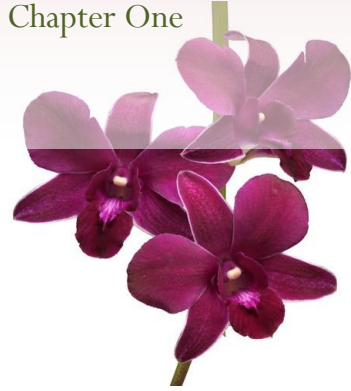




# CONNECTIONS

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



## President's Letter

LATELY, I'VE BEEN struggling to write. I have a deadline looming, so my muse's decision to take a vacation is especially poorly timed.

I don't believe in writer's block, at least not the type that's portrayed in movies and on television. I don't know any writers who stare at a blank page, trying to think of something to write about. But I know plenty of writers who find themselves in positions where they either just don't feel like writing, or when Gremlins (see my June 2010 letter) prevent them from getting around to it, or when life's circumstances become overwhelming.

The reasons for struggling can be big or small—but, luckily, so can the solutions. It's often said that the cure for Writer's Block is "Bichok" – *Butt In Chair, Hands on Keyboard*. For me, lately, that hasn't been enough. So, I've had to resort to other tactics. And, since I suspect I'm not the only one this ever happens to, I thought I'd share them.

*Get off the internet.* No email, no Facebook, no Twitter. For me, resolving to do this isn't enough—checking my email has become so automatic for me that I can do it in the middle of writing a sentence. Instead, I have to get up out of my chair, cross the room, and *unplug the cable modem*. I set a couple of times a day when I'm allowed to plug it back in and check messages, etc., after which it goes back off until evening. Period.

*Set a schedule.* I'm a morning person so, when I worked full time, I got up early and wrote in the morning before work. I know others who wait until their children are in bed, or when the rest of the family is watching T.V. No one time is better than the other, but if you get into the habit of writing the same time every day, it will be easier. If you are writing full time, "go to work" – get as dressed up as you would if you were going to a casual office. One writer I know says she never sits down to write until she'd put on her earrings. Another says she has to have on lace-up shoes, so she can't kick them off (I, personally, refuse to concede my bunny slippers—thanks, Rhonda Lane).

*Set a daily goal.* Not a huge one, but not one that's so small that it feels as if you can always make it up tomorrow if you don't get to it today. Cherry Adair prints out calendar pages that have a place for her to write in a daily goal and an actual word count. I'm trying this now – it seems to be helping.

*Use a timer.* If things are getting desperate, figure out a number of minutes for which you absolutely know you can write. Lately, for me, this has been just TEN MINUTES. Yup, ten. You can use a kitchen timer (which also comes in handy for that cable modem thing – you can limit the amount of time the internet is turned back on before you unplug it again) or use a tool I absolutely love: Dr. Wicked's "Write or Die." Now, the free version *is* on the internet, but you can get a desk top version for \$10, which you can load on as many personal PC's as you like. Write or Die allows you to set a time/word count goal (I do 250 words in 10 minutes) and then start writing. If you pause for too long (you set the strictness level) it punished you with flashing lights and annoying sounds, such as a crying baby, fingernails on a chalkboard or <<shudder>> Hansen playing *Oom-bop*.

I'll see everyone on our next meeting--September 11<sup>th</sup>, which is the day AFTER I have to have my book turned in. Ask me if the tactics worked!

— Toni

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**NEXT MEETING:**  
**September 11<sup>th</sup>**

**Why Your Manuscript  
Is Rejected**

**See page 2 for details.**

## REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULE

**Resuming August 14<sup>th</sup>**  
**Holiday Inn, North Haven**

Critique Group: 9:30  
General Meeting: 10:45-11:15  
Craft Corner  
Lunch  
Speaker 12:45  
Hands-On Workshop  
(after the speaker)

CALENDAR

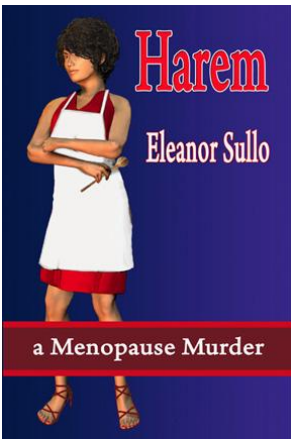
**September 11...The Return of the Divine Miss Thea!** Thea Devine, CTRWA's most published member, will return for her lecture, **Why Your Manuscript Is Rejected**. Why did your manuscript get rejected? Thea will discuss what doesn't work and why culled from her twenty-five years evaluating romance and women's fiction as a freelance reader. She'll talk about story and plot, where you get ideas, and things to try for the times when you're stuck and don't know what to do, discuss trends and cultural themes and answer questions. This is a nuts and bolts, look under the hood to see how it works discussion, with specific examples and hopefully some practical advice.

**Plot My Proposal: Hands-On Workshop with Toni Andrews.** Learn what a published author has to do to get a new contract (aside from the usual sleeping to the top, that is). Those of us who have witnessed Toni's awe-inspiring process can attest that this will be fun, informative and incredibly helpful.

**September 2, Connecticut Authors Trail featuring Jessica Andersen,** 6:30 pm, Janet Carson Calvert Library, 5 Tyler Dr., Franklin, CT.

**October 9...**A psychic? A SWAT team? We're still working on it, but stay tuned for more details!

MEMBER RELEASES

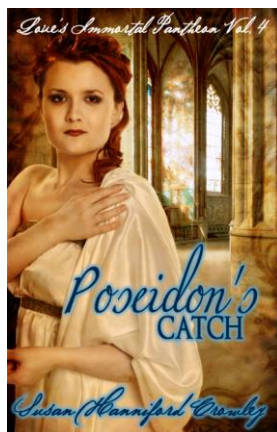


Lucia just wants to make life fun again for Golden Haven's residents. But murder in the night and a streaking senior stud with ogling admirers complicate matters. Trying to calm her often confused mother-in-law, she also fears sweetheart Tony is straying, and she'll never get to open the restaurant of her dreams.

Visit Ellie's website for purchase information, [www.eleanorsullo.com](http://www.eleanorsullo.com)

When sexy Poseidon meets Mila, a passion ignites in him that he's never known. But she is burdened by a secret and time is running out.

Visit Sue's website for purchase information, [www.susanhannifordcrowley.com](http://www.susanhannifordcrowley.com)



MEMBER NEWS

**Marian Lanouette** was asked to submit six chapters of *If I Fail* to an agent! Hooray, Marian!...**Karen Pincio** got two rejections from agents (boo, agents!) and is looking forward to the start of school so she can plot once more...**Kristan Higgins's** office, once subterranean and fondly referred to as the Pit of Despair, has relocated to two stories above terra firma! Kristan plans to call her new place the Aerie of Despairie, or the Desp-Aerie...From **Rhonda Lane:** "After ten years of only emailing each other, I finally met Sisters in Crime friend and debut author Sasscer Hill in Saratoga Springs while she was in town to sign at the National Museum of Racing." ...**Paula Sharon** has become an online workshop junkie, taking Shirley Jump's 'From Good to Sold' and one on creating a web presence...**Kate Smith** just found out that her YA novel, *The Girl in the Steel Corset*, will be released in hard cover in June 2011! So exciting, Kate!...**Monica Spence** is preparing for her PhD review and awaits word from several agents and editors. Good luck on all fronts, Monica!...**Susan and Peter Andrews** learned that the book they wrote together, *Lucky Numbers*, is a finalist in the NJ Put Your Heart in the Book contest, in the Strong Romantic Elements category. We will all be cheering for you two!...**Kelly Morse** submitted to an agent; got about a third through a new endeavor and became stymied, so started re-revising an old one...From **Gail Chianese:** "After attending the great workshops at nationals, I realized I made a major plotting error in my ms and need to start over to fix it. While I let that brew I've started a new suspense story that has been waiting to be put to paper. Thanks to our wonderful workshop last month, the main characters are shaping up nicely."...**Susan Crowley** is working on a steampunk (alternate history) romance in addition to another vampire full length. On Sept 17-19, Sue will be at the Authors After Dark Romance Unlimited Convention as a speaker...**Huntley Fitzpatrick** has written 1/3 of her new novel whilst crawling around on her floor and dodging the feet of her many children. She broke her ankle. It's not funny. Stop laughing...**Joy Smith** submitted a children's story she wrote for her grandchildren! What could be lovelier? And **Anna Malick** has finished her third manuscript! Congratulations, Anna! **Katherine Albert** is trying to polish three chapters of something and would love to find someone who could read it objectively...any takers? And finally, **Paula Robinson** has given up the idea her first draft has to be a work of art and is just writing. Yay, Paula!

## Member of the Month...the lovely Barbara Gerwien

*Everyone's favorite Cuban, Barbara Gerwien's energy, determination and good cheer—and habit of giving everyone a nickname—have invigorated us all. Barb took a few minutes to tell us about her writing life.*

Tell us about what you're working on now.

I'm presently working on an erotic historical. Set in 1892 London, Alexandra Donahue, the daughter of the Earl of North Hampton is desperate to get married and has formed the perfect plan to force her father's hand. Her only problem: she mistakenly seduces the wrong man at a masquerade ball. Lord Winthrop Jack James, the Duke of Mansfield, is her intended's cousin...not to mention her sister's ex-fiancé.

Jack finds himself in the arms of masked, raven-haired beauty who is sure to ease his heartache, even if just for one night. His only problem: she is a virgin...or was a virgin. He soon discovers that he has deflowered Alexandra Donahue, his one-time closest friend, and his ex fiancé's youngest sister. His honor forces him to propose marriage...after all he isn't the rake that his reputation says he was.

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

Making it all fit together on paper. I need to keep reminding myself to make sure it comes across the page, and that every detail is important to my characters. Then finish the darn thing!!!!

What have been some of the highs of your romance writing thus far?

Definitely the national conference. From the key note speaker - Nora "freak'n" Roberts - who was unbelievably inspirational (everyday I tell myself to keep swimming)...to watching Kristan accept her Rita!!!! Honestly, that really hit home because as Kristan has told me before, it's about determination, hard work, and honing your craft...all things that I know I am capable of. Also meeting so many people in Orlando, and realizing what a spectacular group of women and a few men that we have in our chapter. Being a part of CTRWA has been one of the best groups I've ever been a part of, and hope to be with you for years to come.

What are some good books you've read lately?

I just finished Sabrina Darby's *On These Silken Sheets* - Historical Erotica - It was beautifully written. I've been poring over Julia Quinn's *Bridgerton* series, and of course the *Demon Keepers* series when I need to get out of historical stuff.

Favorite authors and why?

Lauren Willig—she is the author that inspired me to write. Her mastery of the English language is something that I hope to one day grasp. Elizabeth Hoyt, who I met at nationals and made a complete fool of myself. I love her plots, and because damn that woman can write a sex scene. And my idol that I would make an even bigger fool of myself if I ever met is Diana Gabaldon of the *Outlander* series. I have hoarded her last two books, and have refused to read them because it would over.

Favorite Connecticut restaurant?

El Coyote in Monroe - three Mexican brothers that make damn good black beans, and a hell of a margarita!!!

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

The girl from *Vampire Diaries* - Elaina (Nina Dobrev). She is like the girl next door, that's how I imagine Alexandra. Jack is Yoann Gourcuff - Midfielder for France in the World Cup Soccer. Seriously look him up, so hot!!!



From *Masked Seduction*  
by Barbara Gerwien

He was dressed just as they planned: a black mask and black coat with a sprig of flowers in his lapel. He seemed a bit taller, and more brutish, but she disregarded her assessment. His dark hair curled slightly around his ears just like Henry's. She should have known the moment he had kissed her. *Henry never made her tingle in such a way.* Alexandra thought it was the anticipation of what was to come. *How could she have been so foolish!*

# Dialogue: Five Mistakes to Avoid

by Isabo Kelly

A FRIEND AND editor once told me that we all get one “easy” thing in writing and the rest of the craft we have to struggle with to get right. My easy thing is dialogue.

The problem with having something come easy to you, though, is that you forget you still have to develop the skill so it will grow with the rest of your writing. I had two books published before an editor started calling me out on my dialogue mistakes. Imagine the horror. What do you mean I need to fix my dialogue? Dialogue is supposed to be my easy thing? I’m not supposed to have to work at it!

Wrong. Like it or not, we have to work on all the elements of our fiction, all the time. During this learning process, I discovered a few common mistakes made by authors of every level. Here are five problems to look out for in writing dialogue:

## 1. Using characters’ names in dialogue all the time.

Listen to two people talk and you’ll notice you rarely hear them refer to each other by name. Whole conversations can be carried on without either person saying the full name of the other. Nicknames or pet names may come up, but rarely full names. The level of acquaintance between the two people will influence this, with people new to each other more likely to use names than people who’ve known each other for decades. But frequently in written dialogue, authors have characters constantly referring to each other by name: sometimes for dramatic effect, sometimes to make clear who’s speaking, sometimes because it seemed like a good idea at the time. This was one of the first things I got called out on. When you’re editing your stories, cut out as many uses of names in the dialogue as possible. This will not only tighten your prose, it will make the flow of the dialogue more realistic for your reader.

## 2. Not making the voices of your characters distinctive enough.

When done well, entire passages of written conversation with no dialogue tags can be read and the reader will still know who is speaking. Do all your characters—particularly your hero and heroine—sound alike? Do many of them use the same turns of phrase despite very different backgrounds? Try removing the tags and letting someone else read the dialogue. Can they tell who’s speaking? If they can’t, you need to work on making the voices clearer. Pay attention to word choice and turns of phrase that are unique to your character to help give them their individual voice. Subtle changes can make all the difference.

## 3. Forgetting that dialogue is not the same as a real life conversation.

This happens frequently, but it’s important to bear in mind that dialogue is NOT conversation. In conversation, we pause a lot, we use a lot of “em”s and “uhm”s and we don’t always form coherent and understandable sentences. If you try to translate this directly into written dialogue, it never reads right. Dialogue has to make sense, it has to flow, and it has to be somewhat coherent. The trick is to make dialogue sound realistic without making it “real”. Avoid excessive stutters, interruptions and dropped sentences. Have your characters say what they mean to say.

## 4. Not using contractions.

Even if your characters are upper crust, even if they’re historical figures, humans use contractions when they talk. Leaving them out of dialogue will make your characters sound stiff and unrealistic—and it’ll drive readers like me nuts. It’s tempting, particularly when you’re writing characters who are more formal in countenance, to have them say things like, “I will not have coffee.” But people don’t talk like this. Even a formal turn of phrase will sound more like, “I’ll not have coffee.” A more realistic way of saying this for a modern reader is, “I won’t have coffee.”

The only time to use the full “will not” rather than “won’t” is when you want to add emphasis to the “not”. And if you’re using contractions regularly, when you do have a character say, “I will not have coffee”, the reader will know the character is placing that emphasis for a reason (like they’re pissed off at the person offering, or maybe they know there’s poison in the coffee).

## 5. Using dialogue to convey information.

Here’s the tricky part—sometimes dialogue is a great way to convey information, especially when you have characters discussing topics that are new to one or the other of them. The mistake in this technique arises when characters are conveying information they both already know.

“As you are well aware, Jane, I’ve just crashed my car into our front window, in the house we’ve lived in for the last fifteen years and where our children grew up.”

“Why yes, Stan. And as you know, we don’t have insurance on either the car or house to cover this accident, which is exactly like that incident last week when you ran over the neighbor’s award-winning roses worth half a million dollars.”

*continued next page*



# Burnout

by B.K. Reeves

I BELIEVE THAT sooner or later, every successful professional writer suffers from burnout. What happens when an author is burned out? It's very simple. We wake up one morning and our sole ambition is to laze in bed all day. The last thing we want to do is write.

Force of habit rules here. Burned out gal plops her butt in the chair (BIC) facing her computer. She pulls up a game of solitaire. Playing games might relax her enough to write. My favorite delaying tactic is to check my email. I answer all my messages, some of them twice. I write to my family and to others I need to contact and some I don't.

Make no mistake. This is not writer's block. We know our story; some of us have already written our synopsis. So we know what to write; we just don't feel like doing it. The first time this happened to me, I was scared spitless.

What causes burnout? Who knows? Maybe our brain rebels and refuses to produce for a while. One consolation: Burnout is a temporary condition. Trust me. Burnout does not, I repeat not, last forever or very long. Whatever the cause, learn to deal with it. Keep assuring yourself the burnout will pass. Word of advice: Call your editor (who doesn't believe in burnout) and tell her anything but the truth. Say you have to go in for emergency surgery. Or you must travel to West Texas to take care of your ailing mother. She will believe this because she knows you're tight with your mom. Say your house was struck by lightning and your files are all fried. Say you've lost your flash drives and can't find your backup files.

What you have going for you is the fact that for years you have faithfully met your deadlines. That pristine track record will carry you through the horrors of burnout.

Decide what you're going to do. Leaving town isn't the answer; running away won't cure burnout or anything else. Grasping at straws, you remember that written into every novelist's contract is a nasty little clause stating she must offer her publisher first refusal of her next book. Is this the solution? Distract your editor with a proposal you know she will turn down. Every writer has an early novel or two in her files that is bad, bad, bad. This delaying action could give you time to recover from your burnout.

Another method that might work is simply to write through the darned thing, just keep pounding the keys. Don't worry. The words don't have to make sense. Ignoring burnout and trusting that it might go away sounds like a Pollyanna thing to do. Wait a minute. Wasn't she the girl who always looked on the positive side of life? She was and so am I.

Burnout has knocked me off my feet before and I've always survived. I will survive this time, too.

*See more of BK online at [www.bkreeves.com](http://www.bkreeves.com)*

*This article first appeared in the July 2010 issue of In Print!, the monthly newsletter of Houston Bay Area RWA.*

## Dialogue Mistakes, *continued from previous page*

Dialogue should be pertinent to the situation, and if it's conveying information, the information needs to be new to at least one person in the conversation.

"Stan, honey, will our insurance cover the wreck you just made of our front window?"

"Uhm, no. Insurance company dropped us after I ran over the neighbor's fancy flowers. Said I'm a high risk driver."

"I wonder where they got that idea."

Great dialogue will make your novels sparkle, bring your characters to life, and help your readers fall in love. Bad dialogue will make them throw your book against a wall. Watch out for these five common mistakes, and you'll have your readers flipping pages to the very end.

*Isabo Kelly (aka Katrina Tipton) is the author of multiple science fiction, fantasy and paranormal romances. Her Prism Award Winning novel, SIREN SINGING, has just been released in paperback from Ellora's Cave ([www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com)). For more, visit [www.isabokelly.com](http://www.isabokelly.com).*

*This article first appeared in the March issue of the RWANYC newsletter, Keynotes.*

## Having trouble getting motivated?

Here are a few songs that might get your butt in that chair when all else fails...

The Impossible Dream, Man of La Mancha

Where the Streets Have No Name, U2

Unbelievable, EMF

Baba O'Riley (aka Teenage Wasteland), The Who

Theme from Rocky (oh, come on! You love it!)

Every Day I Write the Book, Elvis Costello

Soar, Christina Aguilera

I Believe I Can Fly,  
R. Kelly

I Gotta Feeling,  
Black Eyed Peas



## Brainstorming Secrets From a Writer Hermit

By Carol Ann Erhardt

Brainstorming is not a fun thing to do when you are a writer hermit. That's me. A writer hermit.

Although cats are supposed to be muses, my three cats are simply distractions. They love to climb across my keyboard and chase the cursor on the monitor. They are not good for bouncing ideas against. I sometimes write the ideas on paper and toss them on the floor for them to play with. Alas, they never give feedback. Likewise, my husband doesn't have a clue about book writing. He doesn't get it, and his attention span is much too short.

Some writers have great critique partners, or a writing group, where brainstorming and conflict can be tossed around for new and exciting ideas. But, what does a writer hermit do? When publishers want new ideas, new voices, and plots outside the box, brainstorming is required. I've tried the "what if" many times, but that works best when used with other people. It just didn't work for me. I began to despair of ever finding a way to come up with great plots.

Then I saw a post about the "Writer's Brainstorming Kit" by Pam McCutcheon and Michael Waite (Gryphon Books). I read several reviews and it sounded like this might be my solution. I purchased the book, which comes with a deck of cards.

The concept is to utilize what you already know about the structure of a book: goals, motivations, etc., with one added dimension—a deck of cards! How does it work? You set up the structure for your book, or characters, or both. Then randomly draw cards for each. Each card has one word on it (and a number). The book lists each of the cards in numbered order with words or phrases to jumpstart your creativity. For instance, I might pick "Insanity" for my Character Role, and Loneliness for Character Trait. From the list of words, I might choose "psychopath" for the role and "isolated" for the trait. From that I could write a thriller about a character who has a relationship with a psychopath. She's isolated, has no friends, and no support system. I'd need to draw cards for the inner and outer conflict and the plot to really flesh out the story, but this method really works for me. It sparks creativity and gives me new ideas.

Another method which helps to open my mind is utilizing Tarot cards. After seeing presentation by author, Casey Daniels, I became intrigued with the cards. I searched the internet until I found cards which I thought would be thought provoking and not too scary. Some decks can be pretty far out. I chose the Paulina Tarot by

Paulina Cassidy (publisher U.S. Games Systems, Inc.). I loved the Mardi Gras, Victorian look to the characters and costumes. These cards are so pretty and so full of little details.

I will never be able to "read" the tarot cards as one who might give a reading to predict the future. I don't even look up the meanings for the cards. How I use them is to draw a random card when I'm struggling with what should happen next. I study the pictures and all the intricate details until an idea surfaces. It's fun and relaxing.

The great thing about each of these methods is that you aren't stuck with the first card you might draw. Feel free to change your mind. But, don't be too quick to do so. Stretch your brain muscles a bit. That's what brainstorming is all about.

For either of these methods to work, you must clear your mind and let the new ideas flow. It's easy to get caught in the trap of choosing a familiar and comfortable scenario, instead of thinking bigger.

Writing should be fun. If you are like me, and struggling with plots or character motivations, and have no one to brainstorm with, perhaps one of these methods will work for you. Each writer has their own way of approaching plotting. We are unique individuals. I envy those writers who can sit down, write an outline with a great plot, and create a NY Times Bestseller.

But for me, I fear I'll always be a writer hermit. I love mystical things, so these methods work for me. If you were to sneak a peek into my writing cave, you might find me shuffling cards or staring at a card lying on my desk, and even talking out loud. I'd invite you in, but I post a warning sign on the door: Beware...brainstorming in progress. Enter at your own risk.

*Carol Ann Erhardt writes Inspirational Romantic Suspense. She is published with White Rose Publishing. Check her website for Free Reads and information on her available books at [www.CarolAnnErhardt.com](http://www.CarolAnnErhardt.com) This article appeared in the August 2010 issue of Write From The Heart, the newsletter of Central Ohio Fiction Writers.*



# Computer Vision Syndrome

by Elizabeth Palladino

NINETY PERCENT OF all workers who use computers more than three hours per day complain of Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS). This occupational hazard for professional writers can easily be prevented or treated.

Symptoms of CVS include eyestrain, dry or irritated eyes, blurred or double vision, headache, and neck/back discomfort. These problems can result from visual interaction with the computer display and from environmental factors. To avoid CVS, make sure to get yearly eye exams, and tell your optical professional about your computer use. A pair of eyeglasses that you use only for computer work may be helpful.

Have proper lighting in your workspace, and strive to eliminate glare. Try a desk lamp rather than overhead lighting. Upgrade your computer if you can. An LCD display is easier on the eyes than a CRT. Adjust for the sharpest resolution possible, and preferably use a screen that is at least nineteen inches diagonally. Maximize your office ergonomics, as repetitive strain can overlap with computer vision syndrome and just make things worse.

Take frequent breaks. Leave the screen for ten minutes every hour. Blink several times to keep eyes moist. Focus on objects near, then far. Try rolling your eyes in figure-eight movements. Be one of the ten percent without CVS!

*With an extensive background in health care, Elizabeth Palladino uses her experiences to enrich her novels. She lives in Kingston, New York, where she is revising her Nano novel.*

*This article first appeared in the March 2010 issue of Keynotes, RWANYC's newsletter.*

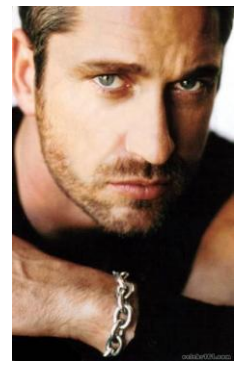


# Gerard Butler Grammar Quiz

More than vs. Over & Less than vs. Fewer

Which is correct?

- A) Over a million women would kill their grandmothers for a date with Gerard Butler.
- B) More than a million women would kill their grandmothers *and* their grandfathers for a date with Gerard Butler.
- C) My grandmother had over four hundred photos of Gerard Butler plastered around her bedroom at the time of her death.



B is the correct answer. *More than* indicates a number, whereas *over* indicates position, as in

*Gerard's lips hovered over Kristan's, then swooped down and claimed hers in such a way that her wedding ring melted right off.*

Moving on...

- A) Fewer than a hundred women have claimed to have borne Gerard Butler's love child.
- B) Gerard was mobbed by no less than twenty-seven women when he came into the pub.
- C) I drank less than half a beer, and still was intoxicated by the mere thought of Gerard in a kilt.

A and C are correct in this example. *Fewer* deals with actual numbers; *less than* deals with volume or percentages. *I should eat fewer M&Ms when watching 300 because I want to weigh less than Gerard when we get married.*

## The Most Romantic Places to Visit

Courtesy of Lauri Brett via Trip Advisor

- Oia, Greece
- Venice
- Napa
- Paris
- Positano
- Sedona
- Quebec City
- Florence
- Bora Bora
- Aitutaki, Cook Islands

*A loaf of bread, a jug of wine and thou, sitting beside me in the wilderness!...Or, an order of nachos grande, a killer martini, and thou, sitting beside me on the porch of our love shack!*



## Pointless But Fun

What was your favorite back-to-school outfit?

A hot pink blouse (collar up) with a black tank top. No doubt it went with three shades of pink eye shadow (worn all at once, of course).

—Karen Pinco

After pleading with my mother, going into a public high school from uniforms in a catholic school, I got thigh high boots and hot pants with a great blazer. Guess the year? It sounds kinda cheesy now, but back then WOW! —Marian Lanouette

It was an olive green jumper and a printed flower blouse to match. My twin and dressed alike throughout high school and each fall we both needed to agree on that same back-to-school outfit.—Marie Roy

In Catholic school we wore uniforms. The older I get, the more I appreciate the fact we didn't have to fuss with clothes every morning!—Monica Spence

In 1951 I was 8 years old and beginning the third grade. Disney's "Alice In Wonderland" had been released during the summer and I was the proud owner of a new AIW frock; pale blue taffeta hoop dress, white linen apron and a blue ribbon for my stringy blonde hair. I just bowled the kids over with my dazzling new duds! Now that I'm older I can see that the hoop dress shape would compliment my "voluptuous" (or something) figure far more than the stick shape Margery of six decades past. If you see me in a repurposed blue hoop dress, you'll know that you're in Wonderland.—Marge Reynolds

When I taught school, my friend gave me a dress she no longer wanted. It was sleeveless black knit, J. Crew with five horizontal pin stripes (alternating yellow and red) that were spaced throughout the length of it, from neckline to mid-calf. I was thrilled because A. she'd always been smaller than me and finally I was her size, and B. I'd never worn a name brand before. —Kelly Morse

Hated them all. We had uniforms that were sort of a coat dress in ugly shade of navy with detachable white collar, belt, big sewn-on pockets. Even Angelina would look in one like a second-rate cleaning lady in the Communist Party headquarters. It definitely made everybody look equal. —Anna Malicka

Notre Dame All Girl's Catholic HS. We wore uniforms, but the best part was the saddle shoes and bobby socks! Really! We girls loved them and no boys around to make fun of us!—Patti Cavaliere

I'm mostly a jeans kind of girl, but can do the girly thing when in the mood, which usually was the first day of school. So, skirts (swirly), dresses and pretty shoes to match was how I braved the first day.

It involved shoulder pads. We won't speak of it. —Huntley Fitzpatrick

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**"I don't have a lot of experience with vampires, but I have hunted werewolves. I shot one once, but by the time I got to it, it had turned back into my neighbor's dog."**

**— Dwight Schrute, The Office**

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