

The Writers Network News, February 2015

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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, a free service that takes long web addresses and converts them to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

"Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views Cicero, Locke, and Bacon have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote those books." --Ralph Waldo Emerson

American poet, essayist, and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson was born on May 25, 1803, in Boston, Massachusetts. Emerson became known for challenging traditional thought. Emerson's first book, *Nature* (1836), has been said to be the best expression of his Transcendentalism, the belief that everything in our world--even a drop of dew--is a microcosm of the universe. An optimist, Emerson refused to acknowledge the existence of evil. Even though writers such as Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne doubted Emerson's judgment, his beliefs are of central importance in the history of American culture.

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One: From the editor's desk: A New Year, a New Plan

Dear Fellow Writers:

Many folks make resolutions for the new year, and for a few weeks they may even try to fulfill those resolutions. I see the results at the gym in January, when the parking lot is filled with automobiles driven by people who have resolved to work out more, for example. By the end of February, the lot is back to its usual status of only half full.

I watch while the TV features ads in January aimed at all those folks who resolve to lose weight and quit smoking, too. Those ads wean down to only a few, once February arrives.

A good friend of mine writes intentions for the new year, rather than resolutions, which is a good idea. Someone who has the intention of finishing her book in 2015 is less likely to feel frustrated by February if she hasn't written as much as she had hoped. She has, after all, the remainder of the year to fulfill her intentions. What motive does she have to meet her intentions, though? As writers, we all know that characters must have the motivation to change, or nothing happens.

Years ago I resolved to have no New Year's resolutions. I don't write intentions, either. I know what works for me. Instead of resolutions or intentions, I get to the nitty-gritty and write goals. Once I have written a goal, I give it a deadline and break it into smaller deadlines. Goals and deadlines motivate me much more than resolutions or other methods.

My goal for 2015 is to re-release my award-winning book on creative writing titled Write In Style. People have been begging for me to get that book back on the market, and a business acquaintance has promised to work with me to get it printed and ready for sale in the summer. Because I wrote the original book near the turn of the century, though, I have to update and expand much of the information, which requires a great deal of rewriting. I broke the process down by dates by which I will get each portion complete, so that I can get the completed manuscript to the printer in time for a summer release. Now that I have written goals, I know I will get the project done, barring unforeseen circumstances.

I have declared my goal for 2015 and made it known to the multitudes, now, which is also a great motivator. Watch for the release date for the second edition of Write In Style! I know I will meet my goal.

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, click on Free Newsletter, and follow the prompts. I never share your address or send out spam.

Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Showing Rather than Telling, Submission Guidelines, and Getting Releases from Resources

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: My new editor is fussy about the "show, not tell" axiom. Everything has to be as if it is played out on stage.

If I have a character experiencing internal frustration, but he doesn't want people around him to know it, how would I explain it? I want to say, "John felt his heart race and he clinched his fists while he struggled to sit quietly in his chair," or something like that, but that's telling, not showing. Any thoughts would be helpful.

A: Your editor knows what he or she is talking about when saying "Everything has to be as if it is played out on a stage."

You are on the right track as a way to show, rather than tell, the character's frustration by what he does. It would be wrong to tell it this way: "John felt frustrated and he could hear his heart beating heavily." A sentence such as that one would tell, rather than show, because onlookers would not be able to see what was going on. To show, rather than tell, think of how a scene in a movie would show his frustration. Consider a rewrite something like this:

John touched a pulse point on neck but quickly withdrew his hand and looked around with wild eyes. He shifted in his seat, took a deep breath, and exhaled slowly through pursed lips. He pulled out a handkerchief and wiped his forehead. After jamming the cloth into his pocket, he shook his head, clinched his fists, looked from side to side, and exhaled again.

If you saw a man doing all the above, you would know he was in distress, as would readers, if they read about the man's actions. The key is to describe the visual, visible images, and your writing will show, rather than tell.

Q: When the submission guidelines ask for the plot summary, is it supposed to be added to the cover letter or sent as a separate document?

A: A cover letter normally does include a brief one-paragraph summary of the plot, but sometimes submission guidelines want a longer summary that is separate. Read the guidelines carefully to uncover the answer. If the guidelines say to send a cover letter complete with a plot summary, then the summary is part of the cover letter. If the guidelines say to send a cover letter plus a summary, the two would be separate documents, even if the separate document simply repeats the paragraph that summarizes the plot in the cover letter. Remember the cover letter should also include the title, genre, and word count of the book as well.

Q: I have contacted the Georgia Lawyers for the Arts and joined for one year to have a good source of information. They have me believing I should get releases for interviews, photographs, letters, etc. It also appears that anyone I name in the book such as "The shortstop, Joe Blow, had two hits" should sign a release.

The lawyer said I would have to get an attorney to look at everything. I can't afford it. I said that I didn't see how a nonfiction book could be written. She laughed.

In your books, what did you do about releases? There is a formal way to look at all this to be sure that no one can come back on a writer, but there also must be a realistic way to go about this.

I will not be able to use the old team photographs I have located because of the right of privacy. The applicable laws depend on the state in which those people now live, though, and how can I possibly contact all of them?

All this is not possible to do. This book may be ended before I get started.

A: What a dilemma! The problem with attorneys is that they are intent on covering every single possibility, and as you can see, the project can get out of hand.

I haven't run into the same problems with my books, because I am not writing about anyone else, just writing about writing. I can answer for how I handle magazine articles, though. In that case, when I speak to resources and get information, I quote them and explain who they are and why they are an expert resource. For example (and this is entirely made up): Joe Blow, who invented bubble gum, says, "I was fooling around with a formula for toothpaste, and instead discovered I could blow bubbles with the stuff."

Without seeing the book or the content and without being an attorney myself, I can't know for sure if the same thing applies, but it seems to me, as an unqualified lay person, that if someone played a ballgame that was visible to the public, you can report the game in a book. After all, it could have been reported by any newspaper reporter watching the game, and the reporter didn't have to get releases, so why should you? I do understand that photographs are the property of the photographer, but most will give permission for use either for free or a small fee and acknowledgment of who took the photo. I often see photos that say "Used by permission of [name of entity that owns the rights to

the photo]."

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

The Small Publishers and Writers Network (SPAWN) website graciously hosts dozens of past "Ask the Book Doctor" columns. To catch up on many writing and editing tips, go to <http://www.spawn.org/editing/index.htm#bookdoctor>.

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Three: This Month's Easy Editing Tip from Bobbie Christmas: Assure/Ensure/Insure

Assure: To inform positively, as to remove doubt: The conductor assured us that the train would be on time

Ensure: to make sure or certain Use a paper clip to ensure that no pages get lost.

Insure: to cover with insurance. The policy insured my house, but not my car.

Assure, ensure, and insure all mean "to make secure or certain." Only "assure" is used with reference to a person in the sense of "to set the mind at rest" Sam assured the crowd that justice would prevail.

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

Scary Market Update

Many of us have gotten accustomed to hearing the scary figure that about 75 percent of published books sell fewer than a hundred copies, but that statistic has gotten worse. Brian Jud of Book Marketing Works just announced that the figure is now 93 percent. Yes, 93 percent of books published sell fewer than a hundred copies. For this very reason I warn people not to bank on large incomes from their books; however, many failed books are self-published and have little to no distribution or marketing. Self-publishers need to find ways to combat the statistics by ensuring they diligently promote their books to their target market through as many avenues as possible, including (but not limited to) speaking engagements, blogs, and web pages. Anyone who plans to publish a book and hopes to sell more than a hundred copies also has to have the book thoroughly edited by a professional editor before it is printed. Readers expect professional quality in the books they buy.

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#### Reward Your Friends

Wouldn't your friend love an apron that says "I'd rather be writing?" Find these and other gifts for yourself and your friends at <http://tinyurl.com/nvh7dyu>.

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My Eyes Are Peeled for Interesting Idioms

I've always wondered about the expression "Keep your eyes peeled." Taken literally, the thought disgusted me. I decided to look up the origin of the idiom, in hopes that I could understand and embrace it. I learned that the usage of "peel" in this sense derives from an old verb "pill," which means "to plunder," as in "pillage." From about the seventeenth century on, "pill" was commonly spelled "peel" and took on the sense of "to remove or strip" in the weakened sense of removing an outer covering, such as a coat or the skin of a fruit. The figurative sense of keeping alert by removing any covering of the eye that might impede vision seems to have appeared in the United States about 1850. When we peel our eyes, then, we are removing the outer covering, the eyelids, so we can remain alert and vigilant. I feel much better now and will continue to keep my eyes peeled for explanations of other idioms that chafe me when I hear them.

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Who or Whom? Which should you use? See [http://theoatmeal.com/comics/who\\_vs\\_whom](http://theoatmeal.com/comics/who_vs_whom) for an interesting explanation and an easy way to remember the difference.

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#### Terminology Writers Should Know: Copyright

Some writers may not realize that under current law, they own the rights to their work, whether or not they go to the trouble and expense to register the copyright. The difference is that one cannot sue for infringement on a copyright unless the copyright is registered. The original law said that literary work had to be published to be protected under statutory law and protected the work only between the time it was created and published. In 1976 Sonny Bono helped push a new copyright law through that became effective in 1978. Since that time, a statutory copyright exists in work as soon as it is created in tangible form (written, in the case of writers), even if it has not been published and regardless of whether it has been registered with the U.S. Copyright Office. The time to register a copyright is after a work is completely finished and edited and will not be changed further. To register a copyright, writers go through the U.S. Copyright Office, which supplies the application form and charges a fee to register the copyright. Copyright owners can then transfer or sell the copyright to another party, if they wish.

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Computer crashes, accidents, and theft. Things happen. Are your novels, business documents, and other computer files safe? If your computer died this afternoon, would your hard work 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: <http://tinyurl.com/k9mb8r9> 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.

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#### A Little Help with Proofreading

Some folks swear by [www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com) as a great way to check manuscripts for errors. It's still not human, so it cannot give you advice for improvement and it can make mistakes, but it could help you catch some errors in your manuscripts.

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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.

The e-book is the best deal, because you get it immediately and pay no shipping, and it then resides on your computer for the speediest reference, whenever you need it.

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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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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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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Excellent information on how to write a book review: <http://tinyurl.com/oqh6dr5>.

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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>.
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Five: Contests, Agents, and Markets

IPPYs

The 19th Annual Independent Publisher Book Awards (aka IPPYs), the industry's most competitive and prestigious awards for independently published books, are open to independent authors and publishers worldwide who produce books intended for an English-speaking audience, and we are now accepting entries for books released between January 1, 2013, and March 10, 2015. For independents only, 78 national categories, 10 e-book categories, and 24 regional categories. All entries must be posted online or postmarked by the final deadline of March 10, 2015. Click here to download guidelines and the entry form as a PDF document: <http://tinyurl.com/kjtdz7c>.

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The Silver Petticoat Review: A New Online Magazine  
<http://www.silverpetticoatreview.com>

The Silver Petticoat Review is a hybrid online magazine that is a mix between a blog, an entertainment magazine, and a journal. We cover film, literature, and television in a fun and fashionable way and have a vintage design with both classic and modern content.

#### ~~~~~ Kudzu House

We are a nonprofit journal of ecological creative and scholarly writing. To submit, visit [www.kudzuhouse.org/quarterly](http://www.kudzuhouse.org/quarterly)

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Oghma Creative Media
<http://oghmacreative.com/>

Although Oghma Creative Media includes imprints that publish fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and more, the only imprint accepting manuscripts at this time is the County Down imprint, which is seeking erotica. It makes a clear distinction between erotica and porn, so be sure to follow the guidelines at <http://tinyurl.com/low9anv>.

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Capital Talent Agency  
1330 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Suite 271  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-429-4785  
[literary.submissions@capitaltalentagency.com](mailto:literary.submissions@capitaltalentagency.com)

We accept submissions only by e-mail using the above e-mail address. Please adhere to the following guidelines: For fiction and nonfiction submissions, send a query letter (see requirements below) in the body of your e-mail. Please note that while we consider each query seriously, we are unable to respond to all of them. We endeavor to respond within six weeks to projects that interest us.

#### Query letter requirements for fiction and nonfiction:

- Contact information
- Working title of manuscript
- Overview/summary
- Approximate word count
- Short biography
- Any relevant credentials
- Previous publications

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Aesthetica Creative Writing Award

The Aesthetica Creative Writing Award is open for submissions. Now in its eighth year, the award is internationally renowned and judged by industry experts including Arifa Akbar, literary editor of The Independent – with £500 prize money for winners and publication in an anthology of new writing, giving you the chance to showcase your work to a wider, international audience.

Creative Writing Award 2015 Prizes:

£500 Poetry winner

£500 Short Fiction winner

Publication in the Aesthetica Creative Writing Annual

One year subscription to Granta

Selection of books courtesy of Bloodaxe and Vintage

Complimentary copy of the Aesthetica Creative Writing Annual

To submit, visit www.aestheticamagazine.com/creativewriting

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Six: Got Muse? Tickle a Funny Bone

Humorous writing is said to be the hardest, because everyone has a different sense of what is funny and what is not. Oddly, however, what most of us agree is funny involves embarrassing events. Think back to a time that you felt embarrassed and write about it in a way that makes light of your circumstances. If you cannot think of a time when you were embarrassed, write about the time you saw someone else who did something embarrassing. Because humorous writing is best when it is tight, after you finish your first draft, go back and take out all or almost all adverbs and adjectives. When you have tightened and polished your piece, let others read it and see if they laugh or at least smile when they read it.

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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.

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 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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