



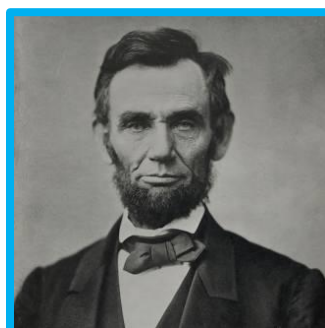
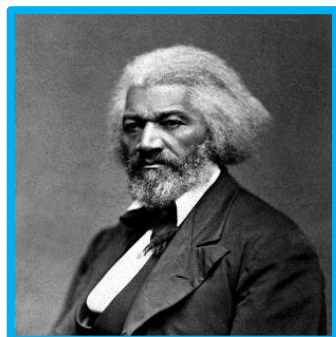
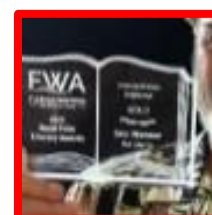
November 2023

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**RPLA Winners
See Page 8**



Message from Your Newsletter Editor

[Larry Martin](mailto:drlarry437@gmail.com)
drlarry437@gmail.com



We have a new Newsletter Editor, starting in 2024: Penny Thomas. Her bio is on [page 5](#). If you have ideas or contributions for the newsletter, please email Penny at pt0647@gmail.com. In addition to the newsletter editor, 2024 will see other changes, including a new slate of officers.

And...some new equipment. Your board has purchased a new microphone and sound system, so we won't have to rely on the often-not-working-well microphones at the rec center and B&N.

This issue continues the tradition of pictures and text about our members, five of whom won Royal Palm Literary awards at the recent Florida Writers Association annual convention (see page 8).

In addition to all the pictures, this issue contains a lot of words – over 5100! A large number for a club newsletter but we are, after all, a “writers” club. (I don't expect my ukulele club to put out 5000 words for its newsletter.) Also, a third of these words are in the Appendix, which as its name implies, is optional, an addition, for reference or general interest.

This month's Appendix is about learning to write without a formal education. It focuses on Frederick Douglass, the 19th century ex-slave who, largely self-taught, became a noted orator and author of three autobiographies. How did he do it? Do you need a formal education to become a writer? [See pages 14-17](#).

Upcoming Activities

November 2023

Thursday, Nov 2, 6:30-8:30 pm -- Wine and Words, Riverbend Rec Center, 6:30-8:30 pm;
book presentations by Barbara Welsh and Fran Szarnicki

Saturday, Nov 4, 2 pm – B&N Kick-off for fourth quarter, second group of 6 authors
for the quarter, Lake Sumter Landing

Wednesday, Nov 8, 9-11 am – WLOV General Meeting, Laurel Manor Rec Center,
Presentation: Meet Your Character, organized by Paula Howard

Tuesday, Nov 14, 11 am-2 pm - All Booked Up book signings, Colony Plaza

Saturday, Nov 18, 11 am-2 pm - Wildwood Antique Mall book signing: Bill Hade and Scott Ives

Tuesday, Nov 28, 2-3:30 pm – Expo24 Training Session for exhibitors: How to best present
yourself and your books. Laurel Manor Rec Center, Jefferson/Washington Rooms.
Instructors: Paula Howard and Chris Cooper

Message from your President

By Frank Lancione, flancione@verizon.net

AI and Deepfake Scams



At the WLOV August monthly meeting, I did a presentation on Artificial Intelligence that included an analysis of issues in the Hollywood Writers Guild strike. AI has developed to the point that it can produce facsimiles of actors and writers are so realistic that they are virtually impossible to distinguish from the real thing. Little did I know that I, myself, would be the target of a deepfake incident. It happened just the other day and it's a cautionary tale for all of us in WLOV.

On an otherwise ordinary day, my email inbox suddenly started filling up with messages from friends saying: "Did you send this message?" On October 31st, they had received a message with the subject line: Writers League of The Villages, from "Frank A. Lancione" with return email barbara@assessoriamoll.com.

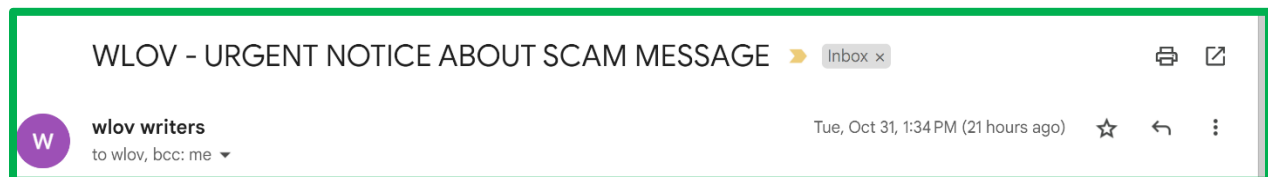
Note that while my name is on the "from" line, the mail account that recipients were to respond to is *not* my email. Adding to the ruse was the fact that the salutation contained the recipient's first name, for example: Dear Nancy. Finally, the signature line was my name and title: Frank A. Lancione, President.

The content of the message was the frequently-used scam of citing a worthwhile cause and asking the recipient to support it by sending gift cards. Usually when this fraud occurs, the scammer has hacked into someone's account and sent e-mails to that person's address book. I immediately changed my password and checked with Verizon, my email provider.

It turns out I had not been hacked. That's what makes this so sinister a situation. In the new world of AI, you don't have to be hacked to be spoofed.

Somehow, the scammers got access to our club's WLOV e-mail list. Here's where AI-type smart tools kick in. The scammers developed a very sophisticated program that could handle all of the variations required to harvest the first names of recipients associated with their email addresses and paste that into the salutation line of their phishing email. They then simply inserted my name into the tag that was associated with their email address and into the text of their message. Voila! A highly convincing deepfake message that looks like it came from me and went out to scores of WLOV members.

As soon as I became aware that a scam had occurred, the WLOV Board put out a notice to all club members warning them to ignore the false message, under this headline.



But the damage had been done. The danger of having people misuse our mailing list is that it compromises our ability to communicate with members. No one will want to open messages from WLOV, if they have to be concerned it's possibly a phishing hoax.

This past spring we had an unauthorized use of our e-mail list by a member that exposed the individual addresses of all our membership. That's over two hundred personal e-mail addresses sent out to over two hundred people -- a huge treasure trove of confidential information sitting out there in people's inboxes that a scammer can use to perpetrate fraud. We have redoubled our efforts to control who can access and use the WLOV writers mailing list. We have also added provisions to our bylaws clearly prohibiting unauthorized use of our mailing list and consequences for doing so.

The bottom line for all of us is that we need to be especially cautious in this era of deepfakes. You don't have to be hacked to be spoofed. If you get an email from flancione@verizon.net, it came from my account. If you see my name, but another email listed as sender, it didn't come from me. Likewise, if you get an e-mail from wlovwriters@gmail.com we are doing everything possible to make sure you can be confident it has been authorized by our WLOV Board and you can safely open it.

AI has tremendous potential to make significant contributions to humankind. But, as with all powerful tools, we need protect ourselves from unscrupulous people who can misuse such tools. AI has ratcheted up the options for deepfake scammers!

SHARING A LITTLE SUNSHINE

Know of a member recuperating from surgery, down with the flu, suffering from the loss of loved one – or facing some other traumatic event? Please contact us at wlovwriters@gmail.com and share the member's name and situation. We'll forward the information to Our Sunshine Committee chair, Kathy deMaCarty, who will send them a card with a caring message to show WLOV's support.



New WLOV Newsletter Editor Starting 2024

Meet Penny Thomas

By Penny Thomas, pt0647@gmail.com.



When I was an infant in Cardiff, Wales, my father took a job in Cairo, Egypt. Civil unrest, due to the overthrow of King Farouk, made us move to Oporto, Portugal. Then in 1954, Dad got a position with the United Nations in Beirut, Lebanon. I attended one of the many international schools and a year of college there before going to London to continue my studies.

I returned to Beirut in 1971 with a degree in cartography and photogrammetry and worked as a cartographer in Lebanon until 1976 when the Lebanese Civil War made it too dangerous to stay.

My American husband and I moved to Sharjah, The United Arab Emirates. There I worked as a cartographer and office manager of a charter airline company.

In 1980 I took a one-year position with the United Nations, in New York City. After the UN, I stayed in New York and worked in various industries – special events (Operation Sail 1986), museums, package design, a hospital, and lastly, an international investment banking firm. I was, at different times, executive secretary, administrative assistant, and office manager. While working full-time, I returned to college and graduated from Pace University, New York, with a bachelor of science degree. I also became a proud American citizen.

One of my tasks as a cartographer was to take aerial photographs, and this involved flying in small aircraft. I loved it. Sadly, I failed my pilot's license because of my eyesight. However, I flew right-seat (that means as a co-pilot/passenger) across Africa, from Dakar, Senegal, to the Red Sea at Sudan, then up through Saudi Arabia and Jordan to Lebanon. (photo is one of the planes I flew across Africa in, a Dehavallind Beaver). I also flew right-seat across the USA, east-west, and north-south many times, all in single-engine aircraft.



In 2013, tired of the winters in the Northeast, I wanted year-round warmth. Friends told me of The Villages, so moved here and have never regretted it. I also sadly stopped flying and left general aviation life behind. But it lives on in my writing. During my thirty-three years of corporate life in New York City, I pursued my love of the written word. I attended many writing classes and groups in the Greater New York Area until I got up the courage to apply to Seton Hill University in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, to study for a Master of Fine Arts in Writing Popular Fiction.

My M.F.A. thesis was an aviation mystery novel, and it won the 2014 Mystery Writers of America, Florida Chapter's Freddie Award for Writing Excellence. This manuscript is now in the process of publication. I am currently working on a second novel, my memoir, and playing

around with poetry. However, a lot of my writing time is given over to creating and giving talks to many of The Villages clubs on a multitude of topics, including “The Mystery of Mystery Writing”; “The Death of Cash”; “The ‘Why’ of Brexit”; “What is An American?”; and several others.

Over the years I have written and produced a few newsletters for various organizations such as; a chapter of the Experimental Aviation Association; Operation Sail 1986; a maritime museum; and a vitamin doctor. When Larry Martin announced his retirement from editing WLOV’s newsletter, I thought the challenge of keeping *Quill de Ville* in production was something I’d like to do. I hope I live up to Larry’s high standards as WLOV Newsletter Editor starting in 2024.

Expo24 - Update

By Rita Boehm

Countdown to Expo! It’s hard to believe, but BookExpo2024 is right around the corner. **JANUARY 28, 2024**, Eisenhower Rec Center. During the next couple of months, the pace of activity will increase exponentially. Below is information on two training sessions for exhibitors.



- **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28th** from 2 – 3:30 p.m. **LOOK SHARP – SELL BOOKS:** Do Both at Book Expo.
How to best present yourself and your books. Location: Laurel Manor Rec Center, Jefferson/Washington Rooms
Instructors: Paula Howard and Chris Cooper
- **WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6 TH** from 2:00 - 3:30. **BOOK PROMOTION:** Before, During and After Expo. Location Laurel Manor - Jefferson/Washington Rooms
Instructor: Mark Newhouse

General Information re: Marketing

Marketing is key to a successful Expo. BookExpo bookmarks and signs will be available at our general meetings, or by contacting me at wlovwriters@gmail.com. Please hand out Expo bookmarks at your church, clubs, neighbor events, doctor’s office, dancing at the town squares – in other words, EVERYWHERE you go.

One enterprising member used to slide them into her neighbor’s newspapers as she took her morning walk.

Organized marketing: Business Outreach - We are organizing a committee of folks to visit businesses in The Villages and surrounding communities in the late December/early January timeframe. If you haven’t already signed up to help and would like to be added to the list, please contact me at wlovwriters@gmail.com.

PUBLICITY. Advertisements will be placed in the Daily Sun and the event will be publicized on WVLG radio. Exhibitors from outside The Villages have agreed to request coverage in their local media. Please send out announcements via your social media feeds.

EVENT SPEAKERS: Tell your friends! Our excellent speakers are part of the strategy to bring people to the event.

- Dr. Donald P. Wyman, Army veteran and retiree of 22 years in the CIA, will present a talk on THE JFK ASSASSINATION: WHY IT HAD TO HAPPEN. Dr. Wyman will present many facts previously unknown about this 60 year-old assassination. In addition to being an Enrichment Academy speaker, Dr. Wyman is a frequent cruise ship speaker, presenting a variety of talks. He will be featured on an upcoming transatlantic Viking Ocean Cruise. Check out his website: www.donwymanpresents.com.
- Patricia Charpentier, owner of the company, Writing Your life, regularly teaches well-attended Enrichment Academy courses designed to help people compile their memories so they can share them with their families—and the larger world. She will offer hints and tips on WRITING YOUR LIFE STORIES. Check out her website: <https://writingyourlife.org>.

TABLE ASSIGNMENTS: Exhibitors will be provided with room/table assignments in mid/late December.

All Booked Up for November and December

Coordinator: Bill Pullen, billanita@att.net

Julie Feingold - “The Angel Who Could Not Sleep”
 Dan Kincaid - “A Gift to the Nation”
 Steve Burt - “New England Christmas Sampler”
 Mark Newhouse - “Dreidel Dog”
 Peggy Best - “The Reason for the Season”
 Barbara Walz - “Merry Christmas Everywhere”

Schedule for book signings at All Booked Up:

Tuesday November 14, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Mark Newhouse
 Julie Feingold
 Chris Tolos

Tuesday, December 12, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Peggy Best
 Dan Kincaid
 Barb Walz



RPLA Winners in WLOV

On Saturday, October 21st, 2023, the prestigious Royal Palm Literary Awards (RPLA) were announced at a well-attended banquet in Orlando. Hosted annually by the Florida Writers Association (FWA), RPLA is a highly regarded writing competition that celebrates excellence in writing across more than 20 genre categories for adults and 5 for youth.

The Royal Palm Literary Awards stand as a pinnacle of achievement in the writing community, offering a platform for writers to showcase their literary works and gain valuable recognition. With a rigorous judging process, RPLA provides all entrants with constructive and insightful written assessments, fostering growth and development within the writing community. Winners represent the best of the best, demonstrating an exceptional level of creativity, storytelling, and craft. The following Writers League of The Villages members received awards. (For a complete list of all winners, go to https://fwa.memberclicks.net/assets/RPLA/2023_Royal_Palm_Literary_Awards.pdf)

Pictured L to R:

Eric (Doc) Honour, Gold, NOT LIKE US, Science Fiction

John Mallon, Gold, MARQUIS JAMES: A BIOGRAPHER'S LIFE,

Unpublished General category; John's book was also a runner-up for Unpublished Book of the Year

Keith Abbott, Silver, THE SPILL, Unpublished blended genre

Rita Boehm, Silver, THE PRICE OF REVENGE, suspense/thriller

**Manijeh Badiozamani, Silver, A YEAR IN MIDDLE AMERICA:
A MEMOIR IN AEROGRAMS**



Barnes and Noble Kick-off, October 14, 2023

Six of the 12 authors for 4th quarter, L to R, from the top:

Ann Marie Acacio, *Rise and Shine*

Chris Coward, *Perpendicular Women*

Book rack in B&N for WLOV Authors

Robert Firster, *Flight of the Golden Dragon*

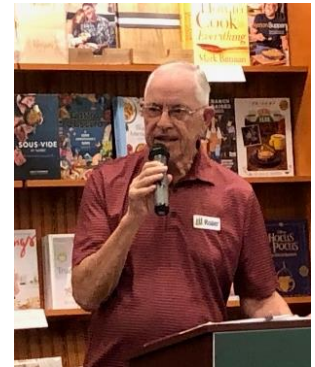
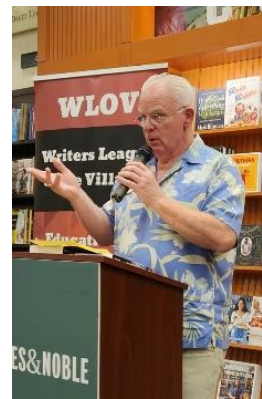
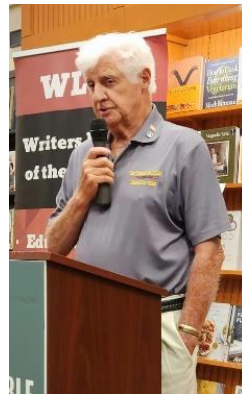
Dave McKeon, *Relentless Pursuit*

Roger Neff, *Seven Colorful Cats*

Barbara Walz, *Merry Christmas Everywhere*

Photo of audience on Oct 14

NEXT 6 authors: Saturday, Nov 4th, 2 pm



Turned down by publishers? You are not alone.

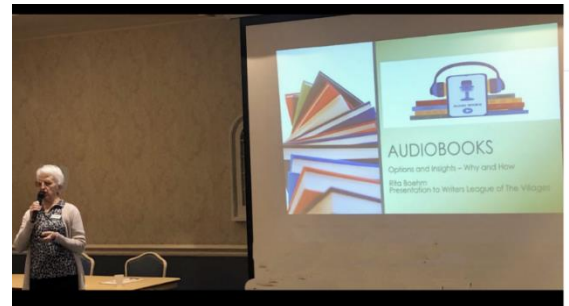


October 11, 2023 – General Meeting

AUDIOBOOKS: OPTIONS and INSIGHTS

By Rita Boehm

If you missed the detailed Audiobook presentation at our October general meeting, the full presentation is available on our website: www.writersleagueofthevillages.com. Here's a summary of the key points.



Why create an audiobook? Because that's where the customers are. The global audiobook market size was valued at \$5.3 billion in 2022 – with a 24.7% compound growth rate anticipated between 2023-2030.

How do I create an audiobook? There are 3 major options:

- 1) Record your own
- 2) Pay for production
- 3) Use a “Done For You” Audiobook Publishing Company (many pitfalls with this approach.)

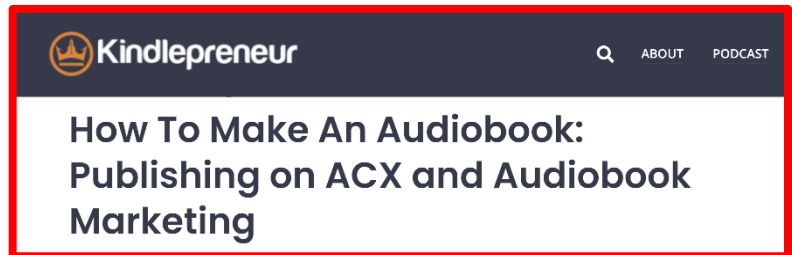
Here I'll focus on options 1 and 2.

- Option 1 – Record your own: Unless you are tech savvy, have excellent equipment, have TONS of time, and have an ‘actor’ quality voice, this might not be the best option.
- Option 2 – Pay for Production: This is the route most folks take. Hire a narrator/producer either through ACX (the Amazon company that created the specifications for audiobooks), Fiverr.com, Findaway Voices, or other sources. Upload a short script that allows the narrator to effectively cover the range of emotions and voices you'd like to hear. Candidates will submit audition recordings for you to select from.

What does it cost? That depends on the length of your book – and the experience level of your narrator. Narrators generally charge a “Fixed Production Hour (FPH)” rate of between \$100 - \$400. An experienced narrator will charge between \$200 and \$400 per FPH. For a 40,000-word novella, you can expect to pay between \$450 and \$1350. If your book is over 100,000 words, expect to pay between \$1100 and \$3300. Here's a chart that breaks down the cost.

FINISHED PRODUCT: You'll have an opportunity to review the book by chapters as it's being produced. Before it's released, you'll have to create and upload an audiobook cover (square format instead of rectangle). Usually the narrator's name is included on the cover. Your narrator will usually handle uploading the book to Audible/ACX – or other platforms that you may choose.

Good luck with your audiobook journey! For more detailed information, view some of the free videos and presentations by folks like Dave Chesson of Kindlepreneur. Check out: <https://kindlepreneur.com/how-to-make-an-audiobook>.



WLOV Book Promotion Opportunities

By Rita Boehm

Great news! After a number of months without the Daily Sun's weekly Author Spotlight column, our local authors are once again getting some much deserved publicity. I met with the person who was recently hired to write the column. She's excited about supporting local authors – and looks forward to getting engaged with WLOV. We discussed a variety of new ideas. She's got quite a backlog to work through, but I'll continue to forward information about our members' new books. Our promotional events continue at a fast pace.

- **Barnes & Noble:** The kick-off event for six of our 12 featured Q4 authors will be on Saturday, November 4th from 2:00 – 3:00 at Lake Sumter Landing store. Steve Camp, Jack Davis, Julie Feingold, Martha Geaney, Nancy Pflum, and TJ Trapp will be presenting. These are always fun events with standong-room-only crowds. Please join us.

- **All Booked Up:** Our next book signing at the store will be on Tuesday, November 14th from 11:00 – 2:00. Mark Newhouse, Julie Feingold and Chris Tolos, If you'd like to be part of a future All Booked Up event and are not currently on Bill's list, please contact Bill Pullen at billanita@att.net.

- **Wildwood Antique Mall:** On November 18th from 11:00 – 2:00, Bill Hade and Scott Ives will be signing books at this location. If you'd like to be a part of a future event at the Antique Mall, please contact Tom LaBaugh at tom@labaugh.com.

- **Wine & Words:** Riverbend Rec Center, 1st Thursday of the month, 6:30 – 8:30 pm.
Coordinator: Frank Lancione, flancione@verizon.net

On the first Thursday of every month, Frank interviews two authors who then have an opportunity to address a friendly group of fellow writers and book lovers. Contact Frank if you are interested in being part of this fun event.

- **Village Neighbors Magazine – Writing Bug Column**

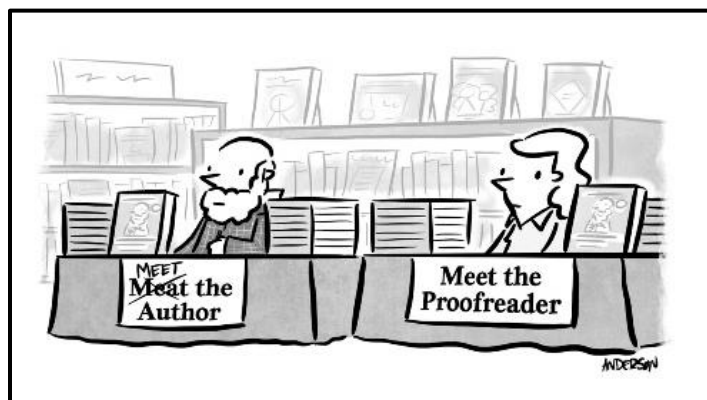
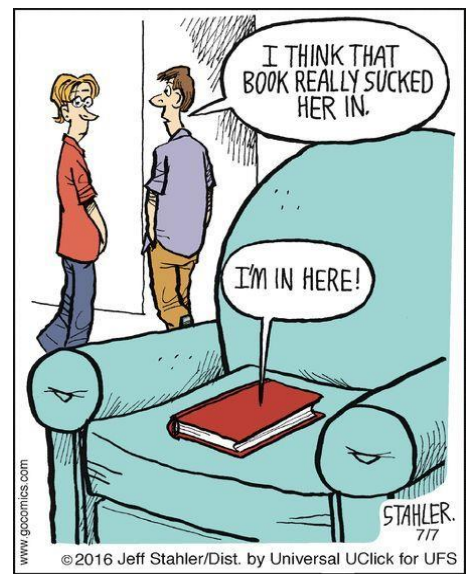
Coordinator – Mark Newhouse, mark@newhouse.net. Contact Mark to learn how you and your book(s) can be featured in his monthly column.

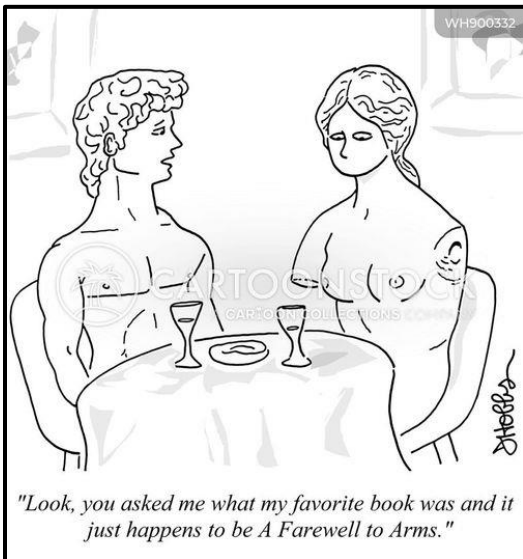
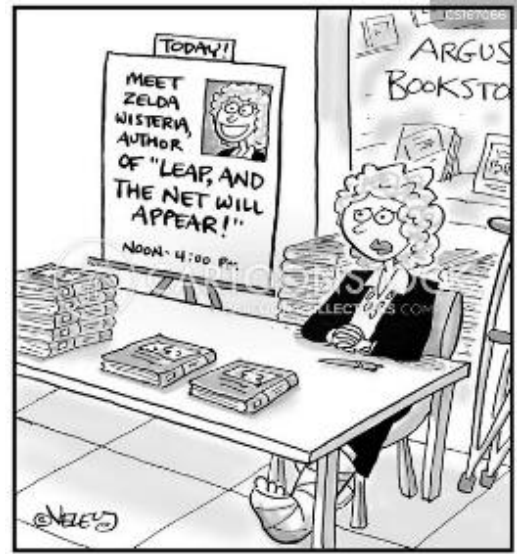
- **The Villages Magazine – Author Spotlight Column**

Coordinator: Francesca Boroden, franceboroden@gmail.com




We will send out request for new submissions next spring.

Cartoons





Shakespeare spoilers

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Hamlet</p>  <p>everyone dies</p> | <p>Macbeth</p>  <p>everyone dies</p> | <p>King Lear</p>  <p>everyone dies</p> |
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wranghands1.wordpress.com

Appendix

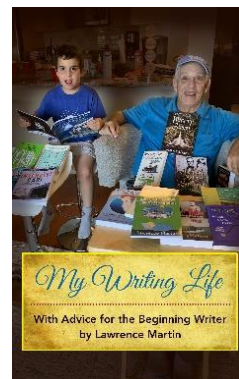
Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln

Do you need a formal education to become a great writer?

Adapted from *My Writing Life: With Advice for the Beginning Writer*

By Lawrence Martin

www.lakesidepress.com/MyWritingLife.pdf/



The question in the subtitle is rarely asked, because today virtually all published writers have had some formal education beyond high school. But that was not the case in the 19th century, and there are no better examples than two Civil War contemporaries, Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) and Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865).

It's well known that Lincoln had only a few years of elementary school, after which he became a self-taught lawyer, and went on to write some of the greatest presidential speeches in American history. Just how little schooling did he have? Biographers state that cumulatively it amounted to "about one year." Lincoln mostly educated himself by borrowing books and newspapers. He loved *Robinson Crusoe* and the tales of *The Arabian Nights*, a biography of Washington, and the poetry of Shakespeare and Burns. A contemporary recalled, "I never saw Abe after he was twelve that he didn't have a book in his hand or in his pocket. It didn't seem natural to see a feller read like that." Fond of talking and storytelling, he found a book called *Lessons in Elocution* and began practicing his public speaking from a tree stump.^{1, 2}

Frederick Douglass, once a slave and with no formal schooling, went on to become an eloquent spokesman for the anti-slavery movement. Less well known is that he wrote *three* autobiographies, the first a classic in the genre. He became so prominent as orator and writer that Lincoln met with him in three times in the White House during the Civil War.

How was this possible – that the log-cabin-born Lincoln and the born-into-slavery Douglass should rise to such literary prominence with barely any formal education?

You think I know? I have no idea, but it happened. In research for my Civil War novels, I came upon Douglass's three autobiographies, published in 1845, 1855, and 1881. They are a history lesson in the nation's struggle against slavery and nascent adoption of civil rights for all citizens. Just consider the period from 1857 to 1870:

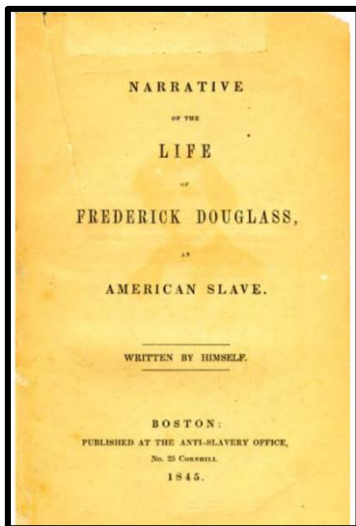
- March 1857: Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision, denying all rights to slaves who escaped to free states
- April 1861-April 1865: Civil War
- January 1863: Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, proclaiming freedom to all slaves held by states at war with the U.S.
- January 1865: ratification of 13th amendment, formally abolishing slavery

- July 1868: ratification of 14th amendment, extending liberties and rights granted by the Bill of Rights to formerly enslaved people
- February 1870: ratification of the 15th amendment: the right to vote “shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” (Women did not get the right to vote until the 19th amendment was ratified in 1920.)

Slaves were not taught to read, lest they become rebellious, so Douglass had no formal education. It was his good fortune to come under the ownership of the Auld family, in Maryland. He served one branch of the family in Baltimore, working for Hugh and Sophia Auld. When he was about twelve, Hugh Auld’s wife Sophia began teaching him the alphabet. Initially, as he points out in his autobiographies, he found her a kind and tender-hearted woman, who treated him with respect.

Hugh Auld disapproved of the tutoring, feeling that literacy would encourage slaves to desire freedom, and convinced his wife to stop the teaching. Fortunately, Douglass (whose last name at the time was actually Bailey) had other learning opportunities, including help from white children in the neighborhood. And he read voraciously: newspapers, pamphlets, political materials, and any books he could get hold of. In 1833, working for a different master, he and other black slaves were also able to attend a Sunday school where they could read from religious scripture.

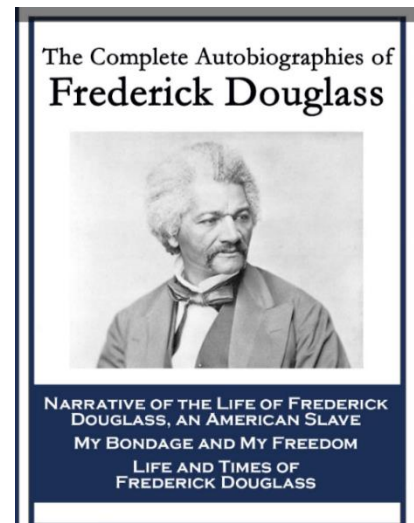
There are many details about Douglass’s early “education,” but they all focus on one salient fact. After some initial instruction, his reading was largely self-taught. Learning to read opened his eyes to the full nature of slavery and fostered his goal of seeking freedom. On September 3, 1838, Douglass successfully escaped Maryland by boarding a northbound train of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad.



The most widely read of Douglass’s three autobiographies is the first, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), which became a bestseller and was influential in promoting the cause of abolition. Five thousand copies were sold within four months of its first printing, and six new editions were published between 1845 and 1849. The cover of the first edition is shown here.

His other two autobiographies are *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855)

and *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881, revised in 1892). All three are available in a single volume on Amazon (e-book and print), *The Complete Autobiographies of Frederick Douglass*.³



Regarding learning to read, Douglass wrote in *Narrative of the Life*:

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read...[Douglass next quotes Auld using the N word in a totally disparaging manner.]

These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty--to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly.

From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read.⁴

In Douglass's second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), he explains that after Mrs. Auld ceased her teaching, at the insistence of Mr. Auld, he sought instruction from neighborhood white boys. In this passage Douglass comments on a book he bought, which greatly expanded his understanding of slavery.

When I was about thirteen years old, and had succeeded in learning to read, every increase of knowledge, especially anything respecting the free states, was an additional weight to the almost intolerable burden of my thought—"I am a slave for life." To my bondage I could see no end. It was a terrible reality, and I shall never be able to tell how sadly that thought chafed my young spirit. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I had earned a little money in blacking boots for some gentlemen, with which I purchased of Mr. Knight, on Thames street, what was then a very popular school book, viz., "The Columbian Orator," for which I paid fifty cents. I was led to buy this book by hearing some little boys say they were going to learn some pieces out of it for the exhibition. This volume was indeed a rich treasure, and every opportunity afforded me, for a time, was spent in diligently perusing it. Among much other interesting matter, that which I read again and again with unflinching satisfaction was a short dialogue between a master and his slave.⁵

His third autobiography, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881), takes us through the Civil War, when he had three meetings with President Lincoln, then his post-war efforts fighting for the civil rights of ex-slaves. The revised version (published 1892) includes his European tour of 1886-1887.

Douglass wrote clearly, with great expression, and from the writing one would never guess the limits of his formal education. The same holds for Lincoln's speeches.

So, if formal schooling is not a necessity, what is the key to becoming a writer? There are, at minimum, four essentials: 1) Native intelligence, and 2) Learning to read. Both men met these essentials. Numbers 3 and 4 are what Stephen King emphasizes in his memoir, *On Writing*.⁶

If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others:
read a lot and write a lot. There's no way around these two things that
I'm aware of, no shortcut.

In closing on this profile, it is interesting to consider another of Stephen King's comments, this one in his Foreword to *On Writing*.⁷

This is a short book because most books about writing are filled with
bullshit.

A little extreme, perhaps, but it does emphasize that learning to write is not to be found in books about writing. You can also say the same about the endless internet offerings for writing seminars and lectures. Unless you can get feedback on your work, on a more or less continuous basis (such as in a good critique group), I doubt any book, seminar, lecture, or recorded course is going to teach you how to write.

**Want to be a writer? Read a lot. Anything and everything. And start writing.
Pour out your words. Let Frederick Douglass be an inspiration.**

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 2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_life_and_career_of_Abraham_Lincoln#:~:text=Lincoln%20was%20self%2Deducated.,a%20lifelong%20interest%20in%20learning.
 3. Douglass, Frederick. *The Complete Autobiographies of Frederick Douglass*. <https://www.amazon.com/Complete-Autobiographies-Frederick-Douglass-Narrative-ebook/dp/B00TN3YOWA/>
 4. Ibid. *Narrative of the Life*
 5. Ibid. *My Bondage and My Freedom*
 6. King, Stephen, *On Writing* p. 145
<https://www.amazon.com/Writing-Memoir-Craft-Stephen-King-ebook/dp/B000FC0SIM/>
 7. Ibid. The Forward