

The Writers Network News, April 2016

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The Writers Network News
No Rules; Just Write!
Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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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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Warning: 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. Go to www.zebraeditor.com, click on the yellow box, and sign up with your new address.

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Some links in this newsletter are shortened with help from [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

"Be still when you have nothing to say; [but] when genuine passion moves you, say what you've got to say, and say it hot." --D.H. Lawrence

Born in England on September 11, 1885, D.H. Lawrence is regarded as one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century. Lawrence published many novels and poetry volumes during his lifetime, including *Sons and Lovers* and *Women in Love*, but he is best known for his infamous novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The graphic and highly sexual novel was published in Italy in 1928 but was banned in the United States until 1959.

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One: From the editor's desk: Sad Thoughts and Happy Times

Dear Fellow Writers:

This month I have had deeply sad times. A couple of weeks ago, the man I've been seeing for about seven years found out he has cancer. His is treatable, and we have high hopes for remission, but he will have to undergo treatments for the next two months. As if that news weren't bad enough, on March 17, a friend of mine from back when I lived in Greenville, South Carolina, succumbed to cancer, after fighting it for several years. Cancer is an insidious, unrelenting disease.

Not to dwell on the bad things, though, I've had uplifting experiences this month as well. Some of those experiences involved simple things such as a good belly laugh with a friend at lunch or bowling my highest score ever. I don't mean to brag, but a 242, folks. Really? All my other games brought me back down to my average, of course, which is nothing to brag about, so it keeps me humble.

I climbed to the top of a rollercoaster hill when I learned that *Foreword Magazine* announced that my book, *Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*, has been named one of only six finalists in the category of Writing in the IndieFab Awards. The final awards will be announced in June. [For all the finalists, see <https://indiefab.forewordreviews.com/finalists/2015/writing/>.]

I plunged to the bottom of a valley again with empathy for a friend who visited while grieving the loss of one of his close friends.

Life is a rollercoaster. We have ups and we have downs. Fortunate folks handle ups and downs with equal grace and recover from both

quickly. Writers, though, might very well feel those ups and downs a little more deeply than others, but tough writers use those mood fluctuations for creative purposes. When I was younger and felt blue, poetry streamed out of me like spring rain. I don't often write poetry as often today, but when I am happy, I still think of ideas for articles, essays, and books I could write. As a result, my past poetry encompasses pensive, reflective, and unsettled thoughts, whereas my books, articles, and personal-experience essays tend to be upbeat, playful, and often humorous.

When we write novels, the best ones replicate the same difficulties that life gives us. Not every scene should be downbeat, and certainly, if the entire book is upbeat, no one wants to read about Pollyanna anymore. In nonfiction narratives, readers want to know that the author overcame whatever obstacles he or she faced, even if success meant learning to live with what seemed like an untenable situation.

Once again, life reflects art and art should reflect life. Ah, the rollercoaster and mirror of creativity!

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.NeutroticaStories.blogspot.com](http://www.NeutroticaStories.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.

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Publishers' Guidelines and Preferences

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: I am writing a collection of humorous personal experiences. I need advice on how to submit the collection to a publisher. Do I submit one or two chapters or more?

A: The answer depends on the publisher's guidelines. Some want a proposal and one to three sample chapters. Some want only some sample chapters and a query letter. Publishers vary widely in their guidelines, and you must learn each one's guidelines for submission and follow those guidelines to the letter.

Investigate publishers that handle your type of book and learn each publisher's guidelines for submission. If a publisher does not have a website or does not accept unagented material, you'll need to find an agent first. To find publishers and agents, research through the Internet or subscribe to [writersmarket.com](http://writersmarket.com) or [literarymarketplace.com](http://literarymarketplace.com). Follow each agent's or publisher's submission guidelines. You may also have to write a book proposal for some publishers. Before you attempt to write a book proposal, read a good book on how to write one. I used Michael Larsen's book, *How to Write a Book Proposal*, and it worked for me.

Q: Should I tell the ending when writing a five-page synopsis for a potential publisher?

A: First, the recommended length for a single-spaced synopsis of a novel is usually one to two pages, rather than five pages, although some publishers accept five. Next, yes, always tell the ending in a synopsis. Teasers—or summaries—don't tell the ending. They are good only for one-paragraph hooks in query letters or on book jackets. A teaser or summary might read this way: "What happens when a forty-seven-year-old nun falls in love with the new priest in her parish? What if the new priest is only thirty, but he returns her affection? What if the priest disappears without a trace and the nun is the only suspect? Can Sister Marsha Canestraro uncover the truth, avoid church scandal, and uphold her beliefs, all at the same time?"

Unlike a summary, a synopsis tells the plot from beginning to end and adds other details, such as title, genre, and word count. The synopsis, then, might begin this way: "In *Pop! Goes the Parish*, a 57,000-word mystery, Marsha Canestraro, a forty-seven-year-old nun in Woodlands, Vermont, finds herself with a schoolgirl crush on the new thirty-year-old priest. When he disappears, she is a suspect, so she must find out for herself what became of the man she had grown to adore."

The rest of the synopsis would tell the steps Marsha takes and the information she uncovers, until the truth is revealed. I can't write the whole synopsis, because I have not finished making up the story. Because I know little about Catholicism and its terminology, I would have to undertake a great deal of research, to be sure my story was plausible and the facts were correct. Those drawbacks aside, let's get back to the synopsis.

Publishers know a synopsis will not sound exciting or creative; they simply want to know the type of novel, the length of the novel, the basis of the plot, and the resolution, so they can judge the plausibility and marketability of the novel.

Q: Underlines in a typewritten manuscript used to translate to italics in a printed book. That rule was set long before computers allowed us to italicize, though, so I need to know what publishers want nowadays. For example, foreign words and book titles should be italicized, so in a manuscript I submit to a publisher, should I italicize or underline them?

A: When we had only typewriters, we typed words that were to be italicized and then backed up and underlined them. With computers, we can choose between using italics or underlines. I've even edited manuscripts in which the same word was both underlined and italicized, which is unacceptable.

Most publishers today want a manuscript to be about as ready as possible for layout, which means words that would be italicized in the book should be italicized in the manuscript. Although some writers think underlines emphasize a word or a heading, underlines have almost no place in today's books. Nevertheless, I doubt a publisher would reject a manuscript based on this one format issue alone. Whether you italicize or underline, be consistent throughout the manuscript. Don't underline one word and italicize another, and never, ever italicize a word and underline it too. The two cancel each other out.

Q: Do you have a suggestion for a book I produced in Canada? I have sold 4,000 copies in Canada and am considering submitting it to a US publisher, but I haven't a clue as to who publishes history books in America.

A: It's the author's job to perform the research. Go to bookstores and look for books in your category and see who published it. Pay for one month's usage of [www.writersmarket.com](http://www.writersmarket.com) (it's less than \$5/month), search it electronically, and make a list of publishers that publish history and don't require an agent. If you wish, you can also use the same site to search for agents that handle books on history.

Some publishers won't take pre-published work, but because yours has a good sales record and great reviews, and because you're willing to speak and promote it, you may be able find a publisher in America.

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/lxp7n>.

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

In several manuscripts I've edited lately, I've seen the word "would" overused. While it's a perfectly good word, we writers might abuse it, overuse it, and use it in ways that weaken our writing. After you finish your first draft and begin the editing phase, examine your uses of "would." No, you cannot avoid the word altogether, but let's look at ways you can delete some uses of it to power up your prose.

- To avoid overusing the word "would," use it only in these instances:
1. After a statement of desire, request, or advice: I wish you would stay.
  2. To make a polite request: Would you go with me?
  3. To indicate uncertainty: The temperature would seem to be getting warmer.

Although "would" is acceptable to express something that is habitual, avoid overusing it in that sense, such as in this example: "On Sunday, the family would eat pancakes." If you do use "would," use it once and then revert to past tense or use past tense instead. Example: "On Sunday, the family ate pancakes."

"Would" is an auxiliary verb, and like all auxiliary verbs, it often leads to weakened action. For example, instead of these examples: "John would stroke my hair and look into my eyes" or "Mary would smell her food before she ate it," use undiluted verbs for stronger sentences. "John stroked my hair and looked into my eyes." "Mary smelled her food before she ate it."

Caution: I'd, she'd, he'd, or we'd are often hidden forms of "I would," "she would," "he would," and "we would," although they can also mean "I had," "she had," "he had," and "we had." I recommend avoiding contractions in narrative, anyway, unless writing informally.

Remember to use my Find and Refine Method to power up your prose. Simply use the Find function and type in the word "would." Keep searching and editing each use of the word throughout the manuscript. You'll be amazed at the easy yet potent results.

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

Four: Subjects of interest to writers

Free Bobbie Christmas Seminar and Webinar  
*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 Robert Gilbert has some good news to report. "In the March 2016 online issue of *Frontier Tales* is my western short story, 'Pointed Gun.' Once you open their front page, I would appreciate your vote for my story, and kindly tell others. Yes, enjoy the story. Also, in the coming April 2016 online issue of *Frontier Tales* is my western short story 'Chase For Uber Mix.'"
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CNN Reports [Dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com)'s Word of the Year for 2015

It's been an important question in 2015. From Caitlyn Jenner to Rachel Dolezal, the idea of self-identification played a prominent role in some of the biggest news stories of the year.

Race, sexuality, and gender are the live-wire topics that inspired Dictionary.com to pick "identity" as its word of the year for 2015. To read the article, see <http://tinyurl.com/jjokaop>.

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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.

Order Purge Your Prose of Problems today at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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The Guardian Reports that scholars at the University of California-Berkeley have uncovered and authenticated a cache of stories written by Mark Twain when he was a 29-year-old newspaperman in San Francisco. Many of the stories are 150 years old. See <http://tinyurl.com/pqwe3dt>.

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Free Reports for Writers from Bobbie Christmas and Zebra Communications

Report #107 - Find a Publisher for Your Nonfiction Book: Follow the steps Bobbie Christmas took to sell her book, and you will know how to locate the right publisher for your book.

Report #118 - Chicago Style versus AP Style: More in-depth than Report #105, this lengthy report shows folks a great deal of vital information on Chicago style and how it differs from AP style and other styles. This report is for anyone who writes books.

For these reports and more, go to http://zebraeditor.com/free_reports.shtml.

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Can't make it to a conference? The Florida Writers Association offers online webinars for writers. See <https://floridawriters.net/conferences/webinars/> for schedule and information.

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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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Which is correct? "I went to the store and then the hairdresser." "I went to the store, then the hairdresser." Not sure? For answers to this question and more, read this month's Q & A from ChicagoManualofStyle.org. See <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>.

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Write In Style is Now Also an E-book

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/ouoejc>

For an autographed printed copy directly from me, write to me here: bzebra@aol.com

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Alice Hoffman fights a bad review of her recent book. Did it help? You decide. See [http://www.salon.com/2009/06/30/critic\\_fight/](http://www.salon.com/2009/06/30/critic_fight/)

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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

Business Jet Traveler
214 Franklin Ave.
Midland Park, NJ 07432
Tel: (201) 444-5075
Fax: (201) 444-4647
<http://www.bjtonline.com/>
Editor: Jeff Burger
jburger@bjtonline.com

Study the publication before submitting articles. Sample copy available; request by e-mail. Pays a minimum of .50/word on acceptance, more for cover stories and sometimes negotiate flat rates with regular contributors. Publishes stories one to six months after acceptance. Buys first rights. Rarely accepts reprints. Usually responds to queries within one to two days Further guidelines by e-mail.

"Most interested in reader-service copy about buying/using private aviation services; vacation travel stories (see our "Getaways" feature); and interviews with celebrities and prominent CEOs who fly privately. We use some brief (100-650 words) front-of-the-book items. One-page stories run about 650 words. Major features average 1,500-2,500 words. We'll look at a complete manuscript. but writers would be best advised to start with an e-mailed query."

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New Agent Seeks Submissions

Red Sofa Literary

Erik Hane is a literary agent with Red Sofa Literary. Erik is a writing major from Knox College, and attended the Denver Publishing Institute after graduation. His first publishing job came soon after, as an editorial assistant and then assistant editor at Oxford University Press. He then moved to The Overlook Press as an acquiring editor, working on primarily upmarket nonfiction (history, biography, pop science), but was lucky enough to work on some novels as well. He is seeking: literary fiction. For nonfiction, he seeks popular science, sports writing, popular culture/modern life, essays, and history. In nonfiction, he loves seeing complex subjects written about in an engaging way for the non-expert, or energetic, incisive looks at topics not usually treated that way (looking at you, sports writing). He wants to see literary novels that place story first; no use writing beautifully if nothing's going on.

How to submit: erik@redsofaliterary.com.

"For fiction, I'd love to see a query letter (perhaps one that includes some comp titles) and a first chapter, and will request more if interested. For nonfiction, send a proposal that includes an overview of the project, a table of contents, a clear sense of who the author is and why he/she is the one to write the book, comparable titles, and some sample writing."

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Mystery Weekly Magazine

Published monthly, Mystery Magazine presents crime and mystery short stories by some of the world's best established and emerging mystery writers. The original stories we select for each issue run the gamut from cozy to hardboiled fiction. Send us your 1,000 - 8,000-word mystery. Simultaneous and multiple submissions allowed. Submissions must be original works of short fiction that have not been published elsewhere. We currently pay a half cent per word for accepted stories, but this will increase as our readership grows. To submit, use form at <http://mysteryweekly.com/submit.asp>.

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Susanna Lea Associates  
Literary Agency  
<http://www.susannalea.com/submissions.aspx>

Created in 2000, Susanna Lea Associates has offices in Paris, New York, and London. Our aim is to work in close collaboration with authors and publishers in order to maximize the potential of each project both domestically and in translation—in print, audio and electronic media—and, when applicable, for film.

The defining characteristics of our list are:

Our authors and projects all have potential on an international level;  
Our taste is eclectic: we are interested in works of both fiction and non-fiction, commercial and literary;  
We pride ourselves in keeping our list small: we prefer to focus on a select number of projects rather than spread our energies thin.  
We are always on the lookout for exciting new talent, but as we receive a large number of submissions, please help us by following the guidelines:

We do not consider poetry, plays, screenplays, science fiction, educational textbooks, short stories, or illustrated works.

We are environmentally friendly: we accept submissions only by e-mail. Please do not send manuscripts by post.

To submit your work, please send us the following by email:

1. a concise query letter, including your email address, telephone number, and any relevant information about yourself (previous publications, etc.)
2. a brief synopsis
3. the first three chapters and/or proposal

Text should be double-spaced and font size 11 or 12. Reading time is generally between 6 to 12 weeks. Due to the number of submissions we receive, we cannot acknowledge receipt, offer editorial advice on material that we decline, or guarantee a response. We do not charge a reading fee.

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Duke University Press Open to Submissions

U.S. Mail:
Duke University Press
Box 90660
Durham, NC 27708-0660

Federal Express, United Postal Service, and other courier services:
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Durham, NC 27701

Duke University Press welcomes the submission of book proposals in the areas in which we publish. We ask that you submit your proposal to only one editor. If your proposal seems more appropriate for another editor's area of acquisition, it will be passed along to him or her for consideration. Please send a printed copy of your proposal by mail. If you would like the proposal to be returned to you, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope. For complete guidelines, editors, and areas of specialization, see <https://www.dukeupress.edu/Authors/manuscript.php>

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Six: Got Muse? Cheat!

We all have known cheats, and many of us may have cheated a time or two in our lives. Why do people cheat? How do they cheat? What are the results of cheating? Think of the many ways a person can cheat, from copying someone's homework, shortchanging a clerk, or creating

false investment plans that bilk people out of millions of dollars. We can cheat on our taxes, cheat on our partners, or cheat at Scrabble.

Write about someone who cheats in some way and then write about the consequences of his or her actions.

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Please send it in the body copy, not an attachment, to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com.

Deadline: The 15th of each month.

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Send a copy of this newsletter to all your writing friends. Tell them to join The Writers Network F-R-E-E by visiting www.zebraeditor.com and clicking on Free Newsletter.

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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, 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.

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

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