years.

Given all that, we can hardly keep up with the flow of U.P. literature coming in the door. If you love writing about books, consider joining the review team. Contact victor@LHPress.com for details.

Visit <https://upbookreview.com> and click on Subscribe so you never miss a review.



*Lightness of being* (poems), by t. kilgore splake (01/01/2023)

*The Biting Cold* by Matthew Hellman (01/10/2023)

*Granite Oath* by James M. Jackson (01/15/2023)

*The Dockporter* by Dave McVeigh and Jim Bolone (01/20/2023)

*High on the Vine: Featuring Yooper Entrepreneurs Tami and Evi Maki* by Terri Martin (02/01/2023)

*A Quiet Foghorn: more notes form a deaf gay life* by Raymond Luczak (02/10/2023)

*The Wonderful Friendship* by David Swindell (02/15/2023)

*Digging Up the Truth and Other Big Bay Stories* by Faye Bowers (02/20/2023)

*The Wicked Sister* by Karen Donne (03/01/2023)

*Architectural Missionary: Fred Charlton in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, 1887-1918* by Steven C. Brisson (03/10/2023)

*Twenty Stories* by Jack Driscoll (03/20/2023)

Books which are reviewed on UPBookReview.com may be referred by us to the U.P. Notable Books Committee for consideration. Some books sent to UP Book Review will be reviewed in *Marquette Monthly*.

**Didn't see your book here?** Submit two paperback copies of books published in 2021, 2022, or 2023 to

U.P. Book Review  
5145 Pontiac Trail  
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

# Waterproof White: Language and Poetry

By Kathleen Carlton Johnson

*Ed Note: This is the first installment of a series on writing poetry for both novice and experienced poets. We hope this will inspire you to keep writing.*

The human person speaks in many ways: hand gestures, body language, written thoughts, eye contact, and often attitude, and, of course, verbal communication. The vehicle we use, however, when meeting others is a verbal salutation that expresses what we are thinking or asking or dreaming. We often do not really think out this communication; it comes very naturally.

However, for writers, language is the common currency of written thought. It sits alone on the white page. Language becomes the magical offering of what we are thinking. Others will receive our message and, sharing our culture and language experience, realize what we are transmitting and find it valuable. That in a nutshell is what communication is. Sending out a message and receiving feedback from another person who shares a common language and can decide what you are sending and give you feedback, completing the communication process. This may be between two people or a work of art, book, poem, painting, musical score, etc.

All art is about sending out communication. Poetry is the closest thing in the written word realm that is purely about language. Yes, I realize there are similes and metaphors, images and special constructions for the poetic language to hang on, but basically the most important element of a poem, indeed any written art form, is language.

Language can parrot the local dialect; it can be abrasive or uplifting; it all depends on what we want to communicate in our poem. It is a critical factor. The language we choose for our poem must not only communicate but it must direct the thought you are projecting to your reader.

One of the mistakes I have seen in scoring poems for publication is the lack of vocabulary to send a memorable message. It could also be inappropriate words to express what your message is about. It could be that the poet has a small and basic pool of words to express what they want to say. Most often in what I have read in poems wanting to be published, this is the case. Language poverty, I call it.

Language is a collection of words we use to express our greetings, thoughts, abstract values. Poems are creations that we send out as artistic communications. The language we use is tricky. The words must not only hold our thoughts, but also use language that can communicate with others. There is an underlying drawback here. If the language is too common or ordinary, the receiver of the poem may dismiss it. The challenge is to send out a thought in our poem by using a variety of words and images while at the same time connecting to the universal or common human experience. Not an easy task.

My suggestion to all poets and writers is: if poetry or indeed writing are of interest to you, start collecting WORDS, listen closely to local dialogue, listen for new ways to say things. Sharpen your eye and ear to the verbal and written images around you. All writers and poets are also readers. Read as much as you can; start with any of the classics. First, use your library to focus your interests, searching the library for books you may like or want to read. Second, the quiet found in the library time is necessary for creative work. No, it does not need be a library, but find some special place where you are free of distractions and can allow your inner self to direct your creative prompts.

I suggest the following books, which you can find at most libraries to further your poetic journeys. *The Poets Companion*, by Addonizio and Laux, Norton, 1997. Also excellent is *The Discovery of Poetry*, by Frances Mayes. Harcourt, 2001.

# Overcoming Writers' Block

By Sharon Kennedy

*Ed. Note: this is the first of a series of articles on the process of writing and how you can write more effectively and more often. We hope you find these articles inspirational. If you would like a specific topic to be addressed in the future please write to Sharon Kennedy <sharonkennedy1947@gmail.com>*

At one time or another, every writer hits a wall we call “writers’ block.” It took me awhile to realize it wasn’t so much a “block” as it was a detour. If I was having a difficult time deciding what to write, it dawned on me it was because I was on the wrong block and I needed a detour. In other words, I was forcing a character to say or do something that should have been expressed or done by someone else. Once I put the words or actions where they belonged, the block was gone. The same is true when I’m using the wrong point-of-view. If you haven’t already discovered these simple detours, you’ll be pleasantly surprised at how quickly your “block” will disappear.

However, if I’ve given a different character the words or action and I’ve changed the POV and I’m still having trouble, I put the story aside for a few days and mull it over. Often I decide the stumbling block occurred because the scene wasn’t necessary. Once ditched, the block was removed. This can be a painful experience especially for novice writers who treat their words as if they were precious infants.

Mature writers know it’s better to slay the beautiful, albeit destructive scene, than struggle with it for days until it defeats us. Readers know when a scene is forced and unnatural. If it doesn’t ring true, we’ve lost their trust. When that happens, they’re likely to put down our book in favor of a writer they know won’t lie to them.

Because I work under deadlines and submit a 585-word newspaper column twice a week to my Gannett Media editor, I don’t have time to devote to writers’ block. I have to be merciless in chopping irrelevant or redundant scenes so they “flow” for readers. I use this tactic when writing stories. No matter how much I love what I’ve written, if it

doesn’t make sense or it’s inappropriate for a particular scene, it must go. It’s okay to set it aside for future use in another novel, short story, or even a poem where it would be welcomed.

As writers, we have the wonderful ability to knock off or add characters, rearrange scenes, develop complex but believable plots, and surprise readers with clever or unexpected outcomes. If we’re aware that a block is just a detour, not an impenetrable cement wall, and if we stop fighting it, the words will come. Why? Because it’s our characters that lead us and tell us where they want to go and how to get there. If we listen to them and put our ego aside, we’ll be rewarded with writing that readers will embrace. And that’s something we all desire.



# Back to Basics: Book Review Tips and Tricks

By Victor R. Volkman

*Ed. Note: Each installment of BACK TO BASICS will give members a chance to take a fresh look at something they may already be doing in a new way. Brand new writers and authors can also be guided by advice from the guests who contribute to this column. If you have something to share, contact editor@uppa.org.*

A lot of things have changed since you had to stand up in Ms. Maki's fifth-grade class and deliver an oral "book report" to the class. The average person, if asked to write a book review, will basically deliver a plot recitation and little else. Unfortunately, a review that is just a synopsis or summary doesn't really interest potential readers and at worst, can simply spoil the plot entirely. There is actually an art to writing a great book review; much of it comes through simply doing them but I have a few hard-earned lessons to pass on from three decades of writing reviews for business and pleasure.

*Why write reviews at all?* There are many types of print and online publications that are in need of content, including perhaps your own blog or newsletter. Every time an author incorporates your review into their publicity, it's another mention of your name and what you wish to be known for (in your "credit line"). A more important reason is that it deepens your understanding of what makes literature great and not-so-great. You will grow as a writer by reading other authors and commenting on their work, I guarantee! The remainder of this article shows you what we strive for at UP Book Review, and you are invited to use it in your own personal reviews.

In order to help with consistency of reviews at UP Book Review, I've created something

of a "Checklist" to see whether your fiction review is complete or not before you submit them to UP Book Review. In no particular order:

Basic setup -- what is the situation when the story opens? Introduce a few characters and the problems they face, mention when it is set (present day, 19th century, etc.). Where is it set? (a fictional or real town, etc.)

Three things you liked about the book

One thing you didn't like about the book

What other book, movie, story did the book remind you of? (any aspect including characters, plot, setting)

Relate something about the book to your own life (e.g. setting, people you knew growing up, locations you have visited, situations you were stuck in)

If there is any U.P. content, try to keep a list of real-life towns, businesses, natural places mentioned in the text while you read it.

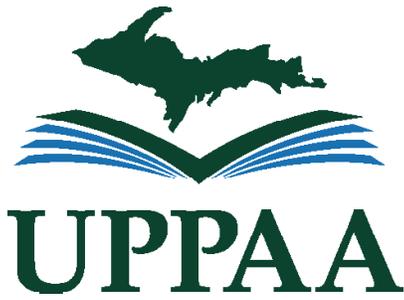
Themes: what are 1 or 2 important themes (e.g. "The importance of relying on family", "being honest", "staying true to your goals", whatever you think it is)

Mention the author's hometown and how this book might relate to other titles they have written.

Pull quotes for the author: "I recommend this book for \_\_\_\_\_ because of its \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_."

Like anything else, the craft of review writing takes practice, and you'll get better with each one if you hew to these basic precepts. It's not an exhaustive list but will produce a satisfying result if respected.

“  
**I recommend  
this book for \_\_\_\_\_  
because of its...**  
”



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