

THE LONE STAR LITERARY LIFE

M A G A Z I N E



JANUARY 2026

ISSUE 16



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Many years ago, I was introduced to the idea of having a word of the year. As a word-loving girl, I immediately adopted the practice. Now, when November rolls around, I start percolating on the next year's word.

Connect, Flourish, Align, Integrity, Sparkle...last year, I landed on "Simplify." Usually, I discover the word that resonates by December.



This year was different.

As I mentally scrolled through verbs, adjectives, and nouns, nothing landed. I resolved to choose my word during an upcoming conference, where I knew I'd have some solitary time in a hotel room to figure it out.

Sure enough, my word found me there. However, although the word resonated deeply, I did NOT want to adopt it as my own.

EXPAND.

A bold word. Tough, even.

I wanted a word that would inspire me and keep me anchored to my intentions for the year. I wanted a word that would give me the warm fuzzies. Not one that I tried to argue with it and transform it into something more benign, like...expansive. It's a spacious

adjective that brings to mind wide-open spaces, I reasoned.

But EXPAND did not let me go, would not allow me to pick anything else.

So, in 2026, I will have “EXPAND” on a sticky note on my desk. I will focus on it during my contemplative prayers. I will sleep, eat, and breathe “EXPAND.”

Hey, will you look at that? Breathe is directly connected to EXPAND. (According to my yoga instructor!)

That’s what my word of the year always does—reveals all the places it’s already been sneaking into my world, gently bringing my attention to it.

EXPAND doesn’t feel gentle, but I am resolved to stay in the discomfort, because as aggressively as it is asserting itself as my new word of the year, I am confident it has something to teach me.

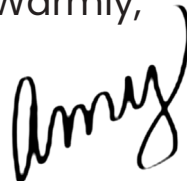
By the way, if you’re wondering about the theme of this issue, it is RESOLVE. (You were thinking it was EXPAND, weren’t you?!) I talk more about resolve in my video, so be sure to check it out.

But for now, I’m wondering: Do you choose a word of the year?

If not, I encourage you to try it in 2026. If you do choose one, we’d love to hear what it is! DM it to us on Instagram and include this hashtag: #WOTY2026. We’ll send you a free Canva template that you can use to create a printable version of your word of the year. Want extra credit? Share it on your socials and tag us.

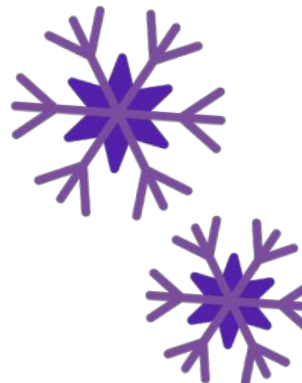
Whatever your word is, here’s to a year of intention and growth!

Warmly,



AMY KELLY

Editor-in-Chief, Lone Star Literary Life



VIDEO FROM THE EDITOR

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Texas Writes



Believe that everything happens
for a reason. Life is too short
to wake up with regrets. So love
the people who treat you right,
forget about those who don't.
If you get a chance, take it.
If it changes your life, let it.
Sometimes good things fall apart
so better things can fall together.

HOW TO BUILD A TEXAS LIBRARY, CIRCA 1885: *Start with a Book Club*

By Jann Alexander

The First Texas Book Club Began 140 Years Ago, in February 1885, Thanks to Houston Women in Search of 'Intellectual Culture'



1929 Poster by Robert Lee,
Books for Everyone

It began with nine Houston women, who gathered in the home of Mary Jane Harris Briscoe on February 26, 1885 — 140 years ago. They formed a club to seek “intellectual and social culture,” which they named Ladies’ History Class.

But by April that same year, with about thirty-five members, they’d changed their name to Ladies’ Reading Club, and had drafted a constitution. They wanted to expand their knowledge of art, science, literature, and history, and they started by devoting their first few weeks to studying Egypt, no doubt in a nod to “[Egyptomania](#)” that swept Great Britain with the British occupation of Egypt in 1882. The members soon “determined to so divide the

time that one week each month, in regular rotation, should be devoted to the discussion of subjects included under the general heads of Art, Science, Literature, and History."

THEY FORMED A CLUB TO SEEK "INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL CULTURE," WHICH THEY NAMED LADIES' HISTORY CLASS.

They formed a club to seek "intellectual and social culture," which they named Ladies' History Class.

They assigned themselves topics for papers, which they presented at their meetings. Because Houston had no public library to provide reading materials for their research, the Ladies' Reading Club began acquiring their own. They purchased books and subscribed to periodicals. The members could check out the club's books for a small

fee. Those fees were used to purchase more materials for their ever-expanding library. By 1895 the club's library contained 148 books and several volumes of bound magazines, and was outgrowing its shelves.

The city appropriated money in 1899 for a free public library, and the wealthy industrialist Andrew Carnegie agreed to give the city \$50,000 for its building. But a plot of land to build the library on was needed.

Enter the Woman's Club, the Current Literature Club, the Shakespeare Club, and the Mansfield Dramatic Club, which partnered with the Ladies' Reading Club to form the City Federation of Women's Clubs. The women raised the money. Federation members sponsored musicals, lectures, ice cream socials, and bazaars. Their efforts, combined with individual gifts, brought in \$7,880, used to purchase the property at the corner of McKinney Avenue and Travis Street in 1904.

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Delivery: January 2026

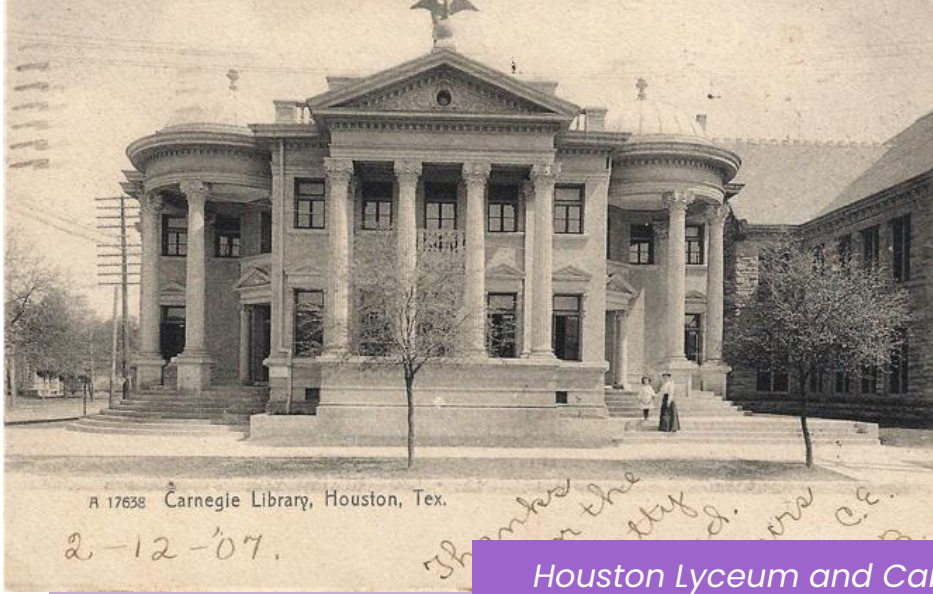
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Reaching
& Rooted

JANUARY 2026 ISSUE

9 



Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library, 1907

And thus arose the Houston Lyceum and Carnegie Library, later replaced by what's now the Julia Ideson building of Houston Public Library (in 1926).

In 1929 Stanley Marcus, fresh from his master's degree in business from Harvard and by then the merchandising manager for his father's and uncle's Dallas ready-to-wear store, had set to work on building the store's image. He'd already made Neiman Marcus the first department store to hold fashion shows for its customers. And no doubt his customers were topmost in mind when he borrowed a page from the Houston Ladies' Reading

Club, and organized what he called the Book Club of Texas.

But his was hardly the first.

Sources: TSHA, Britannica Money



Jann Alexander

is the author of the best-selling *Unspoken: A Dust Novel*, the first book in The Dust Series.

This article was originally published on Jann Alexander's Blog.



CREATIVITY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Art House Dallas is a local non-profit that exists to create community and empower local artists. Each year we host over 100 events and programs for writers, musicians, visual artists, and performing artists. There's something for everyone!

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You can apply to be in a monthly writing group, attend a feedback for writers, and meet writers and creatives at one of our upcoming virtual or in-person events.

Find out information, group applications, and registration at arthousedallas.com





YEARS OF “MAYBE NEXT YEAR.”

The book you’ve been dreaming of is not finished because you lack *time*. You lack *a plan*.

You are the thought leader, the coach, the expert. You have the ideas. Stop letting analysis paralysis and the myth of “finding time” stall your author dream.

A FINISHED MANUSCRIPT IS SIX MONTHS AWAY.

My Book in Six is the 183-day roadmap for nonfiction authors who need structure, not more hours.

- **20 Minutes a Day** (*Write during the cracks in your schedule.*)
- **Idea to Done** (*Month One is dedicated to finding your best idea.*)
- **Real Community** (*Find your author people. No one succeeds alone.*)

WRITE YOUR BOOK TODAY



Your Guide to Texas Bookish Events

Texas is full of bookish magic, and now it's easier than ever to find it.

We've added a new feature to the Lone Star Literary Life website: a curated list of [major bookish events](#) happening across the state, organized by month. From literary festivals and book fairs to conferences and community celebrations, this growing resource helps readers discover where stories are celebrated *and* helps authors find places where their stories can be shared.

We'll continue to update this list as new events are announced, making it a reliable, go-to resource for the Texas literary community. If books bring you joy, whether you're reading them, writing them, or sharing them, this is your roadmap to where it's all happening.

[Explore the list](#), mark your calendar, and we'll see you out and about, Texas-style!

Here's a glance at some of January's major bookish events:

JAN
16-17

**Roanoke Annual
Writer's Conference**

JAN
17



FREDERICKSBURG
BOOK FESTIVAL

**Fredericksburg
Book Festival**

JAN
22-23



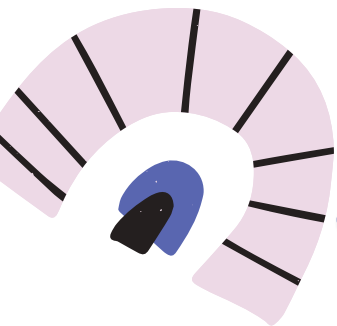
LITERACY
TEXAS

**Far West Literacy
Symposium, El Paso**

JAN
31



**Bookworm Festival for
Young Readers**



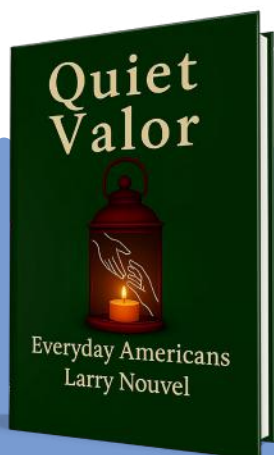
JANUARY BOOK CAMPAIGNS

Lone Star Literary Life Book Campaigns begins the new year with two unique reads. This month, we're spotlighting a gorgeous picture book and a moving nonfiction work on the resolve shown by everyday Americans.

Follow along on social media throughout the month for exclusive insights, behind-the-scenes content, and engaging updates as our reviewers share these works from two marvelous Texas authors.

Don't miss out! Connect with the authors, and discover a book that just might become a new favorite. Stay engaged on social media to join the conversation and the fun.

You can find us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), and [X](#).



Quiet Valor: Everyday Americans

By Larry Nouvel

Inspirational Nonfiction /
Biographies & Memoirs /
American Social History

January 13–26



Ziva the Great

By Cindy J. Vanous

Picture Book / Animals / Family
& Friendship

January 20–February 16



TEXAS LITERARY PODCASTS

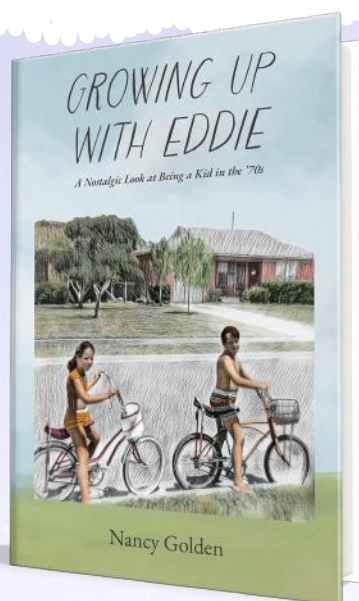


As we step into a new year with intention and resolve, we're celebrating the voices that help Texas readers and writers stay inspired, grounded, and moving forward. Our curated ["2025 Texas Literary Podcasts Roundup" Spotify playlist](#) brings together standout episodes from the Texas-connected shows we love—conversations that spark creativity, deepen craft, and remind us why stories matter. Whether you're seeking motivation for your next chapter, wisdom from seasoned authors, or simply a companion for your daily walk, these episodes offer a powerful start to 2026. Press play and let Texas literature fuel your resolve.



Grab a new book to start 2026 off right!

Resolved to hit the ground running on your reading goal for the new year? We're here to help with a collection of new books to start things off with a bang. We have mysteries to snare your sleuth skills, nonfiction to edify your mind, poetry to soothe your soul, and romance to give you all the feels. Set that reading target and dive in today!



Growing Up with Eddie: **A Nostalgic Look at Being a Kid in the '70s**

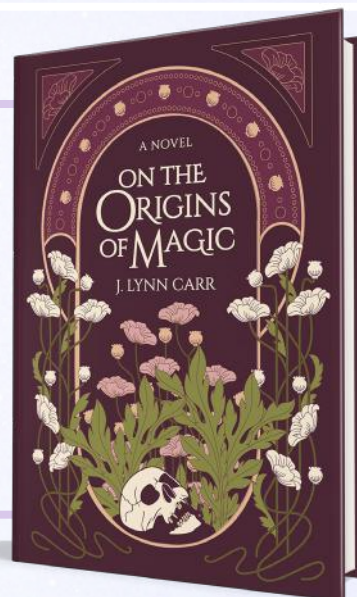
By Nancy Golden

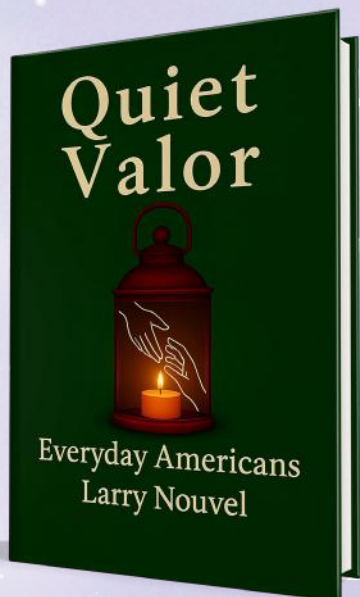
Nonfiction / Memoir
Golden Cross Ranch LLC
December 15, 2025

On the Origins of Magic: **A Novel**

By J. Lynn Carr

Fantasy / Romance
August 26, 2025





Quiet Valor: Everyday Americans

By Larry Nouvel

Inspirational Nonfiction / American Social History
November 4, 2025

Summer's Heart

By Linda Broday

Romance / Western
Epitaph Press
January 12, 2026



Ziva the Great

By Cindy J. Vanous

Picture Book / Animals / Family & Friendship
October 7, 2026





Resolve to Be

DISCOVERABLE:

Why It Matters More Than Ever

This month, we're focusing on RESOLVE, the steady, intentional commitment to doing what moves your writing life forward.

One of the most powerful commitments an author can make is this: **Resolve to become discoverable.**

Your stories deserve to be found, shared, and celebrated. And yet many authors

unintentionally hide behind private profiles, untaggable accounts, or incomplete social media setups. With a few purposeful choices, you can strengthen your visibility and open the door to new opportunities.

This month's Marketing Moment shows you where to begin.

RESOLVE TO BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION: CREATE AN AUTHOR FACEBOOK PAGE

A personal profile simply isn't built for professional reach. Resolving to create, and optimize, an **Author Facebook Page** gives you:

- A fully public, easily searchable presence
- The ability for bookstores, reviewers, and festivals to **tag you directly**
- Shareable content that doesn't get lost behind privacy settings
- Access to professional tools like analytics and scheduling
- A clean separation between your personal life and author identity

And one step that requires intention: **Set your custom Page URL** (e.g., facebook.com/AuthorJaneDoe). This small act of resolve dramatically improves your tagging, SEO, and recognizability.

Resolve to be reachable so readers can champion your work.

RESOLVE TO SHOW UP PUBLICLY: USE A PROFESSIONAL INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT

Many authors remain on private Instagram profiles without realizing the impact. A professional Instagram account signals a clear, confident choice:

"I resolve to let readers find me."

A professional account ensures your profile is public and accessible, making it easy for:

- Readers to follow you instantly
- Bookstagrammers to spotlight your book
- Reviewers to tag your handle

- Media and bookstore accounts to share your posts
- You to access insights that guide a smart content strategy

Locking your profile locks out opportunity.

A public, professional account is an act of authorial resolve.



Add a category like **Author, Writer, or Public Figure** to instantly clarify your professional identity.

RESOLVE TO LOOK PROFESSIONAL: GET YOUR IMAGE SIZES RIGHT

Discoverability isn't only about being found; it's about being *recognized*.

Consistent, correctly sized images signal clarity and professionalism.

Using the right dimensions prevents:

- Blurry, pixelated graphics
- Cropped-off text or logos
- Disproportionate headers that look unpolished
- Inconsistent branding across platforms

Taking time to update your visuals is a simple but powerful act of resolve—one that elevates your entire author platform.





RECOMMENDED IMAGE SIZES

Facebook:

- Profile: 170×170
- Cover: 820×312

Instagram:

- Profile:
320×320
- Feed Squares:
1080×1080

X (Twitter):

- Header:
1500×500


(Always upload the highest-resolution files available.)

RESOLVE TO REMOVE OBSTACLES

When you commit to making your online presence discoverable, you clear the path for:

- Stronger reader engagement
- More shares and tags
- Increased invitations from bookstores and festivals
- Easier collaboration with reviewers
- Better visibility for your books

Discoverability isn't flashy. It's purposeful. It's the quiet, steady resolve that opens doors.



Resolve isn't dramatic, it's deliberate.

STRENGTHEN YOUR RESOLVE. STRENGTHEN YOUR PLATFORM.

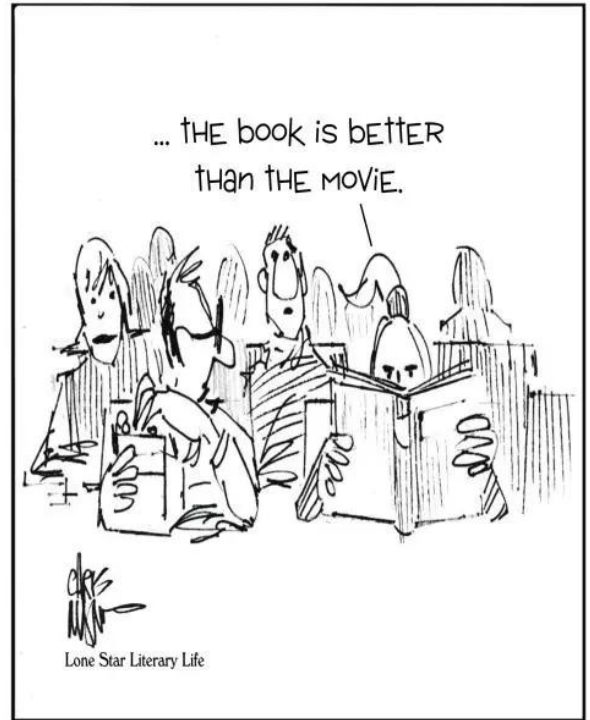
[Join our newest 5-Day Email Course: Transform Your Social Media Discoverability](#)

Five days. Clear steps. A more confident, intentional author presence.

*Resolve to be found. Resolve to be seen.
Resolve to grow.*

BOOKISH HUMOR

Chris Manno's award-winning cartoons appear in periodicals worldwide. Several of his cartoon collections are available in paperback and Kindle format. He is also the author of the award-winning Texas novels *East Jesus* and *Blood and Remembrance*. Manno earned a doctorate in English from Texas Christian University, where he teaches writing. Enjoy more of Manno's cartoons in [Cartoon Chronicle: Winter 2024-2025](#).





Welcome to *Love, Jill*, the column devoted to those of us who are enthusiasts of all things bookish. As a dedicated book nerd, I follow many authors and bookish content creators. A few Decembers ago, my feed was full of posts from readers summarizing their books read and target goals reached. Not usually a fan of New Year's resolutions, this got me curious. How many books did I read last year? I had no idea. I asked my techy spouse to create a spreadsheet so I could track my reads and find out for myself.

The results were weirdly surprising. I knew I read a lot. Turns out, I read A LOT. Previously mentioned techy spouse would say I read a bit too much. Debatable, but probably true. I'm rarely to be found without a book in my hand or in my ears. My bank account is deeply grateful to the people who created Libby. It's definitely played a role in expanding (maybe exploding) my reading output.

Over the years, I've made multiple resolutions around reading—join a book club, read a few nonfiction books, read a specific number of books, and review books I've enjoyed to help out new authors. Book clubs were a hit/miss situation. One felt WAY too much like a graduate-level course. Luckily, we moved, so I could bow out gracefully. I've helped start one in the condo where I live, and it's been absolutely wonderful. We found the right mix of chatting with friends and actually discussing the book we read. Both the book club and the nonfiction resolution pushed me to read genres or topics I would never have chosen on my own. Some I enjoyed, some were tough to finish, and some surprised me in the best way.

Through my work with LSSL, I've discovered just how vital reviews are, especially to new authors. Through my goal to review more of the books I read and connect with authors on social media, I've had some truly marvelous interactions. Please consider reviewing and following your favorites today.

My resolution for 2026 is to more intentionally support indie bookstores. I plan to buy books either in person or via [Bookshop.org](https://www.bookshop.org), attend book signing events, and continue to support the people who share their stories with the world. I hope your 2026 bookish resolution sparks something new in your reading journey.

Jill Anderson is a former teacher and academic advisor who focused her career on helping students find their voices and develop confidence in their own wonderfulness. A misplaced Texan, she currently lives in Tacoma, WA, but thinks the weather might keep her there permanently. Jill@LoneStar-Lit.com

Out & about

With

Lone Star Literary Life

This month, we had a blast hanging out with authors at [Inclusion Coffee](#) in Arlington. Thank you, [Pretty Little Things Market](#), for hosting the event!



Author Gayla J. Reel
Forgotten Vows



Author CD Britt
Omens of Wolves and Witches



Author Frannie Gilbertson
Bibliotherapy: A Collection of Poems





Author Stephanie Morris
Back to You



Author Landyn Hill
For Fillies and Monsters
(Trauma Bonded Series)



Author Lexi MacQueen
The Goddess Calls

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meet a sign
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and over
not cross;



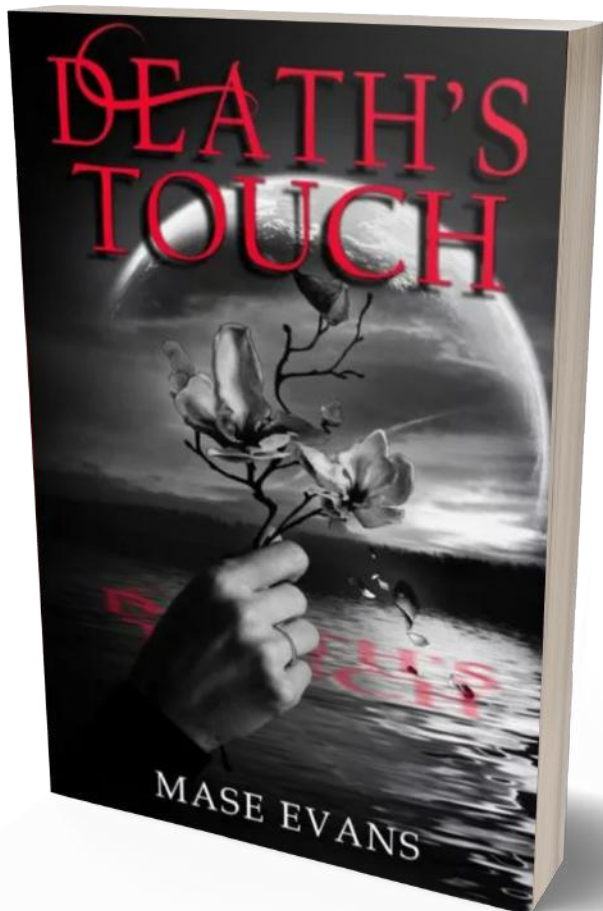
WHAT TO READ NEXT IN YOUNG ADULT



Welcome to **Texas Reads YA!** As a teen who loves to read YA, I sometimes have a hard time finding quality YA novels.

If you love fantasy books with a side of romance then these books are for you! Both of these books are very different though, with one focusing on relationships and deadly secrets and the other on worldbuilding and rebelling.

DEATH'S TOUCH



Thana is the strange sixteen-year-old girl who no one wants anything to do with. Everyone who looks at her sees the quiet gothic girl who hates the world and everyone in it, which is just how it needs to be. The only people who know the truth, that she can kill with just her touch, are her family members. So, she spends her days alone, and keeps her distance from everyone around her because it's the only way to keep them safe.

At least, she does her best to until Chase comes around. Unlike the other kids at school who cast her skeptical, sideways glances in the hallways, or bully her over her appearance, Chase is the first to make a genuine effort to become her friend. And, as dangerous as that is, Thana has a much harder time avoiding him than she wishes she did.

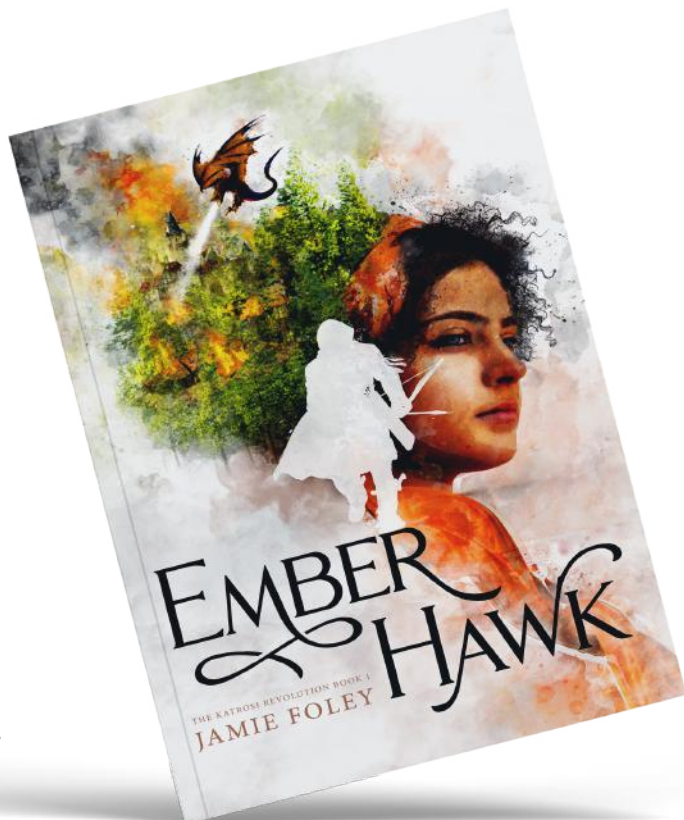
She knows the risks of having a friend who she has to keep such a big secret from, but she's never had a real friend before, and the companionship, and the way he's able to so easily make her feel carefree and happy is something she's never experienced in this way before.

But what happens if she gets too close to him? What happens if she kills him?

Death's Touch is a story about family, relationships, and secrets. Thana and Chase depict classic friends to lovers, but with a layer of secrecy and rules. It is fast paced, especially in the middle, and has good character development throughout.

Mase Evans is a fantasy and romance author who grew up in Houston, Texas and began writing at the age of 10, finishing her first full length novel when she was 14. She continues to live in Texas with her husband and her four fur babies.

EMBERHAWK



The elementals have decided they're gods, and humans are nothing but fuel for their fire.

A starving trapper.

Merciless drought withers Kira's ranch, leaving her family hungry—and desperate enough to cross the border into the forbidden forest to trap wild game.

But the forest is infested with tree-scorpions and giant cats that wield elemental invisibility, and they're hungry, too. When Kira mistakes one elemental

creature for another, she ends up with the last thing she wants in her trap: an enemy soldier.

An invisible spy.

Ryon can't afford to be a prisoner of war. If the Malaano Empire extracts his secrets, the rumors of war will be confirmed—and the tribes stand little chance against the Empire unless they can put aside generations of bad blood for the sake of a Tribal Alliance.

When Ryon's escape leaves Kira injured and her livelihood in flames, Ryon must choose between aiding her... or returning to his chieftess with vital information. But can he survive the trek when an elemental pursues him for his rejected heritage?

A sacrificial princess.

Imperial Princess Vylia is given a powerful ancient stone as her wavesinger trials approach. But is the stone's whispering voice from the water goddess, or a masquerading elemental the creator god imprisoned millennia ago?

When Vylia's diplomatic mission to the tribal lands erupts in fiery revenge, she, Kira, and Ryon must work together to survive—or become pawns in the battle of the gods.

Emberhawk contains a beautifully crafted world with fleshed out characters and plot points. The novel is complex without being confusing and this allows for readers to be fully immersed in the world and story.

Jamie Foley is a fantasy author who loves strategy games, gardening, and making lembas bread. When she's not writing, she's working for Enclave Publishing or the Christian Writers Institute, typesetting, or drawing maps to Cair Paravel. They live between the Texas Hill Country and the family cattle ranch, where their hyperactive spawnling and wolfpack roam.

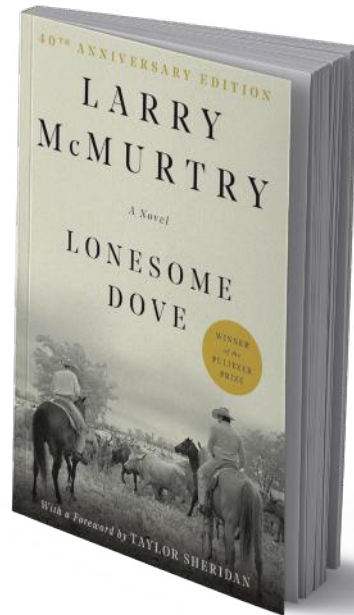
Sydney Spell is a student at UT Austin. She has enjoyed reading throughout her adolescence and is an especially big fan of YA novels.

TEXAS READS

with
Preston Lewis

These Westerns provide an expansive look at the breadth of the Texas frontier experience and the resulting Texas character and spirit. These classics are necessary to understand the state's historic roots. The first three are well known while the final three are more obscure and, unfortunately, out of print, though they can be found in used bookstores.

1. *Lonesome Dove*
(Larry McMurtry, 1985)



Any list of Western books on the Lone Star State begins with *Lonesome Dove*, Larry McMurtry's Pulitzer Prize-winning classic on 19th century Texas. There is a



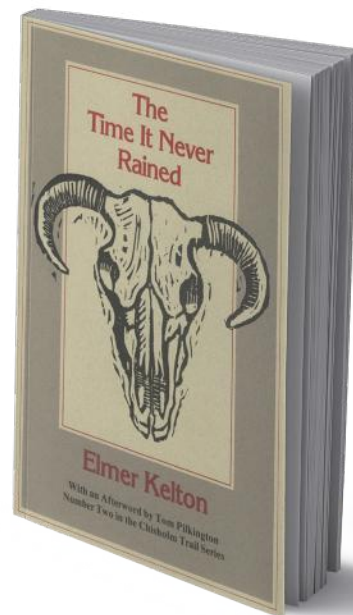
certain irony in the success of McMurtry's classic novel as a decade before its publication, the author said Texas literature would never reach its full potential until it abandoned homages to the Old West and turned its attention to more modern and urban topics.

Perhaps he was trying to throw other authors off the cattle trail, but his epic work transforms the cattle drive into a meditation on friendship, mortality and the passing of the American frontier. Though he honors the Old West tradition, McMurtry also exposes its myths, showing how violence, loneliness, and loss often underpin the heroism we have come to associate with traditional Western morality tales. Even so, he neither diminishes nor demeans the courage or spirit that make the story distinctly Texan.

Lonesome Dove captures Texas as memory and myth, not only showing the grandeur of the open range era but also the passing of

its heroes and their time. Augustus "Gus" McCrae and Woodrow Call embody two sides of the Texan psyche—the gregarious philosopher and the stoic doer. Their friendship mirrors the tension between independence and duty that lies at the heart of Texas identity. *Lonesome Dove* redefined the Western novel for contemporary readers and inspired more writers to explore Texas history with both realism and reverence.

2. *The Time It Never Rained* (Elmer Kelton, 1973)



While *Lonesome Dove* was populated by a variety of traditional villains, the devastating West Texas

drought of the 1950s is the primary antagonist in Elmer Kelton's classic *The Time It Never Rained*. Kelton's novel is the most authentic depiction of 20th century Texas ranch life ever written, bringing the Western into a new era with more complex challenges that could not be settled with a gun.

Kelton's protagonist, Charlie Flagg, is an old-fashioned rancher who clings to past traditions demanding his rugged independence in a time when the growing complexities of modern ranching make economic survival more dependent on other entities, including the government. Though times and conditions have changed due to the drought, Flagg refuses governmental aid, symbolizing the rugged independence that shaped Texas ranching culture.

The Time It Never Rained explores themes of pride and self-reliance, core principles of the Texas spirit and ethos. Kelton treats these not as

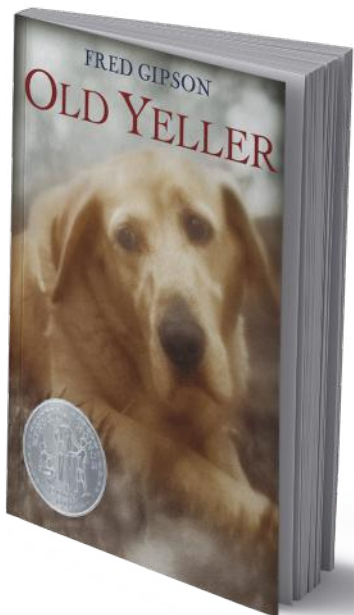
clichés but as moral dilemmas, showing the price of integrity when modern pressures and the encroaching governmental bureaucracy threaten traditional ways. *The Time It Never Rained* demonstrated that Texas heroism can lie not in gunfights but in endurance.

Kelton wrote with unmatched realism about land, livestock, and weather, an authenticity derived from his childhood on a West Texas ranch and his career as an agricultural reporter for the *San Angelo Standard-Times* and then *Livestock Weekly*, writing his Westerns on the side until he retired.

Voted by his Western Writers of America peers the greatest Western writer of all time, Kelton penned more than 60 Westerns, most set during the 19th century. None of those traditional Westerns resonated with Kelton as much as this one. On his grave marker is inscribed "Author of *The Time It Never Rained*."



3. *Old Yeller* (Fred Gipson, 1956)



Set in post-Civil War frontier Texas, *Old Yeller* views the pioneer experience through the eyes of young Travis Coates while his father is away on a cattle drive. The novel portrays the realities of frontier survival—hunger, danger, isolation—with honesty and warmth through the evolving relationship between Travis and a stray cur dog he names “Old Yeller.”

Though often remembered for the heartbreaking ending in the 1957 Disney screen adaptation of the same name, *Old Yeller* endures as a classic of YA literature because it

captures love, responsibility, and the loss of innocence in a uniquely Texas context. The bond between Travis and his mongrel mirrors the relationship between settlers and their land, always demanding and sometimes sacrificial.

Author Fred Gipson, a native of the Texas Hill Country, writes in the plain, direct idiom of the people he knew growing up, neither demeaning nor romanticizing frontier life. Instead he honors the hardships of pioneering and shows the moral clarity it engenders. The novel and the subsequent Disney film introduced readers worldwide to the Texas frontier. *Old Yeller* remains a children’s and Lone Star State classic because it authentically represents Texas history, values and speech.

Beneath its simple plot lies a profound allegory of frontier virtue—courage, loyalty, and duty—that defines much of the Texas character across generations. *Old Yeller* presents Texas as an environment where family, loyalty, and loss forge strength

of character. After Old Yeller becomes rabid after fighting a wolf, Travis is forced to shoot his beloved dog, symbolizing the sacrifices necessary to survive on the frontier.

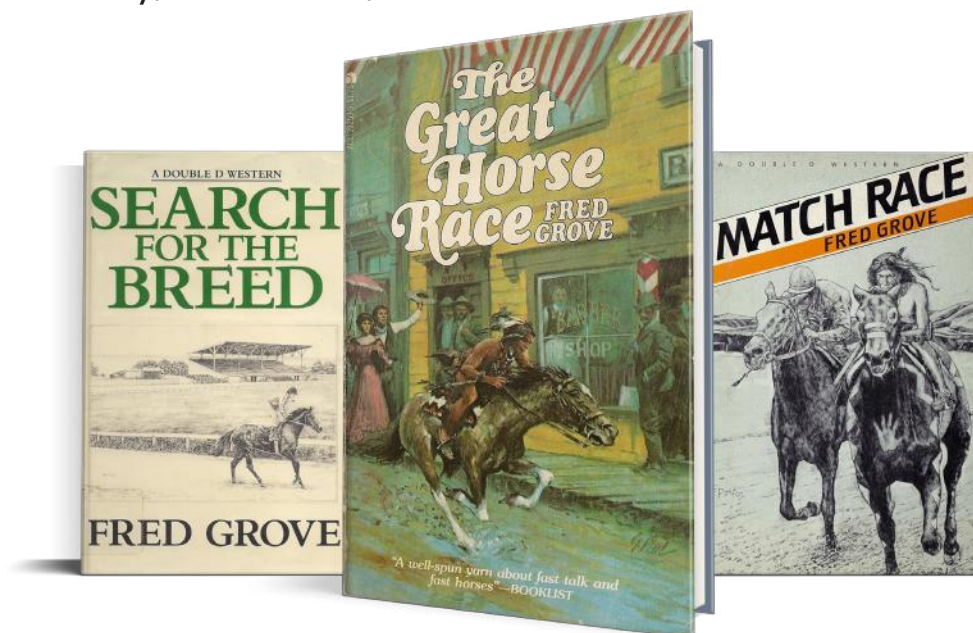
Old Yeller's death symbolizes the inevitability of loss faced by every Texas family on the frontier. The subsequent birth of Old Yeller's pup named "Young Yeller" by Travis reminds us that life, even on the dangerous frontier, renews itself just like the resilient Texas spirit.

4. *The Great Horse Race, Match Race, Search for the Breed* (Fred Grove, 1977, 1982, 1986)

While McMurtry, Kelton and Gipson were native Texans, Western writer Fred Grove was born in Hominy, Oklahoma,

and set his novels primarily in Kansas, Indian Territory and Texas. I consider *The Great Horse Race*, *Match Race*, and *Search for the Breed* his horseracing trilogy with the recurring characters Dude McQuinn, a gritty Texan with a wry sense of humor; jockey Coyote Walking, a Comanche born in Indian Territory; and Kansan horse trader Uncle Billy Lockhart.

The trio travel the region, making their precarious living by trading and racing horses. The trilogy uses horse racing as a lens to illustrate the Texas spirit and pride, both seasoned with a Texan sense of humor and heightened by racing braggadocio and chicanery.



The author's cast includes mixed-heritage cowboys, Indians, small-time dreamers, drifters and minorities often unseen in other Western novels, showing that the Texas spirit is not owned by any single class or race but rather shared by all with a dream for a better tomorrow.

Grove's tone recalls Mark Twain more than Zane Grey, mocking pretension while celebrating ordinary courage and initiative. His humor both humanizes the frontier in a way few writers manage and shows a sly smile often is hidden behind Texas braggadocio. His racing novels remind us that the Texas story extends beyond conflict, hardship and death to ingenuity, rivalry, and ambition. In his trilogy victory is measured as much by heart as by the finish line.

The racing trilogy deserves recognition in Texas literature because the three novels capture with humor and moral

clarity the democratic energy of the frontier and reaffirm that everyone in Texas can run the race and succeed if they possess the grit, the horse, and the heart.

Conclusion

Taken together the books of the four authors provide a nuanced but expansive portrait of the Texas frontier and its legacy. In *Lonesome Dove* Larry McMurtry gave Texas its *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, capturing Texas as myth and memory while exploring the grandeur of its open range and the passing of its heroes.

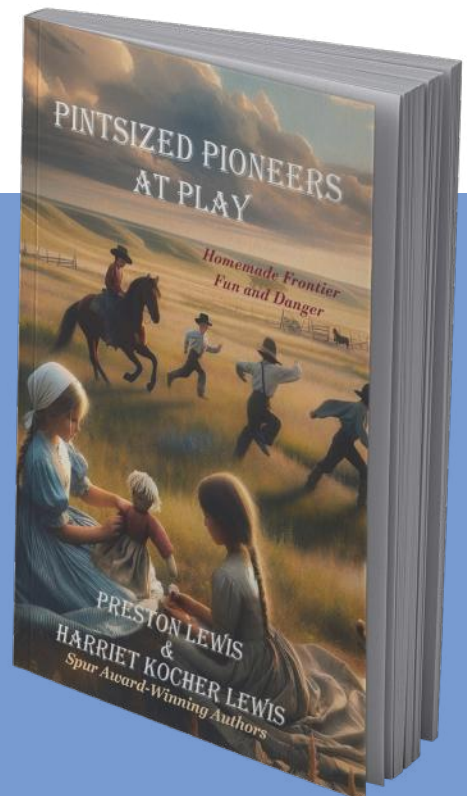
By contrast Elmer Kelton in *The Time It Never Rained* provided Texas its Book of Job, delivering a moral compass with its subtle heroism and tenacity facing the growing complexities of a changing world. Kelton writes with an authenticity where pride and endurance define the soul of Texans.



In *Old Yeller* Fred Gipson contributed to Texas literature the classic frontier coming of age story. Travis Coates is to Texas what Huck Finn was to the Mississippi River, an archetype of frontier Texas boyhood and the difficult choices of youth.

Through his horseracing trilogy, Fred Grove gave Texas a folk epic, providing tales where decency and shared humanity prevail over pride and prejudice. His literary gift is written with the wry sense of humor that reflects a sly smile behind much Texas braggadocio.

PRESTON LEWIS is an award-winning Texas author and historian with more than 50 published fiction and nonfiction works, including Westerns, historical novels, and young adult books. He is a member of the Texas Institute of Letters and a recipient of multiple Spur, Elmer Kelton, and Will Rogers Medallion Awards.



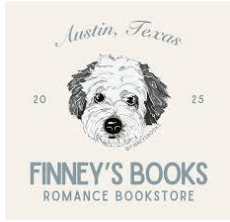
OPENINGS, CELEBRATIONS, CLOSINGS, AND AWARDS



Texas bookstores are opening, expanding, fundraising, and celebrating. Read on!



AUSTIN



Finney's Books Romance Bookstore

held their grand opening on December 13 in

East Austin. They hope to create a welcoming and safe space, because "at Finney's, pleasure is never guilty."

Barnes & Noble opened a new store in early November in the Southpark Meadows shopping center. Author Tracy Wolff was on hand for the ribbon cutting and to sign her newest work, *It Happened on a Sunday*.

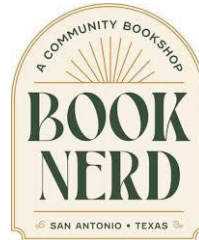
BROWNSVILLE

Barnes & Noble opened their Sunrise Mall location on November 19. Anamely Salgado Reyes, author of *My Mother Cursed My Name*, performed the ribbon cutting.

BURLESON

Barnes & Noble opened a store in the Gateway Station shopping center. Author Marela Fuentes performed the ribbon cutting and signed copies of her novel *My Mother Cursed My Name*.

CASTLE HILLS



Book Nerd on NW Military Hwy opened in late October. The locally-owned

bookshop offers new books across a wide range of genres as well as a space to escape, connect, and find great stories.

CYPRESS

Books-A-Million opened a new location in the Fairfield Town Center. The grand opening on November 22 included a toy drive benefiting Cy-Fair Helping Hands.



HOUSTON



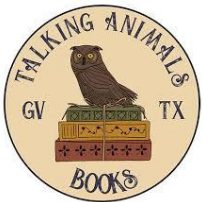
Dreamers Books

+ Culture, a

Latina-owned and curated bookstore, opened in late

October. They carry titles for all ages in English and Spanish.

GRAPEVINE



Talking Animals

Books held the grand opening celebration for their second

location on November 8.

MISSOURI CITY



books & more
bookstore

Books & More

opened in The Township Square in late September.

Run by a former teacher, the store offers author visits, story times, tutoring, and financial classes for adults in addition to a fantastic selection of new and used books.

SAN ANGELO

Nook & Press, a new independent bookstore in San Angelo, held a soft opening in late October. They hope to create a “cozy corner to read, work, and gather.” They plan to offer community events including story hour, murder mystery nights, and more.

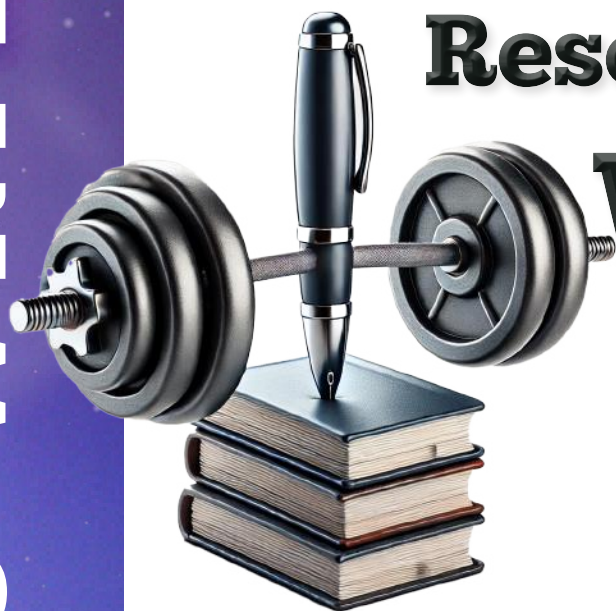
SPRING

Barnes & Noble opened a store in the Grand Parkway Marketplace in early November. Author Ashley Winstead, author of *This Book Will Bury Me*, performed the ribbon cutting.

OTHER INDUSTRY NEWS

Outlander author Diana Gabaldon selected [Texas A&M University's Cushing Memorial Library & Archives](#) as the permanent home for her literary papers, notes, and memorabilia from the historical science fiction, adventure-romance series and its hit streaming adaptation.

Lifting the Weights of Resolve in Our Writing



DiAnn Mills

Does your writing need a makeover in 2026? Have you resolved to lift weights and add muscle to your manuscript? This is not about a New Year's resolution. Those seldom last longer than a few days to a week, and the thought of failure is depressing.

This post is about using your strengths as a writer to move forward with your publishing dreams. Strengths like purpose, perseverance, tenacity, determination, and inner fortitude. Those are much more appealing than a to-do list.

Take your strengths and build action into your writing. You might discover powerful traits about yourself to add muscle not only to our writing but also to other challenges of life. I've used a few quotes from Winston Churchill, who understood resolve.

Purpose:

What is the reason for learning about the writing industry and laboring over your manuscript? We need to know why we're driven forward. There, motivation and purpose line up as teamwork.

Record your purpose. This can be long or short. It's for you and about you. If your brain is detailed, great. How fantastic that your brain is wired for brevity! Read it often. Sometimes, knowing our purpose clears the cobwebs so we can work effectively.

Winston Churchill said, "The pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

Perseverance:

This is the staying power to complete the task even when the thought is difficult. Writers focus on creativity even when friends and family ridicule them. Even when rejections pour into their inbox. We take a deep breath and—persevere.

Winston Churchill said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

Tenacity:

Have you ever watched two children involved in a tug of war over a toy?

"It's mine."

"No, it's mine."

"You can't have it."

"It's mine."

That, dear writer, is tenacity in action. A dictionary states it's an attitude of being very determined. The writer pushes their way through the impossible to achieve what others believed was impossible.



Winston Churchill said,
“Difficulties mastered are
opportunities won.”

Commitment:

Years ago, I learned that
if I didn’t dedicate myself
to my writing, no one else
would. Commitment means
responsibility, dedication, or a
vow. Our resolve to succeed
takes all three, and that
requires a passion for the
project.

Winston Churchill said, “Never,
never, never, never, give up.”

Inner Fortitude:

We never know how strong
we are until we’re backed into
a corner. Deadlines, writing
challenges, rejections, and
criticism are corners where
we need to step out with
confidence. Roll up our sleeves
and use our muscles. But let’s
be realistic. The negative can
destroy a writer unless we
embrace ways to build our
inner fortitude.

- Search and record positive affirmations. Read them often.
- Discover your challenges and turn them into strengths.
- If you are a writer of faith, tap into God’s plan for you.

Winston Churchill said, “If
you’re going through hell, keep
going.”

Resolve includes all the items
listed above. Each of the traits
gives us a clearer picture of
our strengths and challenges.
We have the qualities needed
to break through the negativity
and reach our writing dreams.

Winston Churchill said, “Every
day you may make progress.
Every step may be fruitful. Yet
there will stretch out before
you an ever-lengthening, ever-
ascending, ever-improving
path. You know you will
never get to the end of the
journey. But this, so far from
discouraging, only adds to the
joy and glory of the climb.”





DiAnn Mills is a bestselling author who invites her readers to step into stories where

suspense meets adventure and romance warms the heart. Known for crafting unforgettable characters tangled in unpredictable plots, DiAnn believes every breath we take unfolds a story waiting to be told—so why not make it thrilling?

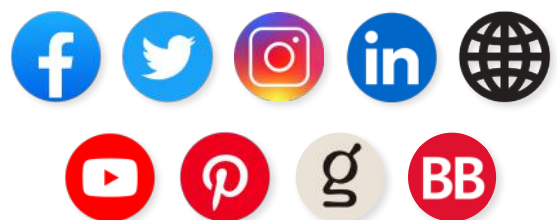
Her novels have consistently landed on bestseller lists including CBA, ECPA, and Publishers Weekly, and have won prestigious awards such as the Christy, Selah, Golden Scroll, Inspirational Readers' Choice, and Carol awards.

DiAnn is a founding board member of American Christian Fiction Writers and Conference Advisor for the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers. She actively participates in Advanced Writers and

Speakers Association, Mystery Writers of America, the Jerry Jenkins Writers Guild, International Thriller Writers, Outliers Writing University, and The Christian Pen. DiAnn passionately invests in helping fellow authors succeed through mentoring, book coaching, and editing. She travels nationwide speaking and teaching engaging writing workshops.

A proud coffee snob who roasts her own beans, DiAnn also enjoys diving into good books, experimenting in the kitchen, and unabashedly spoiling her grandchildren—whom she insists are the smartest kids in the universe. She makes her home under the sunny skies of Houston, Texas.

Connect with DiAnn online for behind-the-scenes glimpses, writing tips, and lively discussions:





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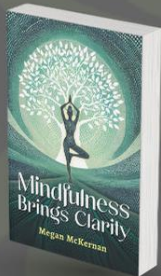
Pursue Your Spark by Heike Yates

A bold midlife reset for the woman ready to reclaim her confidence and her voice.



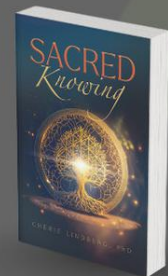
Mindfulness Brings Clarity by Megan McKernan

A grounding guide to overcoming anxiety, self-doubt, and the weight of judgment.



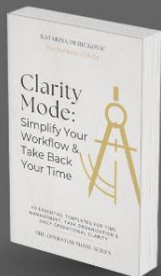
Sacred Knowing by Cherie Lindberg

A transformative path to nervous system healing, trauma recovery, and personal growth.



Clarity Mode by Katarina Durickovic

A systems-first playbook with 49 templates to help founders and operators take back their time.



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THE LONE STAR LITERARY LIFE MAGAZINE EDITORIAL CALENDAR

MONTH	THEMES	AD CLOSE	CONTENT DEADLINE	PUB DATE
JAN	RESOLVE	12-15-25	12-15-25	01-07-26
FEB	EXTEND	01-14-26	01-19-26	02-04-26
MAR	HOPE	02-11-26	02-16-26	03-04-26
APR	GROW	03-11-26	03-16-26	04-01-26
MAY	HONOR	04-15-26	04-20-26	05-06-26
JUN	EMPOWER	05-13-26	05-18-26	06-03-26
JUL	SPARKLE	06-10-26	06-15-26	07-01-26
AUG	PREPARE	07-15-26	07-20-26	08-05-26
SEP	WELCOME	08-12-26	08-17-26	09-02-26
OCT	THRILL	09-16-26	09-21-26	10-07-26
NOV	GATHER	10-14-26	10-19-26	11-04-26
DEC	INSPIRE	11-11-26	11-16-26	12-02-26

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