

The Writers Network News, March 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](http://www.tinyurl.com), a free service that converts long links to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

"Any word you have to hunt for in a thesaurus is the wrong word. There are no exceptions to this rule." --Stephen King

When King gives writers advice, he knows what he's talking about. Born in 1947, King is an American author of contemporary horror, supernatural fiction, suspense, science fiction, and fantasy. His books have sold more than 350 million copies, and many of his books and short stories have become feature films, miniseries, television shows, and comic books. King has published 54 novels, including seven under the pen name Richard Bachman, and six nonfiction books. He has written nearly 200 short stories, most of which have been collected in book collections. Many of his stories are set in his home state of Maine. King has received Bram Stoker Awards, World Fantasy Awards, British Fantasy Society Awards, and an O. Henry Award, and he was a Nebula Award novelette nominee. He earned the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters from the National Book Foundation. His other awards include the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement (2004), the Canadian Booksellers Association Lifetime Achievement Award (2007), the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America (2007), and a National Medal of Arts.

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One: From the editor's desk: Riprap

Dear Fellow Writers:

Unless you've worked in construction, you probably have never heard of riprap, but riprap has been on my mind lately. Riprap, also known as rip rap, rip-rap, shot rock, or rubble, is rock or other material used to line shorelines, streambeds, bridge abutments, pilings, and other shoreline structures. It looks like a pile of useless rocks or debris to the untrained eye, but workers intentionally put it there to fight erosion.

Why has riprap been on my mind? Some forty years ago, I worked in corporate communications for a construction firm, and we used Riprap as the title of our magazine section that featured bits and pieces of information. Even though riprap itself is unattractive, the word riprap struck me as beautiful, alliterative, and poetically repetitive. Riprap. I loved saying it. Ever since then, I've paid attention whenever I see riprap lining a streambed or gutter. A neighbor installed riprap in his yard to handle rain runoff, and I pass it every day when I walk my dog.

Riprap, in the form of bits and pieces, has become a part of my life. Tidbits, tips, advice, guidance, contacts, and other information piles up in my brain as if protecting a shoreline in danger of erosion. For example, based on information built up in my brain, I daily edit manuscripts and advise writers on how to write powerful prose. During a recent consultancy, I was able to examine a book cover and advise a client on how to make it more marketable in the second edition. On the phone, I advised someone about a terrific printer I know. A layout designer contacted me and wanted to share referrals. Within two days, a client called looking for a designer. People send me questions after reading

my "Ask the Book Doctor" columns, and I often answer their questions by digging into the debris in my brain.

All the rubble I've compiled in my head, bits and pieces of information, time and again serves a purpose. I'm pleased that I can put that information to good use for others and for myself.

We all store information, rocks and rubble we've collected, but for me, the best riprap is the stuff I can use to help others. It's my way of staying vital, aiding writers, and avoiding self-erosion.

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

Have you been following my zany, odd, and sometimes creepy blog about my encounters with the opposite sex? See [www.NeuroticaStories.blogspot.com](http://www.NeuroticaStories.blogspot.com), and sign up to follow it.

If someone forwarded this newsletter to you, please sign up to get your own copy. Simply go to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com), click on Free Newsletter, and follow the prompts. I never share your address or send out spam.

Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Branding, Brand Names, and Trademarks

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: At a recent writers conference, the word "branding" kept being thrown around. Am I behind the times? What does branding mean, when it comes to writing books?

A: First let me define the word "brand." I liked the following shortened definition from WhatIs.com, the best: "A brand is a product, service, or concept that is publicly distinguished from other products, services, or concepts so that it can be easily communicated and marketed. Branding is the process of creating and disseminating the brand name."

How does branding apply to writers? Branding helps writers gain followers and readers. Branding helps writers draw attention to themselves as well as their books. Branding may also show how a book fits into a specific niche. Branding is a subject so broad, however, that entire books have been written on it. I can tell you only about the things I've done to brand myself and add some of the ideas I've seen other writers use.

My editing company is Zebra Communications, so I customized my white car with zebra stripes and drove that car for twenty-four years, until it could go no farther. People could spot me, wherever I went. Although the car is gone, I still have a photo of it on my Zebra Communications Facebook page. Anyway, I studied more about branding oneself and learned that one way was to create a moniker, something people will remember. Think of some of the monikers you automatically recall. The first that comes to my mind is Dear Abby. Most people quickly recall the name of Abigail VanBuren, the advice-column writer, but few knew her real name was Pauline Phillips. A current well-known moniker (or writer's brand) is The Queen of Clean. Who can remember the columnist's actual name, Linda Cobb? Who cares? If I look up Queen of Clean, I can quickly find her on the Internet.

I did not feel the need to use a different name; after all, Bobbie Christmas is fairly memorable in itself. What I do, however, is tag the words "book doctor" with my name, whenever possible. I became Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas or Bobbie Christmas, book doctor.

Another suggestion I took to heart was that you can brand yourself physically to make people remember you. At a book event I attended, for example, two authors of an anthology of stories set in the South wore old-fashioned dresses with hoop skirts. People who came to see their outfits up close often walked away with one or more copies of the book. Another author wore a tiara, because her romance novel involved a beauty queen. One of the most popular booths had a live dog sitting in a basket on the table. The dog allegedly wrote the book, and trust me, that woman's booth stayed busy for the entire event. Who doesn't want to pet an adorable, well-behaved dog?

How do I brand myself personally? Because I am a book doctor, a person who heals ailing manuscripts, and I write books that advise writers on how to heal their own manuscripts, I wear a white lab coat whenever I speak at conferences or have publicity photos taken. My lab coat has the words "Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas" embroidered over the front pocket. I sometimes even wear a stethoscope, just for kicks. Without a doubt people can spot me at gatherings for writers, and they remember me as the book doctor in the lab coat. I've established my personal brand.

Q: When using the name of something as a verb, must it be capitalized? For example, "I keep telling you to Google him" and "Miranda can Google all day."

A: Google is a brand name, and companies want their brand names to be capitalized and prefer that they not to be used as verbs. Does company preference stop us from misusing brand names? Not at all. We Xerox our articles and FedEx them to others all the time, just as we Google our names to see how often we appear on the Internet. That type of usage is fine in informal speech and maybe even in dialogue in a story, but when you are writing an article or a book, you'd do better to conform to the proper use of brand names. In that case, you would have to say that "Miranda can use Google all day."

Q: I'm writing a book in which I use the names of board games (like Monopoly and Pictionary) and video games (like Rock Band and Guitar Hero). Do I need to use the TM or R symbol next to the names of those games within the pages of this book?

A: Can you imagine how unwieldy our writing would become if we had to use the trademark and copyright symbols every time we mentioned a registered product name? Although advertisers want everyone to acknowledge their trademarks, and therefore the ads and packaging use trademark symbols, we follow Chicago Style when writing books, and The Chicago Manual of Style recognizes registered names by capitalizing them only.

Ideally, advertisers also want us to use the generic description after the brand name, but that, too, can become cumbersome. For example, they wish we would say Kleenex brand facial tissues, Band-Aid brand bandages, and Jell-O brand gelatin, but you won't be hauled off to court if you leave off the generic description. Capitalizing Monopoly or Guitar Hero is enough to acknowledge that they are trademarked names.

Send your questions to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto: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](http://www.zebraeditor.com).

Bobbie Christmas's second edition of *Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing* is available at <http://tinyurl.com/pnq5y5s>.

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: All about Exclamations!

In the novels I've been editing recently, more sentences than ever end with exclamation marks, especially sentences in dialogue. Whatever became of the rules of exclamations? Perhaps our casual writing in e-mails and on social media has made us lax about the use of exclamations, because in casual writing, we tend to use exclamation marks for a variety of reasons, including the following:

1. To add emphasis to a word or phrase
2. To show we aren't serious about whatever we just wrote
3. To show our enthusiasm about a subject
4. To indicate an exclamatory statement

Well, fellow writers, only the fourth reason--to indicate an exclamatory statement--follows the rules of grammar, so let's again review the grammar rule that applies to the use of exclamation marks. (Resource: *Purge Your Prose of Problems*, my book doctor's desk reference book)

Exclamation marks belong in exclamatory sentences, which often begin with how, what, why, or are short bursts of words. Examples: What a beautiful sunset! How embarrassing! Oh! Damn!

Do not use exclamation marks as an attempt to show surprise. Follow the rules of correct punctuation. If the words themselves don't convey passion, exclamation marks won't help. William Styron (author of *Sophie's Choice*) said it well: "Every writer should be given just one exclamation mark per career."

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

Bobbie Christmas Seminar and Webinar – Free!  
Write In Style, and You Write to Win  
In-Person Workshop & Live Webinar  
BookLogix in Alpharetta, Georgia, and on the Internet  
Everyone is invited.

April 30

11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

This seminar is not about grammar. It is based on *Write In Style*, Bobbie Christmas's quadruple-award-winning textbook on creative writing. You'll learn how to power up your prose, whether writing fiction or nonfiction. You'll learn all this and more:

- How to save time and be objective during revisions by using the Bobbie Christmas Find and Refine Method
- Words and phrases to avoid, and why.
- How to make your manuscript more marketable, whether self-publishing or submitting to agents or publishers.
- How to make your own strong voice come out through your writing.
- How to avoid the most common errors that writers make.

Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas has more than 40 years of experience in publishing. She is the author of several books, including her quadruple-award-winning book on creative writing, *Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*.

To register for either the webinar or the in-person workshop at our office in Alpharetta, GA, go to <http://booklogix.com/upcoming-events> and scroll down to April 30.

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Member Mary Stripling had me laughing with her comments regarding last month's issue of *The Writers Network News*. Here's her note:

Regarding the pretty sisters, I agree and disagree and agree to disagree regarding "next" but not "last." This is so funny and fun! Absolutely, "prettier than the one before" seems better usage of our beloved language, and yes, I too sympathize with the author, that maybe we are over-interpreting her/his intention; however, regarding the word "last," it could refer to the "one before" or "last" could refer to the very last/end of the fresco. So even though, mathematically, this too would work, I'd go with "the one before."

After thinking awhile, Mary wrote, "Actually, 'last' doesn't work because the one at the end would have to be the least pretty! Definitely it has to be 'the one before.'"

Mary added the following observation, which gave me a chuckle:

Oh, dear! If anyone scrutinizes my work this closely, I'm dunked in the water, but that's what you're for, and I love you for it. EDIT ON!

Member Marlene Clark sent in her opinion, and I agreed with her that I should not have used the word "ugly" in my attempt to make my point, but she nailed it when she said some colloquialisms and idioms don't say what they mean. Take for example "I could care less." The original idiom was "I could not care less." If one could care less, then one cares. If one cannot care less, however, then the person does not care at all.

Here's what Marlene wrote:

An interesting read, your analysis of the listing of beautiful frescoes: if one was prettier than the next, then the first was the prettiest ... something like that. But as there were only seven, it doesn't make the last one ugly; the last one could have been pretty. At least that's how

I read the phrase.

I find the term, "prettier than the next" to be a colloquialism that turns the term on end. Like many colloquialisms, it makes no sense, but it sounds nice.

To my readers: If you missed the discussion on "prettier than the next" versus "prettier than the last," you can read past issues of this newsletter by following the link listed at the top of this e-mail.

As a bonus, my question and the answer to it also appear in this month's The Chicago Manual of Style Online Q & A. See here: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>.

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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>. Available printed or as a PDF to store on your computer, ready whenever you need it.

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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More Bookstores Opening

In addition to Amazon's latest move to open brick-and-mortar stores, Publisher's Weekly reported an uptick in independent bookstore openings, as well. Read the full article at <http://tinyurl.com/huk2fdc>.

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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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How does Chicago Style treat spacing before and after hyphens? Read this month's CMOS online Q & A to get the answer to this question and others that writers have asked. <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>

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Two years ago, the first Author Earnings report revealed the growing market share of self-published e-books. With data on hundreds of thousands of titles, it was suddenly possible to measure the relative sales and earnings power of e-books according to publishing path. By sharing this data, we hoped to help authors understand the changing market in order to make sound decisions with their manuscripts. In the two years since, our quarterly snapshots have revealed emerging trends in the digital publishing world. To read the full report, see <http://tinyurl.com/zlgl27x>.

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Positive Writer announced the top 50 writing blogs for 2016, along with links to some awesome blog entries. See <http://positivewriter.com/top-50-writing-blogs-for-2016/>.

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Good suggestions on using the five senses and more, to enrich your writing. <http://tinyurl.com/zs6cbjf>.

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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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Good article on Ten Habits of Highly Effective Writers  
<http://tinyurl.com/j8g8mx4>.

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Write In Style is Now Also an E-book

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Find Your Fresh Voice at a Lower Price

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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For an autographed printed copy directly from me, write to me here: [bzebra@aol.com](mailto:bzebra@aol.com)

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Sign up to receive 31 writing prompts.

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<http://tinyurl.com/jmud3nv>

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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

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Lost Dreams, an anthology, seeks submissions  
DBell Publishing, LLC  
Deadline: Thursday, March 25, 2016 at 11:59 p.m. EST

Seeking nonfiction stories of loss to include the following:

- Loss through death; a spouse, child, family member, friend, or pet.
- Loss of health; faculties, fertility, memory, limb(s), or mobility.
- Loss of career, job, livelihood, or wealth/savings/nest egg.
- Loss of freedom, due to actual or perceived imprisonment of any kind.
- Loss of home and/or material possessions due to financial strain or natural disaster.
- Loss of faith, religion, or belief system.
- Loss of a childhood due to physical, mental, sexual, or emotional abuse or situations.
- Loss of love, marriage, friendship, or business partnership due to betrayal/breach of trust.
- Loss of appearance through aging, weight gain/loss, or scarring/burns as a result of trauma or disease.

I am looking for stories portraying loss of any kind that results in the loss of a dream, the path you thought your life would take, how you once envisioned your future, which has been altered due to loss. I'm interested in how you coped with the loss, how it changed you for better or worse, what you've learned, and what advice, if any, you'd like to pass on to others. Each entrant may submit up to two (2) nonfiction stories. Approximately 20-30 stories will be chosen for printing in Lost Dreams. If your story is chosen as a winner, you will be a published author and receive one paperback copy of Lost Dreams.

For full details and submission guidelines, send an e-mail to DBellPublishing@gmail.com

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The Masters Review Anthology Volume V  
Deadline March 31  
\$5000 Awarded - Ten Writers Recognized

Every year The Masters Review opens submissions to produce our anthology, a collection of ten stories written by the best emerging authors. Our aim is showcase ten writers who we believe will continue to produce great work. The ten winning writers are nationally distributed in a printed book with their stories and essays exposed to top agents, editors, and authors across the country. For guidelines, see <https://mastersreview.com/submissions/>

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Agate Open to Submissions for Variety of Imprints  
Agate Publishing, Inc.  
1328 Greenleaf St.  
Evanston, IL 60202  
<http://www.agatepublishing.com/about/agate/>

Agate is considering submissions in the general areas of food, cooking, and nutrition-related nonfiction for its Surrey imprint; business-interest nonfiction for its B2 imprint; fiction and nonfiction by African-American writers for its Bolden imprint; and books on Midwestern topics or by Midwestern authors, for its Midway imprint. Submissions in other content areas will not be considered. Email inquiries are welcome. Do not make telephone inquiries regarding submissions, and do not attempt to send any hard-copy submissions unless you have first made an email inquiry.

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Poetry Market

2River View  
7474 Drexel Dr.  
University City MO 63130  
E-mail: [1ong@2River.org](mailto:1ong@2River.org)  
Submission E-mail: [su3m1t@2river.org](mailto:su3m1t@2river.org)  
Website: [www.2river.org](http://www.2river.org)

2River View, published quarterly online. Considers unpublished poetry only. 2River welcomes submissions of poems, chapbooks, art, and multi-media presentations of poems. Before submitting, please read the guidelines on the website.

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Six: Got Muse? Double the Pleasure

"Be not too hasty to trust or admire the teachers of morality; they discourse like angels, but they live like men." --Samuel Johnson, lexicographer (1709 - 1784)

News reports often expose the truth about ministers and politicians who advocate morality yet secretly indulge in the same behavior they claim to abhor. Some folks who are the most outspoken against pornography, for example, have turned out to have large personal collections of the stuff. Men who speak out for family values sometimes turn out to have secret lovers and even offspring on the side.

For this creative writing exercise, create a character who lives a double life, a person in the public eye who presents one life to the public yet leads another life. Write a story of how he or she handles the duality and what effect it has on the character as well as the character's loved ones. You may want to write further and have the character's indiscretion revealed and how it plays out; that is, how the revelation of the character's double life changes all the main characters involved in the story.

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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 enter a competition, pitch or accept an assignment, spend money, or sell your work.

REGARDING ADDRESS CHANGES: 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. Just go to [www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com), click on the yellow box, and sign up with your new

address.

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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