



## Schedule of Panels & Workshops

Links to all rooms will be provided to attendees 1 or 2 days prior to the conference.

### **Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Room A**

**9:00 a.m. – 9:10 a.m.**

Introduction

Terese Lavalley, Conference Co-Chair

**9:10 a.m. – 9:25 a.m.**

Welcome

Zachary Steele, Executive Director and Founder of Broadleaf Writers

---

**9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**

#### **Room A**

*If You Can Dream it, You Can Do It:* A Q&A session with Paul Jenkins

He's a legend in the comic book industry, a vanguard of video game storytelling, a novelist, and founder of Meta Studios. Above all, he's a champion of writing and every

writer trying to achieve their dreams. Join us for an open and inspirational session with the one and only Paul Jenkins. No matter your question, no matter the style or genre of writing, Paul's here to answer your questions and get you charged up to write!

## **Room B**

*The Visual Writer: Creating a World Your Reader Will Remember*

Panelists: Karen Abbott, Ricki Cardenas, Anthony Grooms, Roger Johns

Moderator:

Your world is the place where your characters—and readers—will live and spend all their time. Is it vivid or vague? Fascinating or faulty? Learn the essential elements of crafting your perfect world—whether you set your stories in a fantasy landscape or right here on planet Earth. From history to geography to culture, our panelists will share their tips, advice, and secrets on how to create visual elements that live and breathe on the page.

---

**10:45 a.m. – 11:45 p.m.**

## **Room A**

*Oops, I did it Again: The Darwin Award Guide to Characters*

Panelists: Clay McLeod Chapman, Paul Jenkins, Rona Simmons

Moderator:

As Anna Karenina can attest, the heart of a good story has nothing to do with happy people doing well. Drawing out your character's flaws can show your reader symptoms of a challenging life they can relate to. This panel will offer insights and tips on how to craft mistake-prone klutzes who can't manage to do a darn thing right, and how you can lead them down a path to realization and redemption.

## **Room B**

*Show and Tell: One of These Things is not Like the Other*

Panelists: Ricki Cardenas, Shelli R. Johannes, Chris Negron, Kris Spisak

Moderator:

When you were a child, your teacher would invite the class to a day of show and tell. Your task: Bring something or someone to show your fellow students and describe and explain what, or who, it is. Show the class the personal connection you share with the item or person and why it matters. Writing is no different. Tell a reader what happened, or what your character is feeling, and the lasting image has no depth, no color. But show a reader what has happened, or what is felt, and they live the moment with your characters. Great storytelling begins with this vital tool. Show your reader what they need to know.

---

**12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

**Room A**

*The Children's & YA Market: It's a Jungle Gym out There*

Panelists: Shelli R. Johannes, Kimberly Jones, Kenzi Nevins, Chris Negron

Moderator:

Once a small piece of the pie, the children's and young adult markets have grown. But with that growth, the path to publication is more complicated. Picture books, chapter books, young readers, upper and lower middle grade, and paranormal romance, contemporary, commercial, and fantasy young adult—which one is right for your story and how can you stand out? Let our panelists guide you through the industry's hottest markets, offer their tips and insights on how to write a marketable story, and help you find the right genre for your manuscript.

**Room B**

*Workshop: Writing the Perfect Query Letter*

Latoya Smith, LCS Literary Services

Writing a query letter can be the thing of nightmares for a writer. What should be included? Does voice or tone matter? How long should the synopsis be and what about comp titles? Join literary agent Latoya Smith as she leads a workshop on crafting the perfect query letter. A brief Q&A session will follow her presentation.

---

**1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.**

Lunch

---

**2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.**

**Room A**

*Themes & Debates: Setting Up Your Story*

Panelists: Anthony Grooms, Paul Jenkins, Rona Simmons

Moderator:

For your characters to learn anything, there first must be something for them to learn. An established and clear theme not only reveals a character's flaws but forces them along a path to realization and renewal. Along the way, they will resist this new way of thought, they will fight, they will debate everything that drives them forward. It's a war of attrition your character must face, and a necessity in your story if you want your

reader to root for (or against) them. Learn how to create a proper theme and debate in your story from our panelists!

## **Room B**

### *The Criminal Villain: Finding the Motivation for Your Antagonist*

Panelists: Karen Abbott, Clay McLeod Chapman, Roger Johns

Moderator:

A well-crafted villain can seduce your readers, test their loyalties, and even appeal to their baser instincts. It begins and ends with motivation. Though villains can be diabolical, manipulative, vicious, bloodthirsty, and ruthless, they're more intriguing for readers when they have a *reason* for their actions. Join our panel for a discussion on creating a believable and motivated antagonist that your readers may secretly (or not so secretly!) root for.

---

**3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.**

## **Room A**

### *First Pages Critique*

Panelists: Kenzi Nevins, Latoya Smith, Katharine Sands

Moderator:

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 our literary agents 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, October 18<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.**

Welcome Back

---

**9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.**

## **Room A**

### *Query Letter Critique*

Panelists: Kenzi Nevins, Latoya Smith, Katharine Sands

Moderator:

When Little Orphan Annie got left on the doorstep, her parents included a note to ensure that their baby would be handled with care and affection. When you're querying new agents about your talent or your latest project, appealing to them for kindness and attention can seem just as intimidating. In this panel, agents will critique your query letters to tell you their strengths and ways they can improve, all to help you get your baby into the right home.

## **Room B**

*The Nonfiction Writer: From Research to Pitch*

Panelists: Karen Abbott, Rona Simmons, Kris Spisak

Moderator:

Writing nonfiction offers many challenges that writing fiction does not. The industry manages nonfiction titles differently, introducing a slew of requirements a writer may face when trying to sell a manuscript. Join our panelists as they discuss how to navigate the market, the value and necessity for thorough research, and what makes a story stand out.

---

**10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

## **Room A**

*Writing for Comics*

Panelists: Clay McLeod Chapman, Paul Jenkins, Chris Negron

Moderator:

Comic books are one of the fastest growing segments of the publishing industry. More writers, established and new, are turning to comics and graphic novels to tell their stories. But how is it done? What differences are there between comics and novels? And once you've written a comic, where do you pitch it? Join Paul Jenkins, the legendary author of *Wolverine: Origin* (as well as countless others!) and Clay McLeod Chapman, author of Marvel's *Scream: Curse of Carnage* for a discussion on the comic book industry and some pointers on crafting a comic of your own!

## **Room B**

*Workshop: Master-Pitch Theater*

Katharine Sands, Sarah Jane Freymann Literary Agency

Your pitch is a performance. Whether you deliver it in person or on the printed page. Literary agent Katharine Sands shows you how to hone the on-page elements and in-person aspects of the pitch to create the actual script you will use at the conference, and beyond. Pitchcraft™ is an invaluable tool—You will learn what to do—and what not to do—when summarizing your book: the description of your book in 200-250 words; —

How to get an agent from the get-go; start in a logical place, yet from a compelling perch; how to encapsulate in clear core points; ways to create coming attractions that whet the reader's appetite for more—and how to avoid “Querial Killers”: the easy-to-fix mistakes writers make when querying agents. This presentation cuts through the mystery of getting an agent to want YOU, to read YOU and to say YES to YOU. A brief Q&A session will follow her presentation.

---

**11:45 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.**

**Room A**

*Planning and Plotting: How to Keep Your Pants On*

Panelists: Karen Abbott, Roger Johns, Chris Negron

Moderator:

You've heard it asked, countless times. *Are you a pantser or a plotter?* But what does that mean? For some, the need for an outline is a vital step. For others, it's an obstruction. But which is right for you? Perfect works have come from both sides, some from the strangest of places and the most meandering of plans. Even Mark Twain had to put down *Huckleberry Finn* and re-evaluate as its story and subject got to be bigger than his intentions. If you're looking for tips on outlining a manuscript, or whether you need an outline at all, this panel will give you suggestions on how to accomplish it.

**Room B**

*POV Challenge: I, You, and We Walk into a Bar*

Panelists: Anthony Grooms, Shelli R. Johannes, Kimberly Jones, Rona Simmons

Moderator:

Unlocking the momentum of your story often comes when you determine who should be telling it. Should the narrator stand apart and see everything? Should your character be telling their story in their voice, as surprised as the reader with every new twist? Who should be the voice of your story? Every tale has a different need and a different approach. This panel will help you determine whose eyes will see and whose voice will tell the story.

---

**12:45 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Lunch

---

**2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

**Room A**

*YATL Pitch Match*

Hosts: Kimberly Jones and Vania Stoyanova

Four categories. Sixteen contestants. Four literary agents. Four winners. Take a dash of *The Dating Game* and add in the zany, off-kilter antics of the popular *YATL* program and you get ... this? Join *YATL* founders Kimberly Jones and Vania Stoyanova as they lead attendees through a series of fun and entertaining questions that dig deeper into their story and characters than a pitch could ever go. One winner in each category will get fifteen minutes of one-on-one time with an agent!

## **Room B**

*Workshop: Editing to Empower Every Word*

Kris Spisak

Just like any other piece of the writing process, editing is a craft to be learned. So often the best of stories are held back not by the author's creativity but by common typos, weak verbs, cliché phrasings, and vague descriptions that don't hook the reader as much as they could. How can an opening go beyond what readers have seen before? How can a writer think past overused body language postures and movements? How can a simple interaction come alive?

In this workshop, attendees will have the opportunity to brainstorm how to fix less powerful writing samples and gain confidence in their edits! A brief Q&A session will follow her presentation.

---

**3:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

## **Room A**

*I Think We're Alone Now: Battling the Impostor Syndrome*

Panelists: Ricki Cardenas, Clay McLeod Chapman, Paul Jenkins, Shelli R. Johannes, Kimberly Jones, Kris Spisak

Moderator:

When do you feel comfortable admitting that you're a writer? When will you give yourself that label and feel like it fits? No matter what success a writer has, they tend to be their own worst critics. But take a moment. Breathe. You're not alone in your fears, your insecurities, and your doubts. Listen as our panelists discuss how they have faced and fought the ever-present demon of Imposter Syndrome.

**4:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.**

Closing Remarks

Zachary Steele

## Schedule of Pitch & Mentoring Sessions

All sessions will be in Room C

### **Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup>**

**9:30 p.m. – 10:30 a.m.**

First Pages Critiques with David L. Robbins

**10:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.**

Pitch sessions with Kenzi Nevins, Katharine Sands, and Latoya Smith

**12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

First Pages Critiques with David L. Robbins

**2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.**

Pitch sessions with Kenzi Nevins, Katharine Sands, and Latoya Smith

**3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

Mentoring with David L. Robbins and Roger Johns

### **Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup>**

**9:15 p.m. – 10:15 a.m.**

Mentoring with Ricki Cardenas, David L. Robbins, and Shelli R. Johannes

**10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

Mentoring with Kenzi Nevins and Latoya Smith

**11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.**

Mentoring with Kenzi Nevins, Katharine Sands, and Latoya Smith

**2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

Mentoring with Clay McLeod Chapman, Chris Negron, and Kris Spisak