

BLOG BYTES



by Kristopher Zgorski

Billing themselves as “where new writers begin,” *Valley of Writers* (<https://www.valleyofwriters.com>) truly is a one-stop shop for emerging artists interested in a writing career. Here visitors will find a multitude of tools and resources designed to lay a strong foundation for the journey ahead. This means help with the craft of writing, but also with the business side of writing. There are features on the benefits and challenges of technology, how to engage in the overall literary community, and even links to open calls and contest opportunities where newer writers can begin to make their mark. The site was founded by Fungai Tichawangana, a Zimbabwean native and fellow writer who simply wanted to provide a platform where he and other writers could share what they have learned—in an effort to make the trek just a bit easier for others. Now based in Amherst, MA, *Valley of Writers* has amassed an impressive array of resources in a relatively short amount of time. Their blog alone posts everything from “ideas & inspiration” to “power tools for writers” as well as serving as a central location for finding Internet news from all across the literary landscape. With an aim towards building a true community, *Valley of Writers* also accepts pitches from contributors who feel they have something useful to add to the conversation.

Pretty Sinister Books (<https://prettysinister.blogspot.com>) is a book blog run by J F Norris. The main focus of this blog is vintage and obscure releases under the crime, supernatural, and adventure umbrella. The reviews are well written and informative, while the background information included shows a real effort to provide the endeavor with a scholarly framework. New postings have slowed down, but the archive is strong enough to make this a worthwhile visit for anyone interested in the history of our genre.

Another quality book blog is *She Treads Softly* (<http://www.shetreadssoftly.com>) from Lori L. Lutes. Like most bloggers, Lori focuses on new releases (mainly, though not exclusively, in the crime-fiction genre). Some readers will find her star-rating system very useful, especially after reading multiple reviews to get a sense of her tastes. Lori really takes the time to think about the book in question and how it compares to her other readings and ratings. Of utmost value is her year-end favorite-reads list, which also includes a rundown of everything she reviewed each month of the previous year. *She Treads Softly* has been running since 2007 and it shows a well-rounded reader and will give confidence to anyone looking to these reviews to help choose the next book off the to-be-read mountain.

We have talked about vocabulary sites in this column before, but it is worth highlighting *Daily Grammar* (<https://www.dailygrammar.com/index.html>)

as well. The glossary on this website alone is worth a visit. Each term is defined and then includes links to lessons that delve deeper into its practical use in writing. Quizzes help visitors to practice their own grammar skills. A daily stop at the blog is your best bet if you are just looking to randomly test—and invariably improve—your grammar skills. © 2024 by *Kristopher Zgorski*