

The Writers Network News, February 2016

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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 converts long links to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

Leonard Bernstein said, "To achieve great things, two things are needed: a plan and not quite enough time."

Bernstein, an American composer, conductor, author, music lecturer, and pianist, was among the first conductors born and educated in the USA to receive worldwide acclaim. According to music critic Donal Henahan, he was "one of the most prodigiously talented and successful musicians in American history." His fame derived from his long tenure as the music director of the New York Philharmonic.

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One: From the editor's desk: Prettier than the Next?

Dear Fellow Writers:

I am thrilled to have received a personal e-mail from the staff of The Chicago Manual of Style Online. On its website, it allows people to ask questions, but it notes that it chooses which ones to use in a future column, but it does not respond to messages personally. Despite the disclaimer, it did respond to me directly. Here's what's been going on.

On both my personal and my Zebra Communications page, I posted the following:

I'm reading *The Dovekeepers* by Alice Hoffman, usually a brilliant and beautiful writer. On page 354, though, I saw a common error that writers make. Can you tell what is wrong with the following passage?

Here goes:

Through the haze of the smoke we found a lamp, and although the glow was dim, it worked well enough so that we might find our way. We went along a hall, down the corridor where the frescoes of the seven sisters had been painted by masters from Rome. Each of the sisters was more beautiful than the next, yet none was as beautiful as my mother, not even the silver moon. She drew me to her, and we stood together beneath swatches of ocher and amethyst and sea green.

After many people spotted some of my own typos, which I've fixed in this newsletter, only one person—a fellow editor—spotted the thing that had distressed me. If each sister was more beautiful than the next, then each one was less pretty than the one before, or each one was uglier than the one before. It should have been "each sister was prettier than the one before" or "each was prettier than the last."

A fellow writer then commented that she disagreed. "She is trying to say all the sisters were beautiful.... She is comparing each sister to a superlative."

I wrote, "I gently disagree. If something is more beautiful than the next thing, then the next thing is less beautiful than the one before. If the next thing is less pretty and the next thing is even less pretty, then eventually we reach ugliness. I stand my ground that the statement should be "each one prettier than the one before," not "the next."

The writer then posted, "Agree to disagree. Bear in mind that I was interpreting the author, not you. I thought you were doing the same, but it seems you are foisting your own opinion on the author's intentions. I do prefer 'prettier than the one before,' although 'prettier than the next,' in this instance, means the same thing. The two phrases simply represent two different sides of the same prettiness (not ugliness) bell curve."

I responded, "Of course (I was interpreting the author); that's what readers do, and editors are the worst for doing it. I will agree to disagree, as well."

Frustrated and not sure anymore that I was right, I wrote to The Chicago Manual of Style online, even knowing that I would not get a personal answer, but that the staff might answer in a future column.

I wrote the following: I'm having a long debate with a writer about the following usage: "Each sister was prettier than the next." As an editor I say that as stated, it means that the sisters got uglier on down the line, which was not what the author intended. I say the proper term should be "Each sister was prettier than the one before." I often see formations such as "prettier than the next," though. Is it still saying that the sisters were all pretty, or isn't it saying that the first is the prettiest, and the following ones therefore get uglier and uglier?

The staff of CMOS online answered my question personally, saying the following: You are right: it should be either "than the one before" or "than the last."

Vindication is mine!

Only writers and editors would get into such detailed discussion over a single word, "next" versus "last." For that reason, I love writers and editors, especially when I am right. My ego felt immensely satisfied.

Speaking of ego, on January 6, I received notice that my book on creative writing, *Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing* won First Place in the How-To category of the Florida Book Festival winter competition. First place! Wow!

Have you been following my zany, odd, and sometimes creepy blog about my encounters with the opposite sex? See www.NeuroticaStories.blogspot.com, and 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 Radio Promotions

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: I haven't a clue about how to promote my book on radio, yet I've heard other writers have been successful doing so. What's the secret?

A: Because I am a book editor, my expertise usually ends when a book gets published; however, I can tell you what a highly successful client of mine did.

He wrote a touching novel about a soldier in the Civil War, and he based it on information he found in an old family bible. He labeled the book fiction, because he added dialogue and concocted details necessary to pull the story together, but he inserted photographs of the decapitated house where the real family had lived as well as marriage records and other documents to back up his story. After I edited the book and he self-published it, he and his wife loaded up their motor home and took off. They stopped in small towns along the routes mentioned in his book, found bookstores or other venues that would allow him to hold book signings, and then called local radio stations and landed on-air interviews to promote his book and book signings. Perhaps because the towns were small and had few competing events, he managed to get large crowds at most of his events. After he sold out of the first printing, he told me he and his wife had planned to tour the South anyway, and much of his book-promotion journey turned out to be tax deductible, while he and his wife had a delightful trip and sold many books. They planned another tour for the second printing.

Q: I just noticed that you had a radio interview on self-publishing. I missed the interview; however, I would like to contribute some firsthand info about self-publishing. If you are a senior (I am 87), think twice about self-publishing. I self-published a Christmas book for children, and although I had several reliable distributors, I discovered that I still was expected to do signings, make appearances all over the country, and do much of my own marketing. I am too old to be traveling all over the country, and besides, it was Christmas. Who wants to be away from home around Christmas?

A: Thank you for your opinion on self-publishing. In truth, though, even if a traditional publisher buys your book, nowadays you're expected to market it yourself, and unless you're prepared to spend a great deal of time marketing, the book may not sell well. Read some good books or websites about book promotions and find a few tips you can use to promote your book without traveling too much. Sometimes you can get radio interviews or give seminars and events while working from home. Telephone lines and the Internet reach the world over, so personal appearances are not as vital as they used to be.

Q: I'm a stay-at-home mom of a two-year-old, and I have a book that I would like to try to have published, but I keep putting off sending in my manuscript because I'm afraid that if I ever do get published, I'll have to leave my son for a publicity tour. Could you please let me know what, if anything, I can do?

A: I am amazed at the obstacles we writers put in our own way. "I won't try to get my book published, because I don't want to leave my son" is like saying, "I won't buy a new outfit, because I'd have to wash it." Rather than thinking of a negative result, we must think of the positive outcomes from selling our books. In addition, we writers have options open to us that we may not yet know about.

Here's the truth about the publishing business: The chances of selling a manuscript are slim. If you beat those odds and sell your manuscript to a publisher, you may have to attend a book release party, give interviews, or attend a few book signings, but few publishers plan or finance publicity tours anymore. Most promotions are handled over the radio or Internet these days. The books that result in national TV and radio interviews are typically written by celebrities. Every time I see a celebrity on a talk show, I know he or she is pushing a new book or movie, and I'm usually right.

Don't let the fear of success or the reluctance to travel stop your forward movement. Trust that if the book sells, you will work out arrangements that suit you and your family, even if you do help with publicity. When the traditionally published first edition of my book Write In Style was released in 2004, the publicity "whirlwind" included a few newspaper and radio interviews that I handled by telephone. I love to be invited to speak at writers gatherings, where I can also sell the book, but it's my choice to accept those invitations, and it was never a requirement from my publisher.

Every time you think of a reason why you aren't moving forward with your book, study the logic behind your thinking and decide whether it's just another way to block yourself. Writer's block comes in many forms. Don't fall prey to it.

On a personal note, I'm thrilled to announce that the updated and expanded second edition of Write In Style, my book on how to use any computer to improve your writing, just won First Place in the How-To category in the 2016 Florida Book Festival winter competition. Purchase it at <http://tinyurl.com/o4trud2> or <http://tinyurl.com/pnq5y5s>.

Note: Write In Style, Bobbie Christmas's book on how to use a computer to improve your writing, is available at <http://tinyurl.com/pnq5y5s>.

Send your questions to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com. Bobbie Christmas, book doctor and owner of Zebra Communications, will answer your questions quickly. 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/lxp7n>.

Three: This Month's Easy Editing Tip from Bobbie Christmas: Writing Dialect

Okay, so conventional wisdom and today's creative writing instructors discourage the use of dialect, yet creative writing has few absolute rules. If you feel the urge to write a character's dialogue in dialect, here's the one immutable rule you absolutely must follow. Do not misspell words that would be pronounced the same if spelled correctly. For example, in a recent manuscript I edited, among the somewhat acceptable dialect I also saw several simply misspelled words, including the following: cleer (clear), frum (from), remembur (remember), and eyrport (airport). If you decide to use dialect, which is difficult to write well and even harder to read, at least remember to spell words correctly that have the same pronunciation when spelled either correctly or incorrectly.

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

Four: Subjects of interest to writers

Wahoo! On January 6 I learned that Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing, 2nd Edition, won First Place in the How-To category of the Florida Book Festival winter competition. First Place! Hooray! Order the book through Amazon today. For a full list of winners, see <http://www.floridabookfestival.com/>.

Do you write blogs? Check out information on how to get even more traffic to your blog here: <http://boostblogtraffic.com/writing-destination/>.

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. Newest report: Genre: A Slippery Subject Essential to Fiction: Learn about genre fiction categories and the benefits of complying with genre specifications.

For tips on how to evolve as a writer and get more readers for your book, see <http://www.indieauthornews.com/2015/03/tips-to-evolve-as-author-and-find-more-readers.html>.

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>.

Good self-editing tips before you send your manuscript to a professional editor: <http://www.digitalpubbing.com/indie-authors-self-editing-before-getting-your-manuscript-edited/>.

Writer's Digest lists eleven steps to follow to find an agent who will love your book. See <http://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/guide-to->

literary-agents/11-steps-to-finding-the-agent-wholl-love-your-book.

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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>.

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More on complaints against AuthorHouse, Xlibris, iUniverse, Trafford, and others. Always check for complaints and lawsuits against any publishing company you plan to use. See <http://writersweekly.com/angela-desk/complaints-about-authorhouse-complaints-about-xlibris-complaints-about-iuniverse-complaints-about-trafford-etc-etc-angela-hoy>. It's no secret; I recommend (and am proud to say I use) BookLogix.

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Write In Style is Now Also an E-book

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The 2016 Atlanta Writing Workshop: February 20, 2016
<http://atlantawritingworkshop.com/>

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

Gavin Literary Agency  
818 230 7350  
For submissions use  
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[www.GavinLiteraryAgencyLLC.com](http://www.GavinLiteraryAgencyLLC.com)

Gavin Literary Agency recently opened in Virginia, right outside the Capitol. Mary Ellen Gavin is looking for fresh adult fiction in all genres, especially if the story plays out like a movie. While the agency is new, Mary Ellen Gavin is a storyteller and works with other storytellers. She welcomes your submissions. See the website for more information.

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E-mail is our only accepted submission method. To submit, please e-mail our agents at the e-mail addresses listed below. To find out more about our agents and their interests please visit our Agents page. We ask that all text be pasted in the body of the e-mail as outlined in the submission guidelines. E-mails containing attachments will not be opened and will be automatically deleted due to security reasons. Because of the high volume of submissions, we will respond to queries only when we are interested in reviewing additional materials. Our response times are usually within 8-12 weeks. Please do not call our office regarding specific submissions and their status.

Adult Fiction Guidelines:

Please send a query letter, synopsis, author bio, and the first three consecutive chapters (no more than 30 pages) of your novel.

Adult Nonfiction:

Please send a query letter, proposal, outline, author bio, and three sample chapters (no more than 30 pages) of the manuscript.

Children's and Young Adult:

Please send a query letter, synopsis and the first three consecutive chapters (not to exceed 25 pages) of the manuscript.

To read about each agent and decide which one best suits your manuscript, see <http://mcintoshandotis.com/agents/>.

Please send the materials as outlined above to the appropriate agent at the e-mail addresses listed below.

To query Elizabeth Winick Rubinstein please e-mail [EWQuery@mcintoshandotis.com](mailto:EWQuery@mcintoshandotis.com)

To query Shira Hoffman please e-mail [SHQuery@mcintoshandotis.com](mailto:SHQuery@mcintoshandotis.com)

To query Christa Heschke please e-mail [CHQuery@mcintoshandotis.com](mailto:CHQuery@mcintoshandotis.com)

To query Adam Muhlig please e-mail [AMQuery@mcintoshandotis.com](mailto:AMQuery@mcintoshandotis.com)

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Langmarc Publishing started primarily as a publishing house for church resources and inspirational/motivational books over twenty years ago. Langmarc has grown and expanded into some new and exciting areas. Today Langmarc is the proud home of a number of outstanding novels and non-fiction books produced by more than fifty talented authors. These are men and women who are at the top of their profession, contributing to literary excellence with novels, recovery books, and inspirational books.

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Writer's Digest  
Annual Writing Competition

<http://www.writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions/annual-writing-competition>

DEADLINE: May 6, 2016

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.  
Prizes

One Grand Prize winner will receive:  
An announcement of the winner on the cover of Writer's Digest (subscriber issues only)  
\$5,000 in cash  
An interview with the author in Writer's Digest  
One on one attention from four editors or agents  
A paid trip to the ever-popular Writer's Digest Conference!  
A one-year subscription to Writer's Digest Tutorials  
A 30-minute Platform Strategy Consultation with Chuck Sambuchino

First place will receive \$1,000 in cash and \$100 off a purchase from the Writer's Digest Shop

Second place will receive \$500 cash and \$100 off a purchase from the Writer's Digest Shop

Third place will receive \$250 in cash and \$100 off a purchase from the Writer's Digest Shop

Fourth place will receive \$100 in cash and \$50 off a purchase from the Writer's Digest Shop

Fifth place will receive \$50 in cash and \$50 off a purchase from the Writer's Digest Shop

Sixth through Tenth place winners will receive \$25 in cash and \$25 off a purchase from the Writer's Digest Shop

All top winners will also receive:  
A one-year Writer's Digest VIP membership, which includes a one-year subscription (new or renewal) to Writer's Digest magazine, access to WritersMarket.com for one year, discounts on Writer's Digest University workshops and discounts off of purchases made at WritersDigestShop.com.

Their names listed in Writer's Digest, on WritersDigest.com and in the 84th Annual Writer's Digest Annual Writing Competition Collection.

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Six: Got Muse? Listen, My Children

As I walked my dog through an autumn afternoon, very few birds were singing, a fact that made me think the afternoon was soundless. When I took stock of reality, though, the neighborhood was anything but silent. Music wafted from a neighbor's open carport door. Perhaps he left it open while he worked on his car. Traffic whooshed down a road nearby, such a constant sound that I rarely notice it. Where was everyone going? A few cars passed me on my street, and their tires whined while their engines hummed. Were these folks almost home, just leaving home, or on their way to visit someone in the neighborhood? My dog's paws clicked on the asphalt and his tags tinkled on his collar. What images, sounds, and smells interested him at the moment? Overhead I heard the high whine of an airplane. Where was it headed? Who was onboard? In the distance leaves rustled, and a chipmunk scurried amid the fallen leaves and acorns. I assumed he had work to do, stocking up for the winter. A hawk squawked above me; perhaps he had caused the other birds to fall silent. Would he spot the chipmunk I had noticed?

Once I took the time to pay attention of every sound around me, I realized I was walking in anything but soundlessness. A variety of performances played all around me, reflecting endless events and experiences.

For this creative exercise, visit some location, whether noisy or quiet, and spend time listening to the sounds, identifying them, considering what caused them or even what caused the absence of other sounds. Take notes and then write a story that involves some of the sounds or the silence that you observed.

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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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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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