



Schedule

Saturday, September 21st

9:00 a.m. – 9:10 a.m.

Introduction

Benjamin Carr, Board of Directors

9:10 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Welcome

Zachary Steele, Executive Director and Founder of Broadleaf Writers

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Ballroom A

Breaking Boundaries: Getting to the Heart of Stories That Need to Be Told

Panelists: Angie Thomas, Becky Albertalli, Denene Millner, Nic Stone

Moderator: Zachary Steele

The landscape of publishing continues to evolve, opening readers to a world of stories once deemed unsuitable. Boundaries that existed are being broken by writers offering fresh perspectives on the lives of characters we've never been able to read. Join four *New York Times* bestselling authors as they discuss their writing journey and the heartfelt and necessary stories they write.

10:45 a.m. – 11:45 p.m.

Ballroom A

But Why?: Connecting the Reader to Your Characters

Panelists: Becky Albertalli, Denene Millner, Julian Winters

Moderator: Nic Stone

“Empathy is the most mysterious transaction that the human soul can have, and it's accessible to all of us, but we have to give ourselves the opportunity to identify, to plunge ourselves in a story where we see the world from the bottom up or through another's eyes or heart.”

—Sue Monk Kidd

Creating a sense of empathy for, and with, your characters is a vital component of storytelling. It draws the reader in, helps them relate to your character's journey, and drives the plot forward. But what in the world is an emotional connection, and how does one create it without pandering to the reader? Find your inner five-year-old self, listen up, and cue up the most important question ever: “But, why?”

Break-out Session

Room #118

Goons, Dames, Lying, Cheating and Killing: Putting the Thrill in Thriller

Panelists: Emily Carpenter, Roger Johns, Christopher Swann

Moderator: Ian Campbell

From the gritty pulp crime novels on dime store racks of old to the current bestselling trend of vulnerable, weird narrators finding murderers next door, on the train or just outside their window, nothing quite compels like a good thriller. But what are the ingredients you need to make your thriller delicious instead of toxic? How do you create something daring and effective in a genre where everything can be spoiled by too many turns of the screw? Our panelists will investigate, seeking out the clues to help you solve this challenging mystery within your own work.

Workshop #1

Room #111

Burn Your Boats: The Writer's Guide to the Kobayashi Maru

by Zachary Steele

It isn't enough to put your characters on a journey. They must suffer and struggle, claw and fight, find their way forward only to get knocked back down again. After all, life in the real world isn't easy. It can't be easy in the world you create, either.

Join Zachary Steele, Founder and Executive Director of Broadleaf Writers, for a workshop that your characters will hate. From No Way Out to the No-Win Scenario, the path to a great story is giving your characters hell and writing them out by the skin of their teeth.

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Ballroom A

Tidying Up: Paring Down Your Story Without Losing What Belongs

Panelists: Nic Stone, Xhenet Aliu, Soniah Kamal

Moderator: Alayna Tucker

“What I should be doing is finding the things I want to keep. Identifying the things that make you happy: that is the work of tidying.” – Marie Kondo

Marie Kondo might as well be talking about writing. Editing your manuscript can feel like a gut-punch. You *have* to reduce your word count. You *have* to look for scenes to cut. But consider Marie Kondo's approach and the task can change—find the parts that spark joy for you and the reader, that reveal your best writing, and remove the rest. Our panel will share their “tidying” tips, best practices, and lessons learned as they've gone from long drafts to polished published works while keeping the spirit of their original manuscript alive.

Break-out Session

Room #118

A Series of Plots: Crafting the Overarching Plot

Panelists: John Adcox, Zachary Steele, Lou Aronica

Moderator: Justin Barisich

Managing the plot of a book can burn a pack of notecards in a hurry. Its beginning must progress logically through the middle, then to an end. Every character must evolve on a journey. All B-stories and characters must wind their way through, intersecting in

between with resolution to conflict and relationships ahead. But what if one book becomes three, or five, or seven? Multiple stories, multiple plots. One tale. Join our panel for a discussion on how to integrate the plot of each book into the overarching plot of an entire series.

Workshop #2

Room #111

Under Construction: Building a Plot that Captures the Reader

by Roger Johns and Steve McCondichie

A hands-on session during which the instructors will provide writing prompts, help participants develop or work with an existing inciting event that will carry the story forward, look at ways to determine the correct protagonist to tell the story, and help develop scene sequences by focusing on how the protagonist will experience the changes to her and her world caused by the inciting event.

1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

Lunch

2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Ballroom A

Finding the Catalyst: Inciting Your Character Into Change

Panelists: Angie Thomas, Caroline George, Zachary Steele

Moderator: Daniel Lamb

You've introduced your protagonist, who they are in relation to other characters and established a theme. Enter the catalyst. The inciting event that happens *to* your protagonist that forces them into action. Now they must ... do the thing! Solve the mystery, pursue justice, win the girl's heart, battle the evil wizard, or bury that body in the desert so that no one will ever find it! But how do you turn a catalyst into believable motivation, with emotional stakes and weight strong enough to bring your reader along on the adventure?

Break-out Session

Room #118

In So Many Words: Essays, Flash Fiction, and Short Stories

Panelists: Xhenet Aliu, Soniah Kamal, Collin Kelley

Moderator: Lauren Vogelbaum

Not every project takes you to the end of a full-length manuscript. Essays, flash fiction, and short stories (among many other forms!) tackle a far shorter word count. Brief pieces require a different plan of attack. This panel focuses on how to create strong short work that resonates with the reader, where our writers found inspiration for their shorter pieces, and the unique challenges you might face when given a limited amount of space.

3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Ballroom A

First Pages Critique

Panelists: Caroline George, Moe Ferrara, Kelly Peterson, Lou Aronica, John Adcox, Steve McCondichie

Moderator: Alayna Tucker

The first page is an introduction to your story, and to your writing. To catch the eye of an agent, your first page needs to be on point. Join four industry professionals across a broad spectrum of publishing as they listen to and critique your first pages. Which pages will tantalize and intrigue? Gain invaluable insights from their gentle criticism and learn how to craft a killer first page!

Sunday, September 22nd

9:00 a.m. – 9:05 a.m.

Welcome Back

9:05 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Ballroom A

The Art of the Synopsis: Getting to the Hook of Your Story

Panelists: Moe Ferrara, Caroline George, Kelly Peterson, Lou Aronica

Moderator: Ian Campbell

Take one Introduction, add a Flawed Hero, mix in a healthy dose of Theme, Fun and Games, Something at Stake, then polish off with a Cliffhanger in as few words as possible! Easy peasy, right? Telling the tale of your full-length manuscript in as short as 100 words is a challenge every writer must learn. It takes patience, an understanding of your story's core message, and considerable practice. Learn the art of the synopsis from a panel of agents and publisher reps; and if you're so brave, pitch your manuscript for their feedback!

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Ballroom A

The Perfectly Flawed Hero: Finding Your Protagonist's Achilles Heel

Panelists: Nic Stone, Emily Carpenter, Soniah Kamal

Moderator: Carmen Slaughter

Pobody's nerfect.

Your protagonist carries the story. Their flaws and imperfections grab the reader more effectively than their strengths. Luke Skywalker, Elizabeth Bennett from *Pride and Prejudice*, Charles Darnay from *A Tale of Two Cities*, Katniss from *The Hunger Games*: each battle with themselves and their tendencies as much as they battle an antagonist. Flaws deepen characters and enrich their personalities, connecting with readers well after they've completed a book. Join our panelists for a discussion on creating vibrant heroes, and how their flaws can positively impact your story.

Break-out Session

Room #118

Getting to Yes: How Community Helps Get You From Draft to Publication

Panelists: Roger Johns, Kimberly Jones, Christopher Swann

Moderator: Justin Barisich

Life is hard. Writing is harder. Walking the writing road alone can further the difficulty and deepen the sense of isolation. Writers need writers. We need a community that consists of supportive critique groups, effective beta readers, and programs that introduce us to scores of writers, editors, agents, and publishers. These resources are easy to take for granted yet sometimes hard to find. Where do you start? How do you find "your people"? Let us open the door, answer your questions, and help you find the community you need.

Workshop #3

Room #111

Plotting for a Purpose: Writing with Your Audience in Mind

by Caroline George

Incorporating elements of her public relations background, Caroline talks about the importance of *purpose plotting*—writing for a predetermined audience. She shares how *purpose plotting* boosts a book's marketability and teaches attendees ways to target their audience, connect their book's plot/message to their brand and convey their marketability to publishing professionals.

11:45 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Ballroom A

When Bad is Worse: The Motives of Villainy

Panelists: Angie Thomas, Christopher Swann, Julian Winters

Moderator: Carmen Slaughter

"When I'm Good, I'm Very Good, But When I'm Bad, I'm Better."

—Mae West

Antagonists don't see themselves as evil. There's always a motivation, a reason. And though villains can be diabolical, manipulative, vicious, bloodthirsty and ruthless, they're often more intriguing for readers and writers to spend time with. If you handle them right. A properly written villain—much like Erik Killmonger, Hannibal Lecter, or the Wicked Witch of the West—can seduce your readers, test their loyalties, and even appeal to their baser instincts. Join our panel for a discussion on creating a believable and motivated antagonist that your readers may secretly (or not so secretly!) root for.

Break-out Session

Room #118

Go Your Own Way: A Writer's Alternatives to the Mainstream Press

Panelists: Collin Kelley, Steve McCondichie, Denene Millner

Moderator: Daniel Lamb

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

—From *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost

The mainstream publishing industry is a well-oiled, highly subjective, lean machine. But it isn't for everyone. The expectations you set may well determine the route you should take. Self-publication no longer carries the stigma it once held, and the rise of Indie presses (as well as the cooperative strength of small presses) give authors far more possibilities than ever before. Take the dive into the conversation and see if the divergent path is right for you!

Workshop #4

Room #111

The Storyteller's Toolbox

by John Adcox

Author, screenwriter, and CEO of Gramarye Media, Inc. John Adcox details some of the arrows in the storyteller's quiver, focusing on character, milieu, and structure ... including why everything you've heard about the three-act structure is a cruel and damnable lie. These aren't rules or formulas ... but they're in the toolbox because they work.

12:45p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Lunch

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Ballroom A

The Sensory World: Creating a Vibrant Visual World

Panelists: Xhenet Aliu, Emily Carpenter, Roger Johns

Moderator: Ben Bowlin

Many writers spend time on the history, politics, economics, and trivial details of their worlds—giving readers an interesting but dry, abstract experience. For the reader to truly enter your world, it needs to delve into sensory experiences—seeing the caved in roofs of houses in an abandoned rural town, hearing the cries of seagulls along an unpopulated coast, smelling a peach pie as it's lifted from the oven. Like a movie, no matter how ambitious your world, the sensory details will ultimately build the bridge with your audience. Our panel will discuss ways of using sensory detail to bring your world to life for the reader.

Break-out Session

Room #118

Sticking the Landing: Finishing Your Story With a Flourish

Panelists: Becky Albertalli, Collin Kelley, Julian Winters

Moderator: Ian Campbell

On any flight, the experience doesn't much matter unless you land safely. To a reader, a book is no different. A story with a great beginning and middle can fall flat with a hasty, poor, or ill-thought-out ending, leaving the reader unsettled and frustrated. So, how do you nail the ending? And where does it go wrong when you don't? Join three authors for a discussion on what pitfalls to avoid, and what you can do to make the ending just as electric and exciting as the beginning.

3:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Ballroom A

The Art of Storytelling: Telling the Tale Anyway You Can

Panelists: Benjamin Carr, Kimberly Jones, Will Young

Moderator: Lauren Vogelbaum

Everyone has a story. Everyone has a unique voice, experience and perspective. Though our lives are often filled with common problems and similar milestones, no one else has ever been *you*. Knowing that—and every nuance it entails—will help you create vibrant and original characters. Enter the storyteller and the art of performance. Live storytelling teaches us compassion, connection, motivation, plot, tone and voice. Even the most mundane of experiences can teach us about humanity, get us to laugh at ourselves and understand one another. Join us for a live storytelling demonstration and a discussion on how it influences the writing of our panelists.

4:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Closing Remarks

Zachary Steele