Welcome to the Monadnock Writers' Group! Since 1984, the MWG has provided community, inspiration, and support to the writers of the Monadnock region. All are welcome! Our membership includes writers of every variety: from poets to journalists, from mystery writers to playwrights, and from career writers to those just getting started. We meet on the third Saturday morning of each month, September through June, at the Peterborough Town Library, unless otherwise noted. Monthly meetings start at 9:45 a.m. and go to about 11:30 a.m, but times can vary. Meetings include a 15-minute meet-and-greet, announcements, a ten-minute reading from a member, and a main speaker sharing professional writing experience and answering questions. Coffee and light refreshments are provided. Our monthly Speaker Series is open to the public and free of charge. Our speakers are instructive and inspirational for writers of all literary forms, genres, and levels of experience. For more information, please go to our website at www.monadnockwriters.org, or join our Monadnock Writers’ Group Facebook page.

RECENT & UPCOMING MWG EVENTS

May General Meeting. On May 11, author and Shakespearean scholar Brinda Charry spoke and took part in a Q&A about the process of writing and researching her historical novel, The East Indian (Simon & Schuster, 2023). For more about her work, please go to https://brindacharry.com. Also at our May meeting, Holly Gary, the winner of the George Duncan Essay Contest, read her winning essay and answered questions in a lively discussion about the use of AI in schools. Holly is a freshman at ConVal High School.
MWG Board Elections. We are happy to report that all current Board members would like to remain in their roles. Directors up for re-election are Deni Dickler, Tori Haring-Smith, Mary Marchese, Rodger Martin, Ronnie McIntire and Jesseca Timmons. (For a full list of the Board, see the end of this newsletter.) The full membership will vote on these re-elections at our June General Meeting. Also, our summer Board meeting date is set for July 30. Please email monadnockwriters@gmail.com if you have any questions or would be interested in joining our Board next year.

MWG Member Survey. We are conducting our first survey of members and former members, in conjunction with our 40th anniversary. We hope to learn what you like about the MWG and what we might do better. Please watch for an email with the survey link soon. We look forward to getting your input.

Fred Gerhard Reading. MWG member Fred Gerhard (who is our featured member this month; see below), will be reading from his new book on June 15 at 11:00 a.m. at the Toadstool Bookshop in Peterborough.

Smoky Quartz Update. The Editors of Smoky Quartz are finishing the technical aspects of publishing the online journal. They are excited about the high quality of writing and visual impact of the artwork. The Spring 2024 issue will be released before the end of June. The Editors will email an announcement as soon as it is released and ready for everyone to read.

2024 SPRING MEETINGS & SPEAKER SCHEDULE

June 15: BIANNUAL MEMBER READ-AROUND. Our second Member Read-Around of the year has the same rules as in December...please come, share your writing, and try to keep your selection to ten minutes, so everyone will have a chance to read! Our Read-Arounds are always surprising, humbling, entertaining, and inspiring. Come learn what your fellow MWG writers are working on! At the Peterborough Town Library at 9:45 a.m.

The MWG is on summer break in July and August! We hope to see you all at our September General Meeting, which is tentatively scheduled to take place at MacDowell, an artist’s residency program in Peterborough, on September 21. This is always a wonderful meeting…save the date!

SUMMER RETREATS & CONFERENCES

MWG may not be meeting in July or August, but there are many writing-related events taking place throughout New England this summer that offer opportunities to develop and hone your writing. Check out these conferences and writers’ retreats.
The 603 Writer’s Conference. The New Hampshire Writers’ Project hosts its annual conference on June 8 at Southern NH University in Manchester. This year’s keynote speaker is American writer, actor, and director Ernest Thompson. Thompson is best known as the author of the play *On Golden Pond*, about New Hampshire’s Squam Lake, which he wrote at the age of 28. He later won an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for his own play of the same title. More information at [https://nhwritersproject.org](https://nhwritersproject.org).

Squam Writes Retreat. Squam Writes is a four-day retreat on June 6-9, in Holderness, for writers in all genres looking for time and space to practice their craft, and for connection with other serious writers doing the same. For the last eight years, this small group retreat has offered writers a chance to focus on craft in the stunning natural setting of Squam Lake. In addition to ample writing time, they offer optional critiques from published authors, the chance to receive feedback from your peers on your work in progress, and nightly discussions on common roadblocks and career hurdles many writers face. [https://jgagnon90.wixsite.com/squamwrites](https://jgagnon90.wixsite.com/squamwrites)

MacDowell. The oldest artists’ and writers’ retreat in the U.S. is right here in Peterborough. MacDowell offers residencies of up to six weeks year-round to poets, fiction writers, creative nonfiction writers, translators, and all other disciplines in the arts. Residents are provided with a private studio and work space, as well as access to the James Baldwin Library. For application dates and requirements, visit [https://macdowell.org](https://macdowell.org).

The Writer’s Retreat at Thoreau Farm. Spend a unique day working at a replica of the desk Henry David Thoreau used at Walden Pond in Concord, MA. The Thoreau birthplace is the perfect country setting for writers who want uninterrupted concentration and a reprieve from urban stress. Thoreau Farm is a 290-year-old colonial New England farmhouse adjacent to a working twenty-acre organic farm in Concord, Massachusetts. Quiet pastures and woods surround the house and serve as inspiration through every window. It was here that, as his friend Ellery Channing wrote, Thoreau “first saw the light” and “drew his first breath in a pure country air, out of crowded towns, amid the pleasant russet fields.” Retreats are ongoing. [https://thoreaufarm.org/writers-retreat/](https://thoreaufarm.org/writers-retreat/)

Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance (MWPA) has several retreats and conferences throughout the year, including the Maine Crime Wave in June. The 2024 Maine Crime Wave will be an evening plus a full day of panels, a keynote talk, book signings, a contest, and much more, on Friday, June 14 - Saturday, June 15 on the University of Southern Maine (USM) Campus in Portland. [https://www.mainewriters.org](https://www.mainewriters.org)

2024 Stonecoast Writers’ Conference. This annual event returns to Portland this summer. Workshops will run from the morning of Monday, June 24 through noon on Saturday, June 29. Because the conference runs concurrently with USM’s Stonecoast MFA Summer Residency, participants have exclusive access to the faculty and programming of one of the country’s
The Monadnock Storytelling & Spoken Word Circle is the third Wednesday of every month from 6:30–8:30 p.m. at the Dublin Community Center. This is an open mic event for participants to share stories, poetry, rap, comedy, truly any kind of spoken word, going round the circle. The organizers are Sebastian Lockwood and Papa Joe Gaudet, both of whom have 20-plus years of experience as professional storytellers. For more information, please go to: https://dublincommunitycenter.org/.

The Monadnock Lyceum will feature literary speakers, including author Rinker Buck on June 30 at the historic Peterborough Unitarian Universalist Church. Buck has noticed that other writers often ascribe their success to lofty, pretentious factors. But Buck believes it is the prosaic, even embarrassing events of youth that send aspiring writers on their way. He will talk about how to “screw up and become a hero.” His books are Life on the Mississippi: An Epic American Adventure (2022), The Oregon Trail: A New American Journey (2015), and Flight of Passage (1997). For a complete schedule, please go go to https://monadnocklyceum.org.
Poetry at The Root, an open mic night for poets in Temple, is hosted by poet Brian Evans-Jones, former Poet Laureate of Hampshire, U.K., and winner of the Maureen Egan Award from Poets & Writers. He writes about poetry and creativity at The Poetry Place. Read your own poems, read poems by your favorite poets, or come to support the poets by listening to the poems — everyone is welcome! You can warm up at the fire, listen to the live music, hang out with other poets and poetry lovers, and enjoy the night. https://www.writebetterpoems.com/poetry-at-the-root.

Monadnock Underground Open Mic. The Peterborough Town Library and Monadnock Underground host a monthly open mic night for writers of all genres and levels of experience. Poetry, prose, something you're not even sure what it is - bring it on down! You can sign up when you arrive at 5:30 p.m. In an effort to keep things relaxed, loose, and informal, they try to avoid fixed rules like maximum length, and simply ask that readers be mindful of how many others are signed up to read and the fact that they have a hard stop at 7:00 p.m. https://peterboroughtownlibrary.org/event/9879820

The High School Creative Writing Club is run by Avenue A Teen and Community Center, a project of The Grapevine in Antrim. The Creative Writing Club is open to all teens. Students are encouraged to express themselves, tackle difficult issues, and offer support to one another. The club also supports performance, bringing art into the community by hosting readings of student work in local bookshops. https://avenueatc.org/

The New Dawn Writers Group at the New Dawn Arts Center, 84 Main Street, Ashburnham, MA, holds Tuesday night workshops on fiction, memoir, and poetry, plus open mic nights, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. MWG member Fred Gerhard runs the poetry workshop. Please click the link for more details on specific dates. https://www.newdawnarts.org

MacDowell Downtown is a free series of presentations by MacDowell Fellows that are open to the public. They take place on the first Friday of the month from March to November in downtown Peterborough. Each season of MacDowell Downtown features a wide array of programming, including film screenings, readings, artist talks, interviews, musical performances, and more. MacDowell Downtown begins at 7:30 p.m. typically at the Monadnock Center for History and Culture in Peterborough. https://www.macdowell.org/events/2024-macdowell-downtown

The Amos Fortune Forum at the Old Jaffrey Meeting house provides a summer of knowledge, discussion, and ideas. Their 2024 line-up is a wonderful selection of speakers on diverse topics. The Forum takes place Friday nights at 8:00 p.m. and is live streamed on YouTube as well. https://amosfortune.org
Wild Graces Annual Haiku Gathering, August 24, will be a day of creativity and sharing among haiku poets, artists and musicians amidst the old apple trees, herb gardens and frog ponds at Wild Graces in Deerfield, NH. Masters and newbies are welcome to share their haibun, tanka, senryu and haiku during the open mic. Bring your books, broadsides, brushwork, haiga and CDs to swap, sell or share. [http://www.wildgraces.com/Haiku-Gathering.html](http://www.wildgraces.com/Haiku-Gathering.html)

MEET A MEMBER: FRED GERHARD

Fred Gerhard is a widely published poet, a founder of the New Dawn Arts Center in Ashburnham, MA, and a member of multiple writing and poetry associations. He is one of the editors of the MWG’s *Smoky Quartz*. His poems have appeared in *Amethyst Review, Asylum Magazine, Attachment, Black Moon Magazine, Cacti Fur, Door is a Jar Magazine, Entropy Magazine, Friends Journal, Global Poemic, Harpy Hybrid Review, Heavy Feather Review, Monadnock Underground, Otherwise Engaged Literary and Arts Journal, Pif Magazine, POETiCA REVIEW, Sylvia Magazine, Wild Musette Journal*, and other magazines and anthologies. In addition, Fred is a clinical psychologist, operator of antique trolleys, museum guide, folk dancer, musician, runner, and hiker. He particularly enjoys sitting on his porch and spending time with family, friends, and a tortoise named Twyla. You can find and purchase Fred’s work, including his new book, at [https://www.fredgerhard.com](https://www.fredgerhard.com).

*The Quill Questionnaire*

**How long have you been writing?**
I’ve been writing poetry since 1979, when I was 17. My mother was a poet and encouraged me to write. Then in the 1980s, I was lucky enough to study under the poet Harry Humes at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania. I had a handful of poems published in the '80s and '90s. Then in 2016, I made a decision to take online classes and hone my skills. A writer-friend challenged me to write daily and I still do, to this day. Since 2017, I’ve been getting poems published pretty consistently. I just got my first chapbook, *Lilacs Still Bloom in Ashburnham: Songs of Spring*, published by Local Gems Poetry Press, and my first full-length poetry book, *Drifting to “Hello”* from Khotso Publishing, both in 2023. I am ridiculously proud of *Drifting to “Hello.”* Carl Mabbs-Zeno did a fantastic job as my publisher.

**What are you working on right now?**
I don’t have any specific project currently. I’ve done a lot of ekphrastic projects in the past couple of years. The main project for me is to continue to improve and grow as a writer. I just got notified this week that my first short story was accepted at *Quibble Lit*. So, I hope to do more short stories. I am making an effort to write more poems about dance, especially morris dance and contra dance, and poems about what it is to be haunted. Some of those themes began in *Drifting to “Hello”* and I’m enjoying writing more of those. Other than my own writing, I’m
pretty involved in editing for *Quabbin Quills* anthologies and *Smoky Quartz*. Plus, I am running monthly poetry workshops and open mics at the New Dawn Arts Center in Ashburnham. And I am doing launch events for my book at the Tidepool Bookstore in Worcester this month, and the Booklovers Gourmet in Webster, MA in June. And on June 15 at 11:00 a.m., I will be reading at the Toadstool right here in Peterborough.

**Who are some of your favorite writers?**

I’m constantly reading poetry and looking for new inspiration. Some of my favorites, and the list is very long, are Jane Hirshfield, Thomas Lux, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Bei Dao, and Tomas Tranströmer. Jane Hirshfield is able to go to dark places and find light. It’s easy to write a poem that ends in a drop or a shocking line, but it’s something more, I think, to make a turn to something curious about being human at the end of a poem. I love that. Most recently, I’ve been enjoying Geffrey Davis. I based the format for *Drifting to “Hello”* and for my website FredGerhard.com on his book and website. I’ve been reading a lot of sonnets lately, everything from Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Shakespeare to Ted Berrigan. There are some fantastic sonnet poets in New England like Maxine Libby and my friend Simon Hunt. His combination of traditional form with punk rock themes is brilliant and fun. I am also always reading novels and recently enjoying Haruki Murakami, Gabriel García Márquez, Carson McCullers, and Thomas Hardy.

**Do you have a writing routine/process that you stick to?**

Yes. I write daily in the mornings. I’m more creative then. Although insomnia has also been a strange friend for creative writing at times. Mondays, all day, and Thursdays, until noon, are dedicated writing times. That’s when I do revisions and submissions, and take a weekly online class. I’m currently doing Carol Ann Duffy’s BBC Maestro course which has really helped me think about revision, or as she calls it, redrafting. The process each morning is to read three poems from a poet who reliably gets me into that creative space Blake describes, and then I see what comes from what the moment is presenting to me. If the form or voice carry over from the poet I’ve read, all the better to challenge me.

I also have a playlist of songs that sometimes demand that I stop and write. It’s full of great lyricists like Bob Dylan, Patti Smith, Jack White, Vashti Bunyan, Conor Oberst, and Suzanne Vega, among others. A can of Red Bull and a few Swedish fish round out my routine. I should mention that my house is a great inspiration. I purposely got a whimsical painted lady in 2016 to spark inspiration and joy. Writing comes most easily to me on the porch or in the tower there. And then I workshop my poems in either my own workshop at New Dawn, or an online Stafford Challenge Circle Group. Finally, the poems are read by my wife, Rachael, who often has great feedback.

**What is your favorite/least favorite thing about writing?**

My favorite thing about writing is when I surprise myself and the poem takes over and goes just beyond what can be said, pointing to something more. Billy Collins talks about that, and I love when it happens. My least favorite thing is probably realizing I’ve spent too long on something
that just doesn’t work, and wishing I’d let it go sooner. Luckily, I’m not affected much by rejection. I usually write around 400 to 500 poems a year and I submit 20 or 30; I really don’t spend too long on rejections. I’m too busy with the poems vying to be in the next batch going out. Here’s a poem (*Atmosphere*) that got picked up by *Pif Magazine*. It made me especially happy knowing that Pif had published Billy Collins, one of my heroes. So, I felt I was in good company.

*ATMOSPHERE* by Fred Gerhard

The descending tone of a single prop
rises to a steady hum lost in atmosphere
I breathe – and again –
quieter, listen
three notes of a truck in reverse
three blocks away
warning transmitted even to me
the intention to go back
through blind spots.
the first sounds of an SOS
injury is possible, listening for
what lifts off from the ground
or rolls back heavy as time
under the wheel
there’s much more I do not hear:
my breath repeating,
squirrel talons down walnut bark,
oak leaf scuffling over fallen copper comrades
to no avail, catching
the momentary lift
that slid the glinting plane out of view
carried the warning thrice intoned,
glancing to the courtyard
I forgot to mention
the breath I held
listening for you.

---

**ALL ABOUT MWG**

- **Submit your bio as a member of MWG.** Are you a member? If you would like your bio added to the [About Our Members](#) page on the MWG website, please send it to Mary Marchese
Volunteer! If you would be interested in bringing refreshments, being our ten-minute reader or have ideas for speakers or events, please let us know at monadnockwriters@gmail.com.

Send your writing news or announcements to The Quill. If you would like to submit to our monthly newsletter, please contact Jess at mwg.quill@gmail.com at least a week before the end of the month. As a member, you may include your author events and announcements.

Who are we at MWG? Established in 1984, the primary mission of the Monadnock Writers’ Group is to offer fellowship and support to professional writers and to those actively engaged in developing their writing skills. To learn more: www.monadnockwriters.org/about-us

Please explore MWG online. Visit our website, www.monadnockwriters.org, for news, member profiles, speakers series information, contests, publications, and more. Find us on Facebook under Monadnock Writers’ Group: www.facebook.com/groups/monadnockwriters/

Monadnock Writers’ Group membership information:

- Annual membership fees are $30, or $25 for students and seniors, $50 for Patrons, $100 for Benefactor, and $250 for a Corporate membership.

- Individual members are encouraged to announce their own projects such as workshops, social gatherings, group support sessions, or whatever the writing-related endeavor. Feel free to take the floor at the monthly meeting, or contact the newsletter editor at mwg.quill@gmail.com to send an announcement to the membership in the monthly newsletter.

- Bring a friend to one of our monthly meetings, and if they join MWG, you will receive a $20 gift certificate for the Toadstool Bookshop!

- See the full list of membership benefits here: www.monadnockwriters.org/membership

The MWG 2023-2024 Board of Directors

President: Jesseca Timmons, Vice President: Rodger Martin, Treasurer: Carl Mabbs-Zeno, Secretary: Susan Gebo, Members at Large: Deni Dickler, Tori Haring-Smith, Maura MacNeil, Mary Marchese, Ronnie McIntire, Emerita: Ann Day.