

The truth is...we gather on the Third Monday of each month to practice our writing skills. We listen and share in each other's work. We are small in number and our commitment is strictly to produce and foster creativity among our members.

We started in July 1999 and consist of adults that enjoy writing memoirs, commentaries, essays, poems, and/or prose. Our simple method each month is to use a pre-selected word or phrase as the basis of a story, an idea, an opinion, a derivative of, or an implied essence of and write a 1 to 1 ½ page document. We share our stories, comment, and in that way build up our writing skills through practice and presentation. The atmosphere is friendly and supportive, and the feedback is gentle.

Curious? Always wanted to try writing for fun, entertainment, or even profit? Come visit with us at any of our open meetings. Bring a sample of your work. Sit in and see what we do. If you like it, join us every month and become a member.

Original Works by Members of the Pen & Ink Writers' Group
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March 2018 selection – Frivolous

Is Teal Frivolous
By Sara Schupack

The New York Times writes about the queen of color, who has made a very good living off of her own assessments of the psychological and spiritual powers of colors. She says something like, "People who don't like teal blue have a little voice in their heads, a mother or partner or roommate, telling them to clean their rooms." I do love that. My gravitation towards the off colors (and minor keys in music? And short, quiet, or nerdy men, the ones others don't seem to notice?) might be in part a rebellion against that voice (from society, or maybe my father, not my mother) urging me to get in line and follow expectations. To be practical and productive.

Maybe there is a power in frivolity.
I love the frivolous and the ephemeral.

Because the alternative is an admission that since life is short, and my one life a tiny drop in the universe, there's no point to anything. So, I make my own points. Polka dots of teal, rust orange swirls, blue-grey stripes, and neon green splotches. I embrace nonsense and small pleasures.

Does the big stuff not matter to me? Of course it does. I used to reject deep royal purple. It seemed pretentious, expecting too much, grand-standing. Mommy kept giving me purple clothes and accessories, and my heart would sink. Since then, I have repeatedly

been told that I look good in purple and its cousins: wine, mauve, eggplant. She knew. I don't think purple is the color of romantic love, but it is the color of loving commitment to and passion for something larger than yourself. Frivolity might inadvertently tickle or trip over greater causes and grand ideas, but purple embraces them.

I don't feel the need to live in purple, to make some huge, widely-recognized contribution to the world. I am not ambitious in that way. I am comfortable being a dabbler and a dilettante. I enjoy almost all colors except pastels, which make me queasy and antsy. I get judgmental about pastels, finding them wimpy, hesitant, merely pretty. And that may be unfair. Connecting to the world delicately, through layers, with nuance or ambiguity, there's probably nothing wrong with that. Strange that I used to be painfully shy, and then found my voice, and then became impatient with other quiet people. Share an opinion for goodness sake! Stop choosing only white or tan! Listening is as important as talking, however. Blending with other colors does not necessarily dilute them all. I'm deluded if I think I always move through the world boldly. I aspire to do so, but not by forcing myself on others. When two opposite colors meet, they don't cancel each other out; they form something new. Blue and yellow make green. I want to go forth with more love than fear, more joy than doubt. Maybe not painting the town red, but adding a little asterisk of pink here, a spiral of magenta there.

Solemnity has its place too. I love dark hues. Black, midnight blue, red so dark it looks dead. These are for dreams and silence, absorbing the colors that others carry, taking in distant viewpoints, allowing space for sadness, contemplation, and deep breaths.

My favorite color is orange, which I have always loved, way before I learned that it is supposedly the color of creativity, which pleases me. Orange is warm, fun, playful, more earthy than bright yellow, more cheery and less demanding than pulsing, insistent red. Do I want to live in orange? Maybe. But I haven't been. I'm afraid I've been beige and green, and not a new grass green, more of the sickly, bitter green of vegetables going bad. My anger at the big bureaucracies or corporations that make my life difficult. My disgust with current politics. My guilt and worry with parenting. Is he not like me enough or too much like me? My confused, unfulfilled, ungratified professional yearnings. I think about an ex-colleague's comment about how she misses me, and sure, I am smart, but more importantly and more rare, I have a big heart. That is the me I want to be more often. How to get back to orange?

I can start with teal. Taking pleasure in my dark teal sofa and my retro ice-blue coffee maker and almost matching water bottle, the color of a 1970's rotary phone. Not shying away from obnoxious fuchsia or enjoying a quiet moment with chocolate brown. Relishing small pauses between the anger, moments to cuddle a dog, return a smile, laugh at a bad joke. The small dots or stripes of color. The frivolous and ephemeral.

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Frivolous
By Elvira K. Castillo

I have to admit “Frivolous” is a word I found very difficult to write about for an essay, and I was tempted to just read one of my previous stories for this month. I looked in the dictionary and one of the meanings I found for the word was “Of little weight or importance.”

Then, just this past Thursday, I happened to watch the 1942 movie “Mrs. Miniver.” The movie is set in England in 1939, just prior to WW II and the Nazi invasion. The story begins with Mrs. Kay Miniver, admiring a hat she loves and wants to purchase, but hesitates because she thought it a bit “frivolous” and perhaps her husband Clem would object to the purchase. However, she decides to go ahead buy it, brings it home, but hides it from her husband.

Meanwhile, unbeknownst to Mrs. Miniver, the same day, husband Clem is looking at a very fancy car, and he, too, feels it may be too “frivolous” to purchase such an extravagant item without discussing it with his wife. As his wife, he couldn’t resist, and buys the luxurious automobile.

At dinner that evening, they hint towards their frivolous purchases, but both eventually confess. You might say that Mr. and Mrs. Miniver lived a peaceful and happy life in a lavish home with three children. They really could afford a few frivolous adventures. Like most of us, they most likely took their safe, happy life for granted, but soon found frivolous behavior was no longer a privilege, as the invasion of the Nazis on their existence was very near indeed!

After the first enemy attack, Mrs. Miniver found a wounded Nazi parachutist in her garden, and, unfortunately, it was when her husband was on his way to Dunkirk with a civilian rescue team to help fallen English soldiers. The Nazi passed out due to his wounds, so Mrs. Miniver bravely took his gun and called the police to take him, and her husband returned safely from Dunkirk. Thus began the hardships in the small town in England. The family covered all the windows with dark curtains, they slept in a bomb shelter where Mrs. Miniver comforted her children, their lavish home was bombed, their eldest son Vin joined the RAF and although he was not injured, his new bride, Ann, was killed on land by gunfire, and many dear friends were killed.

All through this disaster, Mrs. Miniver comforted and encouraged her family and friends and she was much beloved. Yes, simple frivolities were over for the time, but the temporary loss of their way of life and the remembrance of loved ones gone made the community stronger to conquer tyranny and care for each other. Mrs. Miniver stood out amongst them. As Winston Churchill might have said, and I quote: “Mrs. Miniver was more to the Nation than a fleet of destroyers.”

P.S. By the way, Greer Garson received the Academy Award in 1943 for her portrayal of Mrs. Miniver.

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A Gun Carry Classroom Discussion **By N. Stewart**

“This is a waste of time for us to be discussing. Neither of us have children in school, nor can we make any difference to what happens with guns in classrooms anyway. It is out of our hands. I’m disappointed with the politicians, parents, and the children, too. Although I can hardly blame the children for thinking that they have all the answers at what 14-15 years of age. They have seen so much of the world and experienced so much of life,” Joan said sarcastically. “Sheltered by helicopter parents, teachers that baby sit rather than teach, and all the clever, know-it-alls that freely give unsolicited advice to all of us. How much can children that age know of “real” life?”

“They have grown up under different circumstances than we did as we viewed wars from afar and after the fact. Today, children see the immediate aftermath of horrible disasters. For example, they witnessed pictures of 911, unfolding - first one tower and then a second tower - before their eyes with all the chaos that followed, shattering their hold on security. More than I would ever like to believe have experienced a lone gunman, stalking and shooting their young friends in a classroom or at a concert. The terror they must have felt, the insecurity of it all, and the broken trust. One day they are happy students going off to school to learn, to be with their friends, and in the next moment guns are blazing in the halls, blood is spilling over everything, and friends, teachers, coaches are dying around them. How do you resolve something like that in a tender innocent mind? They need to be protected in the classroom.”

“Yes, but is that a reason to allow teachers to carry guns in the classrooms, protecting the students while their right to feel free is being stolen away? The practice of shooting at a stationary target and actually shooting at a live human being that is shooting back is an entirely different situation. What happens when a false rumor starts and the guarded, gun-sliding, inexperienced teacher draws and fires the hair trigger and it is only a student entering late to class? If I were a teacher, I would not want that responsibility - to carry a gun. As a teacher, am I then required to kill the offender? What if I don’t take action and a student is killed? Am I then responsible for the death of that student? Will I be tried? Teaching is educating the young; not for defending them. There are others for that.”

“That’s a frivolous, silly argument. That’s never going to happen.”

“No, it’s not frivolous and never say never. What if my job description required that I maintain order in the classroom, requiring me to carry a gun for the protection of the students? Can I lose my job if I don’t agree to carry? I personally am not going to fire it. I don’t believe in killing. I don’t even want a gun around me let alone used as protection and for the defense of others.”

“That’s utterly absurd, Joan. No one is going to ask someone to carry a gun if it is against what they believe.”

“So that makes me safer in the classroom because the teacher holding the gun believes in guns: firing them, hunting with them, killing with them. What about that teacher that had the gun in the classroom and fired it out the window because he was having personal problems? Or those that see themselves as the ‘Lone Ranger’ type, protecting all mankind against all enemies.”

“The gun carriers would be carefully trained...”

“By whom?”

“As I was saying, the gun carriers would be carefully trained and evaluated by some authority. Not every room would have a teacher allowed to carry. Only those teachers prepared to do so.”

“Seriously, Barb, are you listening to yourself? Someone will train and evaluate the gun carrier? Perhaps... until money runs out, or it no longer is a hot issue, or no one remembers the reason for carrying in the first place. And, how are those that are untrained, unevaluated, unauthorized gun-carrying wanna be teachers going to be stopped from also carrying guns into the classroom to protect themselves and, needless to say, their students. And if the teachers can then why can’t the students protect themselves by also carrying a gun into the classroom. Doesn’t everyone have the right to bare arms?”

Next more and more teachers will start to carry a gun in their classroom, and more and more people will start to carry into churches, restaurants, and stores, creating a modern version of the ‘Old Wild West.’ There will be no end to this if we allow teacher to carry guns in the classroom.”

“Golly, would you look at the time? Sorry to cut our discussion short but I have to be running along, but this certainly was interesting. Like you said it is out of our hands and there is nothing we can really do about it. We’ll just have to wait and see what happens. It was nice talking with you though. See you soon. Bye.

Good bye Barb. *Well that didn’t go over very well. I need to step down off my soap box and figure out how I can get my point across without offending. It’s just such a scary proposition for me, thinking about allowing teachers to carry guns in the classroom. When does it all end?*

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