



# connections

the newsletter of the Connecticut Romance Writers Association  
Romance Writers of America, Region One, Chapter One



## letter from the membership secretary

Dear Friends,

Are you experiencing the late winter/early Spring doldrums like I currently am? Is the weather too gray, the lawn too dead, the house too.. blah? I keep thinking, “How am I supposed to write creatively when all I want to do is escape to crystal blue waters, skin-warming sunshine and frolicking manatees?” Okay, so manatees don't exactly frolic.

Hearing people comment similarly – a friend, somebody at the grocery store, the plumber who came to my house – is of great comfort. Especially when it comes from writers. People who know what it means to stare at a blank page, yearning to create something that will inspire, when we ourselves are in dire need of inspiration. Inspiration to write, that is. I'm plenty inspired to get out of dodge for awhile.

“Travel Broadens the Mind.” I clipped that out of a magazine and promptly adhered it to the front of my travel scrap book. Whether you travel down the road or across the world, there are just so many details that our writer, detail-oriented brains absorb. Like feeding a hunger, And I'm plenty hungry.

Researching locations for my stories is so satisfying (be it physically or electronically) because I get to visit new places, while flushing out my characters. Hello Naples! Hello rainforests of Costa Rica! Hang on... okay, I just pulled up Minot, North Dakota, where my father has a hunting camp. Hello, I'm in my pajamas and on the couch! With a cup of tea. As it snows.

The internet is a major bonus in our tech-driven society. When I can Google Earth the town where one of my characters lives or watch live street cameras, I feel like I've just taken a trip somewhere pretty cool – while getting that much closer to understanding the people inhabiting my head. And you know what? The doldrums have disappeared.

Happy trails – and researching - y'all!

Jennifer Iszkiewicz  
Membership Secretary

“ It's 106 miles to Chicago. We got a full tank of gas, half a pack of cigarettes, it's dark and we're wearing sunglasses. Hit it! ”

*Elwood to Jake, The Blues Brothers*

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next meeting  
april 9<sup>th</sup>  
laura moore  
writing a trilogy  
bonus session~  
pitching & moaning



## regular meeting schedule

Critique Group: 9:30

Business Meeting: 11:00

Lunch: 12:00. Don't forget to use the website to RSVP for either hotel or brown bag lunch

Speaker 1:00

Bonus Session  
(please see calendar)

## member news

**Jessica Andersen** turned in the seventh Nightkeeper book (Sven's story) and got to work on the next Bear Claw-set Intrigue (working title, Bear Claw Tree Fungus...not really!). She's also gearing up for a major web redesign and upcoming releases in May (Bear Claw Conspiracy) and June (Storm Kissed)...**Joy Smith** is still plugging away on my WIP, *Green Fire* (genre: suspense w/rom elem) and will be back on American soil soon! Can't wait to see you, Joy!...**Bill Clark** will be headed for Britain to watch Wills and Kate get married (as predicted in his first novel) and have cocktails at the House of Lords (slumming again).

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**Rhonda Lane** went to the Mystery Writers of America meeting in Manhattan where book critic and author Hallie Ephron, literary agent Janet Reid and editor Katherine Nintzel talked about what makes them stop reading a manuscript, like too much backstory early and characters described only by hair and eye color. **Gail Chianese** is taking Margie Lawson's Empowering Character Emotions class and highly recommends it to anyone who wants to take their writing to a new level. **Beth Seeber and Christine Wunch** are PRO members of RWA! Congratulations, ladies!

~ ~ ~ ~

**Huntley Fitzpatrick** handed in her rewrite! We could hear the angels singing, Huntley! Speaking of revisions, in what is surely a land-speed record, **Kristan Higgins** finished hers in 48 hours, resulting in bleeding eyes, shaking hands and her first ever third-person manuscript.

On a serious note, **Susan Hanniford Crowley** asked to be replaced as publicity director on the CTRWA Board of Directors due to health issues. At the last board meeting, Annie Greenberg was appointed as Sue's replacement. Thanks, Annie, for stepping up, and best wishes for your speedy recovery, Sue!

## calendar

**April 9<sup>th</sup> ~Laura Moore on writing a trilogy.**

Series can be a launch pad to best-seller status, but they can also be hard to sell if you're unpublished. Laura will talk about the ins and outs of series writing, as well as give tips on how to do it well. Laura is the author of *Remember Me* and *Believe in Me*, both from Ballantine Books, and will have copies to sell at the meeting.

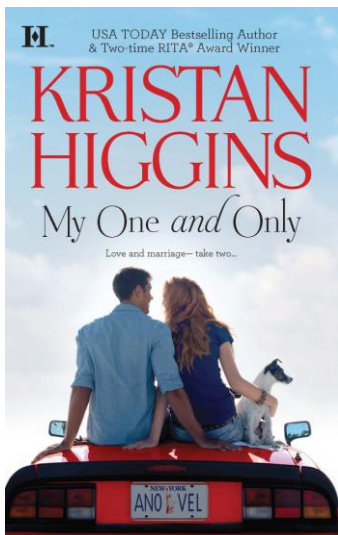
**Bonus session~Pitching and Moaning!**

That's right, you can practice your pitch in front of a panel of published authors and successful unpublished authors who've mastered the artform. Learn what to do—and what not to do. Jess Andersen will give a nutshell version of her rightfully famous pitching workshop, and you'll have a chance to practice. Don't be shy! Talking about your books is a necessary part of being an author.

**May 14<sup>th</sup>~Fiction Fest 2011!**

We are almost sold out, so if you haven't registered yet, don't wait! Agent and editor meetings! Informative, fun workshops from illustrious authors! Networking! Booksigning! Cocktail hour! Guys, don't miss this wonderful conference, which holds its own with some of the best regional conferences out there at half the cost. You'll learn something new, meet a new pal, give your manuscript the very best chance to see the light of publication, whether by pitching it to an eager editor or learning what it's missing. For more info, visit [www.ctrwa.org](http://www.ctrwa.org).

## member releases

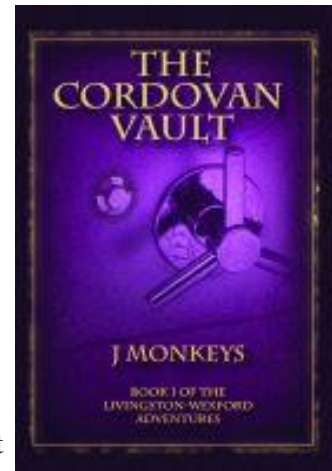


*Divorced couple. Best man. Maid of honor. Glacier National Park. Road trip. Mustang. World's largest penguin statue. Yankees. Red Sox. Quirky family. Cute dog.*

**“The best romance I’ve read in years, maybe ever.”** (The Reading Frenzy). **Starred review**, Publishers Weekly. **4 ½ stars**, The Romance Readers Connection. **Perfect 10**, Romance Reviews Today. For ordering info, visit [www.kristanhiggins.com](http://www.kristanhiggins.com).

*Kayla & Quinn are having a really bad weekend. For 14-year old enemies who are forced to live together it takes something extraordinary for things to be really bad. Like their house exploding. Or people trying to kill them. When a DVD turns up saying "We are not who you think we are," they begin a crazy adventure to figure out what that means & they find that nothing is the way it seems.*

J. Monkeys is the pen name of Jennifer Moncuse, and this is her first book! To order, visit [www.smashwords.com/books/view/46484](http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/46484)



## member of the month...the Big Man—Gerard Chartier



*Tell us about what you're working on now.*

I'm currently working on a revision of November Coven, my urban fantasy manuscript.

*What's the next major step you need to take in your writing?*

I think the next step, once my manuscript is revised to my

satisfaction, is to find an agent.

*What's the hardest part of the writing process for you?*

Revising. Composing original material gives me a creative rush, but revising is a much more workmanlike process. When I have a strong idea for improving the work, revising can be easy, but often it's a grind.

*What's your favorite part of the writing process?*

I love the initial composition, where I take ideas from my head and bring them to a form of reality in print.

*Any quirks or special talents you'd like to share?*

I can ice skate pretty well - legacy of playing youth hockey for ten years - and I make a pretty awesome pot of chili, if I do say so myself, and I won't kill spiders - I scoop them up and deposit them outside or in the basement instead.

*Have you been given any great advice on writing fiction, or do you have any to impart?*

Have I been given great advice about writing fiction? Sister (or Brother, as appropriate) have I ever! Part of the reason I'm revising November Coven so much is because of all the excellent tips I've been getting from CTRWA seminars. My own insights seem pretty feeble by comparison, but I can offer this thought: something is better than nothing. I know we've all had those moments where we've sat in front of the computer and the brain just doesn't seem to want to offer up anything. When it happens to me, I've found it helps to just write something - anything. It doesn't have to be awesome, it just has to get you going.

*Who are some of your favorite authors and why?*

I've been enjoying the heck out of the Dresden Files novels by Jim Butcher - action, excitement, humor, pathos, those novels have it all. Neal Stephenson has had some great works - in particular I enjoy Snow Crash and Cryptonomicon. They're both ripping good yarns, and in those works Stephenson writes with a playful sense of humor, offering turns of phrase that have left me in tears from laughter. George R. R. Martin's Song of Ice and Fire series of books is the best fantasy series I've ever read.

Unfortunately, he hasn't gotten past book 4 of a projected 7 book series, and I've been waiting for the next installment since 2006 (classic example of what not to do, right?). I used to love Azimov and Heinlein, and I'll still read through Zelazny's novels when I'm looking for a good read, but for high-literature quality sci-fi, you can't beat William Gibson - Neuromancer is his first full-length novel, and it'll blow you away.

*Best CT restaurant in your humble opinion?*

In my neck of the woods, I'd have to give the nod to 85 Main in Putnam Connecticut.

*If you could cast your current hero or heroine, who'd get the call?*

I really had trouble with this question, but after agonizing over it for a while, I figured my first choice for my current male protagonist would be Adam Baldwin, and for my female protagonist Morena Baccarin. Yes, they were both on Firefly - sue me!



### From *November Coven* by Gerard Chartier

The male vamp interposes himself between me and his date and hisses theatrically, his fang-bearing display perhaps just a tad less impressive than he'd like due to being at least a head shorter than me. I laugh and draw a vial of water from my belt to brandish at him. It only has tap water sloshing around within, but I'd stenciled the word "HOLY" onto the smooth glass surface. The pair shrinks away, much to the amusement of a quartet of zombies, who offer high-fives for my minor triumph.

You have to love New Haven on Halloween night.

## To Blog or Not to Blog?

By Peggy Staggs



WHAT'S IN IT for you and me? It could be a step forward to getting an agent or an editor. It allows the prospective agent/editor to have a look at the real you. Are you someone they want to represent? Are you reliable?

It's a window into who you really are. They can tell a great deal about you by the topics you choose, and the interesting way you communicate those subjects. The agent/editor who is uncertain may be swayed by your blog. I know someone who joined a blog about a year ago. When she joined none of the people on the blog were published. This sounds really clunky to me. It needs to be split up into a couple of sentences. Now nearly all of them are. Woo, ringing endorsement.

Think about it, what better way to convince a prospective agent/editor of your ability and reliability. After all, if you can write books and a blog and get them both out on time, you're someone they want to deal with.

You're shouting to the agent/editor that you're not only good and you have varied interests, but you can make a deadline.

It's also a great way to expand your readership. If someone comes to your blog, likes your writing and you have information there about your next book, you have a very good chance of selling said book. And it won't cost you a dime. Wow! Free publicity.

A few things to consider before you begin blogging:

Choose your blogging partners carefully. The last thing you want is for a potential or current reader to visit your blog only to find a fellow blogger has gone off on a tangent about which you don't agree. Or they have delved into something personal and inappropriate for public consumption. Now, what if that person visiting is someone you're hoping will become your agent/editor?

You've shot yourself in the foot and you didn't even pull the trigger.

Ouch!

We can all sabotage ourselves very nicely. We don't need outside help.

Set rules for everyone to follow and enforce them. You've done everything you can to be sure your new partners in blogging are responsible and rational and then it happens. That stable person you thought was the rock of sanity goes off the deep end and posts something embarrassing.

This can be avoided with specific rules. They should be clear and all should understand that those tough rules are carved in stone—cyber stone. Remember it's your career. The negative impression will rub off on you and you don't want your reputation tarnished by someone else writing something stupid.

So then, make firm rules and stick to them.

Make the blogging goals clear. What are the goals? Are

they to inform, educate, or provide entertainment? Or is it all three? Whatever the goals, make them clear to all who will be writing.

Be prepared for comments. If you put yourself before the public, there are going to be others who have something to say to you. Develop a thick skin for those times you may get a negative comment. And don't reply. It won't help your cause and it will only make the naysayer more powerful. You could end up with a back-and-forth that will sap your creative energy and taint your credibility.

The consequences for not complying. This is a tough one, but it needs to be clear to all—if the rules are broken they will be asked to leave. Hopefully, you'll never have to enforce this one.

Blogging can be a valuable a tool to advance your career. There are several ways to direct readers to your blog, but that's for another article.

Good luck and good blogging!

## Five Things I Would've Told Myself

By Cathy Maxwell

In a recent blog, Cathy Maxwell, who's been writing for 20 years, thought about what she might have told her younger self about writing...here are her lessons.

1. Don't be so anxious. Have fun with this. Easier said than done but so important. Whenever I was uptight, I wasn't my best. Laughter draws people to us. It also draws creativity to us as well.
2. The work is what is important. It's all you can control. The politics of publishing, of markets, of writing groups can make a person crazy. You don't have to share your opinion on every topic. Give yourself room to pivot to meet the demands of the marketplace and keep writing.
3. Celebrate every success along the way no matter how large or small. I'm not advocating blowing horns and throwing confetti for all to see—but realize when you've done something right.
4. A career is built one reader at a time. Lists and contest wins are gratifying, good reviews a gift...but your career foundation is built on readers. Don't let your ego or laziness disappoint them.
5. And finally, enjoy the people you work with. Pick the best publisher, the best editor, the best agent you can and form a team. Recognize they want to sell books as much as you want to write them. Sometimes, their decisions will be at odds with yours. Sometimes, you will part ways. But remember that publishing is a small community. Keep doors open.

*Cathy Maxwell is one of most respected and loved writers in the business. Visit her website, [www.cathymaxwell.com](http://www.cathymaxwell.com)*

## Uptight About Tenses

by Patti Cavaliere, CTRWA Member

I ADMIT IT. Until recently I did not understand Active versus Passive voice. I have a feeling I'm not alone and it occurred to me why.

For one, most of us have been out of grammar school for some time, and unless we happen to be English teachers, grammar is a part of our past. Which brings me to my point: I was confusing **Voice** (active, passive) with **Tenses** (present, past, past perfect, ect).

As an author, we decide whether our story takes place in the present or past, but if we want our sentences to stand out, we need to aim for Active Voice. Yes, this is what confused me, too, because a sentence written in the Active Voice can be in the Present or Past Tense.

Relax those shoulders. Don't turn the page yet. I *promise* you will feel better if you finish this article. NOTE: Text in (parentheses) is for entertainment. The following are all examples of **Active Voice**:

PRESENT TENSE: She loves him.

PAST TENSE: She loved him (ever since they met as children).

PAST PERFECT TENSE: She had loved him (until the day he cheated with her best friend).

With Active Voice, the subject of the sentence (She) performs the action (loves). The following is an example of **Passive Voice**:

PRESENT TENSE: He is loved by her.

PAST TENSE: He was loved by her (ever since they met as children).

PAST PERFECT TENSE: He had been loved by her (until he turned into a rat).

With Passive Voice, the subject of the sentence (He) does not perform the action; the subject is acted upon. **Hint: Passive Voice will often contain the word BY.**

The above Passive Voice sentences aren't grammatically incorrect, however, they are often not as clean and simple. This is why editors prefer Active Voice.

So that's all you need to know, except that **She** ended up marrying his brother, the doctor, and they live in a fifteen room house on the beach where she spends her days reading romance novels. See, I promised you'd feel better.

*Patti Cavaliere recently won First Place this summer in a literary contest and another took Honorable Mention in the 2010 Fall Fiction Women On Writing contest. To distract herself from waiting to hear back from agents and publishers, she writes humorous articles for CTRWA. While trying to find a home for her first novel, LOOKING FOR LEO, she has finally started her next women's fiction.*

## Choosing a Setting

by Karen Rose Smith

WHILE PLOTTING, THERE are many reasons why a writer chooses a particular setting. In my first few books, I chose the town where I grew up to be my backdrop for many reasons. Garnering local publicity was a big one. But I believe I mainly chose it for familiarity. I knew what shops and businesses were located downtown. I had a host of suburbs to choose from. The town was large enough so I could weave in anything I needed. Most of all, I knew it so well I could concentrate on all the other elements necessary to sell those books. Years later when I set a more expansive book there that dealt with the 1970's, I realized my heart was in my hometown and that shone through whether or not I'd realized the fact in my earlier books.

Sometimes I choose a setting because of my hero or heroine's background or career path. If I want to write about a venture capitalist, I could choose Chicago or New York City. A trauma surgeon would lead me to a more heavily populated area and have hundreds of patient contacts whereas a small town doctor would be involved with fewer patients over his or her lifetime. If I select a large city, I still create a community of characters because friendships and family bonds are critical in my novels. A hometown gives my hero or heroine roots. If my character is a newcomer, he or she can feel estranged from the residents, or see this place with a sense of exploration. My hero and heroine can shade a reader's opinion of any setting.

A fictional setting is often the easiest to use. I writer can give the town a flavor all of its own. My street names can be picturesque or utilitarian. I can build a hospital with a specialized Neonatal Intensive Care unit or create a lake for boating. Anything and everything I will need for my plot can be a product of my imagination.

For my Reunion Brides series, I choose a setting that is as important as any character. Miners Bluff is a fictional former copper mining town near Flagstaff, AZ. Forests, canyons and mountains infuse the books with their own special magic. My heroes and heroines are surrounded by a natural beauty that infiltrates not merely the descriptions but the imagery I use as well. This setting becomes a character in itself.

Every setting should have a purpose. Before beginning a project, I ask myself—What does this setting accomplish? If I'm mindful of its purpose, it can become integral to my book. In all of my romances, I concentrate on emotion. My emotional, creative and spiritual response to the awesome scenery in this section of our beautiful country also seeps into the fabric of my Reunion Brides series. I hope you can fall into these plotlines and find them as compelling to read about as I did to write about.

*Karen Rose Smith is the award-winning, best-selling novelist of over seventy published romances. Her latest series, The Reunion Brides, is set near Flagstaff, Arizona. Visit her at [www.karenrosesmith.com](http://www.karenrosesmith.com) or on Facebook.*

*This article first appeared in the February 2011 issue of the Heartline Herald, newsletter of the NJRW.*

## Quick Tips to Help Pace Your YA Novel

by Amanda Ashby



WHEN I FIRST started writing YA books I remember someone telling me that I would need a fast pace because teens had a short attention span and were easily bored. And so, being an impatient Aries girl who likes to do things quickly, I took this to heart. However, it didn't take me long to discover that it's just as easy to kill of a story with a unrelenting speed and action as it to include a ten page sunset description, so really, I think the motto is that you don't need to have a fast pace to write good YA books, but rather that you need to have a good pace.

Which of course leads to the question, what is pace and how can I make it good?

Quite simply, pace is the speed with which your book moves along and for me the easiest way to control my pace is to look at my scenes and sequels.

### Scenes and Sequels

Now I must confess that I'd never heard of scenes and sequels until I stumbled onto Randy Ingermason's site not long after I sold my first book. I was actually there to look at his Snowflake method but ended up being a lot more interested in his article on scenes (<http://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/art/scene.php>), which is based on Dwight Swain's Techniques of the Selling Writer.

A scene is where your heroine or hero has a specific goal or desire in mind and sets out to achieve it (and the reader should also know the motivation behind the goal so that they can understand what will happen if the character doesn't achieve it). This desire creates action, which moves the story along. However, because all stories require conflict, even if your character does achieve their goal when they leave the scene, it will always be at some kind of cost.

An example of this when the heroine wants to convince her parents to let her go out on a date with a guy she knows that they don't approve of (her motivation is because despite the fact he's from the wrong side of the tracks, he's the only guy who has ever been able to see past the burns on her face). So, after some snappy dialogue and perhaps some foot stomping and sulking, the parents agree to the date, but only if the heroine takes her younger brother with her. This is the perfect example of a heroine achieving her goal but at a cost.

As you can imagine the scene is full of action and drama, but instead of moving straight onto the next scene (aka the date), a good scene should be followed by a sequel, where the heroine can show her emotional reaction to what's happened before she regroups and come up with a new plan or goal to deal with it (you know, like locking her brother into the closet so that he can't make the date!). Then once your character has that

new goal, it will lead onto a new action scene.

Now, the reason I've spent so much time on scenes and sequels is because for me they are the things that dictate your pace. An action scene can be fast, with lots of things going on and then the sequel is the place where both the characters and readers can both catch their breath and get ready for whatever is going to happen next. Another advantage of using sequels is that they give you as a writer a chance to make sure your characters aren't heading off in an unexpected direction (or perhaps that's just me—see the above comment about being an impatient Aries!).

So once I go through my manuscript and identify my scenes and sequels, I then check to see if they're all working as well as I want them to. Of course, most of the time they're not, but that's okay because there are some simple things that I use to fix them!

### How to increase your pace in a scene

#### Show not tell.

All writers are told the importance of showing and not telling, but sometimes it can be a hard concept to master. Telling a scene is when your character recounts what has happened either internally or through dialogue and while it can be good way to convey smaller pieces of information, if it's an important scene then it's much better for you to let the reader see it unfold first hand, or "on camera" as I like to call it. It can be particularly easy to fall into the "telling" trap when you write in first person and your character starts to become the narrator rather than the participant. So a great place to start looking at your pace is to make sure that all your major scenes are played out for the reader to see instead of just having your character recount what has happened.

#### Dialogue

Dialogue is a great way to move a scene forward, though make sure that it's not filled with mundane stuff like three pages of what the heroine has bought at the mall or recounting previous information that the reader already knows. To increase pace, make your dialogue snappy and not peppered with unnecessary speech/action tags or internal thought that can all slow down the flow.

#### Action

Don't dump too much back story in an action scene because it can slow down the pace. Imagine if you're watching an episode of 24 and Jack Bauer spent fifteen minutes daydreaming about his bad love life instead of working out a cunning and ingenious way to get into the heavily guarded foreign embassy. Not only would he probably get caught, but you as a viewer would be very tempted to go and make a cup of tea and hope that when you got back, there would be something to watch! Or worse, you

*continued next page*



## Sleeping Around in New York

by Rhonda Lane, CTRWA Member

ATTENDING RWA NATIONALS is a significant investment in a writer's career. Costs rise significantly this year because Nationals will be held at a midtown Manhattan landmark hotel during the week, during vacation travel season.

If the Marriott Marquis runs out of rooms blocked out for the conference, or if you'd rather not sleep with three others, or if you don't mind not staying at the conference hotel, you still can cut costs.

If you like Hotwire, or Hotels.com or Priceline, by all means consult them. The Marquis is in Times Square where multiple subway lines converge, so you can stay just about anywhere in the city. Or even outside the city.

Here are some options you can consider.

Head for a bed and breakfast, or even sublet an apartment. What could be more "New York" than subletting an apartment? City Lights [www.citylightsnewyork.com/](http://www.citylightsnewyork.com/) has been a clearing house for B&Bs and sublets. All you have to do is stay a minimum of three nights. *New York Magazine's* article about budget hotels names some suggestions. [www.nymag.com/urban/guides/nyonthecheap](http://www.nymag.com/urban/guides/nyonthecheap). Keep in mind that some of these, especially listed toward the bottom, have rooms where guest share a bath. Also, rates may have risen since the article was published. Rosemary Harris, author of gardening mysteries DEAD HEAD and SLUGFEST, reports that friends have recommended the Gershwin Hotel. [www.gershwinhotel.com](http://www.gershwinhotel.com). The Pod Hotel [www.thepodhotel.com/](http://www.thepodhotel.com/) is a hip new hotel with some rooms with private baths but cheaper ones without private baths. An in-room indicator light system shows guests which bathrooms are open.

Hotels in the suburbs and commute on the train. Author Rosemary Harris, a Stamford resident, reports that the Stamford, CT, train station has plenty of parking. Stamford is a 45-minute ride on the train from midtown Manhattan. If you live near New Haven, a trip on the train takes slightly longer than 1-1/2 hours. Be sure to factor in any driving time, especially weekday rush hour traffic. TIME-SAVING TIP: If you decide to commute, buy your subway Metrocard when you buy your train ticket (you can get both on the platforms or in the station), instead of fumbling with your wallet down in the subway station.

### Useful links

**Marriott Marquis** location map with surrounding hotels [www.marriott.com/hotels/maps/travel/nycmq-new-york-marriott-marquis/](http://www.marriott.com/hotels/maps/travel/nycmq-new-york-marriott-marquis/); **NYC Subway map** [www.mta.info/nyct/maps/submap.htm](http://www.mta.info/nyct/maps/submap.htm); **Trip Advisor** [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com) Do a search on the hotel you're considering. Anyone who wants may write a review. You'll see the good, the tolerable and the seriously ugly.

Pacing Your YA Novel, *continued from previous page*

might even change the channel. Of course there's always a place for back story, but just not in the middle of an important action scene.

### Emotion

Just because you're cutting back on internal thought and back story in a scene, doesn't mean you can't still have your characters showing emotion to help mirror the drama that the scene is creating and also heighten the conflict, since the more adversely the character responds emotionally, the more the reader knows that they have something important is at stake. An example is again with Jack Bauer, we want to see the sweat on his brow and his chest rising and falling because we know that if Jack's nervous about this mission, then we should be as well.

### How to slow down the pace in a sequel

Basically, the easiest way to slow down the pace in a sequel is to reverse everything that I've just mentioned! Now is the time to have longer internal thoughts, use description, and drop in bits of back story if you need to. However, just because you slow the pace down in a sequel, it doesn't mean that things need to come to a complete halt. Yes, you can have your heroine sitting in her bedroom moodily staring at her Edward poster as she thinks about how badly her confrontation with her parents went, but you can just as easily have her talking to a friend about what's happened so they can figure it out together and come up with a new plan, or the heroine could be at school, involved in a sub-plot that will still add conflict and tension to the story, but just not at such a quick pace as your other scenes.

### And finally...

Every story has its own pace and these notes aren't designed to turn your gentle coming of age romance into a high-speed dystopian action story, but they will hopefully let you identify a few parts of your manuscript and help you control the pace so that they story moves along at the speed you want it to. Good luck!

*Amanda tries to write nicely paced YA books and her next one, Fairy Bad Day is out on the 9th of June with Puffin.*

*Visit her at [www.amandaashby.com](http://www.amandaashby.com).*

*This article was first used in the February 2011 edition of The Scoop, the newsletter for the Young Adult Chapter of RWA.*

“Inspiration usually comes during work, rather than before it.”

— Madeleine L'Engle

## pointless but fun

## what's the first line of your current work-in-progress?

"You're off the case, Jack ... period, end of discussion."—Jess Andersen

I have one of the best jobs in the world. —Bill Clark

Victor Novak felt the woman's eyes slide over his body, taking in every inch of skin, every mole, and every crease. —Joy Smith

At twenty-two, Cara Landry had on an armor that unrelentingly weighed her down. It could not be seen, and it was not material, but she could not for the life of her begin to take it off.—Shirley Webb

"Where the hell is everyone?"—Allan Cooper

A neon sign in the shape of an eye blinked from an upper window.  
—Toni Andrews

Bystanders remaining on the fairgrounds would be eager to vent about the murder in their midst, but not for long. —Rhonda Lane

All forty-four eyes stared at her from the riser-like steps in silence, thank God. —Beth Seeber

"Son of a bitch," Kyra whispered. — Marian Lanouette

Three souls lined up on the shore of the Lake of Rebirth, awaiting their next assignment. —ZsuZsa Simandy

It was time to escape. Run away. —Cassy Pickard

"Awwrrgh!" I felt the scream vibrate through my throat, but still couldn't believe the horrendous sound had come from me.—Eleanor Sullo

The crack of gun fire exploded in the air...once...twice...three times. I flinched with each pop, the smell of gunpowder thick in the warm mist that rained down over the cemetery. —Paula Sharon

Ariana froze as an arm yanked her back against a burly chest.—Gail Chianese

Maybe if they still had everything in common like they did once, maybe if they'd stayed in touch more often these past twelve years, maybe if there was a better reason for leaving a message like that.—Patti Cavaliere

"You can't go in there, ma'am. 'Tis no place for a lady."—Kate Smith

Whoever said, *life sucks then you die*, wasn't too far off the mark. They obviously didn't have me in mind when they said it, but it applies to my life, both living and dead, just the same. —Christine Wunch

The sun caressed her skin with the warmth of a lovers touch.—Noelle Brunelle

"No more excuses!"—Jennifer Moncuse

Bree Campbell lied to her son. Again.—Jennifer Fusco

The screen flickered eerily, light bouncing and moving in the darkened theater.—Kimberly K. Fox

"So, anyway, we're broke. Sorry about that." — Kristan Higgins

Damn, he was hot. —Kelly Morse

## 2011 ctrwa board



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*Sleeping around New York, continued*

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**Tipping Guide.** One of the toughest parts about traveling in NYC is keeping small bills on hand. If you're staying in a business-class or above hotel? Leave \$5 a day left on the desk with a note for housekeeping, especially with more than one person per room. If a doorman hails you a cab, give him a buck or two. If a bellman lugs your bags loaded with all the books you take home? Another \$5. Or if they're hardbacks? \$10  
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