

Ten Great Things a Writer Can Get Out of the PPW Conference

By Stephanie R. Johnson

It's that time again! The Pikes Peak Writers Conference is being held April 23-26, 2009—have you registered yet? If not, what are you waiting for? Here are 10 great things you can get out of attending this fantastic conference:

1. **Abbondanza!** From mystery to mainstream, suspense to short stories, historical fiction to science fiction, there's something for everyone. Not only will you discover what your genre is (if you don't already know), but you'll be able to talk shop with many others who share your passion. There will be plenty of literary agents, acquiring editors, authors, and specialists to speak on dozens of topics.

2. **Brain Pickees:** What better brain to pick than someone who wrote the book (pun intended) on the questions you have? Whether it's screenwriting, magazine articles, proposal writing, or plotting, you won't find better sources anywhere, and they're all in one place.

3. **Creativity:** Staring at a blank screen? You can't go wrong with workshops like these: writing in a conversational tone to engage your reader; shaping and structuring your story; using a lowlife informant in your mystery novel to get information to your reader; expressing a theme without getting preachy; and much, much more. You can kiss writer's block goodbye!

4. **Do or Die:** You might be thinking, "I would rather die a slow death than pitch my book to an agent." The Read & Critique and Speed Pitching sessions are a great way to overcome your fears, tighten your manuscript, and fine-tune your pitch. Don't worry, you'll survive just fine, even if you do break out in a cold sweat. You won't find a safer environment anywhere else.

5. **Elbows and Expo:** This year's PPWC features a new Trade Exposition for vendors, companies, and organizations that support the writing community (check the PPW Web site for participants and details). Elbow rubbing can occur at the book signing on Saturday, where speakers and PPW authors attending the conference will be more than happy to autograph your purchases.

6. **Friendships:** Being around like-minded people who live, eat, and breathe writing is what an author needs to be successful. The people I've befriended at writers' conferences have told me about workshops, social events, writers' groups, and critique sessions, where I made even more networking connections. There's much truth in the phrase, "It's not what you know, but who you know," and it especially applies to every person you meet at conference—you might even meet your future agent or editor!

7. **Guidance:** The keynote speakers, agents, and editors aren't the only ones who want to see you succeed. There are other authors, published and aspiring, who want to see you make the bestseller list too. So if you can benefit from learning the essential elements to writing a novel that editors want to buy; are looking for an accountability partner; have questions about marketing; or haven't a clue about where to start, someone at this conference can definitely point you in the right direction.

8. **"High Attitude Writing: Cut to the Craft":** This year's theme says it all, and you will enjoy the keynote presentations: "The Most Important Elements of Success...", "The Trick is to Keep Breathing", "...A Humorous Look at Becoming a Novelist," and "Keeping the Magic in Your Writing." Special add-on workshops on Thursday include

“Thinking it Through”, “Fleshing it Out,” and “Giving it Wings.”

9. Invitation: These agents and editors are looking for their next bestseller, so imagine the euphoria you’ll feel when one of them (or more!) extends a personal invitation for you to send your manuscript. Take my word for it, this is a rare opportunity. Even if your work isn’t quite submissible, they can provide the feedback you need to get it there. Many agents and editors rely heavily on these conferences to find new authors, but you can’t be invited if you don’t attend.

10. Just Do It: Is money holding you back from attending this conference? In this recession, it will be hard for many of us to scrape together the registration fee (PPW members get a discount), but don’t forget there’s a limited scholarship fund available (deadline is February 28th). Is time your issue? If you can’t call in sick, then call in dead. Or is it fear? Get over it! My point is, do whatever it takes to go to this conference.

Not only will you get all this from attending the Pikes Peak Writers Conference, but you’ll also have a great time, you’ll get to stay up late to fraternize, and you’ll eat fabulous meals with others in the writing industry. It doesn’t get any better than this!

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