



Boston Authors Club

June-July 2018 News & Events

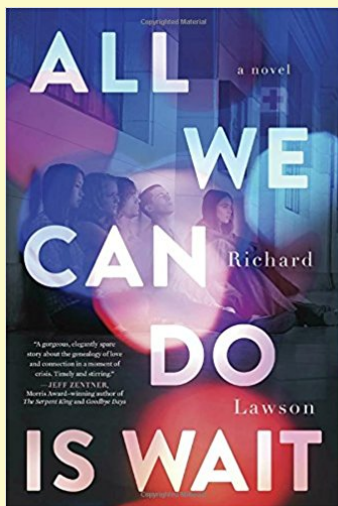
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BAC PROGRAM

June 12 at 7PM at Porter Square Books
Debut Novelist Richard Lawson Reading from
All We Can Do Is Wait



DON'T WAIT!

Join us on Tuesday, June 12 at 7pm to talk with debut YA novelist, Richard Lawson, about writing, publishing, and promoting his first novel, *All We Can Do Is Wait*.

A catastrophic Boston bridge collapse and a cluster of anxious teens waiting at Mass General for news about loved ones launch a page turner that Publishers Weekly called "a gripping and emotionally invigorating story."

Co-sponsored by the Boston Authors Club and Porter Square Books, 25 White Street, Cambridge, MA
<https://www.portersquarebooks.com/>

Featured Author: Richard Lawson

All We Can Do Is Wait (Penguin Random House, 2018) is Richard Lawson's first novel, but by no

means his debut as a published author. Currently chief critic for **Vanity Fair**, Lawson has years of writing experience as a columnist, blogger, and film critic for **Vanity Fair**, **Atlantic Wire**, **The Guardian**, and other media brands. In this interview, he talks about his four-month marathon to compete a first draft of his novel, the attraction of writing for young adults, advice for aspiring novelists, and a generous offer to help.



Q: Did you apply the approach of writing on deadline to your work on the novel, or did you have a more extended timeline?

RL: I had what would be a really long time for a magazine feature, but what I'm told was a relatively short time for a novel, about four months from signing the deal to the first draft due date. Getting that done required a lot of strict time management, and I was definitely working down to the wire, but with the help of a good editor, I got there. The revision process was much more luxurious in comparison.

Q: Did you have particular reasons for writing your debut novel for a teen/young adult audience? Do you feel a special affinity for this age group?

RL: I was approached by my editor about writing a YA novel, so in a way that decision was made for me. But I have always liked YA books, movies, and TV. Maybe it's arrested development on my part, or maybe it's just that emotions are running so high at that age, so many experiences are first experiences. So there's a kind of easy drama to tap into. I feel like I was able to reassess and maybe resolve some of my own teen angst when writing **All We Can Do Is Wait**, and hopefully the finished product can offer some reassurance and enlightenment to today's young readers in terms of whatever they're going through.

Q: Can you talk about which elements of the plot developments, flashbacks, or characters were the easiest for you and any that were particularly challenging for you to write?

RL: Probably the easiest characters to write were Jason and Alexa, two siblings who, in the flashback sections, spend a charged summer on Cape Cod. I have a sister who's very close in age, and we spent a lot of summers near the beach in Rhode Island, so I drew from a lot of that personal history. (Luckily, nothing quite so dramatic happened to us during those years.) That summery setting and the dreamy, melancholy feelings it evokes were easier to tease out than, say, the Scott sections. Scott is a straight soccer jock dealing with girlfriend issues—definitely not a narrative mirrored by my own adolescence! Doing that writing, I just thought about boys I knew growing up in the Brighton/Newton area and tried to get inside their heads in an empathetic way. I may have been intimidated by the sporty boys when I was a teenager, but luckily adulthood and hindsight have allowed me to realize that most of them were just decent kids who valued different things than I did. In the end, I'm happy with how Scott turned out. I think he's well-rounded, both good and bad, like most people.

Q: Looking back, were there notable lessons learned, or anything that you would change if/when you write a second novel?

RL: I would definitely be less precious about my first draft. I've never been a great reviser, and I think sections of the book—particularly the beginning, as I wrote the novel in chronological order—could have used some tightening up that I was too resistant to doing. In a broader writerly sense, what I learned with **All We Can Do Is Wait** is that, while you can have a plot and character arcs carefully mapped out ahead of time, a lot of the book-writing process is sort of arbitrary—details and larger story developments are kind of contingent on how you're feeling on the day you're writing, what the weather's like, what's happening in your life outside of the book process. With book two, I'd like to give into that more, and just see where the moment takes the story.

Q: Speaking of which, do you have a second novel planned or already underway? If yes, could you tell us something about it?

RL: I have the vaguest of ideas for a novel set in mid-aughts New York City. I moved to New York from Boston in 2006, so I suppose the book will have some autobiographical, roman à clef aspect to it. But some days when I think about doing another novel, my ideas go to bigger, more fantastical places. So we'll see! Maybe I'll combine those two impulses, between realism and genre elements. I've only written little snippets here and there, but lately have been getting the itch to really sit down and commit to the writing process again. Wish me luck!

Q: Besides this interview, and your June 12 reading at 7pm at the Porter Square Book Store in Cambridge, what have been the highlights of book promotion since All We Can Do Is Wait was published?

RL: It's a small highlight, in a way, but a cherished and funny one. I was on a panel of YA authors for the kick-off to the New York Teen Author Festival, at the famous Strand bookstore just south of Union Square. So that was exciting enough, to be reading a little excerpt from my book in that hallowed place.

And then during the Q&A we realized that, for whatever reason, a big school group of Danish high schoolers were in the audience. I have no idea how their teachers/chaperones found the event! But the kids asked a lot of really insightful, precocious questions. An unexpected delight, to connect with young readers from another country.

Q: What advice would you give to aspiring, but still unpublished, novelists?

RL: Write as often as you can, but don't push yourself too hard. When you push, the writing can get labored and sloppy. Set reasonable goals for yourself rather than thinking if you just go-go-go and get to the end you'll have something worthwhile. In a business sense, I would say find ways to connect with people in the industry, whether that's through social media, sending considered pitch/inquiry emails, or going to any literary events that are open to the public. It can be hard to be seen, so gently but purposefully making your presence known can be a big help. Also, try to get published in smaller ways—pitch an article to a website you like, write an essay on **Medium** and see if it can make the rounds. I know several YA authors who were "discovered" in that way. Also, reach out to those who offer their help (to that end, my email address is am.lawson@gmail.com).

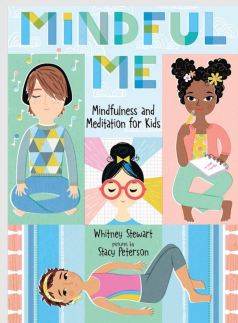
Interview by MJ Cronin

Come to Porter Square Books in Cambridge at 7pm on June 12 to meet Richard in person, ask your own questions, and hear more about **All We Can Do Is Wait**



authors!
AUTHORS!

News About BAC Authors



Whitney Stewart presented her two new children's books, **What's on Your Plate? Exploring the World of Food** (Sterling) and **Mindful Me: Mindfulness and Meditation for Kids** (Albert Whitman) at #TXLA2018 and will do so again at BookExpo/BookCon and at the American Library Association Annual Conference, June 21-26 in New Orleans. . She also offered a mindfulness workshop at Barefoot Books' New Orleans event on May 16th, **Raising Kind Kids in Today's World**.



Shari's Secret, the sequel to Patricia Striar Rohner's debut novel, **Tzippy the Thief** is now available on Amazon, along with **Willameana the Witch**, an illustrated children's book.

The BAC newsletter is published the first week of every month, except for this combined June-July Summer Issue. Please send news about your activities, speaking, and new books (along with related pictures) to bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com by July 26 for publication in the August 2018

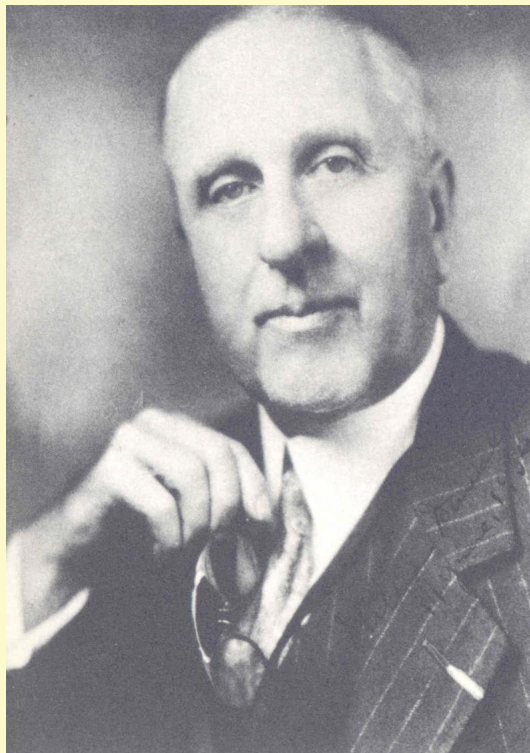
Yesteryear at the BAC by Scott Guthery

WILLIAM DANA ORCUTT'S 1912 ORACLE FOR AUTHORS: THE WRITER'S DESK BOOK

When does the period go before the quotation mark and when does it go afterwards? Do I mean partly or partially here?

I suspect that every author has at hand one or two reference works to help solve such literary puzzlers. They seem to pop up much more frequently than the statistics of the English language would dictate.

*For punctuation and sentence structure I reach for the classic, Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*. For usage I take down Harry Shaw's *Dictionary of Problem Words and Expressions* or Bill Bryson's *Dictionary of Troublesome Words*. I confess I use the latter sparingly. Not because it isn't spot-on but because it is so enticingly written that after looking up a word I too often find myself five pages later reading about words that bear no relationship to the word I originally sought.*

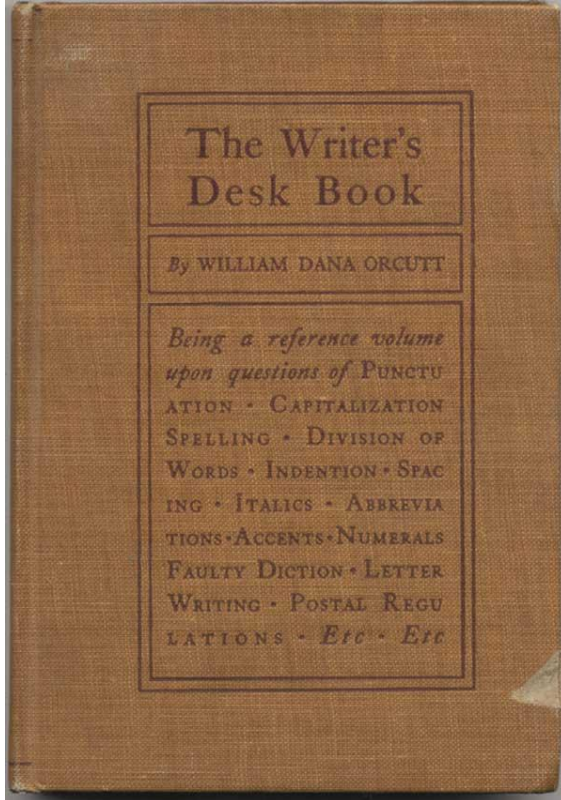


WILLIAM DANA ORCUTT (1870-1953)

A member of the Boston Authors Club, William Dana Orcutt, also contributed a book to this genre. *The Writer's Desk Book: Being a Reference Volume upon Questions of Punctuation, Capitalization, Spelling, Division of Words, Indention, Spacing, Italics, Numerals, Faulty Diction, Letter Writing, Postal Regulations, Etc. Etc. Etc.*, was published in 1912 by Frederick A. Stokes Company in New York.

The Writer's Desk Book takes a mere 184 pages to cover every literary and logistical aspect of the writer's craft. Of course, Orcutt's guidance on postal regulations is a bit dated -- first class postage in 1912 was 2 cents for each ounce up to four pounds -- but his handy and easily-remembered rules for punctuation and spelling are as useful today as they were a century ago: "Words which end in any double letters retain the double with a termination not beginning with the same letter."

WorldCat shows "108 works in 417 publications" associated with Orcutt as author or editor, most but not all of them having to do with publishing and the history of books. In addition to being a prolific writer, Orcutt was the vice president and general manager of the University Press in Cambridge and



later a jack-of-all-trades at the Plimpton Press so he doubtless knew whereof he wrote. The cryptic initials W.D.O. that were part of Plimpton's pressmark were Orcutt's.

Among his other accomplishments, Orcutt was the first president of the Boston Society of Printers. The society, founded in 1905, is still going strong today. (<http://www.societyofprinters.org/>) Within the publishing industry, Orcutt is probably best remembered for the type font called Humanistic he created for the University Press. He designed the font while on sabbatical at the Laurentian Library in Florence. The font was redesigned in 1940 and renamed the Laurentian font. Later redesigns were sold as Bologna, Verona, and Carratere Sinibaldi.

The period always goes before the quotation mark and I meant partly.

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