

The Writers Network News, March 2015

In This Issue

One: From the editor's desk: Words and Music

Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Commitment, Saidisms, and Ghostwriting

Three: This Month's Easy Editing Tip from Bobbie Christmas: Any More/Anymore

Four: Subjects of Interest to Writers

Five: Contests, Agents, and Markets

Six: Got Muse? Similes and Metaphors as Muse

The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

Contents copyright 2015, Bobbie Christmas

No portion of this newsletter can be used without permission; however, you may forward the newsletter in its entirety to anyone who may be interested in subscribing.

Newsletter Sponsor

Zebra Communications

Excellent editing for maximum marketability

Celebrating twenty-three years in the business of editing books. We must be doing something right.

We edit and evaluate fiction and nonfiction book manuscripts. We are a top-rated Better Business Bureau Accredited Business.

Zebra Communications

230 Deerchase Drive

Woodstock, GA 30188

770/924-0528

<http://zebraeditor.com/>

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

~~~~~  
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).

~~~~~  
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.

~~~~~  
Writer's Quote of the Month

"To me the greatest pleasure of writing is not what it's about, but the music the words make." --Truman Capote

Truman Capote was born in 1924 in New Orleans, Louisiana, as Truman Streckfus Persons. Capote was actually his stepfather's last name. A writer and actor, he is perhaps best known for writing *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), *In Cold Blood* (1967), and *The Innocents* (1961). He died in 1984. With publication of *In Cold Blood*, Capote created a new genre that blended fact with fiction. He used a true crime story but showed it unfold like fiction, complete with dialogue as he assumed it might have taken place.

~~~~~  
One: From the editor's desk: Words and Music

Dear Fellow Writers:

I feel moved by Truman Capote's quote, "To me the greatest pleasure of writing is not what it's about, but the music the words make." I often listen to the music of words and revel in their rhythm. Last night, for instance, I fell asleep thinking of *Little Orphan Annie*. That's it, just the title, *Little Orphan Annie*. Three words, six syllables, with the accent on the first syllable of each word. Such rhythm! No wonder the title was catchy.

Titles with rhythm stay in readers' minds. We need to think in terms of rhythm when we title our stories, books, and plays. Prose writers who keep rhythm in mind add a subtle creativity to their writing that does not stand out, but quietly, in the background, forms a masterful, musical composition of words.

As an example of an extreme, however, years ago a woman attended one of my workshops, and afterward she handed me a sheet of paper and said, "I don't know what I've written. What would you call this?"

The page consisted of about six paragraphs that described the author's feeling about life. The piece had such inherent rhythm that I said, "This is pretty prose, but break this into lines, and you've written an outstanding poem."

"I'm a poet?" She looked surprised, startled, and proud.

Instead of being consciously concerned about the accents on syllables, strong prose writers add rhythm to their work by adding a little alliteration here and there, plus changing up the lengths of words, sentences, and paragraphs. With a combination of lengths, the prose forms a natural rhythm. An occasional one- or two-word sentence adds spunk to writing. The infrequent long sentence adds intrigue and sometimes mystery, in the same way. Rats! I wish I could write that way.

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 Commitment, Saidisms, and Ghostwriting

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: I have lots of ideas for books, but I get started on one book and stop to work on another. How can I stay focused on one book at a time until completion?

A: The creative mind can run wild at times, but completing a novel or a nonfiction book requires commitment and focus. The only way you can get focus is through self-discipline, and self-discipline requires goal setting.

To keep myself committed to a project, I spurn vague goals, such as "I want to write a novel about a werewolf that volunteers at a hospital," and instead write down a specific goal with a set deadline. My goals do not float around in my head as ideas. Once a goal is written down, it becomes a concrete thing on which I can focus.

I then break down my goal into smaller goals, by chapters, pages, or word count. Let's say today is December 31, and I set my deadline for completion as October 31. My written goal may look like this:

I complete Volunteer Werewolf by October 31.

January 30 - finish chapter one

February 28 - finish chapter two

March 31 - finish chapter three

Once I have listed each minor goal and its deadline, I have deadlines for each chapter as well as the final book. I post my schedule near the computer where I work each day, so I see the note and know what I have to do to meet my minor deadlines that will lead to my major accomplishment.

When I was writing my textbook on creative writing, Write In Style, my publisher gave me what I feared was an unrealistic deadline to complete a 50,000-word book. I had written 10,000 words for the proposal and had 40,000 words left to write before the deadline, which was only three months away. I deleted one week from the number of weeks remaining, because I would need a week at the end to read over the full manuscript and make the final revisions. I had only about eleven weeks, then, to write 40,000 words. I did the math and knew I had to write 3,637 words every week, or only about 600 words a day, if I wrote six days a week out of seven. Suddenly the task sounded much easier. I used 3,700 words as a weekly goal and 600 words as a daily goal.

Knowing my daily and weekly goals as well as my deadline kept me focused and committed. When I had an idea for another book, I jotted down a few words to remind me of the idea later, when I had the time to pursue it. In the end I met the deadline with ease and without stress or last-minute hurrying.

Q: Lately I've seen people use really odd attributions in fiction and I have been told that it is fine. My question is, are they examples of writer's voice or is it bordering on purple prose? Here are some examples:

"I never loved your father," she wanted me to know.

"I left when he beat me up," she told me.

"I just don't believe it, but I guess it's true," I acknowledged.

"Get me the can of green paint before your sister sees it," I instructed.

"She is in the driveway," he pointed out.

Those examples are far removed from "he said" or "she said." If attributions other than "said" are in a piece that is rich with the author's voice, are they acceptable, or is it just garbage?

A: I would say your examples indicate overwriting and perhaps garbage, for sure, but they are not quite purple prose. Purple prose refers to overwriting that also involves a far-fetched idea. A prime example of purple prose might be this: His reaction made the bare bones truth a walking, breathing dragon that burned a hole in their friendship.

Occasionally replacing or avoiding "said" can be a good literary stroke, but any overused literary device weakens the writing. For example, sometimes it is fine to use an alternate attribution such as "responded," "replied," or the attributions you relayed in your examples.

Overstretching to avoid using "said," however, results in what editors call "saidisms." In addition to advising writers to use only an occasional replacement for "said," I tell them to use action for attribution occasionally. For example: "Mary, come closer." Tom crooked his finger at his date.

In addition, when only two characters are in a scene, not every statement needs attribution, as long as the original speaker is clear to readers. When the dialogue format and punctuation are handled correctly, readers inherently see that the dialogue switches between the two characters in the scene.

Q: I'm sure that I can add ghostwriting more articles to my existing freelance business with no problem, but is it possible for someone like me to also ghostwrite nonfiction books? I don't see a way to add a long-term project such as a book to my existing workload without becoming overloaded.

A: I cannot speak for you, of course, without knowing how much of your week is already scheduled. The benefit of being independent,

however, is that we have more control over our schedules than do those who work for others. If you have regular clients who take up twenty hours of your work week, you still have twenty hours to devote to ghostwriting, if you so desire. The key is to find clients who aren't in a mad dash to complete a book, so you can work on more than one project at a time.

I have worked on full-time projects and part-time projects and have also worked with one client who was in a mad rush. In his case, he assigned portions of the book to several people who worked simultaneously. Each writer interviewed the necessary people and wrote resulting chapters. In the end, the so-called author reworded our writing where necessary to bring it into his style, so the book had consistency, even though it had been written by four or five people.

If you want to add ghostwriting to your repertoire, it doesn't have to overwhelm your schedule. You can take on projects when you have the time, spread out the deadlines to accommodate your schedule, or take on portions of projects. For freelancers, almost anything is possible.

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>.

%%

Three: This Month's Easy Editing Tip from Bobbie Christmas: Any More/Anymore

When is anymore one word, and when is it two words? Read on.

Anymore (adv.): Refers to length of time. Do they make this model anymore? We promised not to quarrel anymore.
Any more (adj. + noun): Refers to amount. Would you like any more carrots? Can you take any more of this torture?

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

%%

Four: Subjects of interest to writers

The Writers Network member Steve Moore saw information in last month's newsletter about an awards competition and wrote, "I don't know much about [that particular competition], but I did a rough calculation for a *Writer's Digest* contest once and concluded that it was clearly a way for them to make a tidy profit off unsuspecting authors--certainly not illegal, but a bit disconcerting. I don't think they help authors very much, either--a short boost in sales at best, I'd say, from winners I know. I stay away from contests. I'd rather spend the money releasing the next book anyway."

I agree that today's competitions tend to be designed to make a profit more than honor literary excellence, with the exception of a few long-running awards and many competitions run through legitimate nonprofit organizations for writers. I trust that writers understand that most competitions are set up to make a profit, yet I also know that being able to say you won an award for your writing still can add to your credibility and credentials as a writer. Ideally potential entrants will judge each competition on its own merits.

~~~~~  
The Writers Network Member Richard Gartee wrote in response to my post in last month's newsletter about Grammarly online, "I thought I'd check around on this before investing in a subscription. Here is a review from the Garammarist website you might find interesting.  
<http://tinyurl.com/ozz2vgf>."

I answered, "Thank you for the link to the very interesting article, which shows how weak computer programs can be. I wasn't promoting the site as affiliate making money off subscriptions, though. I did not even realize the site charged a subscription fee. Someone had suggested the site as a free way to check grammar. In the next issue of the newsletter I'll add the link you sent and let readers decide for themselves."

Done.  
~~~~~  
I'd Rather Be Writing

That's what my apron says. Find it and other gifts for yourself and friends at <http://tinyurl.com/nvh7dyu>.
~~~~~  
Help and Fun for Writers

Correct spellings for foreign words, medical terms, and legal terms, plus educational word games as well as good old time-wasting word games, all for free here: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>.  
~~~~~  
Yes, I'm a stickler about some issues, but here's a good point of view about grammar issues we can ignore: <http://tinyurl.com/kmfwrqc>.

~~~~~  
Do your writing friends a favor, at no charge! 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: Ellipses

An ellipsis is the omission of a word, phrase, line, paragraph, or more from a quoted passage. Chicago style indicates omissions by the use of three spaced periods, with a space before and after. Ellipses can also indicate dialogue that trails off without ending. Most editors advise against uses ellipses in narrative prose to indicate a pause in the prose; it should be used as a pause in actual dialogue only or to indicate an omission in a quotation. The only time to use four periods is to indicate that the quotation with an omission ended with a period. Never use four or more ellipses to indicate a long hesitation; three is the limit.
~~~~~

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.

~~~~~  
Another book by Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is set for release July 14 amid great controversy. Read all about it here: <http://tinyurl.com/pzccpus>

~~~~~  
Purge Your Prose of Problems  
A Book Doctor's Desk Reference, Fifth Edition

This book sold out at the October FWA writers conference, but you can still order a copy.

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>.

~~~~~  
Reedsy Launches a Site to Help Authors

It's wiser and often cheaper to self-publish without the use of a company that bundles all the services for a price. Wiser because you get to choose your own editor, designer, and printer, and cheaper because you're not paying a company to bundle the services for you. A new site has launched that unbundles those services and promises to do even more in the future. Read the TechCrunch article here: <http://tinyurl.com/ln77u9l>

~~~~~  
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).

~~~~~  
Looking for a job as a writer and willing to relocate if necessary? The Write Jobs website is a good place to look: <http://www.writejobs.com/jobs/>

~~~~~  
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>.

~~~~~  
Ten Charming Words for Nasty People

Vary your adjectives to describe your villains. Merriam-Webster gives you ten charming choices here: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/top-ten-lists/top-10-charming-words-for-nasty-people/ruffian.html>.

~~~~~  
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

Hour of Writes is a new literary creative outlet taking the form of a weekly, peer-reviewed writing competition. With a new theme and guest judge every week, the competition encourages established writers and non-writers alike to put aside one hour per week to respond to the theme in any way they see fit. Entry is £3, the word limit is 2000 words, a new theme is announced every Monday, and the prize is usually £50/\$75 minimum (the prize pot increases with more participants).
www.hourofwrites.com

~~~~~  
Short Crime Stories Wanted for Al Blanchard Award

The Al Blanchard Award honors the best crime short story by a New England writer or set in a New England setting. Winners get \$100 cash award, publication in *Level Best Books' Crime Fiction* anthology, and admission to the Crime Bake Conference.

Story must be a crime story by a New England author or with a New England setting.  
Story must be previously unpublished (in print or electronically).  
Story must not be more than 5,000 words in length.  
Story may include the following genres: mystery, thriller, suspense, caper, and horror. (No torture/killing of children or animals.)  
For full submission guidelines, go to <http://crimebake.org/al-blanchard-award/>

~~~~~  
Florida Writer

Submissions welcomed from members of the Florida Writers Association
For full guidelines see <https://floridawriters.net/call-submissions/>

For the April 2015 Issue
Write about someone contending with an unfulfilled expectation.

For the June 2015 Issue

Write a scene with two or more characters interacting that incorporates a summer activity. The activity can be something as simple as family vacation or it can be a new tradition, made up for the purpose of your story. If you need some inspiration, research how different cultures welcome the summer months.

~~~~~  
Harrington & Harrington Press  
<http://www.harringtonandharrington.com>  
Contact: Laurie Champion

Based in San Diego, Harrington & Harrington publishes four to ten titles a year on ethnic issues and women's issues. It specializes in memoirs and creative nonfiction. It also publishes feminist, gay, lesbian, and young adult fiction. To submit, follow the guidelines on the website and send to [Submissions@harringtonandharrington.com](mailto:Submissions@harringtonandharrington.com).

~~~~~  
Lakeside Circus
Short fiction and other oddities
<http://lakesidecircus.com/submissions/>

~~~~~  
Normally this section lists only direct markets, but if you are or want to be a freelance writer for magazines, you need a strong, up-to-date database of magazines and their needs. One such source, but it does charge a fee, is Wooden Horse Publishing. See [http://www.woodenhorsepub.com/Merchant5/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store\\_Code=WHP&Category\\_Code=ODB](http://www.woodenhorsepub.com/Merchant5/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=WHP&Category_Code=ODB).  
%%%%%%%%%

Six: Got Muse? Similes and Metaphors as Muse

Clear as . . .  
What did you think when you read that opening line? Clear as a bell? Clear as mud? Most people will think of one or the other, because the phrase is an overused simile. A simile draws a comparison between two different things. Similes often contain the word "like" or "as," as in "as white as a ghost."

Here are a few other well-known similes that come to mind:

- Raining like cats and dogs
- As light as a feather
- Like a breath of fresh air
- As fresh as a flower
- Like a streak of light
- As white as a sheet
- Like a bat out of hell
- As quiet as a mouse
- Like a cat that ate the canary

Think about what each simile above is trying to relay to readers, and then write original phrases that relay the same message. For example, instead of "raining like cats and dogs," you may write "the rain fell like ropes."

Once you have created several original turns of phrase, use one or two in a short story. Remember that overusing any creative writing tactic results in less interesting writing.

+++++  
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.  
+++++  
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.

+++++  
With the exception of Zebra Communications, information in this newsletter is not to be construed as an endorsement. Be sure to research all information and study every stipulation before you accept assignments, spend money, or sell your work.

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