



Outliers Writing University

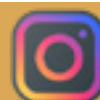
From Aspiring Writers to Bestselling Authors

Your Writing Success IS Our Greatest Reward

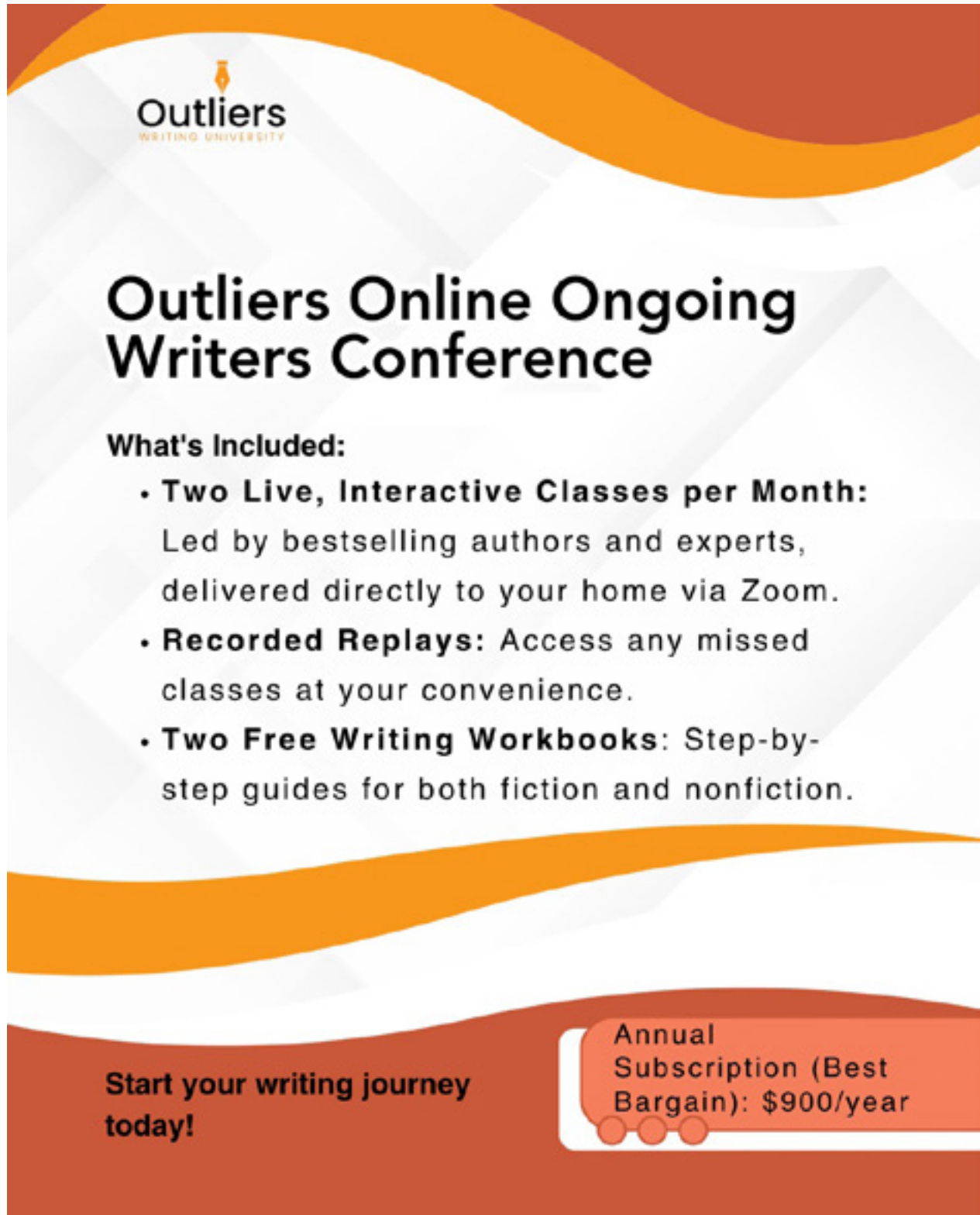
News, Events & Adventures

August 2025

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Why You'll Love Our Online Ongoing Conference

The graphic features a white central area with a faint, light gray geometric pattern of overlapping triangles. This central area is framed by wavy, organic shapes in shades of orange and red at the top and bottom. The Outliers Writing University logo, consisting of a small orange quill icon above the word "Outliers" and "WRITING UNIVERSITY" in smaller text below, is positioned in the top left of the white area. The main title "Outliers Online Ongoing Writers Conference" is centered in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. Below the title, the text "What's Included:" is followed by a bulleted list of three items. At the bottom left, the text "Start your writing journey today!" is displayed. At the bottom right, a white rounded rectangular box contains the text "Annual Subscription (Best Bargain): \$900/year" and three small orange circles below it.

Outliers
WRITING UNIVERSITY

Outliers Online Ongoing Writers Conference

What's Included:

- **Two Live, Interactive Classes per Month:**
Led by bestselling authors and experts, delivered directly to your home via Zoom.
- **Recorded Replays:** Access any missed classes at your convenience.
- **Two Free Writing Workbooks:** Step-by-step guides for both fiction and nonfiction.

Start your writing journey today!

Annual Subscription (Best Bargain): \$900/year

Outliers Has a Brand New Website!

We've been quietly working behind the scenes to give Outliers Writing University a major glow up, and it's finally here.

As one of our valued email subscribers, you're getting the exclusive first sneak peek at our brand-new website:

👉 outlierswritinguniversity.com

What's new?

- ➔ A cleaner, easier-to-navigate layout
- ➔ A streamlined experience for signing up for classes
- ➔ Quick access to our upcoming events, instructors, and replays
- ➔ A beautiful new design that reflects the quality of our community and curriculum

This upgrade was made possible by the incredible Amanda Keller of Northwood Creates, who brought the Outliers vision to life with care, creativity, and a deep understanding of the writing community.

Whether you're a longtime Outlier or just getting started, we hope this new site makes it easier (and more exciting!) to stay connected, keep writing, and keep leveling up your craft.

Take a look, explore, and let us know what you think!

Website by Amanda Keller of [Northwoods Creative & Marketing](https://northwoodcreates.com) — a Wisconsin-based designer and photographer who helps small businesses build websites that reflect who they are and help them grow with clarity and confidence.



Make Your Manuscript Shine With Our Fall 2025 Manuscript Boot Camp

Begins Monday, September 15, 2025

Space is very limited so [SIGN UP NOW!](#)

OUTLIERS MANUSCRIPT BOOT CAMP is a mentored 5-Class, 10-week, small-group intensive program that focuses on the student's work-in-progress. The student and mentor will collaborate to enhance, edit, and polish the writing while imparting techniques that will carry the author through the entire story, and beyond.

- Does your premise and inciting incident capture the reader?
- Is your story structure sound?
- Are your characters three-dimensional or flat on the page?
- Does your chosen Point of View strengthen your story?
- Are your verbs active and does the pacing fit the story?
- Does your dialog ring true?
- Does your setting fit and enhance the story?

You will work with your mentor to address these and other concerns with the goal of making your story the best it can be and ultimately attracting an agent, an editor, and a loyal fan base.

How does it work?

1. Boot Camp will be five 2-hour sessions every other Monday for 10 weeks
2. The sessions will be interactive ZOOM events on every other Monday at 4 p.m. Pacific time
3. Class size limited to a maximum of five students.
4. Three weeks prior to beginning the course, students must submit a 10-page double-spaced sample of their story for evaluation. This will help us determine your current achievement level and match you with the mentor that best fits your needs. These pages will be evaluated and critiqued during the first session.
5. Students will submit up to 10 double-spaced pages 1 week prior to each class. These can be the same pages as a previous session for further work, or new pages for evaluation and improvement. These pages can make up the first 60 pages of your story, or any 10-page segments you want evaluated.

PRICING:

The 5-class, 10-week course is a single payment of \$900. NOTE: Payment and the first 10 pages must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the class start date of 9-15-25.

REGISTRATION: [SIGN UP NOW](#) (Payment Options also available)

Outliers Advanced Workshops

Learn How to Plot the Perfect Crime

Instructor: D.P. Lyle

October 1, 4:00 PT

Crime fiction writers must learn to think like criminals. In this lecture we will look at several famous crimes and attempt to gain some insight into what the criminal was likely thinking, the logic—or illogic—of his planning, and the fatal flaws that unraveled his best laid plans. [Register Here.](#)

October 8, 4:00 PT

INTERACTIVE - Attendees will become the killer and “construct” the perfect murder—the where, when, how, and why. We will then don the hat of the protagonist and “deconstruct” the crime while considering the many variables that make plotting a murder fun for the writer and a disaster for the antagonist. We will discuss the killer’s Pre-Crime Behavior, the steps taken to “do the deed,” and his Post-Crime Behavior from social, psychological, forensics, investigative, and motivational points of view. [Register Here.](#)

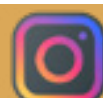
& Coming Soon...

Sign up for the Year-Long Online Ongoing Writers Conference & get a FREE fiction or nonfiction workbook. These workbooks break down the process of writing a book into easy steps that take you from conception to finished draft.

A Bit of Writing Wisdom

“Was I bitter? Absolutely. Hurt? You bet your sweet ass I was hurt. Who doesn’t feel a part of their heart break at rejection. You ask yourself every question you can think of, what, why, how come, and then your sadness turns to anger. That’s my favorite part. It drives me, feeds me, and makes one hell of a story.”

— Jennifer Salaiz



Outliers Special 3-Part Class

Novel Writing for Medical & Legal Professionals

Instructors: D.P. Lyle, M.D. & Meg Gardiner

Coming October 15

Space is Very Limited So [Sign Up Now](#)

Three-Part Series: 10/15/25, 10/22/25 & 10/29/25

This three-week class will give you the skills needed to pen that best-seller. Join best-selling, award-winning authors DP Lyle MD and Meg Gardiner to begin your journey, or continue it if you've already begun. Learn the craft you need in a series of convenient, interactive ZOOM classes.

DETAILS:

Three two-hour ZOOM classes over three weeks.

Access to the classes for review will remain available for one month after the last class.

Wednesdays at 4 PM Pacific/7 PM Eastern

Begins October 15, 2025 (Classes 10/15, 10/22, 10/29)

Course Fee: \$299

SIGN UP NOW

What You Will Learn:

- The essential elements of a compelling story
- How to develop a strong premise for your story
- How to create believable characters and bring them to life
- How to create a dynamic plot that will engage readers
- How to determine the best Point Of View for your story
- How to create believable and compelling Dialog
- How Setting and Mood affect your story
- What is a writer's Voice and how do you find yours

COURSE OUTLINE:

Session 1: Storytelling, Premise, and Characters

Session 2: Point of View and Dialogue

Session 3: Setting, Mood, and Voice

YOUR INSTRUCTORS

[Meg Gardiner](#) is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of seventeen novels. Her thrillers have won the Edgar Award and been summer reading picks by The Today Show and O, the Oprah magazine. Heat 2, co-authored with Michael Mann, debuted at #1 on the New York Times best seller list. A former lawyer and two-time president of Mystery Writers of America, she taught in the Writing Program at UC Santa Barbara and has given keynote addresses and taught courses for the American Bar Association, the West Virginia Bar Association, the Santa Barbara Writers Conference, the Oklahoma Writers Federation, MWA University, International Thriller Writers (CraftFest and Master Class), Curtis Brown Creative in London, HarperCollins UK, and Texas Writes.
<https://meggardiner.com/>



[DP Lyle, MD](#) is the Amazon #1 Bestselling; Macavity and Benjamin Franklin Awardwinning; and Edgar(2), Agatha, Anthony, Shamus, Scribe, and USA Today Best Book(2) Award-nominated author of 27 books, both fiction and non-fiction. He hosts the Crime Fiction Writer's Blog and the Criminal Mischief: The Art and Science of Crime Fiction podcast series. As a founding member of International Thriller Writers he created and directed CraftFest and the Online Thriller school, and co-created and directed the Master Class program. He has worked with many novelists and with the writers of popular television shows such as Law & Order, CSI: Miami, Diagnosis Murder, Monk, Judging Amy, Peacemakers, Cold Case, House, Medium, Women's Murder Club, 1-800-Missing, The Glades, and Pretty Little Liars.
<http://www.dplylemd.com>



[Click here for additional details.](#)

Outliers Classes 2025

08/05/2025 (Class 39)

K.J. Howe

Worldbuilding & Voice

[Register Here](#)



08/19/2025 (Class 40)

Steven James

How to Write Your Way
Out of a Corner

[Register Here](#)

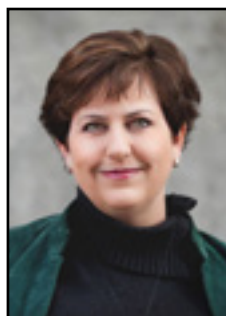


09/09/2025 (Class 41)
(DATE CHANGE)

Allison Brennan

Romantic Suspense v.
Romantic Mysteries

[Register Here](#)



09/16/2025 (Class 42)

James Rollins

Writing the Blockbuster
Novel

[Register Here](#)



09/24/2025
ADVANCED WORKSHOP

Tori Eldridge

Narrating Your
Audiobook: Voicing &
Recording Tips for a
Stellar Performance

[Register Here](#)



10/01/2025
ADVANCED WORKSHOP
Criminal Fiction Plotting
#1

D.P. LYLE

Best Laid Plans: What was
the Killer Thinking?

[Register Here](#)



10/07/2025

J.D. Barker (Class 43)

Indie, Traditional, Hybrid
- How to Level-Up Your
Publishing Game

[Register Here](#)



10/08/2025
ADVANCED WORKSHOP
Criminal Fiction Plotting
#2

D.P. LYLE

Interactive - Constructing/
Deconstructing the Perfect
Fictional Murder

[Register Here](#)



Outliers Classes 2025, Cont.

10/15/2025, 10/22/2025 & 10/29/2025
3-Part Class

Meg Gardiner & D.P. LYLE

Novel Writing for Medical and Legal
Professionals

[Register Here](#)



10/21/2025 (Class 44)

Michael Bracken & Stacy Woodson in
Conversation

Tips for Writing & Publishing Short
Crime Fiction

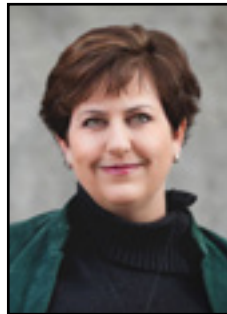
[Register Here](#)



11/04/2025 (Class 45)
Allison Brennan

How Can I Write What
I Know if I've Never
Killed a Man? Research
101

[Register Here](#)

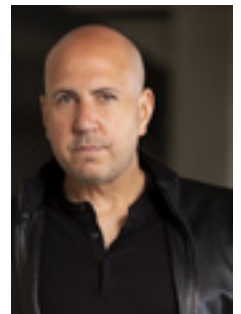


11/18/2025 (Class 46)

Alex Finlay

So You've Written a Novel?
10 Things Bestselling
Authors Do to Make Their
Manuscripts Sing

[Register Here](#)

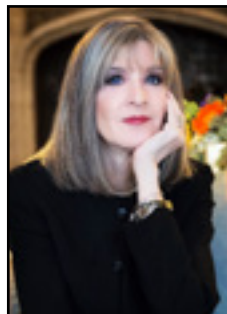


12/02/2025 (Class 47)

Hank Phillippi Ryan

Secrets of the Three-
Act Structure

[Register Here](#)



12/16/2025 (Class 48)

Steven James

The Subtleties of
Voice and Point of
View

[Register Here](#)



Outliers Classes 2025, Cont.

SNEAK PEEK at the First Half of Our 2026 Ongoing Online Conference Schedule ([Register Now!](#))

1/6/26: CLASS 49:

The Supporting Cast: How to Make Every Character Matter—Steven James

1/20/26: CLASS 50:

The Hero's—and Heroine's—Journey--Meg Gardiner

2/3/26: CLASS 51:

The Villains Journey—Allison Brennan

2/17/26: CLASS 52:

Great Beginnings: Perfecting Line 1, Paragraph 1, and Page 1—Hank Phillippi Ryan

3/3/26: CLASS 53:

The Combat Landing: How to start your story in the thick of the action, without shooting yourself in the foot--Meg Gardiner

3/17/26: CLASS 54:

Suspense Versus Tension: What's the difference, and how can you use both to keep readers turning pages?--Meg Gardiner

4/7/26: CLASS 55:

Conquering the Muddle in the Middle—Hank Phillippi Ryan

4/21/26: CLASS 56:

Mastering Dialog--Tosca Lee

5/5/26: CLASS 57:

What No One is Telling You About Dialogue—Steven James

5/19/26: CLASS 58:

Organic Writing: How to Abandon Your Outline and Elevate Your Story—Steven James

6/2/26: CLASS 59:

Twists and Turns: what's the difference, and how can you build both into your plot?—Meg Gardiner

6/16/26: CLASS 60:

Unreliable Narrators and Twisted Truths: Creating Characters Readers Love to Hate—Kaira Rouda

Outliers Instructors

OUTLIERS WRITING UNIVERSITY proudly announces our award-winning, bestselling instructors:

Jeffery Deaver, Meg Gardiner, Heather Graham, Kathleen Antrim, D.P. Lyle, Hank Phillippi Ryan, Steven James, James Rollins, Tosca Lee, Don Bentley, Jon Land, Boyd Morrison, J.D. Barker, Jennifer Dornbush, Harry Hunsicker, Allison Brennan, Tamara Grantham, Tim Maleeny, Cody Blocker, KJ Howe, Joseph Badal, Stacy Woodson, Michael Bracken, Matt Witten, Mark Tavani, Terry Shepherd, Vincent Davis, Lt. Brandon Watkins, Amy Scher, John Ferriso, Dr. Katherine Ramsland, Tracey Ullman, Paul Guyot, Jenny Milchman, Tammy Euliano, David Putnam, Magen Mintchev, Sara Divello, Nicholas Harvey, Douglas Pratt, Alex Finlay, Shirley Jump, Kaira Rouda, and more to be announced soon.

[Learn More!](#)



Outliers on YouTube & Your Fave Podcast Channels

GET TO KNOW: Hosts DP LYLE, MD, & KATHLEEN ANTRIM

Fun interviews with best-selling authors. Recent guests include Jeffery Deaver & Isabella Maldonado, Lee Child, Anthony Horowitz, Reed Farrel Coleman, Laurie R. King, Tori Eldridge, Charlaine Harris, John Connolly, Don Bentley, Linwood Barclay, Zoe Sharp, Mark Cameron, James Rollins, Joe Finder, JD Barker, Allison Brennan, Thomas Perry, and many others. See our [YouTube channel here](#).

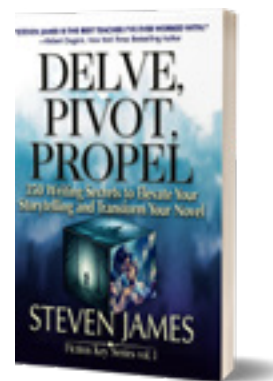
CRIMINAL MISCHIEF: The Art and Science of Crime Fiction Host DP LYLE, MD

Exploring the worlds of forensic science, criminal investigation, and storytelling.

ALSO NOW ON [PLAYERFM](#),
[IHEART RADIO](#), [PODBEAN](#), [APPLE](#),
[SPOTIFY](#), [AMAZON/AUDIBLE](#), AND
[PODCHASER](#)

Writing Tip

“If your story is boring in the middle, it might be because it’s too repetitive, too cyclical, or there isn’t enough tension. Be sure that the stakes continue to rise in the middle of the book and that the tension continues to tighten. If your story has three acts, recast it to include four or five. Don’t let adherence to a plot template negatively impact your story.”



[DELVE, PIVOT, PROPEL](#)
350 WRITING SECRETS TO
ELEVATE YOUR STORYTELLING
AND TRANSFORM YOUR NOVEL
Fiction Key Series Vol. 1
by [Steven James](#)

News Around Town

Outliers Instructors Making Waves for Bouchercon's Blood on the Bayou in New Orleans

Congratulations to the following 2025 Anthony Award nominees which will be awarded at Bouchercon in New Orleans this September:

- Authors Katherine Ramsland & Tracy Ullman for ["The Serial Killer's Apprentice"](#) in the NonFiction category, published by Crime Ink.
- Editor and author Heather Graham for the 2024 Bouchercon anthology ["Tales of Music, Murder, and Mayhem"](#) by Down and Out Books. (Also includes stories by Outliers instructors Heather Graham, D.P. Lyle, M.D., and Killer Nashville's founder Clay Stafford.)
- Editors and authors Stacy Woodson & Michael Bracken for the anthology ["Scattered, Smothered, Covered, and Chunked: Crime Fiction Inspired by Waffle House"](#) by Down and Out Books.
- Editors Michael Bracken & Barb Goffman for ["Murder, Neat: A Sleuthsayers Anthology"](#) with stories set in a variety of bars, taverns, and tasting rooms by Level Best Books.



News Around Town

Outliers Instructors Chosen for Bouchercon 2025's Blood on the Bayou: Case Closed Anthology

Congratulations to these Outliers instructors whose stories will be included in Bouchercon's 2025 anthology, available soon:

Jeff Ayers & Jon Land
Heather Graham
D.P. Lyle
Tim Maleeny
Clay Stafford

Novel Writing Intensive with Steven James & Robert Dugoni (2 Sessions in November 2025)

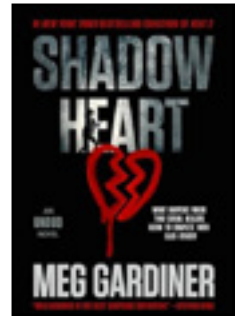
Four days of intensive training and manuscript critiques led by Robert Dugoni and Steven James, two of the country's top fiction instructors.

- Limited to 12 participants per session (two sessions)
- Detailed critique of 50 pages
- 20+ hours of instruction and feedback
- November 2025, Nashville, Tennessee

For more information or to register, visit novelwritingintensive.com or email the conference director, Pam Johnson, at pamtheeditor@yahoo.com

Meg Gardiner Announces...

Her novel, "Shadowheart," Book 4 of her UNSUB series--nominated for the Reading the West Award and the ITW Thriller Awards-- is now out in paperback. [Order Here.](#)



News From Michael Bracken...

His short story, "Renovated to Death," co-authored with Sandra Murphy, appeared in "Black Cat Weekly 198", June 15, 2025. (Their sixth collaboration).

His short story "Penalty for Early Withdrawal" appears in the July/August issue of "Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine."

He'll be a panelist at the Bouchercon event, **Killing Your Darlings: Edit That Manuscript!** moderated by Sara J. Henry. Fellow panelists include Donald Maass, Paula Munier, Otto Penzler, and Luisa Cruz Smith.

News Around Town

Dee Armstrong's Upcoming "Haunted by a Broken Oath" Wins 2024 Killer Nashville Claymore Top Pick

Coming from Outliers•Suspense Publishing in November 2025!

Ghosts. Secrets. One kickass PI.

JD Wolfe survived the orphanage with a butterknife and a bad attitude. Now she's twenty-one, running her first case—and stuck with an annoying ghost who's been haunting her since childhood.

When a military hero turns up dead, two boys go missing, and her mentor starts lying, JD must decide who to trust—including the ghost she'd love to kill (if she wasn't already dead).

"Haunted by a Broken Oath" is sharp, snarky, and suspenseful—perfect for fans of gritty female leads, twisty mysteries, and a touch of the paranormal.

Dee Armstrong writes knee-melting romance and mind-bending mystery with a twist of snark and a splash of the supernatural. A storyteller with sharp prose and a soft heart, she's the author of *Visions of Emerald*, *Sleepwalking with Ruby*, *Haunted by Amethyst*, and the upcoming JD Wolfe series. She believes in tough heroines, complicated heroes, and ghosts who seriously need boundaries. Visit her at www.DeeArmstrong.com or follow her on social media @DeeArmstrongAuthor for sneak peeks, behind-the-scenes chaos, and the occasional ghost story.



D.P. Lyle, M.D.'s Medical Forensic Files

Can the ME Determine the Type of Knife Used in a Murder By Examining the Wounds?

By D.P. Lyle, M.D.

Q: I am writing a story about a killer who uses a specific knife and kills the same way every time. The knife is unique in that it has a long blade that is serrated on one side, curvy on the other. I'm trying to determine if the wound can be used to identify at least some aspects of the knife.

Her method of kill is to plunge the knife into the abdomen, just below the sternum, then to pull the handle towards herself and push the blade up and to the right in an attempt to puncture the heart. She twists the knife as she pushes it upward, trying to conceal details about the knife, mainly the fact that the blade is serrated on one side.

Would it be possible to ascertain from the wound that there are serrations on the knife, perhaps that the blade is curvy, that the tip of the knife curves and that there is some kind of decoration on the guard?

A: The problem with wound analysis here is that with the movements of the blade, the internal slashing that you describe, the wound would be significantly distorted. This would make the ME's job very difficult.

When the medical examiner examines a stab wound with an eye toward determining the type of weapon used, he will measure the length and width of the blade and the depth of the wound. It is sometimes possible to determine whether a blade was single-edged or double-edged, and if serrated on one side. It requires a fairly clean in and out stab wound if he is to have any hope of accomplishing this. Any movement of the blade muddies the water. This could be from the victim struggling to get away or it could be from the attacker using the knife in a manner similar to what you describe. I should point out that the depth of the wound would only determine the minimum length of the blade. It could be longer but it could not be shorter and make such a wound.

That said, there still are a few things that might help you. Even with the internal slashing motion, the medical examiner might be able to determine that one edge of the blade was serrated by examining the skin around the entry wound. This might or might not be possible but at least it's not impossible. Also, if the knife is driven to the hilt, then the hand guard could cause bruises or abrasions of the skin around the

entry wound. If so, this would indicate that the depth of the wound is the actual length of the blade. Also, the shape and any pattern on the hand guard might imprint on the skin as bruises or abrasions. This might also help identify the type of weapon used. If a suspect weapon is recovered, the medical examiner should be able to say that the victim's wound is consistent with the suspect weapon. Simply from the physical nature of the wound, he could not say it was exactly that knife, only that it was similar and consistent with the murder weapon.

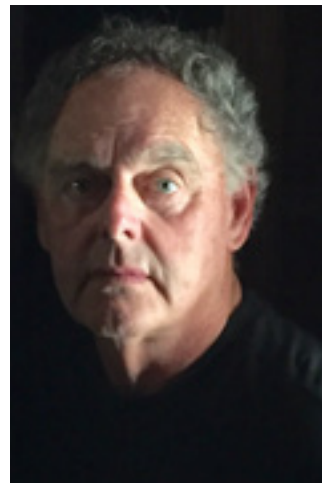
There is one other thing that might help you. Blood invariably gets on the blade, the hand guard, and even the handle with such injuries. Obviously, the killer would clean the knife, but blood might seep into the gap where the hand guard and the blade or the blade and the hand guard join. It can also settle into the nooks and crannies of the handle itself. Sometimes even cleaning the knife will not eliminate these hidden sources of blood. If the medical examiner located this and obtained a usable sample, he could create a DNA profile of the blood. If this then matched the victim's DNA profile, he would know that this knife, to the exclusion of all others, was the murder weapon.

Lastly, even with knives that possess hand guards, the attacker will often suffer hand and finger cuts as the knife slips in his hand. Leaving his blood on or around the victim can prove he was present, and that would require some explaining.

D.P. Lyle, M.D.

Author, Lecturer, and Story Consultant
www.dpylemd.com

DP Lyle is the Amazon #1 Bestselling; Macavity and Benjamin Franklin Award-winning; and Edgar(2), Agatha, Anthony, Shamus, Scribe, Silver Falchion, and USA Today Best Book(2) Award-nominated author of 26 books, both fiction and non-fiction. He hosts the Crime Fiction Writer's Blog and the Criminal Mischief: The Art and Science of Crime Fiction YouTube/podcast series and is co-creator of the Outliers Writing University. He has worked with many novelists and with the writers of popular television shows such as Law & Order, CSI: Miami, Diagnosis Murder, Monk, Judging Amy, Peacemakers, Cold Case, House, Medium, Women's Murder Club, 1-800-Missing, The Glades, and Pretty Little Liars.



Social Media Tips for Writers

Using TikTok & BookTok to Reach New Readers

By Magen Mintchev

If you've been avoiding TikTok because you think it's just for teens doing dances—surprise! It's also home to one of the most passionate, book-loving communities on the internet: BookTok.

And it's not just hype. BookTok has helped debut authors hit bestseller lists, revived backlist titles, and created viral moments that translate into real sales.

So, how can you show up on TikTok in a way that feels authentic (and not totally overwhelming)? Start here.

1. Don't Try to Go Viral. Just Be Consistent.

You don't need a million views. TikTok rewards regular posting, so start with 2–3 videos a week. Show up consistently, and the algorithm will start showing your content to the right people.

Short, honest, and relatable works best—no high production required.

2. Focus on the Reader's Experience

Rather than just saying, "Here's my book," try content like:

- "Books with unreliable narrators and

jaw-dropping twists? Add this to your TBR."

- "If you like morally gray female leads, this one's for you."

Speak to what they're looking for—not just what you're selling.

3. Use Trends, But Make Them Yours

Hop on trends or sounds, but twist them to fit your genre or writing voice. A trending audio can easily become:

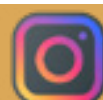
- "Me trying to plot a happy ending when I know I'm killing three characters"
- "POV: You find a diary in the attic that was never meant to be found"

You're not copying—you're adapting, which is what TikTok rewards.

4. Talk About More Than Just Your Book

People follow people, not products. Let them see your personality. Talk about your writing process, your coffee addiction, the book that made you fall in love with your genre.

These posts build connection, and connection builds loyal readers.



5. Use Hashtags Strategically

Include a mix of broad and niche hashtags:

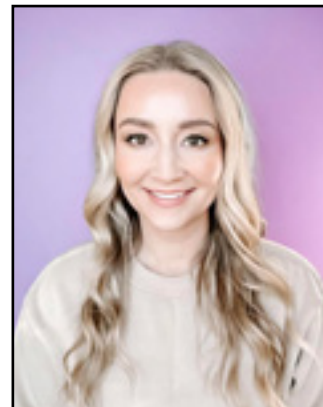
- #BookTok
- #ThrillerTok (or your genre)
- #IndieAuthor
- #BooksThatHook

Hashtags help the algorithm categorize your content and show it to the right audience.



Final Thought

You don't have to be a TikTok star to benefit from BookTok. You just have to show up, share your love of storytelling, and speak to the kind of readers you're writing for. Start where you are. The readers are out there; TikTok just helps them find you.



Instagram: [@socialwithmagen](#) & [@bonechillingbooks](#)



**What Do You
Think?
Tell Us [Here](#)**

New Releases

Don't Say a Word

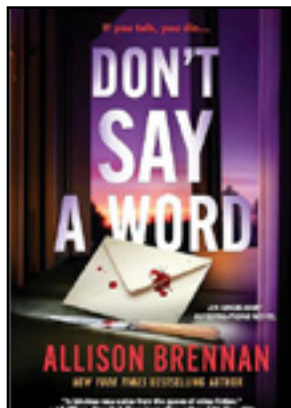
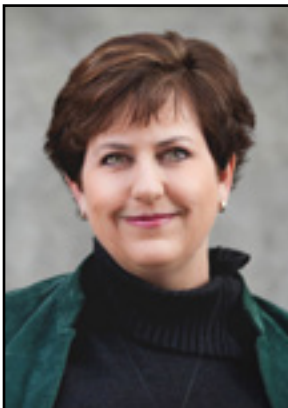
A Dark Mystery Novel of
Community and Family Secrets in
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By [Allison Brennan](#)

Release Date: September 16, 2025
(Mira)

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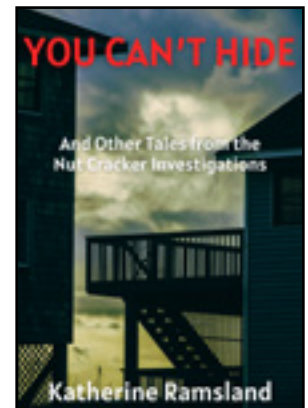
And Other Tales from the Nut
Cracker Investigations
(Series Book 4)

By [Katherine Ramsland](#)

Release Date: August 19, 2025
(Level Best Books)

A deadly threat forces Annie Hunter to face family secrets before the “headmaster” comes for her. Some things are sealed for a reason. Forensic psychologist Annie Hunter hosts a holiday bash at her Outer Banks home. A dangerous man with a lot to lose is watching. When Annie looks for a letter once hidden in the house, she turns up links between missing couples and a serial killer's confession.

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New Releases

Blood on the Bayou: Case Closed

The Official Bouchercon Anthology
2025

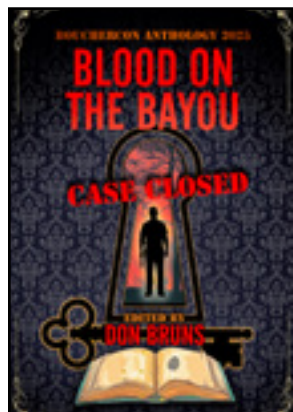
Edited by Don Bruns
(Down and Out Books)

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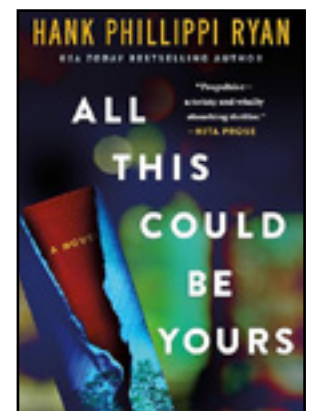


ALL THIS COULD BE YOURS

By [Hank Phillippi Ryan](#)

Release Date: September 9, 2025
(Minotaur Books)

Is a debut author's blockbuster bestseller about to ruin her life? A glamorous book tour becomes a deadly cat-and-mouse chase in this new and captivating thriller by “master of suspense” (Publishers Weekly) and USA Today bestselling author Hank Phillippi Ryan. To preorder, [click here.](#)



And...One More Thing

Series Characters and Character Arcs

By D.P. Lyle, MD

Do series characters need a character arc? If so, how much should they change? How much “change” will fans tolerate?

Simply put, a character arc is the change a character goes through over the course of the story. Something happens in the character’s life that pushes it off balance. It might be a shark feeding off the shores of Amity Island or two robots showing up and babbling about some character named Obi-Wan Kenobi. It might be a group of armed criminals taking over a small hotel on Key Largo, along with an approaching hurricane, just to make things worse. Regardless, something comes into the character’s life, pushes it off kilter, and the story reveals that person’s attempts to rebalance things. As this journey unfolds, the character changes, learns something about himself, reaches a different level of understanding or compassion, or ability to act.

But what about a series character? A character that must move through five, 10, 20 or more novels? Do the protagonists of such series undergo a character arc? Should they? And if they do, will the most loyal readers recognize them after the 20th installment? It’s something that’s argued in writing conferences year after year.

Did James Bond ever really change? Did Jack Reacher? The answer, of course, is very little, if any. Bond is always Bond; Reacher is always Reacher. If in each story, these iconic characters confronted situations that caused a massive change in who they were on a deeply personal level, and these changes piled up story after story, they would quickly become unrecognizable. And readers would revolt. We read these stories because we like the main characters and we don’t want them to be someone else.

So, if a series’ characters don’t change, what’s the story about? It’s about this character, who we know and love, facing difficult circumstances and successfully solving the riddle. Series characters don’t have to change dramatically to do this, nor do they need to have some earthshaking revelation about themselves, or the world, or even someone else. What they need to do is use whatever skills they possess to correct the situation and put the story world back in order.

For James Bond, it’s often saving the world from Ernst Stavro Blofeld. For Jack Reacher, it’s taking on the troubles of the little guy and his fight against the bad guy. Reacher is basically Shane. The quiet hero

who comes into town and saves the day. And we like that. We don't want him to change. Same for James Bond. When James Bond returns to London or Reacher sticks his thumb out and hitchhikes to the next town, they are the same person they were at the beginning of the story and indeed the story before and the one before that. They don't change. They use their skills to solve problems. And we relish being along for the ride.

So, while character arcs work very well, and indeed are essential, for many stories, for a series character, they are problematic. I believe that writers of series characters should pressure them, make them adapt, make them use their skills to solve the problem and save the day. That's good storytelling. But be wary of fundamental changes in who they are. Your readers will buy your next book because they like your protagonist. Don't make them strangers.

D.P. Lyle, M.D.

Author, Lecturer, and Story Consultant
www.dplylemd.com



Conference Scene

Killer Nashville, Franklin/Cool Springs
Tennessee, August 21-25, 2025

Bouchercon, New Orleans, Louisiana,
September 3 - 7, 2025

Author Nation 25, Las Vegas, Nevada,
November 3 - 7, 2025

Kauai Writers Conference, Lihue,
Kauai, November 17-19, 2025

The San Francisco Writers Conference,
San Francisco, CA, February 12-15,
2026.

Left Coast Crime 2026, San Francisco,
CA, February 26 - March 1, 2026

The AWP Conference & Bookfair,
Baltimore, Maryland, March 4-7, 2026.

ThrillerFest XXI 2026, New York, NY,
May 5 - 9, 2026