

The Writers Network News, November 2014

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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Follow my Write In Style creative-writing blog at <http://bobbiechristmas.blogspot.com/>

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Meet Fellow Writers

Do you live in or visit metro Atlanta? Sign up for local meeting notices today! Send your name and e-mail address to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

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Note: I have shortened some links in this newsletter with the help of [www.tinyurl.com](http://www.tinyurl.com), a free service that takes long web addresses and converts them to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

"Authors are judged by strange capricious rules. The great ones are thought mad, the small ones fools." --Alexander Pope

An English poet and satirist born in 1688, Pope became famous for his brilliant handling of the heroic couplet. Pope contracted a tubercular infection in his childhood, which may have been what stunted his growth to four feet six inches. He suffered from curvature of the spine and dealt with constant headaches. Nothing kept him from writing, though.

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One: From the editor's desk: Today's Conundrum

Dear Fellow Writers:

As you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, one of my wonderful clients just sent me a copy of her memoir, *Wife of the Deceased*. Last month, a client gave me two of her books that had recently been released by well-known publishers.

I get all jittery and excited whenever one of my clients gets a book published and then sends me a copy. I take personal pride in my clients' accomplishments.

I also know that my clients don't get books for free. The copies they give me cost them money, so they represent a true gift, in every sense of the word.

A while back, though, one of my clients went through the editing process with me, and he went on to self-publish his book with a print-on-demand company notorious for charging too much for its books. The client sent me a link, hoping I would purchase a copy. I had already read the book several times during the editing process, though, and did not feel the need to pay what I considered an inflated price for a copy. When I did not buy the book, the client, who surely will never hire me again, wrote me a nasty e-mail, complaining that after he paid me to edit his book, I wouldn't honor him by buying his book.

He had a point, even if the note was harsh. On the other hand, I stand by my decision; I will not pay for a client's book that I have already read, sometimes several times.

Maybe I should buy all my clients' books as a way of supporting them financially. If I did, though, my expenses would rise and my house would be even more overflowing with books than it already is. I have edited hundreds upon hundreds of books that have been published over the past twenty-three years.

Instead of buying my clients' books, though, I prefer to feel the warmth spread in my heart when a client goes to the trouble and expense to give me a copy of a book I edited. I also gladly promote my clients' books in this newsletter and sometimes on Facebook, as well.

I see both sides of the issue clearly, though, which leaves me in a conundrum. Should I buy a copy of every book I edit? Should I wait and allow the clients who wish to send me a copy do so? What do you think?

Yours in writing,  
Bobbie Christmas (Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com )  
Author of Write In Style, owner of Zebra Communications, director of The Writers Network, and coordinator of the Florida Writers Association Editors Helping Writers service.

If someone forwarded this newsletter to you, please sign up to get your own copy. Simply go to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com), click on Free Newsletter, and follow the prompts. I never share your address or send out spam.

## Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Literary Agents, Their vs. Him or Her, and Using "Such As"

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: Because the completion of editing for my book is drawing near, I have been looking into agencies to represent it. I am a little disheartened by what I've found. On Writers Market, only three agencies are listed for YA fantasy. Publishers Marketplace also has a very short list. Are there any agencies you would recommend? I feel my trilogy is unique and would do well in the market. I would like to find it the best representation possible.

A: I couldn't be much more help than the resources you've already checked, so I'll say this: Go to a bookstore and read the acknowledgments pages of books in the same category as your series. Write down the book titles and names of the agents who handled those books, and then go online and research those agents to get their agency names, addresses, and preferred methods of contact (snail mail or e-mail). Send each a specifically geared query letter that says something like this: "I see that you represented Sam Smith's Bizarre World fantasy trilogy, and my book fits into the same genre; however..." Briefly say exactly why your book or trilogy of books is even better. Never fail to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you query by snail mail.

Q: When is it correct to use "their" instead of constantly using "his and her?"

- Example 1: Anyone at any age can learn to use their intuition.
- Example 2: Cultural symbols differ for each person because of their backgrounds.
- Example 3: She and he need to find their own musical instrument.

A: It is correct to use "their" only when it refers to a plural, so one way to avoid overusing "his or her" and other such wordy phrases is to make the noun plural, so the pronoun can be plural. Another way is to recast the sentence. Here are some potential rewrites of the examples you sent:

- Example 1: Anyone at any age can learn to use intuition.
- Example 2: Because of differing backgrounds, everyone has differing cultural symbols.
- Example 3: All musicians need to find their own musical instruments.

Q: To avoid redundancy, I believe the words "such as" should be simply omitted. (Quote taken from one of your current pieces, by the way.) "Bobbie sold personal memoirs to publishers such as John Wiley & Sons and Adams Media Corporation."

What'cha think?

A: First of all, I don't claim to be the least wordy writer in the world; instead my mission to teach other writers to write better than I do. (Grin.) Second of all, to delete "such as" implies exclusivity.

Let's examine this rewrite: "Bobbie sold personal memoirs to publishers John Wiley & Sons and Adams Media." While it makes sense and is tight, it implies that I did not sell to any other publishers, which is not the case. I've sold memoirs to many other publishers, but the names aren't as recognizable as the ones I listed.

You're right if I listed all the publishers who bought memoir pieces from me, but I'm right if I sold to unnamed publishers as well.

Is it okay if we both win?

Bobbie Christmas, book editor and owner of Zebra Communications, will answer your questions, too. Send them to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com). Read more "Ask the Book Doctor" questions and answers at [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com).

For more questions, answers, and comments, order the book, Ask the Book Doctor: How to Beat the Competition and Sell Your Writing. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/lexp7n>.

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## Three: This Month's Easy Editing Tip from Bobbie Christmas: Hyphens, Dashes, Em Dashes, and En Dashes--Use Each Correctly

Hyphens

Hyphens join compound adjectives that modify and precede a noun. (Examples: a seven-year-old boy, his reddish-brown hair, a well-crafted table)

## Dashes and Em Dashes

Use dashes--also called em dashes--to denote an abrupt change in thought or an emphatic pause. We will fly to Paris in June--if I get a raise.

You can use two hyphens to indicate an em dash, or, in Microsoft Word, you can also go to Insert and then Symbol and then More Symbols and then Special Characters, to find Em Dash and Insert. Whether using the true em dash or two hyphens, be consistent throughout your manuscript. I use two hyphens in this newsletter, because dashes can get changed to odd symbols or boxes when transferred to other programs when creating a newsletter.

Note: Correct typography calls for no space before or after a dash.

## En Dashes

An en dash is a typographical symbol that is longer than a hyphen yet shorter than a true dash, or em dash. Use an en dash, rather than a hyphen, to mean "through," such as in a page range (pages 4-7) or a date range. (April 7-19). To find the en dash in Word, go to Insert and then Symbol and then More Symbols and then Special Characters. I doubt the en dash will show up correctly in this newsletter, but just know that it is longer than a hyphen and shorter than a dash.

Bobbie's Find and Refine Method: use your Find and Replace Function (Ctrl+H) to locate each use of hyphens to be sure they are used correctly. If a hyphen is used to mean a range, change it to an en dash. If a hyphen is used instead of a dash, change it to two hyphens or an em dash. Remember not to space before or after an em dash.

For more editing and creative writing tips, order *Purge Your Prose of Problems* here: <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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## Four: Subjects of interest to writers

Last month member Cathy Giordano wrote to say I inspire her to write her blogs, but the links did not work. I urge you to follow these correct links and read her terrific columns: <http://tinyurl.com/jvt7v9s> and <http://tinyurl.com/me5dut9>.

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Member Terry Segal writes, "I'm so excited to share the launch of my new novel, *Hidden Corners of my Heart*, available on Amazon.com." Congratulations, Terry. The book is available at <http://tinyurl.com/kgzvbfb>.

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Member Dixon Heame announced on Facebook, "Friends, I am so honored and surprised to learn that my novella, *From Tickfaw to Shongaloo*, earned Second Place in the William Faulkner-William Wisdom Competition sponsored by the Faulkner Society. An excerpt will appear in this year's *Double Dealer*, and the full novella will be out next summer from Southeast Missouri State University Press. I am so happy that this story has found a home and an audience." What an honor, Dixon!

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Member Dawn Bell just sent me a copy of her book, *Wife of the Deceased*. It's an important book for anyone who has lost a loved one, because it follows all the stages of grief she endured when her husband died suddenly at age thirty-eight. The acknowledgment page was especially endearing, when she wrote, "A special thank you to my editor, Bobbie Christmas, at Zebra Communications. Not only did you edit my manuscript with exceptional skill, you confirmed necessity for such a resource. This memoir may never have been published, if not for your support and encouragement."

Thank you, Dawn, for your acknowledgment and for sharing the details of your difficult time with others, who will benefit from your experience. Congratulations on the release of your book.

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Run-on sentences, dangling participles, and more covered in the latest *Chicago Manual of Style Q & A*. See <http://tinyurl.com/a8uzoh2>.

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If you like this newsletter, so will your friends. Tell them to subscribe to *The Writers Network News* by going to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com) and clicking on the yellow box at the top. To view back issues of this newsletter, go to <http://tinyurl.com/psnmp6p>.

## November is National Novel Writing Month

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Here's a challenge to all novelists or those who want to be a novelist. Between November 1 and November 30, write the first draft of (at least) a 50,000-word novel. When I last checked, not all the 2014 information was up on the website yet, but you can still get information and sign up at <http://nanowrimo.org/>.

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What if you dropped your laptop and broke it? Would your data, novels, and business information be lost? Not if you have Carbonite to back up your computer regularly, without any effort from you. I swear by Carbonite, or I wouldn't promote it. It saved me twice, so far, with files that corrupted or simply disappeared, but they were easily accessible again on the Carbonite website. If you follow this link and sign up for Carbonite, you and I both get a \$20 gift card, but if you don't, please, be sure your computer is always backed up to a safe place separate from your computer.

## ~~~~~ Terminology Writers Should Know: Toolbox

Songwriters, poets, and other creative writers often start with a toolbox, a written list of images, metaphors, and words they may or may not use in a creative written piece. For example, if a poet wants to write about a sunrise, his or her toolbox will list items that relate to or describe sunrise, sun, colors, and the like. The toolbox may include words such as these: aura, streaks, light, dark, warmth, golden, rebirth, dawn, splendor, and orange. It may include phrases such as "a new day" and "fresh beginning."

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After creating a toolbox, writers then may use some, all, or none of the words and phrases when they write their poem, song, article, short story, or novel, but the toolbox has still been a vital part of the thinking, planning, and inspiration that drives the writer to completion.

## ~~~~~ Holiday Gifts for Writers

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What gifts can you give your fellow writers? My favorite is an apron that says "I'd rather be writing." If that gift costs more than you want to spend, help your friends promote their own books by giving them a pin that reads "Ask me about my book." For these and other great gifts

for writers, go to <http://tinyurl.com/nvh7dyu>.

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The U.S. book publishing industry generated \$27.01 billion in net revenue in 2013, selling 2.59 billion units, according to a new report from the Association of American Publishers and BISG. This was down slightly from \$27.12 billion in net revenue and 2.62 billion units in 2012. See the article at <http://tinyurl.com/mkafx65>.

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A Book Doctor's Desk Reference, Fifth Edition

Save thousands of dollars and edit your own book! Order my proprietary book-doctor desk reference book online at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

In alphabetical order and in easy-to-understand language, Purge Your Prose of Problems covers all you need to know to revise and edit fiction and nonfiction books, including grammar, punctuation, word choices, creative writing, plot, pace, characterization, point of view, dialogue, Chicago style, format, and much more. The spiral binder lets the book lie flat in front of your computer, for easy use. Available printed or as a PDF e-book that allows you to keep all this vital information on your computer for ready reference.

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To save thousands of dollars by editing your own book, order Purge Your Prose of Problems today at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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Vital to Sales: How to Classify a Book

The Book Industry Study Group (BISG) is the leading book trade association for standardized best practices, research, and education. The group manages BISAC Subject Headings, which are used to classify books, so that brick-and-mortar bookstores know where to shelve books, and online stores know under what genre the book should be listed in their databases. If you are not sure how to classify your book, the BISG website is the place to look. See <https://www.bisg.org/bisac-subject-codes>.

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Free Tools for Writers from Bobbie Christmas and Zebra Communications

What are the pros and cons of self-publishing? How can you tell when you're telling? Order PDF reports on these writing-related subjects and many more. Go to [http://zebraeditor.com/free\\_reports.shtml](http://zebraeditor.com/free_reports.shtml).

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Amazon has introduced a new tool for children's book creators to self-publish their works to the Kindle Store called KDP Kids. The tool allows makers to build in features such as text pop-ups. Once the files are ready, authors can categorize their work by age and grade-range filters. "Authors can earn royalties of up to 70%, while keeping their rights and maintaining control of their content," according to Amazon. See <https://kdp.amazon.com/kids> for full details.

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Ask the Book Doctor: How to Beat the Competition and Sell Your Writing answers many of the questions you wish you could ask an editing expert. Whether you write books, short stories, articles, reports, or anything else, learn more about how to write, edit, and sell your work. Paperback: \$14.95 plus \$4.99 S & H (total: \$19.94 US) E-book: \$8.95, no S & H, with almost instant delivery. You will save almost \$10 by buying the e-book. To order either, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lexp7n>.

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Become my friend on Facebook and follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>  
Like Zebra Communications on Facebook: <http://tinyurl.com/7vcxaxu>.  
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Five: Contests, Agents, and Markets

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Established in 1994, the Black Mountain Press is dedicated to promoting work of emerging authors of literary poetry, novels and short stories. "Creative literary fiction and poetry or collections of short stories are wanted for the next few years." Submit complete manuscript.

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Writers Weekly 24-Hour Short Story Contest! - \$5.00

Register now for the WINTER 2015 24-Hour Short Story Contest. You must be entered in the contest before the topic is posted, in order to submit your story. You cannot write your story first and then enter the contest. Start time is January 24, 2015, at 12:00 noon central time. Competition is held quarterly and limited to 500 entrants. More than 85 prizes! Sponsored by Writers Weekly. To register, go to <http://www.writersweekly.com/misc/contest.php>.

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"We suggest very strongly that you write something you would want to read, rather than something you think conforms to the conventions of the genre. If we're interested in your manuscript, we can absolutely help you make it more marketable, but there is no substitute for passion

and an authentic voice.

"We are very happy to see submissions, and we guarantee to look at everything that comes in, but we warn you that anything addressed to 'Dear Sir/Sirs' automatically loses twelve points. To avoid wasting both your time and ours, we ask that you note the submissions details at <http://felonyandmayhem.com/committing-your-own-mayhem/>."

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Savannah Anthology 2015 Writing Contest

Savannah Authors is looking for unpublished prose from writers in Georgia, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee and North Carolina to be included in A Savannah Anthology 2015. A panel of distinguished publishers, writers, and academics will choose the winners. Your work may be fiction or nonfiction and must be 5,000 words or fewer. The judges will choose three entrants to receive modest cash awards and will also select pieces for honorable mention.

"We ask for first publication rights in book and Kindle form only. The work belongs to you. Choose any genre, location, and length under the limit that suits your style. We are simply looking for the best writing available. The judges will not see your identification information. A \$10 entry fee is required for each entry. All types of prose are welcome." For full details, see <http://tinyurl.com/mygshv7>.

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8th House Publishing

This small company publishes exemplary fiction, philosophy, esoterica, and other earnest works. "What we like at the 8th House: modern, radical, enduring, insightful, inventive ... Whether it's an essay, a philosophy tract, a novel, or a book of verse, send us a sample of your work (two or three chapters and a full table of contents) along with a query letter to [submissions@8thHousePublishing.com](mailto:submissions@8thHousePublishing.com) This e-mail address is being protected from spambots."

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The Fiddlehead  
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Canada's longest living literary journal, The Fiddlehead is published four times a year at the University of New Brunswick, with the generous assistance of the university, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Province of New Brunswick.

"The Fiddlehead is open to good writing in English from all over the world, looking always for freshness and surprise. Our editors are always happy to see new unsolicited works in fiction and poetry.

"Work is read on an ongoing basis; the acceptance rate is around 1-2%. Response time is typically from three to nine months. If you are serious about submitting to The Fiddlehead, you should subscribe or read an issue or two to get a sense of the journal. Contact us if you would like to order sample back issues (\$10-\$15 plus postage)."

See <http://www.thefiddlehead.ca/submissions.html> for full submission guidelines.

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Ginosko Flash Fiction Contest

Ginosko Literary Journal  
PO Box 246  
Fairfax, CA 94978

\$500 Award, \$10 entry fee, deadline March 1, 2015. Submit up to two pieces, 800 words maximum each piece. Awarded work will be published on Ginosko Literary Journal website. The Ginosko Flash Fiction Award is for an unpublished work of flash fiction. Awarded piece is selected through a submission process open to all writers with the following exception: Relatives or individuals having a personal or professional relationship with any of the final judges where they have taken any part whatsoever in shaping the submitted manuscript.

Submit work, along with a brief bio, and cover letter if desired, to [GinoskoContest@gmail.com](mailto:GinoskoContest@gmail.com). Attachments must be in .wps, .doc, .rtf, or .pdf form; otherwise they will not be considered (please include last name on every page submitted).

Payment Procedures:  
Online submissions will receive e-mailed invoices via PayPal, though you do not need a PayPal account. Print submissions may send \$5 in cash or check (made payable to Ginosko Literary Journal) to the above address. For full details, see <http://www.ginoskoliteraryjournal.com/contest.htm>

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Six: Got Muse? From Overused Idiom to Originality

What constitutes an idiom? An idiom is a fixed and distinctive expression whose meaning cannot be deduced from the combined meanings of its actual words. For that reason, non-native people learning English often find themselves at a loss to understand some of our idioms. While strong writers shun idioms in the narrative, idioms are appropriate in dialogue, because in real life, people use idioms often, when speaking to each other.

We've heard all the standard, overused, and easily recognizable idioms, but strong writers avoid them in narrative. What if we used them, however, to spur us on to create something original? Examine the following overused idioms:

- It's not rocket science.
- Once in a blue moon
- Skeletons in the closet
- The whole nine yards
- At the end of the day

Cat got your tongue?  
Piece of cake  
Green with envy  
Let the cat out of the bag  
Hit the nail on the head  
Out of the blue  
Jump on the bandwagon  
Go off the deep end  
Buy the farm  
Don't rock the boat.  
Fall off the wagon

Pick out four of the above overused phrases or find four other well-known idioms. What images did they bring to mind? Write one or more stories using the images that these idioms brought to mind; however, do not use the idioms themselves, except, perhaps, in the title.

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Please send it in the body copy, not an attachment, to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

Deadline: The 15th of each month.

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Send a copy of this newsletter to all your writing friends. Tell them to join The Writers Network F-R-E-E by visiting [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com) and clicking on Free Newsletter.

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