

The Writers Network News, December 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/>

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.

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

"Success is a staircase, not a doorway." -Dottie Walters (1925 - 2007)

Dottie Walters was the author of Never Underestimate the Selling Power of a Woman (Wilshire Book Co.), the first book ever written by a woman for saleswomen. She also wrote Speak & Grow Rich with Lilly Walters (Prentice Hall-Simon Schuster), a book selected in an industrywide survey as the most valuable book ever written for professional speakers. She wrote many other books and was a dynamic speaker loved by all who heard her. I feel fortunate to have met her and heard her speak back in the early 2000s.

One: From the editor's desk: Problems, Solutions, and Excuses

Dear Fellow Writers:

I recently encountered a technological challenge when I discovered that all the notes for one of my seminars resided on an old Mac computer purchased used in 2000. Here was the problem: It was not able to write to a CD, only read a CD. It would write only to a floppy disk, but my 2013 PC did not have a floppy disk drive. I should have been able to send the file over the Internet, except that the old Mac had an external, dial-up modem that no longer worked, so I could not access the Internet with the computer. The best I could do was print out my notes, but I could not upload them to my PC, where I wanted to keep them.

I thought.

For years I had heard the term OCR—optical character recognition—but I had never tried to use it. We used to have to buy a special program to get OCR and learn how to use it, and I never had any need for it. Something in the back of my mind, though, knew that if I could scan the printout of the file and use OCR, I could import the document to my PC. I looked on my printer and discovered all I had to do was choose the OCR option, save the file as a text file, and then open it in Word. Voila! The formatting was a little off, and some handwritten notes on my pages came out a little weird, but I saved myself at least an hour or more of time retyping.

What else might benefit from OCR, I wondered. It did not take me long to remember a novel that has been languishing on that old Mac for more years than I care to admit. I already had a printed manuscript of the book, which I used as backup, so all I have to do put those pages into the feeder and scan them. I had no more excuses for not resurrecting that novel and seeing if I have something viable there. I have learned a great deal more since I started writing that book back in the 1990s.

What excuses we writers use, to avoid doing the work we love! I cannot find any more excuses, though.

What's been holding you back?

Note: to read my zany, odd, and sometimes creepy blog about my encounters with the opposite sex, go to www.NeuroticaStories.blogspot.com. Sign up to follow it.

Yours in writing,
Bobbie Christmas (Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com)
Author of two editions 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.

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Thrillers, Genres, and Prologues

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: When writing a thriller, should I begin the first chapter of the story with action from the protagonist or antagonist (villain), or does it matter what character I start with?

A: The protagonist (main character, the one who wants something or wants to do something) and the antagonist (the person or thing that attempts to stop the protagonist from getting what he or she wants, also known as the villain) are the two most important characters in any book, but no absolute rule dictates which point of view should begin the first chapter. It seems to me, however, that if you want readers to empathize with the protagonist, it's better to begin with that character. Remember that the first person mentioned in a scene should be the point-of-view character for that scene.

Q: I understand what "genre fiction" is, but I keep coming across the terms "literary fiction," "popular fiction," and "mainstream fiction" used in opposition to genre as well as to one another. What exactly is meant by these three terms?

A: In literary fiction the story is usually character driven and the language is artistic and often elevated. Literary fiction may have more narrative, more descriptions, than genre fiction. I have joked and said the difference between literary fiction and mainstream fiction is that literary fiction wins awards, whereas mainstream sells.

Mainstream fiction has broad reader interest than literary fiction and is not genre specific. Sometimes it is easiest described as fiction that does not fit into a genre, unlike the breakdown in the next category.

Genre fiction is the current term for what used to be called popular fiction. Genre fiction is formulaic and appeals to a specific audience. Genre fiction includes fantasy, historical, horror, humor, romance, sci-fi and western. Mystery, suspense, and thrillers are also genre fiction and can include crime, courtroom drama, detective, police procedural, legal thrillers and other thrillers.

Chances are if you cannot classify the genre of what you're writing, you can get away with calling it mainstream, unless it's too far out, in which case you might call it experimental, or as some say, typing. Save it in a drawer and start a book that will fit into a marketable category, if you hope to sell your fiction.

Q: What genre is typically the bestselling?

A: First, you are thinking correctly to think in terms of genre, because books that fit into a specific genre tend to sell better than literary works, short story collections, or poetry. Genre novels drive the publishing industry.

As for what sells best, the information changes often, but according to Simba Information (a division of Market Research Group), a recent report had horror in first place for the most sales. Second in sales figures was the science fiction/fantasy genre. Next came religious/inspirational books, and after that came crime/mystery books. Last in line but still one of the top-selling genres was romance/erotica. It should come as no surprise that many movies have come from those top-selling genres as well, and sadly most authors make more money by selling a book to the movie industry than by selling the book to consumers.

Don't worry about what's selling, though. Write what you love, and you will write what you know best. Several people have been credited with being the originator of the saying, "Write the book you want to read." I won't take credit for it, but it sums up the best way to choose the genre you should probably write.

Q: I recently read a prologue in a thriller, and chapter one coordinated with the prologue's description of a plane crash. My prologue has nothing to do with my chapter one, though. My prologue reappears at the crisis point, and the same scene is repeated later in the book. Can I use a prologue in that way?

A: By its very nature, a prologue involves a scene that takes place before the main action of a novel begins. For that reason, readers will assume the prologue took place before chapter one. Extracting a scene to use as a prologue and then repeating it later may confuse and bore readers. What will they think when they come across it again, later in the novel? Worse, if readers assume the prologue is a typical prologue, and the prologue scene took place before the story began, they will get the timeline confused. Never confuse readers.

Creative writing does not have immutable rules and regulations, though. You can try anything you want, but many people more astute than I will tell you to stick with the intention of a prologue. Remember the etymology of the word prologue. It comprises two elements: pro-, meaning "before" and logos, meaning "discourse or speech."

Note to Readers: Write In Style, Bobbie Christmas's book on how to use any computer to improve your writing is available in either printed or e-book versions. See <http://tinyurl.com/o4trud2> or <http://tinyurl.com/pnq5y5s>.

Bobbie Christmas, author of Write In Style: Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing, 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.

For even 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: Capitals in Titles, Headings, and Subheadings

Several astute people have asked me why I capitalize the word "in" in the title of my book, Write In Style, because doing so seems to go against Chicago style. The Chicago Manual of Style says to capitalize the first and last words in titles and subtitles (also called headings and subheadings) as well as all other major words (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and some conjunctions), but lowercase articles the, a, and an, unless they come first in the title or subtitle. Lowercase the conjunctions but, for, or, and nor, as well as prepositions, but there are some exceptions, especially when a word is important to the heading.

Aha, that last bit, about a word being important to the heading, is the reason I capitalize "in" in the title of Write In Style. I wanted to emphasize the play on words, as in "right in style," and also differentiate the title of my book from another book with the same name but with a different focus.

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

Member Marti Loring writes, "My book, Intimate Coercion: Recognition and Recovery, was published in October." Rowman & Littlefield Publishers says the book "explores the foundation and causes of intimate coercion, focusing specifically on the identification of the issue and subsequent healing process. Coerced by a relation, friend, or lover, the victims commit acts that are contrary to their normal behavior and often illegal in nature. Marti Loring and Melissa Scardaville reference an extensive list of case studies to examine the varying dynamics and experiences of intimate coercion among the wide subset of the population that is affected; this list includes immigrants, disabled individuals, children, and elders." To order, see <http://tinyurl.com/nlpw2oq>.

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A great article on what could be causing writer's block. Read it for good tips, even if you don't have writer's block.  
<http://maryrobinettekowal.com/journal/sometimes-writers-block-is-really-depression/>.

### Terminology Writers Should Know: Logline

What is a logline, why do writers need one, and how do you write one? The information was too detailed for this newsletter, so read the full information in my Write In Style blog at <http://bobbiechristmas.blogspot.com/>.

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Writing teachers, critique circle leaders, and writers begged me to re-release Write In Style, my triple-award-winning book on how to use a computer to improve your writing. The second edition, upgraded and expanded from the award-winning first edition, is at last available. Buy it through Amazon or get a signed copy by ordering directly from me here: <http://tinyurl.com/nm84p3k>.

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Literary Agent Undercover is a website about literary agents for authors of all book genres. For lots of good information about agents and blogs by agents and more, see <http://literary-agents.com/>.

### Free Reports for Writers from Bobbie Christmas and Zebra Communications

Order PDF reports on writing-related subjects, including correct manuscript format, how to form and run a critique circle, how to identify weak writing and repair it, self-publishing versus traditional publishing, and much more. Go to [http://zebraeditor.com/free\\_reports.shtml](http://zebraeditor.com/free_reports.shtml). Newest report: Genre: A Slippery Subject Essential to Fiction: Learn about genre fiction categories and the benefits of complying with genre specifications.

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Thinking of Freelancing? Read this article about the editors you will encounter. As one who has written articles as a freelancer off and on for more than forty-five years, I have encountered almost every one of these editors. <http://contently.net/2015/11/11/play/9-editors-youll-freelance-writer/>.

Purge Your Prose of Problems

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, Purge Your Prose of Problems covers all you need to know to revise and edit fiction and nonfiction. Get information on grammar, punctuation, word choices, creative writing, plot, pace, characterization, point of view, dialogue, Chicago style, format, and much more. The spiral binder of the printed version lies flat on your desk for easy use. Purge Your Prose of Problems is also available in PDF form, which allows you to keep all this vital information on your computer for ready reference.

Save thousands of dollars by editing your own book or make thousands by editing other people's books. Order Purge Your Prose of Problems today at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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Sixteen Punctuation Errors that Can Make You Look Really Bad. See how many you already know. <http://www.inc.com/bill-murphy-jr/17-punctuation-mistakes-that-can-make-you-look-kinda-stupid.html>.

### Unions for Writers Expanding

In hopes to standardize wages and settle other issues, the editorial staff at The Huffington Post plans to unionize with the Writers Guild of America, East, AFL-CIO (WGAE). See <https://www.wgaeast.org/?s=salary&x=0&y=0>.

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Ask the Book Doctor: How to Beat the Competition and Sell Your Writing answers many questions you wish you could ask an editing expert. Paperback: \$14.95 plus \$4.99 S & H (total: \$19.94 US) E-book: \$8.95. You will save almost \$10 by buying the e-book! To order, go to

[http://tinyurl.com/lexp7n.](http://tinyurl.com/lexp7n)

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The Digital Reader reports a new lawsuit filed against Penguin Random House, Author Solutions, and partners. According to the complaint, Author Solutions bilked the plaintiffs out of \$25,000 and "over \$10,000" by selling them publishing and marketing packages and then not following through and providing the promised services. For the full article, see <http://tinyurl.com/prh2clh>

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Write In Style is Now Also an E-book! Find Your Fresh Voice for Less!

To order the Kindle version, click here: <http://tinyurl.com/orjp9v2>.

For a B&N Nook version, click here: <http://tinyurl.com/qfo55xu>

For Kobo click here: <http://tinyurl.com/ouoeejc>.

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Forbes reveals eight tips for getting a book deal. See

<http://tinyurl.com/p3fxzgc>

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For the first time, Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year isn't even a word. It's an emoji. The "word" chosen is the "I'm laughing so hard, I'm crying" emoji, because according to Oxford Dictionaries, it "best reflected the ethos, mood, and preoccupations of 2015." See <http://tinyurl.com/punwcjc>

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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

### Writers Digest Opens 2016 Competition

Writer's Digest has been shining a spotlight on up-and-coming writers in all genres through its Annual Writing Competition for more than 80 years. Enter our 85th Annual Writing Competition for your chance to win and have your work be seen by editors and agents! The winning entries of this writing contest will also be on display in the 85th Annual Writer's Digest Competition Collection.

For full guidelines, see <http://www.writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions/annual-writing-competition>.

To submit see <https://app.wizehive.com/apps/WDAnnual2016>.

DEADLINE: May 6, 2016

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Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards

Karen R. Long

c/o Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards

The Cleveland Foundation

1422 Euclid Avenue, Suite 1300

Cleveland, OH 44115

Phone: 216.685.2018

Email: Submit@Anisfield-Wolf.org

The Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards recognizes outstanding works that contribute to our understanding of racism and our appreciation of the cultural diversity. Awards are given for fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. Submissions will be accepted beginning September 1. The submission deadline is December 31. The winners are announced in the spring. For full guidelines and to submit a book for consideration, send five copies with a completed copy of the entry form at <http://www.anisfield-wolf.org/submissions/submitting-guidelines/>

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Arch Street Press

Submission guidelines: <http://archstreetpress.org/submittingguidelines/>.

An independent nonprofit publisher dedicated to the collaborative work of creative visionaries, social entrepreneurs, and leading scholars worldwide

Our creative team actively seeks collaborations with innovators, leaders, researchers, social entrepreneurs, and other creators engaged in research, practice, and leadership relevant to breakthroughs in human evolution and development. Arch Street Press welcomes traditional manuscript submissions and book proposals. We also invite requests for creative collaboration involving the development of new frameworks and models in specific arenas of theory and practice. We approach each such relationship individually and on its own merits.

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Two Roads Diverge competition

The Writer

For full details see <https://writermag.submittable.com/submit>

Deadline December 6

Have YOUR story read by writer of literary fiction, Colum McCann. His novels include Songdogs, This Side of Brightness, Dancer, Zoli, Let the Great World Spin and TransAtlantic.

Write a 2,000-word short story responding to one or both of the quotes below by novelist and short story writer Colum McCann (and perhaps keep in mind Robert Frost's poem "A Road Not Taken"). What elements of duality and divergence can you include: duplicitous acts, binary oppositions, communication with the "other side," double indemnity, twins? Let your imagination riff on taking a plot, character, setting or theme in two directions.

Colum McCann will read the finalists and choose the winners.

- 1st place: \$1,000 and publication in the March issue of The Writer
- 2nd place: \$500 and publication on The Writer's website
- 3rd place: \$250 and publication on The Writer's website

We encourage you to submit multiple stories for a discounted entry fee of \$15. All entries must be submitted on the same transaction in order to get the discounted rate. The first submission will be \$25 and each additional submission (up to 5 per transaction) will be \$15.

You may enter simultaneously submitted work.

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Dana Newman Literary seeks new clients

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Dana Newman handles narrative nonfiction, business, biography, lifestyle, current affairs, parenting, memoir, pop culture, health, literary, and upmarket fiction.

Prior to being an agent, Newman was an attorney in the entertainment industry for fourteen years.

Dana says, "I help authors, content creators and entrepreneurs reach their goals and maximize their intellectual property. I focus on contracts, copyrights and trademarks, technology and literary law. I believe in the power of a good story and discovering something new."

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Six: Got Muse? Let Your Imagination Run Wild

"No one has ever become poor by giving." -Anne Frank, Holocaust diarist

This creative writing exercise allows you to derive your own motivation from the Anne Frank quote, from her life as you know it, or from the Holocaust itself. Does the quotation make you think of writing about a philanthropist? Does it make you want to write about a homeless person? Does it make you think of a person in hiding or a person incarcerated, either for a crime or for being a political prisoner? Does it make you want to write about your trip to the Netherlands? One quotation can bring up dozens of images. What image comes to your mind? Write about 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](http://www.zebraeditor.com) and clicking on Free Newsletter.

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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.

Note: If your address changes, you must sign up again with your new address; we cannot change your address for you, because of our double-opt-in, no-spam policy.

To access past issues of The Writers Network News, click here: [http://live.ezine.com/feeds/ezine/886\\_2](http://live.ezine.com/feeds/ezine/886_2).

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

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