



JANUARY NEWSLETTER  
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# FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO


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## President's Message

CHRISTINE SPATARO, *President*

It's a new year. 2019 has arrived with a swift turn of a calendar page. We wish for all our members love, joy, and peace. In this new year, share your happiness with friends and family and appreciate each and every day as a gift—for this is what life is—a

beautiful gift. With that thought in mind, find a wonderful fiction book to read and expand your horizons, explore all the diversity around us, and feel the empathy for all new characters you meet down the magical road within those pages. Remember that literature revives our souls and our hearts and gives us great pleasure. Happy reading to all. 

## JANUARY PROGRAM



## American Writers' Museum

By IDA HAGMAN

The American Writers Museum (AWM) is one of Chicago's, and our nation's, newest treasures. In 2017 Fodors Travel ranked the American Writers Museum as the best new museum in the world. In September 2017, readers of USA TODAY chose the AWM as the best Illinois attraction. If you have visited the Museum or even looked at the website, you know why it has received so many accolades. We will learn more about AWM in January when Carey Cranston, President of AWM, will present the program. You will not want to miss this.

The American Writers Museum is the only one of its kind in the United States. The Museum celebrates the breadth of American writing through interactive exhibits and programming that honors the past, promotes the present, and inspires the future of writing in the United States.

The museum's temporary and permanent exhibits offer something for every age group.

The current temporary exhibits are Frederick Douglass: Agitator and Bob Dylan: Electric. Preschoolers with a caregiver can attend a story time on Saturdays. The *Write In Youth Program* gives middle and high school students the experience of an AWM field trip which encourages young people to write with creativity and confidence. The students and adult visitors all enjoy using the typewriters, which are a blast from the past for the adults and a novelty for young people. One link on the AWM website is entitled *Twain to Tupac*, so, yes there's something for everybody.


Many of the exhibits feature interactive, multi-sensory elements. Visitors to the museum can play word games in the *Mind of the Writer* exhibit. They can add a sentence to an ongoing story. Many of the programs are readings of recently published works. Last year Tammie Bob, Karen Pulver and I enjoyed a reading by Angela Jackson from *A Surprised Queenhood in the New Black Sun: The Life & Legacy of Gwendolyn Brooks*.



CONTINUED

The American Writers Museum and Friends of American Writers share a mission to support American writers so we are so pleased that Carey Cranston will present our January program. Carey Cranston took on the role of President of the American Writers Museum in September of 2016. Prior to that he served for 12 years as President of Fox College, a private career college in Chicago. Before his work at Fox College, he was Vice President at Hill & Knowlton, a global PR

firm, where he led digital and web services with several major clients. He also served as Director of Technology and E-commerce at Kemper Lesnik Communications, a local PR firm in Chicago. Early in his career, Carey taught writing at UIC and DePaul and worked at both the DePaul University Library and at Kroch's & Brentano's Bookstore.

This will be a memorable program. Come and experience the synergy. 



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Luncheon Reservations

The January 2019 meeting of the Friends of American Writers will be held on Wednesday, January 9, 2019. Luncheon reservations for this meeting are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 6, 2019. Please note, this deadline is firm. No reservations will be accepted following this date and time. To reserve, please contact Tanya Klasser (312-337-9648) or Pat Adelberg (847 588 0911)

If you wish a permanent reservation, please mention it when you call. All Board members automatically have permanent reservations. Also, a reminder that no permanent reservations are held over from last year to this year.

Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 W. Bellevue Place. The cost is \$45 per person, payable by check (preferred) in the front lobby on the day of the meeting. For group reservations, we ask that only one person make the reservation to avoid confusion. Please note, if you make a reservation and you cannot attend, you must cancel no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the meeting. Reservations not cancelled must be paid for by the member.

### Young People's Literature Committee

Written by ANGELA GALL

*Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope.* —KOFI ANNAN

On Wednesday, December 5th, the Young People's Literature Committee met at the Women's Athletic Club. Currently, we have received 18 eligible books. We are a little disappointed that none of the major publishing companies have sent us any books, but we are happy to report that we have quite a few treasures in our possession! We will continue to read from our list of candidates, and we are hopeful to discover even more contenders. Also at the December meeting, in the spirit of the season, we reflected upon the gift of reading. We came to the conclusion that books have been there for us in so many ways, and for that we are very thankful.

"When our daughter suffered a major stroke, I was filled with stress and anxiety on a daily basis, especially the first two months when medical decisions needed to be made. I found refuge in the evenings reading mystery novels because I could escape the current situation and free my mind of the emotional toll."

—COLLEEN KADLEC

"In the past years, I have gravitated towards books that have focused on World War II. With very few veterans still living, these books keep the war alive so that we will never forget. My favorites have been *The Sweet Potato Pie*, *Literary Society*, *Unbroken*, *Nightingale*, *Sarah's Keys*, *All the Light We Cannot See*."

—PEGGY KUZMINSKI

"I love reading books by my favorite author, Jack Shea. All of his books are uplifting and teach readers how to help themselves and give to others."

—BETTY O'TOOLE

"*A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L'Engle, helped me as a teacher. The story pointed out that sometimes, what we perceive as a negative trait, can be a positive characteristic. The example from the book I would share was that Meg was often too outspoken, but when confronting a force of evil, her assertiveness saved the day."

—TANYA KLASSER

"Every day, I repeat the following mantra from *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell: 'You just have to be *good enough* to be successful—you don't have to be a genius.' These are words I live by as I muscle through the frustration of my eighth grade son and his lack of motivation with homework."

—ANGELA GALL

“While a junior in high school, I did a major term paper on Charles Dickens and read a dozen of his novels. One weekend, I was reading Dickens’ *Dombey and Son* and started sobbing during a very emotional scene. My mom heard me crying and couldn’t

imagine why I was so upset. She calmed me down and the two of us had a stimulating discussion about books and their power. It was the first time the two of us talked like adults about books and would lead to a lifetime of sharing books. I’ve always felt it was the first step of

my library career.”

—VIVIAN MORTENSEN

On behalf of all of us in the Young People’s Literature Committee, we wish for all of you the happiest of readings!

## The Reading Corner

*Educated: A Memoir*  
by Tara Westover

Reviewed by  
ROBERTA GATES

This brave memoir, named one of the 10 Best Books of 2018 by *The New York Times*, is one of those books you can’t put down once you’ve started it.

Tara, the youngest of seven children, was born into a survivalist family so completely off the grid she didn’t even have a birth certificate and did not attend school until she went to college. Her father was a paranoid man who out-Mormoned everyone else at their rural Idaho church. For him, being devout meant Tara could read nothing but the Bible and the Book of Mormon, needed to cover every inch of her body except for her hands and face, and could never, no matter how dire the circumstance, consult a doctor or nurse.

Growing up on Buck’s Peak, Tara never left her mountain home except for church, spending her days working either for her mother, a herbalist, or her father who ran a salvage yard. Working at the junkyard, which all of the children did, was especially dangerous. “God and his angels are here, working right alongside us. They won’t let you be hurt,” their father told them, yet none of them escaped serious injury. Tara’s occurred when an iron spike pierced the inside of her leg, a wound which her mother treated using 12 drops of what she called her Rescue Remedy. “The wound will close,” she told Tara, “but it’ll leave a nasty scar.”

By the time she was a teenager, Tara began to wonder if school was less evil than her father thought. Her three oldest brothers had gotten at least a little schooling (they’d been allowed to attend at a time when their father was less paranoid), and Tony, the oldest, had taught her to read. But it was Tyler, the third brother, who changed her life.

Tyler had been yanked out of school after finishing the eighth grade, but he persevered nonetheless, using what money he had to buy an old trigonometry textbook and studying on his own. When he wanted to go on to calculus but couldn’t afford the textbook, he went to the school and asked the math teacher for one. But she only laughed in his face: “You can’t teach yourself calculus,” she said. “It’s impossible.” But he returned home with the book and continued his studies.

Tyler, who was eventually accepted at Brigham Young University (which considers homeschooled applicants), encouraged Tara to follow his example. In response, Tara managed to scrounge up an old science book, math book and history book. She had little chance to study them, though, since her father tried to get them away from her whenever he ever saw her with one. But Tyler kept pushing:


*“It’s time to go, Tara,” he said. “The longer you stay, the less likely you will ever leave.”*

*“You think I need to leave?” [I asked] . . .*

*Tyler didn’t blink, didn’t hesitate. “I think this is the worst possible place for you.” He’d spoken softly, but it felt as though he’d shouted the words . . .*

*He stood to go. “There’s a world out there, Tara. And it will look a lot different once Dad is no longer whispering his view of it in your ear.”*

Eventually Tara, following in Tyler’s footsteps, prepared for the ACT on her own, was accepted by BYU, and even went on to do graduate work at Harvard and Cambridge University. But the struggle to get there was a costly one, causing a rift with her family so serious that it nearly knocked her off course on numerous occasions.

This is truly an inspirational book and one you’ll not soon forget. As a former teacher, I wish I could have had my students read this just so they’d understand how transforming an education can be and how much it means to someone who is deprived of it. 



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### **FAW MEETINGS 2018-19**

A reminder of the FAW meetings for 2018-19.  
Be sure to mark your calendars.  
You won't want to miss a single one!

#### **OCTOBER 10, 2018**

**Steve Venturino**  
Speaking on Daniel Deronda

#### **NOVEMBER 7, 2018**

**Exploring Historical Fiction:  
A Panel of Three Writers**

**Connie Hamilton Connally**  
(author of *The Songs we Hide*)

**Kelly O'Connor Mcnesse**  
(author of *Undiscovered Country*)

**Devin Murphy**  
(author of *The Boat Runner*)

#### **DECEMBER 12, 2018**

interFRIENDtions will perform  
Christmas and Hannukkah music



#### **JANUARY 9, 2019**

The American Writers' Museum  
will send a representative

#### **FEBRUARY 13, 2019**

Adult-Books Editor  
Booklist Reviews

#### **MARCH 13, 2019**

**Patricia Frazier**  
National Youth Poet Laureate

#### **APRIL 10, 2019**

**Leslie Goddard**, actress  
As Rachel Carson

#### **FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2019**

Awards Luncheon