

---

# The Muse Writers Center Presents “More Than a Mother” – Poetry and Prose Reading

May 6, 2019 By Penny Neef

Like 80

Share

I admit to a little travel anxiety. I’m not afraid of flying, I’m afraid of being late to the airport. I was at the Detroit airport early a few weeks ago. I struck up a conversation with a fellow traveler. I realized that we had both flown on the flight from Norfolk to Detroit a few days earlier and we were heading back together again.

Turns out my fellow traveler was someone I knew, almost. I never met [Desiree Cooper](#), but I had read her articles in the Detroit Free Press for years, so I felt like I knew her. She’s a transplanted Detroiter, just like me. We found lots to talk about.



Photo credit – Desiree Cooper

Desiree Cooper is a 2015 Kresge Artist Fellow, former attorney and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. She's also a mother and a caregiver for her mother (and father). Her collection of flash fiction, *Know the Mother*, is a 2017 Michigan Notable Book and has won numerous awards, including 2017 Next Generation Indie Book Award. I flew home and ordered *Know the Mother*. If you are a mother or have a mother, this book will touch your heart.

Des Cooper will be reading from *Know the Mother* on Saturday, May 11 from 4 – 6 pm, along with authors Lydia Netzer, Kelly Sokol, Shannon Curtin and Jen Malia at the [Muse Writers Center](#) in Norfolk. "[More Than a Mother – Poetry and Prose Reading](#)" will be a great way to celebrate Mother's Day and all the mothers in your life.



Courtesy of the Muse Writers Center

The Muse Writers Center had no trouble finding local authors for this mother-themed event. Shawn Girvan, program manager at the Muse, says, “Many talented teaching artists teach at the Muse. We made a list of writers and poets who were also mothers and reached out to them. All responded with an excited “yes” almost immediately.”

Des Cooper was “thrilled” when the Muse agreed to host a Mother’s Day event this year. She says, “It allows women to gather and explore taboo dimensions of motherhood ahead of the holiday. It’s like letting some of the air out of the balloon of the high expectations that often burden that day.”



Poet Shannon Curtin



Novelist Lydia Netzer



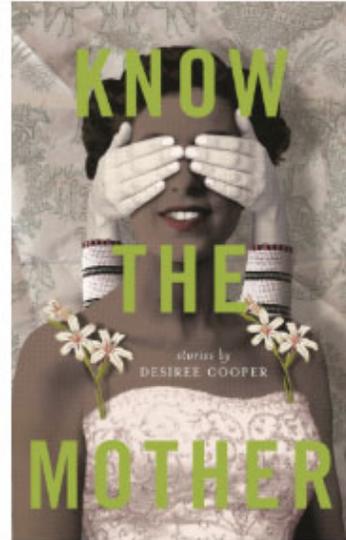
Novelist Kelly Sokol



Children's Author Jennifer Malia



Flash Fiction Writer Desiree Cooper



---

Courtesy of the Muse Writers Center

*Know the Mother* is flash fiction. It “reads like a magazine.” The stories are short and intense. So intense that there were times I had to put the book down for a few days and just absorb a story before I could go onto the next.

Not all the stories are about mothers, but there is a common thread, a “universal experience”. Des Cooper tries “to tell the intimate experience of gender and race. The role of mother demands so much physical and emotional energy, how does it end (or transform) without conflict? And, as they say, it’s conflict that makes the story.”

Des Cooper takes care of her parents now. Both her mother and father have Alzheimer’s disease. It’s why she moved here from Detroit. She has become her mother’s mother. She’s thinking that her next work will be a collection of essays about caregiving, something almost all women face. Society says “get a girl to do it.”

Lydia Netzer and Kelly Sokol are both published novelists and instructors at the Muse. Lydia’s book, *Shine Shine Shine* is a New York Times Notable Book for 2012. The book is about Sunny, a mother who wants to

Shannon Curtin is a poet and author of two collections of poetry, *Motherland* and *File Cabinet Heart*. Her poetry can be found in many literary magazines. She teaches classes at the Muse, including “[How to Submit Your Work to Magazines and Journals](#)”, coming up this summer.

[Jen Malia](#) is a creative nonfiction writer. She is also an associate professor of English at Norfolk State University. Her children’s picture book, *Too Sticky: A Story About an Autistic Girl with Sensory Issues*, is about an autistic girl who has to overcome her fear of sticky hands to participate in her second-grade slime experiment. The book is based on Jen’s experiences as a mother to a daughter with autism.

“To be a life that spawns another life – when does one become two, and how does that work?” Join Desiree Cooper and all of these wonderful women and mothers at the Muse Writers Center on Saturday, May 11, the day before Mother’s Day to think about the questions of motherhood.

The Muse Writers Center, which is located in Ghent on Colonial and 22nd in Norfolk, begins the summer session in June. There are classes, workshops and seminars for any type of creative writer. There are also “writers camps” for children, teens and adults. For a full list of events and classes, go to <http://www.themuse.org>

## Facebook Comments

0 comments

**0 Comments**

Sort by **Oldest**



Add a comment...