



DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

StoryMasters: Our First Meeting in 2022, with Finesse

Just like that, 2022 began. We hope you started off a great New Year. StoryMasters certainly did. On January 9, we had our first meeting of 2022 and spent a lovely Sunday afternoon with our new and old friends. A big shout-out to our Toastmaster for the day, **Harold Gee**. With his dedicated attention, he excelled in orchestrating a smooth meeting we all could cherish. Here are five stories we enjoyed listening to.

Cynthia Moore – *Goodbye to Idioms*

On Christmas Day, **Cynthia Moore** took a spoon and started stirring her black-eyed peas. When she tasted the flavor, she said to herself, “*Cynthia, you put your foot in those black-eyed beans!*” “Put your foot in” is an idiom, meaning a fantastic job. Usually, it refers to a great meal. As an idiom advocate, she introduced some idioms that millennials don’t understand, such as “raining cats and dogs,” “in seventh heaven,” and “break a leg,” and explained the differences in language usage between her boomer contemporaries and younger generations. What are your favorite idioms? Cynthia suggests we all should keep using them.

Vicki Juditz – *Pandemic Vacay*

“*Mom, you could have sleep apnea and die!*” **Vicki Juditz** decided to go to the sleep center when her kid insisted she should get tested. It would be a nice pandemic vacay, she thought, a sleep-over with clean sheets and quiet. But what she saw when she arrived at the sleep center was no vacation resort: an abandoned-looking building, deserted hallway, and no business signs on the doors. When she pushed open the last door, she saw a man facing a video console, just like the horror movie *Cabin in the Woods* where the techs monitor their victims on video screens. It was only the beginning of a long nerve-wracking night for her—and a hilarious tale for us.

Hiba Hamdan – *The Key Factor to Customer Satisfaction*

What makes customers happy? Using business storytelling techniques, **Hiba Hamdan** shared the key factors that satisfy customers through her stories: 1) set expectations, 2) meet expectations, and 3) exceed expectations. When Hiba got engaged, instead of a big protruding stone, she picked a practical ring on which diamond dust was sprinkled so that she could wear it all the time. But the ring was too big for her slender finger. When she requested “bridges” inside the ring to adjust the size, she was appalled at the difference between “bridges” in the jeweler’s mind and her own. Great drawings, Hiba!

Ashton Cynthia Clarke – *The Lady in Red*

On March 19, 2019, kicking her depressions to the curb, **Ashton Cynthia Clarke** put on a red top and a matching pashmina for a concert by the internationally renowned violinist Karen Briggs in Leimert Park. Ashton recalled the concert, *Live at the Acropolis*, at which Yanni and Karen collaborated beautifully, and remembered watching it on PBS with her mother back in 1994. Not long after, Ashton lost her mother to lymphoma, but the elation of hearing the music with her has remained sharp and clear in Ashton’s mind. Reflecting on the beautiful reminiscences, she chose to be happy.

Jon White – *The Questions These Kids Come up With*

Being a dad is not easy, **Jon White** says. What is the difficult part? Dealing with all the questions kids come up with! He can answer many of the questions, like those about finance and sleep deprivation, but having a sad resumé in the romantic department, Jon confesses that dating and ladies are not his subjects of expertise. Jon even found himself hoping his son Austin would be asexual so that he didn’t have to answer the questions he didn’t have an answer for, but the time came much quicker than he thought it would. Austin got a girlfriend at the age of 10! Before he knew it, Jon started getting the tough questions. *What’s a kiss like?*

Meeting functionaries included Toastmaster **Harold Gee**, General Evaluator **Lin Van Gelder**, Timer **Camille Miller**, Wordmaster/Grammarians **Jacki Williams-Jones**, and Evaluators **Jill Vanderweit**, **Margaret Mitchell**, **Tina Tomiyama**, **Lee Amatangelo**, and **Antoinette Byron**.

Every day is a blank page of your 365-page book.

Write a good one, friends!

Next meeting is February 13. (GUESTS, [RSVP FROM HERE](#))

UPCOMING STORYTELLING EVENTS

Many intriguing storytelling events keep coming up. Check them out on [our event page!](#)

JAN 22 **4 Women Telling: Fire & Ice**
<https://thestorymasters.org/event/4-women-telling-fire-ice/>

6:00 PM PST / 9:00 PM EST
 Category: Storytelling concert
 Location: Zoom
 Cost: Free

Come in from the cold and join us around the fire for stories. Careful! Fire warms but also burns. Ice provides new passageways until it cracks.



JAN 23 **StoryMasters Storytelling Café**
<https://thestorymasters.org/storytelling-cafe/>

3:00 PM PST / 6:00 PM EST
 Category: Storytelling swap
 Location: Zoom
 Cost: Free

StoryMasters Storytelling Café is a safe place where you can share your work of art. Bring one whether it's still a work in progress or a finished product. Everybody is welcome!



JAN 21 **The 25th Annual Fillet of Solo Festival**
<http://lifelinetheatre.com/performances/2021-2022/the-2022-fillet-of-solo-festival/>

-FEB 23
 Category: Storytelling concert
 Location: Virtual
 Cost: \$0-100 (\$45 suggested)

Celebrate Chicago's enduring storytelling and live lit scene. Fillet of Solo **virtually** brings 10 storytelling collectives and 27 solo performers together from all over the world in an online gallery of powerful, personal stories!



Check out more events at: <https://thestorymasters.org/events/>

Disclaimer: Events are posted as a service to our members, friends and the storytelling community. Posting is not an endorsement.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

Nourish Your Creativity

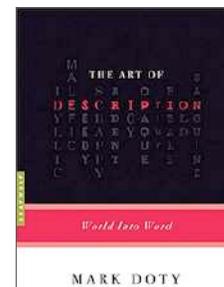
Did you make your New Year's resolutions? Whether you did or not, why don't we all cultivate our creative mind by **reading books** this year? Here are some books you may want to check out!

THE ART OF DESCRIPTION

<https://www.amazon.com/Art-Description-World-into-Word/dp/1555975631>

I haven't finished reading this book yet, but my friend told me that this is an amazing book to inspire writers, storytellers, and anybody who wants to communicate messages that are enjoyed and remember-able.

"It sounds like a simple thing, to say what you see," Mark Doty begins. *"But try to find words for the shades of a mottled sassafras leaf, or the reflectivity of a bay on an August morning, or the very beginnings of desire stirring in the gaze of someone looking right into your eyes . . ."* Doty finds refuge in the sensory experience found in poems by Blake, Whitman, Bishop, and others. *The Art of Description* is an invaluable book by one of America's most revered writers and teachers.



LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY READS: BEST OF 2021

<https://lapl.org/collections-resources/blogs/lapl/lapl-reads-best-2021>

The Los Angeles Public Library, at the Central Library and the 72 branches, are pleased to announce the best books of 2021 as selected by their staff, who volunteered their recommendations. Among the best books of 2021, you will find many to delight and inspire, bring joy and hope, and some that will entice you to read something different.

If you have any book recommendations, please drop Miyoo a line!



STORYTELLING STUB

No One Is a Great Writer

What makes good stories? To me, good stories contains multiple layers. The first layer doesn't challenge readers. It flows into readers' minds effortlessly and paints an imaginary world without putting them to much work. You can enjoy the surface as is, but the real treasure is hidden. If you take a deeper look, you discover jewels underneath and appreciate the story even more.

Then, what makes great writing? Do you think that fine writers like Margaret Mitchell or Tina Tomiyama writes a first draft and is done with it? Seriously!

Great writing is not born. It's made.

The first draft is just putting your thoughts on paper. It's supposed to be bad. Does "bad" sound too harsh? Then let's say "not wonderful." Fine writers do not skimp on editing time. Well, I'm nowhere near my definition of a fine writer, but I spend a lot of time editing. Even with a tiny article like this one, I usually make more than 10 rounds of edits. Sometimes, if it still doesn't work after multiple edits, I trash it and start over. (*See? I told you I'm not a fine writer, but believe me. My first draft was so much worse than this!*)

So **start writing**. That's the first step you need to take.

Here are some writing tips that may help you.

References:

- [What Makes a Good Writer? 6 Unique Traits](#)
- [6 Characteristics Every Great Writer Has in Common](#)
- [Want to be a Great Writer? Then Don't Focus on Writing.](#)
- [10 Things to Do Before Editing Your First Draft](#)
- [7 Things NOT To Worry About During Your First Draft](#)
- [7 Mistakes To Avoid When Editing Your First Draft](#)



EDITOR'S NOTE

Beautiful Quality Is Not Built in a Day

On New Year's Day, I dusted off the ink-stone and ink stick that I hadn't touched for years, poured water on the stone, and started grinding the ink stick. After grinding for a while, I dipped the brush in the ink and wrote one stroke on a piece of paper. I thought I had ground long enough, but the ink was too thin. I ground some more and tried again. No, not ready yet. I ground more. After I repeated a few times, I realized that I was doing it all wrong.

My first mistake was where I put the water. The ink stone has two parts: *oka* (=hill) and *umi* (=ocean). The *oka* is the higher part where you grind the ink stick, and the *umi* is the lower part that the ink flows into. I should've put water on the *oka* instead of in the *umi*. My second mistake was I put too much water at once. The right amount is a quarter size of water. When the ink becomes thick enough, you put another quarter size of water and grind more. As you repeat the process, ink will eventually flow into the *umi*. That's when the ink aroma drifts in the air and you can dip the brush. You will know when ink is ready without even trying a stroke.

But my biggest mistake was that my mind wasn't in it completely. I had forgotten all the basics because I wasn't present at the moment. I cared about time more than ink. I calculated how much time I had and tried to make it work within the timeframe. To make beautiful quality ink, you need to be fully present. Hastiness doesn't cut it. Also, force doesn't make quality ink. When you grind, you need to be gentle. It is said sick people and little girls can make good ink because they don't have strength. Ideally, the ink-stone feels only the weight of the ink stick. That's how gentle it should be.

Making beautiful quality ink takes time and patience.

The same principle can be applied to almost anything. Relationship, work, stories, whatever it is, if you want to create something with beautiful quality, you cannot rush it. You need to start small and take time to grow. Using force may work out in a way, but the quality doesn't come with it.

Today I pulled out the ink set once again and started grinding the ink stick. I'll take as long as it takes. I'm here. I have no time limit.

— Miyo Yamauchi

