

# FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS




Our mission shall be to encourage new, talented writers associated with the Midwest and to promote the arts, especially literature, among our members.

Nov 1, 2020 - [Fawchicago.org](http://Fawchicago.org)

## Message from FAW President – *Tammie Bob*



It is hard to believe it is December and the holidays are upon us. As I write this the weather does not feel like Winter at all, but surely cold and snow are around the corner, as is the special holiday program lined up for Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>.

Our first three “Zoom” meetings went remarkably well, thanks to engaging programs, the technical wizardry of Karen Baker and Brian Johnson, and your supportive participation. Sometimes there are glitches, hard as everyone tries, so if you haven’t received a Zoom invitation 24 hours prior to a program, don’t hesitate to let Karen Baker  know and she will make sure you get one.

Your loyalty during these difficult times is truly heartwarming. We are still eager to grow the organization, particularly in advance of next year, FAW’s centennial. Feel free to invite your friends to our Zoom meetings—just make sure Karen has their email addresses. You will hear more about plans for grand centennial programs in the upcoming months.

I hope we all will be able to wring some joy out of the holidays this year, in whatever form they take. I hope to see you December 9<sup>th</sup> for our musical program. It will be sure to bring some holiday spirit. Watch for your Zoom link.

## December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Program – Celebrating the Season In Song with Julia and Ingrid



Friends of American Writers is proud to welcome Julia Porché and Ingrid Mikolajczyk, the daughters of FAW member Ellen Israel, to our virtual stage at noon on Wednesday, December 9. Both are acclaimed sopranos who grew up in the Chicago suburbs, traveled to Arizona to study vocal performance in college, and then went on to sing professionally in places such as Carnegie Hall and Ravinia.

Among the songs Julia and Ingrid will be singing for us are traditional favorites such as *The Wassail Song*, *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day* and *Silent Night* along with readings from Charles Dickens, the poet Christina Rossetti and others.

Julia, who says her solo repertoire ranges from Mozart to vocal jazz, was an alternate soprano for the Arizona Opera chorus while still in college. Later, she performed at venues and festivals across North America and Asia. Julia, a newlywed, now lives in the Seattle area where she performs with the Bellevue City Opera Ballet, Choral Arts NW and The Dickens Carolers.

Ingrid, a professional soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, has performed principal and chorus roles in 30 operatic works throughout the United States, Italy and Austria. Among her solo repertoire favorites are Countess Almaviva in Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* and Elle in Poulenc’s *La voix humaine*. She

has recorded on DECCA Records London and CSO Resound labels and teaches at the Music Institute of Chicago-Winnetka. Ingrid lives in suburban Chicago with her husband and three-year-old daughter.

**When:** December 9, 2020 at 12:00 Central time

**Where:** Virtual meeting via Zoom. No need to make a reservation. We will send everyone a link to the meeting.

**How:** **\*\*Important - Everyone with an email will be sent a link to join the meeting by email. Watch for your meeting link.** You may forward the link to friends. You may sign into the meeting starting at 11:45 by clicking on the link to join the meeting. Your microphone will be muted when you join the meeting. If you do not receive the link email by December 8, you can send a request to [angela.gall@decca.com](mailto:angela.gall@decca.com)

## CHILDREN'S BOOK PROJECT - *By Angela Gall*

We're readers—that is what we do. When we suddenly awake in the middle of the night, and anxiety pulses through our veins, and sleep is a distant dream, we grab our book off our nightstand and feel the “beautiful stillness that surrounds us when we hear an author’s words reverberating in our heads.” (Paul Auster)

Or when we are literary trapped in our homes for months on end because a deadly disease is ravaging our world, “We read to know we’re not alone.” (William Nicholson) and because “Reading gives us someplace to go when we have to stay where we are.” (Mason Cooley)

Yet, what do we do when we are glued to our TV, watching our cities implode with racial tension and injustice? Is it too easy to think, “Why can’t people just sit and read books and be nice to each other?” (David Baldacci) But, maybe reading is the answer: “Reading is an act of civilization; it’s one of the greatest acts of civilization because it takes the free raw material of the mind and builds castles of possibilities.” (Ben Okri)

What if the castle of possibilities began with our youth? What if we purchased books for young readers to enjoy and learn?

Thus, the Friends of American Writers Children’s Book Project was born. The entire FAW board was enthusiastic from the get-go. Karen Burnett proposed finding a Chicago Public School through the help of an organization called the Juvenile Protective Association (a great program that specializes in providing therapy for abused kids). From there, they got us in touch with a first-grade teacher from Lawndale Community Academy in Chicago.

We knew just the perfect book to purchase for the students: *Thank You, Omu* by Oge Mora. This book was our 2018 Young People’s Literature Award Winner. The author came to our Awards’ Luncheon, and she was just as wonderful as her book. The story is about a grandmother who makes a delicious stew and when the smell filters out into the neighborhood, her neighbors knock on her door and ask for some. Of course, she shares until it is all gone. When she is sad about having nothing left to eat herself, the neighborhood responds in kind and brings items to share with her. It’s such a great example of how to create a sense of community through sharing, caring and thankfulness. It has actually become quite a popular book and has won numerous awards including the 2019 Caldecott Honor Book and the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe New Talent Illustrator Award.


Next, we contacted Suzy from The Book Cellar who placed the order and shipped the books directly to the students so they would receive them at home in the mail. “The students were thrilled to receive their books in the mail. We are so thankful for this opportunity! It was the perfect book to talk about the spirit of Thanksgiving!” (Ms. P., first grade teacher)

Thanks to everyone who generously contributed to the funding of this project. We raised \$1,125. Thank you to Vivian Mortensen who managed the financial end, and Thank you to Tammie Bob, our president, for being a such a strong advocate of this project!


“Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.” (Malala Yousafzai)




## FAW NEWS

 **FAW extends our many thanks to Rex Huppke for the attending our November 11 FAW meeting.** Rex disclosed how he went from being an unfulfilled chemical engineer to entering the field of Journalism (during which we had technical difficulties). Rex’s passion for writing and connecting with his audience was evident in his answers to our questions.

FAW has a YouTube area where we will be posting recording of our meetings. A recording of the meeting will be posted there after a bit of editing. Please feel free to watch it on YouTube by searching for Friends of American Writers.

 **Readers & Reviewers** – We had our first Zoom Readers & Reviewers meeting led by Joan Gordon, for discussion of *The Municipalists* by Seth Fried on November 18<sup>th</sup>. The virtual meeting was very casual and allowed members to chat, divulge what they were currently reading, express thoughts about ‘OWEN’, the wacky Artificial Intelligence partner in the book, or simply listen to the conversation. Try the R & R meeting in March of *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante.

 **FAW Program Committee** – The Program committee met on November 9 and have tentative plans for February and March 2021. In February, Jane Hamilton, author of literary works such as *The Book of Ruth*, *A Map of The World* and *The Excellent Lombards*, is scheduled. In March we hope to have traveler and food Author, Cynthia Clampitt, who spoke in January of 2020 about the History of Bacon. We hope the pandemic situation improves, but until we can safely meet, we are planning for more virtual meetings.

**December 9** - A Musical Program, Vocalists Celebrating the season In Song

**January 13, 2021** - Leslie Goddard performing Georgia O’Keeffe

**February 10, 2021** - \* Proposed - Jane Hamilton, Best-Selling Author

**March 10, 2021** - \* Proposed - Author Cynthia Clampitt

We will also have **Readers & Reviewers** meeting in March of *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante, led by Roberta Gates.



## →8 Feel-good escape books to take us away from reality.

*The House in the Cerulean Sea* by T.J. Klune - Fantasy

*My Life in Houses* by Margaret Forster - NonFiction

*The Authenticity Project* by Clare Pooley - Fiction

*Days of Wonder* by Keith Stuart - Fiction

*Sourdough* by Robin Sloan - Fiction

*Nothing to See Here* by Kevin Wilson - Fiction

*Redhead by the Side of the Road* by Anne Tyler - Fiction

*The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig - Fiction, Fantasy

→ Do you have **SiriusXM** radio subscription in your car? Did you know that you can listen in your home or yard for FREE using that subscription on your smartphone, tablet, PC, Smart TV or wireless speakers? Don't be afraid to try. Create an account with a username and password, get the SiriusXM app and log in. Learn More at : <https://www.siriusxm.com/athome>

→ Civil rights activist Ruby Bridges, known for being the first Black student to desegregate a New Orleans public school in 1960, will publish three new children's books with Scholastic, the publisher announced in a news release. <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/ruby-bridges-to-publish-new-childrens-books/>

→ Are you having Theatre withdrawal? Stream your favorite Broadway hits with BroadwayHD.com. They offer a free 7-day trial, then it converts to a monthly paid plan. Find your favorite Broadway plays : <https://www.broadwayhd.com/>

→ Mitch Albom books are spiritual, thought-provoking, and heart-warming. They are a big dose of what everybody needs right now. Mitch wrote a serialized story of hope, *Human Touch* set during the start of the coronavirus pandemic. It reveals the lives of four families in a small town in Michigan and how the unraveling of their daily routines proceeds during the weeks of quarantine. Some pull closer together. Some drift into mistrust and distance. A doctor must make severe choices. A pastor struggles with faith versus law. A Chinese American couple is suddenly ostracized. And a unique little boy with an inexplicable power becomes the key to hope and a way out of the crisis. Until he suddenly disappears. I listened to the 8 installments on Audible. Each episode is read by Mitch and is about 30 minutes long, except the last is closer to an hour. All the events experienced by the family members could be found in the news headlines or encountered in our daily 'life during the pandemic'. Read or listen to this inspiring FREE story:

<https://www.mitchalbom.com/human-touch-story/>



## READING SUGGESTIONS

### ***CARDIFF, BY THE SEA: FOUR NOVELLAS OF SUSPENSE***

by Joyce Carol Oates

**Short Stories**

Joyce Carol Oates, a realistic and prolific writer, showcases her mastery of suspense in four deeply disturbing novellas. In these psychologically daring, chillingly suspenseful pieces, Oates writes about women facing threats past and present. Each story has an eerie quality about it and a thought-provoking resolution that will keep you engaged and intrigued.

***The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* by V.E. Schwab**

**Fiction**

France, 1714: in a moment of desperation, a young woman makes a Faustian bargain to live forever and is cursed to be forgotten by everyone she meets. Thus begins the extraordinary life of Addie LaRue, and a dazzling adventure that will play out across centuries and continents, across history and art, as a young woman learns how far she will go to leave her mark on the world. But everything changes when, after nearly 300 years, Addie stumbles across a young man in a hidden bookstore and he remembers her name.

***The Lost Memoirs of Jane Austen* by Syrie James**

**Historical fiction**

Many rumors abound about a mysterious gentleman said to be the love of Jane's life—finally, the truth may have been found...

What if, hidden in an old attic chest, Jane Austen's memoirs were discovered after hundreds of years? What if those pages revealed the untold story of a life-changing love affair? That's the premise behind this spellbinding novel, which delves into the secrets of Jane Austen's life, giving us untold insights into her mind and heart.

***How to Save A Life* by Liz Fenton & Lisa Steinke**

**Fiction, Romance**

A modern, suspenseful twist on *Groundhog Day* that asks the question: How far are you willing to go to save the life of someone you love?

When Dom bumps into Mia, his ex-fiancée whom he hasn't seen in almost a decade, he believes they've been given a second chance and asks her out. When Mia dies tragically on their date, Dom makes a desperate wish: to be given the chance to save her life. And when he wakes the next morning to the shock that she's alive, he thinks his wish may have been granted. But day after day, no matter what he changes about their time together, she still meets a terrible fate. Each day is told from a new angle as Dom mentally works through the situation he's in, trying to grapple with how he can become a better man. The premise gives you something think about when considering our own lives - what if we had done one thing differently? Would it change our lives? And would that be a good thing?

<b>FAW 2020 - 2021 Officers</b>	<b>Committee Chairs</b>
<b>President</b> - Tammie Bob, <b>Vice President</b> - Christine Spatara, <b>Secretary</b> - Dale Davison, <b>Treasurer</b> - Vivian Mortensen	<b>Newsletter Editor</b> - Karen Baker, <b>Foundation Fund</b> - Edith Riley, Roberta Gates, <b>Literature Awards</b> - Ida Hagman, Karen Pulver, <b>Young People's Awards</b> - Angela Gall, <b>Luncheon - Social</b> - Carol Eshaghy, <b>Membership</b> - Karen Burnett, <b>Programs</b> - Joan Gordon, <b>Revisions</b> - Pat Schneider, <b>Sustaining Clubs</b> - Diana Adams, <b>Yearbook &amp; Awards Program</b> - Pat Adelberg, <b>Website Manager</b> - Karen Baker

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