Be More Than a Footnote



A Guide for Your Group



The Gate To Your Path

What is a Footnotes Group…

and why do we need one?

The ultimate intention of a Footnotes Group is to allow each of its members to be more than just a footnote for those they create for.

That doesn't mean we'll all become household names or be invited to appear on a morning talk show.

It means our audience, no matter its size, will be positively influenced by what we provide for them.

We're not talking social media numbers, book sales, or copious five-star reviews freakin' everywhere.

To be more than a footnote is to hold a place in a reader's memory.

It's about writing that one sentence, creating that single character, shaping that unique plot twist that makes someone say (preferably out loud): "THAT is truth, and it is so me!"

We writers can be that.

We just can't get there alone.

We need the support of other makers who want to be more than a footnote too.

Ah, but that's where it could get funky.

Imma go out on a limb here and guess that many of us have at some point been part of a group of creatives, makers, writers, or some combination thereof that just didn't work out.

As in…

- It quickly turned into a critique group, most of the "constructive criticism" coming from people who, bless their hearts, didn't actually know what the Sam Hill they were talking about. Nothing mean was intended. It just… wasn't what you were looking for.

- One person dominated. Maybe they *did* have more experience than anyone else, but who knew because nobody else could get a word in.

- It became totally a social thing. By the time everyone vented, gossiped, or just regaled the group with the funny stuff that happened since the last meeting, there was no space for actually addressing creativity. I mean, we need those kinds of conversations. But they can hijack what was meant to be a time to create and talk about creating.

- You left feeling frustrated or discouraged or prickly. Or you found yourself wishing you'd spent that time doing your own thing, which was what you were doing before you joined the group. Either way you felt unsupported.

- Or it was actually working well, you thought, but for whatever reason it just sort of fizzled out—and you miss it.

I have it on the best authority—experience!—that there *is* a way to shape and maintain a group of bright, creative people (in this case women, but you don't have to limit yourself) that provides these kinds of things—

- *A sharing of work,* followed by encouragement and questions. Nobody gets stung. Everybody feels energized to keep going.

- *An atmosphere of equality* in which ideas can be aired, information can be shared, inspiration can be offered. No one feels bossed. Everyone has the choice to run with what resonates with them.

- *Wisely structured time*, to include progress since the last gathering and life stuff that challenges the creative process, followed by a large swath

- of space for sharing work and offering praise and asking helpful questions. Also food…

- *Continual reassessment* of what's working and what's not, both for the group and for the individuals who shape it. No one leaves unsatisfied. Everyone is part of the organic growth.

- *Commitment,* which means setting intentions that are realistic and allowing flexibility when stuff happens and creativity has to be temporarily set aside. (AKA Writus Interruptus). Everyone's whole self feels centered on a strong foundation.

If that sounds impossible, consider this.

- Four years ago, I brought together a group. We call ourselves The Scribbling Women.
- We have designed our online organization according to those five qualities I just presented to you.
- That led us to—
    - meet at least monthly on Zoom around a theme
    - do a lot of lively sharing on our Facebook Group
    - offer options such as weekly Silent Scribbling Sessions, quarterly Sharing Scribblings Live, and occasional Side Quests for special interests such as marketing, publishing in anthologies, being a newbie
    - hold in-person retreats from time to time
    - and support each other in smaller Scribbling Sidekicks subgroups or pairs

We are, in essence, just like the four characters in the Footnotes Collection of novels. And as a result, we find our more-than-a-footnote places in the writerly world.

Need somebody besides me to convince you?



If you want to be able to say that about a group you're in—currently or in your hopes and dreams—read on. This is not a carved-in-stone list of instructions. It's merely a look at what works. You can adapt it in whatever way suits your fellow makers. After all, creativity is your forte!

I'm in a small monthly critique group—Storycrafters—which works because we're so eclectic. We all see different things. We are willing to say hard things in a good way. We cheer each other on. We encourage each other through rejections.

Pam Halter

Author of *Fairy Eaters*

I've grown as a writer with Scribbling Women. Whether one on one with my Scribbling Sidekick, during Silent Scribbling, or at a weekend retreat—each connection holds hidden gems that have strengthened me as a person and as a writer.

Brenda Ulman

Author of *the Time In Between*



Your Companions On the Path

How do you find your Fellow Footnotes?

This is not as hard as it sounds. Take heed, though…

WOO-WOO WARNING!

If you are not one to trust a higher power, something beyond the practical, the universe itself, the following may seem a little out there. But for Pete's sake, we're writers. We make stuff up and shape it so other people will believe it. That comes from somewhere—and so can your companions on the path.

That being said…

- *Put out a spiritual all-call*. That can be a prayer ("God, please bring me my people. Soon." Positive thinking ("I know my tribe is out there.") Even a simple breathy wish. ("I so long for people who get me because they're where I am.")

- *Then keep* your eyes, your ears, even your nose *alert*. Seriously, most of us can practically smell a kindred spirit when they're near. You may see a pair of young writers at a table at Starbucks. Overhear a person whispering in the pew behind you that she's not really listening to the sermon; she's making notes for her next story. Sniff out that woman in the cookie aisle wearing a T-shirt that reads, "Be careful or you'll wind up in my next novel."

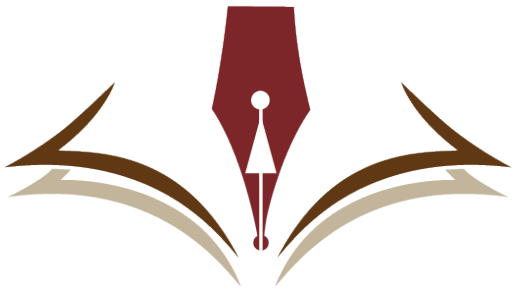
- *Be brave about striking up a conversation*. You don't have to immediately invite them into your home for a scribbling session or ask for their phone number. But it could just happen. Stranger things have when like minds meet.

- If any or all of that makes you start to hyperventilate, take a breath and *focus on the practical*.
    - *Google writer's groups in your area*. In-person is optimal.
    - *Google online groups for writers*
    - *Let your friends and family know what you're looking for*. Two bits somebody knows somebody who has a creative tribe or wants one.
    - *Give a shout-out on Facebook or Instagram*. Y'know, "Message me if this resonates with you." I'd limit this to online gatherings for safety reasons, unless you hear from someone you know who had no idea you had this in common.
    - *Write in public*. There are Scribblies who pen their tales at IHop, Starbucks, and all manner of waiting rooms. Somebody might be looking for you at the same time you're looking for them.

And of course, there is space at the Scribbling Woman table. If you'd like to find out more on how to become part of the mob (as named by Nathaniel Hawthorne), simply email me at nnrue@att.net. Let's talk.

We among the Scribblies firmly believe that your tribe awaits. Finding it requires desire, intention, and not a little bit of chutzpah (Def: self confidence, nerve, gall, or extreme audacity!)

It may take a gathering or two to—to be able to tell if the qualities you're looking for are there. In the novels, Sari, Laurette, and Freddie were doubtful until Merry showed up on the scene. And then… well, if you haven't read the books, what the heck's been stoppin' ya?



Your Map

How to navigate the pathway…

in a way that works for YOU

That last phrase is vital: in a way that works for YOU. The suggestions below are culled from the Scribbling Women experience. They may speak to you, or they may say, "Not this, but how about this…?" Go with your creative instincts.

- *Have an initial meeting to share what you're all hoping for*. If you're the one calling participants together, you'll need to be the leader or ask one among the group who's a natural to take charge this time.
- *Have your questions ready*. Things like:
    - What do you want from a creative group?
    - What don't you want? As in, what would make you back out gracefully? Or run screaming for the exit?
    - What kind of structure would appeal to you?
    - How often do you want to meet?
    - Where do we want to meet?
    - How can we contact each other? What are the hedges? ("Yeah, don't text me between 9 and noon when I'm writing," or "If you message me on Facebook, I probably won't see it for days," or "Whatever you do, don't send me links to TikTok videos. Just. Don't.)"
- *Do your best to stay n track*. Writers are word people, so it only follows that most of us love to use them. Once we get started, it's hard to shut us up—even the introverts among us. As the leader—whoever that ends

up being—don't be afraid to say, "Good points. Now, circling back, Susie, did you have something to add to what Gretel just said?"

- *Speaking of structure, a loose one is a good idea*, just so you don't experience the aforementioned hijacking. Something like this works well:
    - *Limited time for chit-chat*. Ten minutes max before it takes on a life of its own.
    - *A swath for sharing progress since last time* (Susie finished her first draft. Gretel started her first draft. Lulu got halfway through her first draft, realized it was a hot mess, and started over with something she likes way better.)
    - *A swath for asking for support*, letting members vent about rejections, discouraging feedback, distractions by people who just don't get what you're doing. Again, this can turn into the Wall of Awful if we don't weave in genuine encouragement and practical suggestions. We don't want to minimize each other's pain, but nobody should walk away feeling worse than they did when they showed up.
    - *A swath for reading work out loud*. We the Scribblies have some firm guardrails for that, so see the next section.

- *Your group will find its own tone, its own personality*. Some want a place where they can be taken seriously. Others want an escape from the work aspect; they want to rediscover the fun that brought them to writing in the first place. Still others want a mixture of both. Stay with it. You will find yourselves.





Your Guardrails

The Footnotes Guidelines for sharing work

Nothing destroys a creative group like harsh or thoughtless or well-meaning but dang-that-hurts criticism of each other's work. That's why we Scribblies don't call ourselves a "critique group."

When we share work, we're about genuine encouragement to keep going, the honoring of each other's commitment, and showing interest that leads each of us to meet our challenges.

Here's what that looks like:

- *We give a specific amount of time for reading*, depending on how many writers are sharing. In our large group that's 3 minutes, but you'll know what to set.
- *The Scribblie who's about to share tells us what we need to know to make sense of the piece she's reading*. She can tell us what she's unsure of or wants the group to look for. That's not part of the three minutes.
- *After the reading, we give feedback*, and we limit the time for this too, so that everyone who wants to share gets their time too. For us this is about 7 minutes.

In terms of giving feedback, we ask Scribblies to:

- *Say everything they really liked about the piece*, being as specific as they can. "It was good" or just "I liked it" qualify as faint praise. Let the writer know they were listened to and produce an effect.
- If the author poses a question, something like, "Does it drag at the beginning?" or "Is my voice too snarky?" feel free to *answer, but do so with care:*

NO: *Actually, yes. I was falling asleep.*

YES: *Maybe just a little in the first few sentences but then it picked up. Have you considered deleting those to see what it would do?*

- Ask questions that will move the author forward, nudge her a little deeper, again done with positivity. For example –

"I'm intrigued by your protagonist. Do we get to know why she's so buttoned-up at some point?"

"So, your antagonist – so delicious! Does she have any saving graces?"

"I'm not sure what 'doom-scrolling' means. I'm a little behind on the current lingo – explain?"

- *Tell what you want to see even more of*. For example --

"I love your humor. I don't think you can give us too much of that."

"Is that Sheila girl a minor character? Because I don't think I can get enough of her snarky mouth!"

"Oh, my gosh, you HAVE to finish this book!"

- If you need more specificity on what NOT to say, *these are phrases you'd do best to avoid:*

"I didn't like it when you _____"

"I was totally confused about _____"

"It's good, but is anybody reading this kind of thing now?"

"You have a lot more work to do on this, don't you?"

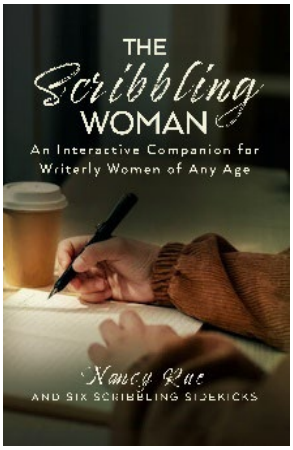
"Email me tomorrow. I think I can help you fix this."

"It'll get better if you _____"

Seriously, doesn't that just make you cringe?

- If you keep the intentions in mind, you'll have no trouble staying within the guardrails:
    - To encourage each other to keep doing the creative work
    - To make sure everyone leaves the session feeling jazzed about getting right back to work tomorrow
    - To instill in each person the truth that it's not "perfect" you're going for. It's AUTHENTICITY.
    - To be sure every author and every reviewer feels safe to express herself.





Your Prizes Along the Way

Perks and Freebies

You're making a commitment to each other. You're being brave in sharing your work. You're investing energy in not just your creativity but your fellow Footnotes'. We think that calls for some rewards!

- If you are one of the first three groups to form and share on Instagram, you'll receive a free copy of *the Scribbling Woman Interactive Companion* for your group
- I'll spotlight your group on Instagram whenever you want to send pictures and progress my way.
- When your group reaches milestones along the way, just message me on Instagram and I'll send you signed book plates, book marks, or Scribbling Women pens—your choice of any or all. New stuff is being added all the time.
- When you're been meeting for two months, message me on Instagram and we'll set up a Zoom session so I can meet your group, answer questions, and get ideas from you, too.

- When someone in your group publishes, either independently or traditionally, message me on Instagram and I'll take a look with an eye toward posting a review.

Anytime you want…

- You can order Be More Than a Footnote hoodies, t-shirts, and mugs from Fourth Wall. That goes live October 1, 2026
- You can feel free to contact me about becoming members of the Scribbling Women online organization. Just email me at nnrue@att.net.

More treats will be available as our movement continues.

Please message me on Instagram if you have ideas for those.[1]



[1]This is the t-shirt design in progress.



In case you want more…

All the links to all the things

Website, the hub for everything www.nancyrue.com

Facebook Author Page, where you can participate in the writing of the books https://www.facebook.com/nancynrue

Facebook Profile, where you can message me
https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100081778060133

TikTok, Footnotes visuals and fun stuff. NancyRue@scribblie1

Instagram, where you can keep up with what other groups are doing.
https://www.instagram.com/the_scribbling_woman

STARTING OCTOBER 24, 2026
Substack, for the digital magazine, The Way of the Footnotes which goes deeper into the books and the issues they present https://nancyrue.substack.com/



Your Inspirations

A rest stop for ideas, progress, and plans

And always, always Scribble On!