

The Writers Network News, December 2014

In This Issue

One: From the editor's desk: Giving Thanks for Open Minds and Happiness

Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Unclear Sentences, Eliminating Extra Spaces, Commas with Conjunctions, and the Interrobang

Three: This Month's Easy Editing Tip from Bobbie Christmas: Possessives in Proper Nouns that End in S Sounds

Four: Subjects of Interest to Writers

Five: Contests, Agents, and Markets

Six: Got Muse? Word Association

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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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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

Walt Whitman said, "The public is a thick-skinned beast, and you have to keep whacking away at its hide to let it know you're there." Whitman self-published the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, a collection of poetry that came out in 1855, after which he anonymously wrote wildly enthusiastic reviews of the book himself. Despite his efforts, he sold only ten copies of the first edition and gave away the rest. Eventually his book received the recognition it deserved. It now has been translated into every major language in the world and has sold "too many copies to imagine," according to [wiki.answers.com](http://wiki.answers.com).

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One: From the editor's desk: Giving Thanks for Open Minds and Happiness

Dear Fellow Writers:

As I write this, I am still swooning with love for my family and thankful for all my blessings. After a huge family wedding a few days before, when our cousin Bryan married Michael, his partner of eighteen years, some of us gathered again to celebrate Thanksgiving. There is a Yiddish word, *kvell*, which means to swell with pride and happiness. It's the only word that describes how I felt, looking from face to face over the table at our Thanksgiving dinner.

Our family is, as my brother describes it, a modern family. My sister and her husband have shared forty years of the happiest marriage anyone can ever hope to imagine. They found each other, however, while they both were married to others, and it took them a long time to admit their love for each other and disentangle from their first marriages. It took them very little time after that, however, to marry each other.

My niece and her husband are happily living in separate homes and still the best of friends, so both came up from Florida for Thanksgiving. The husband, stepfather to her son, is helping his stepson, my great nephew, repair and upgrade the new house that the twenty-three-year-old just bought in our area. My great nephew and his girlfriend plan to live together in that house as soon as she finishes nursing school. Remember when people used to gasp when told a couple was living together without benefit of marriage? I certainly heard it in my generation, but thankfully all that prejudice and condemnation never ruled our family.

My great niece could not make it for Thanksgiving. She and her domestic partner live in California. Our family never blinked when my great

... niece admitted to being gay. So what? She was still the lovely, sweet woman we all loved, and now she has a partner we all love, as well.

Another niece and her husband hosted the dinner, to which we all contributed. She is an artist and jeweler and he is a woodworker and a chiropractor. Their home is a gallery of artwork, with even more artistic and architectural touches everywhere. The couple, happily married for many years, met after the end of their bad first marriages.

I brought my new boyfriend to the event, the first time I've introduced him to family, because he and I have been dating only two months. We met over the Internet and connected through his beautiful letters long before we met in person. By the time we met in person, we already liked each other, and after only a few months of dating, we are in a happy, committed monogamous relationship. We truly enjoy each other, even though (or maybe because) we're both in our seventies. It's never too late! My boyfriend is black, and not an eyelash was batted when I introduced him to my family members. Instead of prejudice, all my family cares about is happiness, and when I looked around the room, I saw happiness everywhere.

Our family situation, however, is rare. I know families with rifts, estrangements, prejudices, and conditional love, rather than unconditional. What a shame! What a waste of time, when love is all that matters in this world. I am truly thankful for my family. Whenever we gather, I feel love swirling around the room in an almost tangible fashion.

Obviously I have a great deal to be thankful for. I hope all my fellow writers feel the same way. Here's to happiness, health, and lots of love for all my readers, no matter what the season.

Note: In my letter to readers last month, I mentioned that some clients send me a copy of their books, once they are published, which I find delightful. One client, however, was offended that I did not buy a copy of his book. I asked readers if I should be expected to buy books that my clients publish. The response from readers was fascinating and overwhelming. I could not possibly post all the comments, but here are a few snippets:

How outrageous that someone would demand that you buy their book! How wonderful that authors send you a copy of their book as a special thank you for you editing help. --Cathy Giordano

Consider this: A candy store clerk received more smiles when partially filling a bag, then adding more candy until the scale equaled one pound. Her counterpart received frowns when overfilling a bag, then removing enough candy to manage the proper weight. Psychological solution: charge clients additional \$20.00 or so in hidden fees and tell them you'll be proud to purchase and promote their published products. Giving their books to others will help promote their babies. Your clients will applaud your great support system. Win - win. --Paul DuBose

Writers know their editors already have read the books multiple times. Writers also know that if editors bought every book every client published, it would set a financially difficult precedent, and don't authors also get a LOT more publicity in your newsletter [and Facebook] than they would ever get from the sale of one book? --Millie Richmond

DEFINITELY this: wait and allow the clients who wish to send a copy do so. --Meredith Rutter

Audrie Clifford had a slightly different take on the subject and good points as well. She said, "I give a copy [of my books] to everyone involved in any way. Because my books are printed by CreateSpace, I can afford to do this and also offer ten books to members of Librarything and Goodreads [sites that give reviews]. I'll admit to being disappointed when [these sites] don't write a review. There is an implied contract here. I send you the book; you write a review. I most certainly feel, however, that you [as the editor] shouldn't feel obligated to buy anyone's book if you don't want to. There's this to remember: If the book sold a lot of copies, the author wouldn't know whether or not you bought one. If it's not selling well, it could mean that no one else is interested, either."

She also said I could review the book, but that thought raised another question. Wouldn't a review by the editor of a book be biased? Would it be a conflict of interest for the editor to write a review? What do my readers 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.  
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Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Unclear Sentences, Eliminating Extra Spaces, Commas with Conjunctions, and the Interrobang

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: Which of the following sentences do you think is better?

I was so frustrated that I gave up my quest for a gown.  
I was so frustrated that I stopped searching for a gown.

I think grammatically the second one might be better. The position of "for a gown" in the first sentence almost makes it sound like I did it for the gown's sake. On second thought, I suppose the second could sound like that too. Any suggestions?

A: When a sentence keeps sounding unclear, even when you shift a few words, it is time to recast the sentence entirely. Consider a rewrite along the lines of these suggestions:

I was so frustrated that I decided to stop searching for a gown.  
Frustrated by my search for a gown, I eventually gave up my quest.  
I gave up my quest for a gown, because I was frustrated.

Q: After writing 150 pages of a manuscript, I found out that I need to put only one space between sentences after a period, not two, as I have been doing.

Do you know if there is a way to correct all 150 pages with an editing option on Microsoft Word, or will this issue be something that the book interior designer will address?

A: It's a breeze to fix this issue and delete other unintentional extra spaces as well. Go to the Find and Replace function in Word (Ctrl + H), and put your cursor in the Find What box and space twice. In other words, hit the spacebar twice. Nothing will show, but you should see your cursor move over two spaces. Next put your cursor in the Replace With box and hit the spacebar only once. Click on Replace All, and in mere seconds, the computer will strip out all the two spaces in a row and replace them with one space. Why wait for or trust a layout person to fix the issue for you, when it's so easy to do?

Q: I know a comma should be used to separate two clauses in a compound sentence, but in the sentence below, is a comma okay before the word "but?"

It was only a five minute drive, but a much longer pursuit when trudging through snow.

It's not two complete sentences, but the "but" gives it a nice pause. Is the comma okay?

A: Commas do much more than separate compound sentences; they also often are needed before conjunctions, even in sentences that are not compound. "But" in the sample sentence is a conjunction, so you are correct that a comma should appear before it. Don't forget the hyphen, too, in the two-word adjective (five-minute) that modifies the word "drive." Here's how the sentence should look:

It was only a five-minute drive, but a much longer pursuit when trudging through snow.

Q: Is an interrobang allowed in a manuscript?

A: The interrobang, also called the interabang, combines the functions of the question mark (also called the "interrogative point") and the exclamation mark or exclamation point. The interrobang may, in casual writing, appear after strong or playful moot questions, such as "Who'd a thunk it?!" The actual interrobang symbol, however, does not appear on the average keyboard, although it can be written as two symbols (?! or !?). In handwriting, the two are combined by writing the question mark first, without the dot at the bottom, and without lifting the pen, then writing an exclamation mark with an upward stroke. One dot at the bottom serves for the entire interrobang, when handwritten.

Is the interrobang acceptable in a manuscript? For several reasons, the answer is no. It is substandard punctuation, few keyboards offer the interrobang, and conventional wisdom calls for only one ending punctuation mark per sentence. In addition, using substandard punctuation downgrades the writing from professional to schoolgirl style. Instead of employing substandard punctuation in an attempt to make a point, strong writers ensure the wording itself is robust enough to make its point.

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: Possessives in Proper Nouns that End in S Sounds

Are you confused about whether to write James' necktie or James's necktie? If so, you are not alone, and it has nothing to do with your lack of knowledge. It is a style issue, not a grammar issue, so take a deep breath and stop blaming yourself.

Here's the deal: AP style calls for only the apostrophe, so you grew up seeing that style almost every day of your life, if you read the newspaper. If you write for newspapers and some magazines, chances are your periodical clients want you to use just the apostrophe to form a possessive of a name ending in s or the s sound.

If you write fiction or nonfiction books, though, book publishers follow Chicago style, so you will also want to follow Chicago style. Chicago style calls for an apostrophe and an s, even if the name ends with an s or an s sound. For that reason, as a novelist or other book writer, you would write James's book, Jesus's blessing, and Berlioz's works.

When making possessive proper nouns, consistency is more important than using an apostrophe and an s or just the apostrophe. Once you decide which style you plan to follow, be consistent throughout the manuscript, and you'll probably be fine.

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

#### Holiday Gifts for Writers

My favorite gift for writers is an apron that says "I'd rather be writing." For that and other gifts for your writer friends, go to <http://tinyurl.com/nvh7dyu>.

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Write Like A Pro-FREE eBook

Marcía Riley has offered to share a Gift of Knowledge with our readers.

Write Like A Pro is jam-packed with tips, tools, and techniques that enhance your writing to produce the "write" results. Whether a beginner or veteran writer, we can all improve our writing skills. This powerful resource is FREE until December 31. Download your copy now from [www.writelikeapro.biz](http://www.writelikeapro.biz).

Editing techniques are also demonstrated in four languages (Chinese, English, Hindi, and Spanish) on the YouTube link from Write Like A Pro's website.

"Powerful writing is not a secret, it's a system." --Marcia Riley

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Writing Mistakes

A creative writing teacher reveals his opinion of the top ten mistakes writers make. Note, however, that Dr. Steven Carver, author of the blog titled Blot the Skrip is not based in America, so he uses British spelling and punctuation. See <http://tinyurl.com/nzbc3nc>.

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>.

Terminology Writers Should Know: Caption or Outline

Captions or outlines refer to explanatory text that accompanies a photograph. Any time a photograph appears in an article, newsletter, or book, a caption should explain or identify the content of the photograph. Never leave readers guessing at the identities of the people in a photograph or the meaning of a photo. At a time when many people are composing holiday newsletters, it's good to remember to add explanatory captions to every photograph in the newsletter.

Computers do not last forever. Often they fizzle and die without giving any warning. If your computer died this afternoon, 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.

Sell More Books

Author Marketing Experts advises writers at book signings not to sit at a table and wait for people to come up, buy your book, and have you sign it. Instead it says you should plan to give a talk. "People are drawn into a discussion and are often turned off by an author just sitting at a table. Marketing is about message and movement, so stand up and speak." For more information contact [info@amarketingexpert.com](mailto:info@amarketingexpert.com).

Purge Your Prose of Problems

A Book Doctor's Desk Reference, Fifth Edition

This book was a top seller at the recent FWA writers conference. Grab your copy today! 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>.

Q. How does one punctuate dialogue in which one character interrupts another in the middle of a word? Read the answer to this question and many others in this month's Q & A by The Chicago Manual of Style. <http://tinyurl.com/a8uzoh2>

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).

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>.

Become my friend on Facebook and follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>. I have a separate Facebook page specifically for writers. Like and follow my Zebra Communications for writers here: <http://tinyurl.com/7vcxaxu>.

Five: Contests, Agents, and Markets

Black Balloon Publishing  
<http://blackballoonpublishing.com>

Black Balloon Publishing is a critically acclaimed independent press headquartered in New York, NY. Black Balloon books are risky but not

gimmicky, whimsical but never light, intelligent but not precious. We publish new voices and familiar ones, and our list ranges from illustrated fiction to creative nonfiction, memoir to literature in translation. We publish literary fiction, memoir, and nonfiction. We accept unsolicited work as well as agented submissions.

We champion the weird, the unwieldy, and the unclassifiable.

We're looking for big-hearted manuscripts with distinctive voices that demonstrate exceptional depth, empathy, and intuition. We like surprises, risky turns, and charmers who lead us to dangerous places.

Before submitting, please take time to familiarize yourself with some of our previously published works.

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Florida Writers Association  
Royal Palm Literary Awards

Starting January 2015, pre-published and published books will accepted for potential prestigious Royal Palm Literary Awards, presented at the annual conference in Orlando in mid-October. Watch the website for full details. [www.floridawriters.net](http://www.floridawriters.net).

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Book Awards add to your book's credibility. On this site, you'll find fifty award competitions where you can enter your book, published or not. <http://tinyurl.com/mh9zlj5>.

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GemmaMedia publishes books and digital content featuring cultural memoir for young people and adults, literary fiction from Ireland, and current affairs publishing with diversity at the heart of the story. Named for the brightest star in the Northern Crown, Gemma explores the brilliance of our shared and diverse experience.

Well-loved authors and clear new voices encourage new and seasoned readers, opening distant worlds and ideas. GemmaMedia brings you a host of new stories, new insights on culture and introduces new lives from Baghdad to Ballyvaughan.

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#### Six: Got Muse? Word Association

I keep a partial list of words that writers mistakenly break into two words. The items in the list are unrelated, but the list serves several purposes. The list acts as a reminder to double check all words that might possibly be one word instead of two. You may even print and keep the list as a reference, because few of us can remember all the words.

For this writing exercise, though, read the list three times, and then close your eyes. Which words do you recall reading? Open your eyes, and without looking at the list again, write down the words that you remembered. It might be only two, or it might be six. The number doesn't matter. Next begin a story that uses the words that you remembered. Amazingly you will find that your mind will find associations among those words, even though the list was never intended to act as a word-association tool.

Here is the list:

- Armchair
- Ashtray
- Autobiography
- Backpedal
- Backseat
- Backup (as a noun)
- Bestseller (noun)
- Bloodstream
- Bookstore
- Breakneck
- Buttonhole
- Cannot
- Caregiving (noun)
- Cheekbone
- Coastline perform
- Commonplace
- Coworker
- Cutthroat
- Daybreak
- Doorknob
- Downstairs
- Downstream
- Downturn
- Easygoing
- Facelift
- Faraway (adjective)
- Fingerprint
- Firepower
- Firewood
- Firsthand (adverb or adjective)
- Getup (noun)

Girlfriend  
Gravesite  
Gunshot (as a noun)  
Halfway  
Handgun  
Handmade  
Heartbeat  
Heartfelt  
Hillside  
Hotheaded  
Intact  
Jackhammer  
Keyhole  
Latecomer  
Laughingstock  
Lifelong  
Lightheaded  
Lighthearted  
Lowdown (as a noun)  
Midair  
Midsection  
Mindset  
Multinational  
Nanosecond  
Nonbeliever  
Nonfiction  
Nonstop  
Notepad  
Notepaper  
Ongoing  
Onlooker  
Overdo/overdid  
Overconfident  
Overlook  
Overreact  
Pissant  
Runoff  
Schoolgirl  
Schoolwork  
Semiconscious  
Shirttail  
Sidetracked  
Singsong  
Somehow  
Splashdown  
Stepfather  
Takeoff  
Timeline  
Trashcan  
Upstairs  
Upstream  
Washcloth  
Wastebasket  
Watercraft  
Wellbeing  
Womenfolk  
Workhorse  
Wrongdoing  
Zigzag

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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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The Writers Network News: a newsletter for writers everywhere. No fees. No officers. No Rules; Just Write!

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