

# NOVEL WORKSHOP

## Caves & Cathedrals



TUESDAYS IN FEBRUARY, 6-8PM  
VIA ZOOM

\$150 SCWA MEMBERS  
\$200 NON-MEMBERS

with **Amelia Brown &  
Amber Wheeler Bacon**

**Writers** SOUTH CAROLINA  
ASSOCIATION

Herman Melville compared writing a novel to building a cathedral. Virginia Woolf described it as digging caves—at a certain point, the caves would connect, and daylight would finally appear. But how do we know where to dig? And how do we get from that first stone, or idea, to the cathedral of your novel?

In this workshop, we'll try out some exercises and explore strategies for drafting and outlining. As part of our discussions, we'll touch on narrative promises, structuring scenes and chapters for momentum, and revision tools used by well-known contemporary novelists. This will be an interactive series of four, two-hour classes. Bring your novel-in-progress—and your struggles and triumphs while writing it. If you're just starting, that's great, too. There's something here for everyone, no matter where you are in your novel-writing journey.

### WEEK 1: Characters & Conflict

Our first week together, we'll look at creating dynamic characters by digging up their wants and fears, and we'll uncover conflict and tension between players. We'll look at select novel excerpts and movie clips as examples and do some targeted character development exercises to explore these concepts.

## WEEK 2: Setting & Character

In our second week, we'll go beyond polishing descriptions of lawns and grungy trainyards to look at how setting can be thought of as an amplifier of character. Used well, your setting will add complexity and urgency to characters' choices and their interactions. Using mapping exercises and select novel excerpts and movie clips, we'll look at how to create fictive dimensions that support and intensify your novel's plot.

## WEEK 3: Building Plot through Action

Who a character is, what they want, and where they are in the world are the foundation stones of your plot. Plot is built up from what your characters do (or don't do), and what happens next--actions and consequences. In the third week, we'll explore how to let a character's actions lead to towering, complex situations, and lay some scaffolding for talking about pacing and narrative arcs while we're at it.

## WEEK 4: Novel Structures

Even if you know your characters well, have forced them to take action and deal with the consequences, you might still be feeling around in the dark for the right shape for your novel. Should you be blazing a deceptively simple-looking trail from point A to point B? Or walking backwards along that trail, from B to A? How many timelines are involved? Is there one POV character? Are there TEN? As anyone who has ever cracked open at least two books has found, structure is not one size fits all. There are nearly infinite possible structures for your novel. In our final week together, we'll face the shape-shifter that is novel structure. We'll discuss how the engine of a story, what's driving it forward, might help you understand its true shape. We'll also look at tricks for diagnosing and fixing issues of balance and order in revision.