

The MANA Sunset

April 2015 Edition



In This Edition:

Spring has sprung! ... almost. In this edition of the MANA Sunset, we look forward to spring while highlighting some of the exciting new programs and features MANA is coming out with in the approaching warmer months--from a creative writing course that symbolizes taking a cruise to a publication featuring the prose, poetry, and short plays of up-and-coming writers. As always, thank you for tuning in.

Enjoy!

Grammar Wisdom:

*When Should One
Capitalize Titles?*

("father", "mother")

*Only when the word replaces the name of the person.

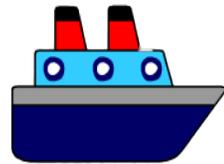
~For example: The daughter of a drill sergeant,
Mom ran the roost with precision and poise.

Your dinner v. you're dinner:
one leaves you
nourished, the
other leaves you
dead. Correct
grammar:
it saves lives.



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Dr. C's Academic Creative Writing Cruise Blog



Dr. C has been holding a weekly digital journal, pinpointing what a creative writing instructor experiences while teaching creative writing courses. A metaphor for the course has been a cruise. Instead of referring to a course, Dr. C serves as a captain of a crew that wishes to become prepared to work on his/her own cruise line. During the sessions, Dr. C provides training in writing. This blog can be helpful for teachers of writers and just those interested in improving their creative writing skills. The crew has completed its 10th week and currently hosts over 400 members! This is a tremendous jump from the mere four members enrolled during the first class.



Life Coaching

For anyone who has an interest in writing, teachers of writing, or any teacher in general: Dr. C will soon be offering life coaching services in the areas of writing, teaching, and teaching writing! Dr. C wishes to hear from you, to see if there is an interest in such a service. If you would like to send MANA some feedback, feel free to email questions or specific challenges you are facing as a writer or as a teacher to marketingnewauthors.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Quote of the Month



“Tell me, what is it
you plan to do
with your one wild
and precious life?”

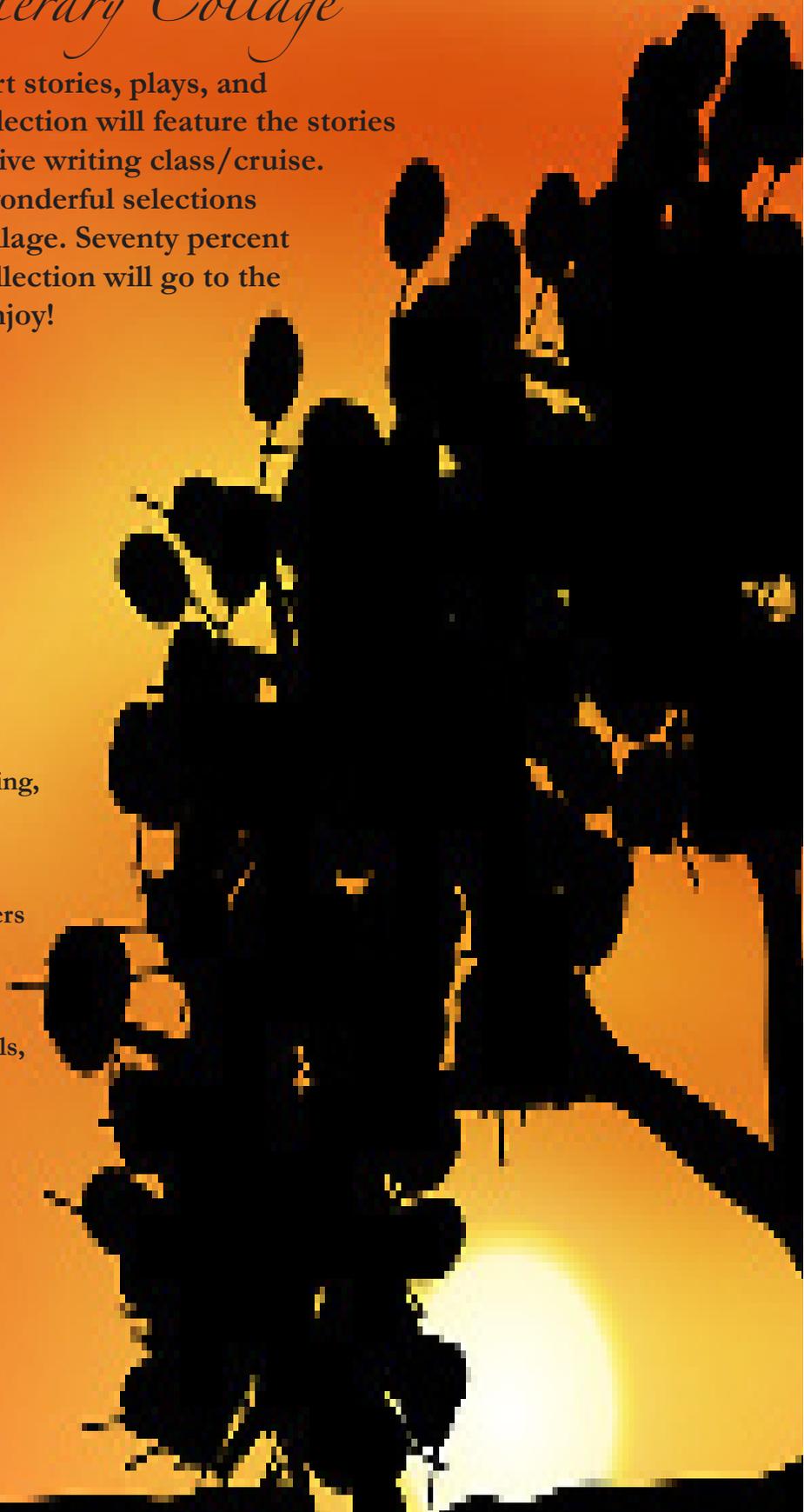
~Mary Oliver~

Writer Feature-
Community College Students'
Literary Collage

MANA will publish a collection of short stories, plays, and poems for adults and children. The collection will feature the stories of "crewmembers" from Dr. C's creative writing class/cruise. In this edition, we have included two wonderful selections that will be published in the literary collage. Seventy percent of profits made from the sale of the collection will go to the Humanities Division of the college. Enjoy!

"At Dusk"
Carol Brown

At dusk, one night, years after leaving having
finally recognized
There would be no end to your raising of
the stakes
To fend off your ghosts
I took an old aluminum cake pan, my poems,
and a Bic out the backdoor, onto the patio
Leaving the dog behind, morosely watching
me through the screen
Concerned about fire and my cedar shake siding,
My neighbors being alarmed by a bonfire,
I began to tear a few pages at a time
Layering them loosely in the pan
They caught quickly, and I watched the corners
curl black
The ashes floating a reasonable height
before disintegrating
I fed the fire all of my poems, then my journals,
then the photographs.
I gathered the remaining notebook covers
with their steel spirals and went inside
Resolute. Never again your firewall.



“The Yellow Ribbon”
Elisha Eubanks

March 25, 1911



CRASH! The sight and sound of the first worker leaping from the eighth-story window of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory shocked the people in the street below.

“Look out!” men cried, rushing over to the scene. Children screamed. Women fainted as the workers, chiefly young women, began fairly pouring from the eighth, ninth, and tenth floor windows. There were shouts of “Grab a mattress!” and “Call for a fire engine!” and mostly “Somebody *do* something!” People ran over with sheets to use as nets. Mattresses were piled against the walls of the building. The sounds of screams, crashes and the ever steady sickening thuds of bodies landing on pavement were soon mixed with the wail of approaching fire engines.

From the street corner, Abigail watched the whole thing. She witnessed as people she had worked beside, some of them close friends, crowded onto the old, rusty fire escape, and, then, as it creaked, twisted and collapsed, sending the escapees to the stones below. As the fire engines approached the building, the crowd edged back to let the firemen forward with their nets and hoses. Ladders started to go up, but they reached only as high as the sixth floor. On the ground, an Italian woman was screaming, “Mio bambini, mio gli angeli amore!” Up on the ninth floor, a dark-haired girl was clutching her struggling younger sister, flames licking at their backs. The older girl curled her body around the young one and fell backward out of the window, aiming for a mattress against the wall. She missed; her body hit the pavement, the little girl bouncing out of her arms onto the mattress, safe and alive, into the arms of her waiting mother. Abigail watched with horrified fascination as the chaos grew to its climax.

After hours and hours, the fire was finally out. Abigail crossed the street to where the police had piled the bodies. She picked her way carefully through the crowd, past the thousands of mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, screaming and weeping in Italian or Yiddish, clutching their dead girls to them. She searched the mound of bodies for one in particular: her twin sister, Gracie. Out of all the bodies too burned and blackened to recognize, she searched their hair for one detail: her sister’s yellow ribbon.

Gracie’s yellow ribbon was her trademark. Every morning, before the girls left for work, Mum would tie a green ribbon in Abigail’s hair and a yellow one in Gracie’s “just so I can tell you two apart.” It was important for Mum to be able to tell because she liked Gracie better than Abigail. The two were identical—every hair, every freckle, except for those ribbons. Whenever Gracie said, “Mum, look what I did” Mum always answered, “That’s wonderful; I’m so proud of you!” For Abigail, it was usually, “That’s very nice, dear; now, run along.”

Once Gracie had accidentally broken Da’s reading glasses, and Mum had thought it was Abigail. She’d gotten a thrashing, while Mum shouted about how they couldn’t afford new ones, before Gracie cried, “It was me! I did it!” Mum had turned to see Gracie standing there crying and immediately rushed over to comfort her and dry her tears and say, “Now, it’s all right, dear; Da shan’t be too angry.”

Abigail never held Gracie responsible for everything their mother did, nor did Gracie ever hold it over Abigail’s head that she was the favorite. They were twins, closer than bread and butter; it wasn’t Gracie’s fault that she happened to be nicer than Abigail. Even Mum knew that; that was, after all, why she liked Gracie better.

Writer Feature (cont'd)

Now, as she wound her way through the heartbroken crowd, Abigail looked for her sister. It had been purely a miracle that she had been out while Gracie was in. How she'd managed to get out at all was Abigail's guess, and she wondered why it had been her instead of Gracie.

As she neared the end of the row of bodies, she saw several piles of charred ash lined up in a row on the sidewalk. She came nearer to investigate; they were too small, far too small to have been in there, and they were completely unrecognizable. Abigail closely examined each one, treating them with gentle nudges so they wouldn't fall to pieces. On the very last one she saw a burned braid, and on the end was tied a yellow ribbon.

What had happened to Gracie in there? Abigail wondered. Why had she stayed inside? Had she been trapped or tried to help someone too afraid to leave? Why had she died, and Abigail lived? Gracie was better; she needed to live. What would Mum do?

Mum. The thought of her triggered other thoughts in Abigail's mind. What would happen now that her favorite child was gone? Did she even know about it yet, or was she coming to find her girls?

"Gracie!"

At the sound of the shriek, Abigail looked up to see Mum thrusting her way through the crowd towards her. "Where are my children!?" she cried. "*Where is my Gracie!?*"

Without wasting a second, Abigail ripped the green ribbon out of her hair and tied it quickly around the black stump of ash just above the yellow one. Then, she pulled the yellow ribbon off and retied it in her own hair. Looking up again, she shouted, "Here I am, Mum!"

Mum burst through the crowd and enveloped her in a hug. "Oh, my child, I was so frightened!" she gasped, sobbing onto Abigail's shoulder. She pulled back and examined the yellow ribbon, then looked at the blackened corpse on the ground. "And... Abigail is..."

"She's gone," said Abigail gravely.

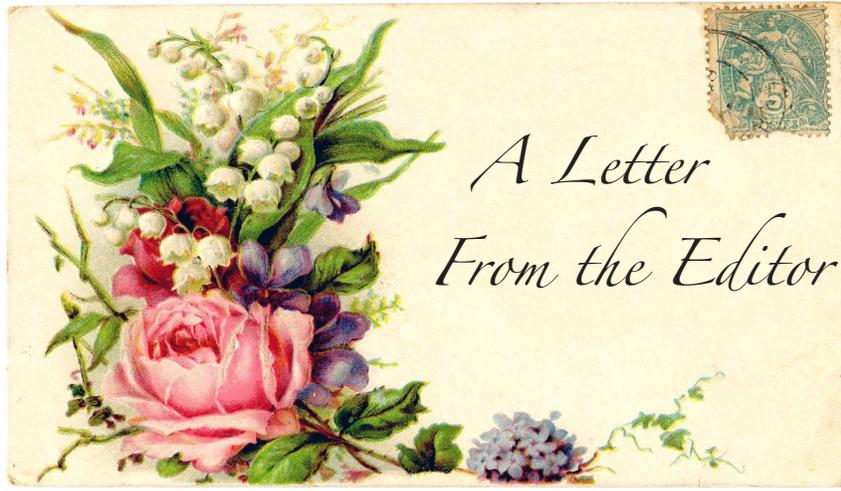
Mum eyed her very carefully, surveying her up and down. "You aren't hurt, are you?"

"No, Mum. I got out okay."

Mum looked at her for a long moment, tears suddenly gleaming in her eyes. Stooping down, she picked up the body of her girl as carefully as possible, then turned to her living daughter. "Let's go home," she whispered hoarsely. Abigail nodded solemnly, taking her mother by the arm, and the two of them turned away from the sorrow and horror of the factory.

I was such a fool, Abigail's mother thought, looking down at Abigail. *This was none but my own doing. Abby can't fool me, even with the yellow ribbon. What a fool I was.*

And together Abigail and her mother walked back down the road, the yellow ribbon swinging from the end of Abigail's braid.



Dear Reader,

In the spirit of spring and newness, I will write briefly on unique and innovative ways to format short stories. Sometimes it's refreshing and fun to read authors who experiment with the written word by doing more than following a linear plot. Here, I borrow from novels and short stories I have read lately, as well as one I've come up with on my own, to provide a list of unique story formats:

- 1) **Inanimate object or animal point of view in the first or third person.** I just finished a novella about a hen's desire to escape from her henhouse and to be a mother (*The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly* by Sun-Mi Hwang). In a *Charlotte's Web*-esque way, this book was excellent in that it portrayed a very strange point of view convincingly.
- 2.) **Non-linear plots.** I've read two stories recently where there are two or three possible routes the story could take. This deviates from the typical linear story line most stories take. This can be jarring and uncomfortable, as we are taught from a young age to go in order. Nevertheless, one can decide the story's ending, giving freedom and license to the reader.
- 3.) **Writing from an unknown perspective.** Myself a female, I've written from a male perspective, to my own great discomfort. Yet I believe it is necessary for writers to step out of comfort zones and challenge themselves creatively.

Happy Writing!