

Pen & Ink Writers' Group

The truth is...we gather on the Third Monday of each month to practice our writing skills. We listen and share in each other's work. We are small in number and our commitment is strictly to produce and foster creativity among our members.

We started in July 1999 and consist of adults that enjoy writing memoirs, commentaries, essays, poems, and/or prose. Our simple method each month is to use a pre-selected word or phrase as the basis of a story, an idea, an opinion, a derivative of, or an implied essence of and write a 1 to 1 ½ page document. We share our stories, comment, and in that way build up our writing skills through practice and presentation. The atmosphere is friendly and supportive, and the feedback is gentle.

Curious? Always wanted to try writing for fun, entertainment, or even profit? Come visit with us at any of our open meetings. Bring a sample of your work. Sit in and see what we do. If you like it, join us every month and become a member.

Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group

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April 2016 selection – Change

I'm Just a Prisoner of Love!

By J. Smetana

People never change! How many times have you heard that old canard? Now, it's true that some young gloomy Gus will grow up to be an old gloomy Gus--we've all seen it happen. The sourpuss just gets more sour, right? But to make the blanket statement, PEOPLE NEVER CHANGE like it's a truism-(so, there!)-I'm sorry I just don't have time for that jive.

I knew a fellow back in high school whose name was Bob who was kind of a mean jerk. Of course he was a big guy so that made his punishment even stronger. He was the kind of guy to play dirty tricks on you--or anyone!--for no reason at all. When you saw Bob coming your way you knew he wasn't bearing glad tidings so if you were smart you headed in the other direction. But something must have happened to old Bob during the summer before his last year. When he came back from summer vacation he was happy-go-lucky, all smiles. I thought it was a trap! I even asked one of my friends, "What's the deal with Bob?" He said, "I don't know!" Bob had done a complete 180. I never saw anything like it before or since.

I thought he might have fallen off his horse and gotten blinded by the light but maybe it wasn't anything so dramatic like that, maybe he was tired of being despised by everyone and he knew that he was the only one who could change that. I never asked him, "Why did you decide to stop being a jerk?" I didn't care what his reasons were--that was his

business. Everybody welcomed the NEW Bob--it was like seeing an old friend again who had been lost.

It's never too late to change. One of my favorite Bible stories is the thief hanging next to Jesus who says, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus tells him, "I say to you today you will be with me in Paradise." One of the kids in Bible study class protested, "It's not fair! He lived his whole life as a criminal then converted at the very last second! Some people live a good life their whole life long and they make sacrifices! It's not fair! It's just not fair! Some people spend their WHOLE LIVES, studying the Bible and going to church and look at this guy! It's not fair! It just isn't fair that some criminal can come in at the last minute and get into heaven just like that!"

JUST LIKE THAT! I'm always amazed by some of the idiotic things people say during Bible Study. I could not even respond to this guy, I was laughing so hard. Talk about Missing. The. Point.

###

Change is Inevitable

By N. Stewart

Change is inevitable. It happens every day.

How can we handle so many changes

And what do we do about them all?

Nothing, I'm afraid.

Go with the flow is best, you see as stagnant

Excuses and reasons just don't matter or alter situations.

Invent different ways to do things;

Success will follow.

I can't change you say.

No, it's not easy, but not impossible either.

Easier to do, however with an open mind.

Vital to do or chance being left behind.

Interesting after all to learn something new,

Transforming old habits may help in ways, too,

And adjusting an attitude may add to self-worth.

Better to give change a try than to totally reject.

Learn to accept it simply as an

Everyday inevitable part of ordinary life.

###

My Friend Karma
By: Susan J Wilfong

It never seems to fail.
When I'm shopping and running late,
Someone ahead of me
Makes me stand and wait.

I think, "It must be a conspiracy".
"Why does this always happen to me?"
They must have seen me coming
Or this would never be.

I only have a few items.
Could I please just cut in?
You look at me through squinted eyes
And you give me a wicked grin.

I get ticked off
As you shake your head.
I give a big sigh
But not a word was said.

They finally ring up your purchase
And your money is in your hand
Then... everything stops.
One item wasn't scanned.

Now, I'm really running late.
I hope my boss will understand.
I'd be in and out really fast.
At least that is what I planned.

I give out another sigh.
I even roll my eyes.
You wickedly smirked at me.
I felt like I wanted to die.

I've never been late for work before.
How much trouble will I be in?
Why do you keep looking at me
With that wicked grin?

Now all your things are scanned
Maybe I can go on my way.
Why are you putting your money back?
You know... You still have to pay.

You sneer back me.
I angrily look at you.
Hurry up and give her
The money that is due.

Maybe I won't be too late.
Maybe the traffic won't be bad.
Maybe the sun will be shining.
Maybe I shouldn't be so mad.

Oh... Pay the bill already!
I have to be on my way.
I hope you're looking for your debit card.
That all I've got to say!

You glance over your shoulder.
And smirk back at me.
You reach inside your purse,
For something I cannot see.

Out comes a fist full of change.
Oh dear God... No!!!
Twenty five, fifty, fifty five, fifty six...
I think I better go.

I can't leave.
I can't get out of line.
Too many people are behind me.
Why is this destiny mine?

I can't believe you did this to me.
Was it because I asked to cut in?
As you dumped the change back in your purse,
You shot me that wicked grin.

But Karma has a way
Of making the wrong things right.
I saw you in the parking lot
And your car was boxed in tight.

Yes, it was me.
I honked at you as I drove by.
I smiled and smirked and waved to you.
And it was you that made a big sigh.

###

Keep the Change
By Sara Schupack

I'm thinking about "here's your change" and "can people change?" — what if I combined those meanings? Change, coins, something left over, it feels extra, even though it's part of the original amount. You buy something for \$8.25 with a \$10 bill. The \$1.75 you get back was obviously part of the original 10, but since you took it out of your wallet, you feel it's already gone, so that \$1.75 becomes a gift that you can spend more freely.

With a person's personality, can it be the same? Let's say he's a pessimist. Let's call him Guy. Guy has committed himself to and presents himself as the full amount, \$10 worth of pessimism. But, someone, some experience, gives him some change, not a lot, maybe \$1.75 worth of optimism. Let's say Guy comments on the lousy weather, the grey day. And let's say Val doesn't reply with a grumble or frown, as Guy's comments usually elicit, but says back -- and not in too chirpy or flirty a voice, just kind of deadpan -- "Yeah, but you look good in grey." And in spite of himself, this feels good to Guy, freeing him from the main part, the \$8.25 of his personality that he has been stuck with. So he "spends" that \$1.75 on optimistic behavior. He buys himself a grey shirt, or he treats Val to a grey scarf, or he simply admits, "I've actually always enjoyed the color grey, now that you mention it." If friends or co-workers overreact "Wow, how great to see you being positive for once!" he might retreat back into pessimism, because that's like someone pointing out that your \$1.75 isn't really extra, and the \$8.25 item was overpriced anyway. It cost just \$7.00 at that other shop around the corner, so you were a fool to spend that much in the first place. But, if people are pleasantly subtly pleased, let's say Val shares her umbrella with Guy on the next rainy day, without saying a word, or she sends her office memos to him on grey paper, well, maybe that will feel like even more money back as change or as if the fun, trivial item you thought you'd spend your "extra" \$1.25 on is actually 2 for a dollar, so the extra extra feels like an even better bonus, or in Guy's case motivates him to go towards optimism again. Maybe he'll actually say it's a nice day, the next grey day that he and Val see.

Now is Guy going to suddenly wake up one morning and see nothing but sunshine and rainbows (besides the atmospheric impossibility) and propose to Val and the two of them will live happily every after? Probably not, but there's no harm in hoping. There's only so much change that you can spend other than planned before you realize there are bills you haven't paid or wasteful trinkets cluttering up your garage only to clutter up landfill when you finally decide to clear them out.

But change is good and change is possible. So go out and buy something you don't need and smile at a stranger.

###

Change
By Elvira K. Castillo

Change can be good, can be bad, can be scary. But, no matter, there's always change, especially today. Today change seems to take place constantly.

I'm at the time of my life where I know I must start making changes, but, honestly, it really scares me. I have lived in my home for 42 years, and have accumulated many things which are not needed, but that I still enjoy. Yet, if something were to happen to me, all these things would be a burden for my son and few relatives to dispose of. Guess I'm like Scarlett O'Hara in 'Gone with the Wind' when she said, "I'll think about it tomorrow." This is an example of my personal scary change - the possibility of downsizing to a place with less responsibility and less "things" - but I still love my "things!"

Of course, we all know our society is in a constant state of change. There are too many changes to get into, but a lot of it has to do with technology. Computers, cell phones, texting, etc. may be good, but for me personally, all these things have just taken away the air waves and ruined television and radio reception, and I have difficulty understanding anyone who calls me from a cell phone. Also, better not invest too much money in DVD's, CD's, etc., as these things may soon be ready for the dumpster, like my hundreds of VHS's.

Recently, I saw a movie where the main character goes back home to a small town in Indiana after many years, and while driving through the town, he says, "Nothin' ever changes." What? Where is this? I have lived in the same area of Chicago all my life, and let me tell you, there are so many changes, I can't even name them. For example: Where's the corner grocery store, the kids playing ball in the street or just outside on the block, the neighbors talking to each other, the buses and streetcars that could take you everywhere, the sales people or gas station attendants that helped you, the fun going to the movies with your friends on a Sunday afternoon, etc. etc., etc..?

One thing that never changes is war. Will there ever be an end to one culture trying to take over another culture for political or religious differences? No matter how much we hope and pray for peace, it seems like this change is never attainable. As in John Lennon's song "Imagine" - "Wouldn't it be nice if we could all live as one."

As I said, there are so many changes that I haven't even hit upon, but what disturbs me is how our communication, imaginary, and hand-writing skills have been affected. There also seems to be more tragedy and less joy in our constant changing world.

###

Poetry Lesson
Pen & Ink Writers' Group Meeting
March 2016
By Nancy Stewart

Introduction:

People write poetry to point out emotional, spiritual, or intellectual truths, and it is in itself meant to be suggestive, leaving the reader to imagine the meaning. Great questions (ones that can't be answered simply) are the heart of poems. Poetry never answers the question directly, but connects through intimate, intuitive understanding. You can feel a poem without really understanding it.

Poetry is the fusion of story telling (the recording of cultural events and happenings), music (the rhythms) and picture painting (the use of words and word sounds to create mental images). Poetry portrays moods, captures sensations, expresses ideas, and touches or changes lives. Poetry is more condensed, exact, and organized than prose. The resulting poem goes to the moment of insight or emotion, and does not develop over time through plot and/or character as prose does.

The poet decides what the reader hears and sees, how fast or slow the reader reads, and when the reader needs to pause. By structuring the poem, the lines and paragraphs, the ending to the lines, and the formatted appearance of the white space the poet is fully in charge.

Some types of poems: Lyric, Ode, Narrative, Epic, Ballad, Sonnet, Elegy, Free Verse, Blank Verse.

Reading a Poem:

Read the title.

Do a general overview for mood, feeling or implication.

Review parts of speech to identify actions, places, people, etc.

Look at the use of punctuation.

Read to get a feel of the rhythm.

Poetry:

organized,
condensed,
exact and
goes to the
moment of
insight or
emotion.

Structure of a Poem:

- 1) Line - a sequence of words (not necessarily a sentence) stylized by the author with specific breaks and punctuation where lines maybe formed into stanzas, expressing additional ideas, thoughts, or images.

- 2) Rhythm – beat or cadence of syllables based on equal time value, adding to the meaning and impact of the poem and reflecting mood and feeling.
Meter – the regularly patterned stressed and unstressed syllables to get a specific measure based on a specific number of feet.
 - (a.) Iambic – unstressed, then stressed beats (e.g., a BOVE)
 - (b.) Trochee stressed, then unstressed (e.g., AP ple)
 - (c.) Dactyl - stressed, unstressed, unstressed (e.g., EL e phant)
 - (d.) Anapest – stressed, unstressed, stressed (e.g., UN der NEATH)
 - (e.) Spondee – two stressed syllables (e.g., E NOUGH)Metric Foot - a pairing of a stressed or hard syllable with an unstressed or light syllable).
Examples:
One foot per line (Monometer)
We write/Tiny/Poems/But we/Never publish/Any of them.
Two feet per line (Dimeter)
We write tiny/Poems but we/Never publish/Any of them.
Five feet per line (Pentameter)
We write standard poems and we often/
Publish many of them and win contests.

- 3) Rhyme – placing vowel and consonants sounds that are alike or nearly alike and are purposely positioned by the poet.
Full or true — exacting sounding vowels and consonants in 2 or more word located at the ends of different lines (e.g., spring, wing)
Slant or near — approximate sounding vowels and consonants in 2 or more words located at the ends of different lines (e.g., death, earth)
Internal - exact or approximate sounding vowels or consonants in two or more words in the same sentence.
Double or multiple — exact or approximate sounding vowels or consonants in two or more words in same sentence and at the end of different lines.

- 4) Story telling – expressing thoughts, ideas, observations, cultural events or happenings, using structured rhythmic lines, specific punctuation, stanzas and white space.

- 5) Image – constructing a patterned picture for the reader through sounds and words, and relating the poet’s vision(s) or experience(s) while creating a mood or a feeling.