

The Writers Network News, July 2016 issue

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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 notices of local (but sporadic) meetings today! Send your name and e-mail address to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

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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

A story should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, but not necessarily in that order.
--Jean-Luc Godard (b. 3 Dec 1930)

Entertainment Weekly voted French-Swiss film director, screenwriter, and film critic Jean-Luc Godard one of the greatest directors of all time.

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ONE: FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: TIME TO WRITE

Dear Fellow Writers:

How many times have we said, "I wish I had time to write?" How about this one: "I'll write that story when I get the time." Prolific writers don't wait for time to appear magically. They make—repeat—make the time to write.

I'm as guilty as any other writer who finds excuses not to write. Six months ago something happened to me that would make a terrific final chapter in my book of relationship memoirs. For six months I've thought about writing that chapter. I heard the words in my head. I saw the scenes in my mind. My fingers never touched the keyboard, though, except to edit other people's books or write blog posts, newsletters, columns, e-mails, and other things.

Finally yesterday morning I sat down to my computer and refused to open e-mail, Facebook, or Google. Instead I opened the file of my unfinished book, the one I haven't worked on in more than eight months. I resisted the urge to reread what I had already written. Instead I jumped to the end, and there I began the first draft of the chapter that would close my memoirs. Yes, it was only a first draft, but since yesterday I've already revised the chapter once and will refine it more, before I'm through. At least the chapter is written and the incident is captured for posterity. I could have been hit by a bus and died with that chapter in my head, but I refused to let such a thing happen. I wrote the chapter because I made—yes, made—the time to write.

Every writer has a different time, place, or way that suits them best. Mornings are my most creative, clear-headed time. By three o'clock, I'm

yawning and losing clarity. For that reason, as soon as I had walked the dog and given my parakeet his daily greens, I pulled myself up to my computer and wrote. The early morning sun streamed into my window, and instead of stopping, I donned a visor to keep out the sun. Within fifteen minutes, that distraction disappeared, and I never noticed. I did not stop writing until I finished the last word in the story I wanted to tell. Today I feel relieved and happy that I made the time to write.

Do you make time to write?

Yours in writing,

Bobbie Christmas [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or [bzebra@aol.com](mailto: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.

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## TWO: ASK THE BOOK DOCTOR ABOUT SPACING, "ITS" WORDS, E-ZINES VS. NEWSLETTERS, AND HOW TO GET A BOOK OUT

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: I don't think I'll ever stop spacing twice after a period. Any suggestions?

A: You can quickly repair all those extra spaces, assuming you are using Microsoft Word, which has become the standard in the publishing industry. Press Ctrl + H, and you'll get a Find and Replace dialogue box. Put the cursor in the Find What box and press the spacebar twice. In the Replace With box, press the spacebar once. Next press the button that says Replace All. The computer will find and change every double space to a single space. You may have to tell it to do the same thing more than once, to catch all the extra spaces, but just continue the process until the computer reports that it has made 0 replacements.

Q: Explain to me this: it's, its, and its'.

A: I always have to stop and think about it, too, because it goes against convention. We think of words that end with an apostrophe followed by an "s" as being possessive, but in this one case, the possessive does not have an apostrophe. I'll explain in detail.

"It's" (with the apostrophe) is the contraction for "it is." Example: It's okay if John comes along. (We know "it's" is a contraction, because the sentence can be written this way: It is okay if John comes along.)

Its (without the apostrophe) indicates the possessive. Example: The seminar had its own schedule.

Its' is always incorrect. Period.

The "its" words often get confused, because they break the rules of possessive apostrophes. If you confuse these two words, you are not alone. Here's a helpful hint: Every time you use it's or its, ask yourself, "Am I saying IT IS?" If so, only then do you use the apostrophe (it's).

Q: What's the difference between an e-zine and a newsletter?

A: All e-zines can be called newsletters, but not all newsletters can be called e-zines. An e-zine is always electronic, whereas a newsletter can be printed and mailed traditionally or it can be electronic. The content does not make the difference, only the method of distribution.

I use the two terms interchangeably for my e-zine, The Writers Network News, because it is a newsletter sent electronically. The term "e-newsletter" isn't as well known as the term "e-zine," so I call The Writers Network News an e-zine at times and a newsletter at other times, to avoid word repetition.

Q: I did not see anywhere in your book *Write In Style* that you address this point directly, but when writing internal dialogue, I take it from your book that you would never say he told himself or I told myself something. Is that correct?

A: Such a conclusion might be drawn from the fact that in my book I say "thought to himself" is redundant, because we cannot think to anyone but ourselves. We can, however, tell other people things, just as we can tell ourselves things, so I have no problem with saying he told himself, she told herself, or I told myself.

Q: I'm fifteen and really into writing. Right now I use an online site to post my stories, but I would really like to get a book out. Do you have any ideas on what I can do about this?

A: Yes, but you cannot learn in one e-mail all that you must know. Join writers groups. Write. Take classes in creative writing. Write. Join a critique circle. Write. If possible, attend conferences for writers. Write. Subscribe to and read publications for writers. Write. Volunteer for your school newspaper or yearbook. Write. Read Strunk & White's *Elements of Style*. Read *Write In Style* (my book). Read William Zinsser's book, *On Writing Well*. Write. Learn to use standard manuscript format. After all that, edit, edit, edit, revise, revise, and revise, and eventually you may have a polished manuscript. If so, read books on how to submit a manuscript. Learn how to write a professional query letter. Write an irresistible synopsis. After doing all those things, you may be ready to submit a manuscript to a publisher or agent.

No matter what your age or skill level, you will find many free reports for writers on my website ([www.zebraeditor.com](http://www.zebraeditor.com)) under "Tools for Writers."

Most writers spend years polishing their craft before they produce a marketable manuscript. Never give up.

For much more information on commas and hundreds of other subjects of vital importance to writers, order *Purge Your Prose of Problems*, a Book Doctor's Desk Reference Book at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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: AND, BUT, SO, OR, NOR, YET, HOWEVER

This lesson teaches you how to use the Find and Replace function to catch opportunities to write stronger prose.

Conventional wisdom says that writers should not start sentences with conjunctions such as and, but, so, or, nor, yet, and however. While no absolute rule exists against using conjunctions at the beginnings of sentences, when I edit books, I see so many sentences beginning with conjunctions that the formation becomes repetitive and weak. Use conjunctions only inside sentences, rather than at the beginnings of sentences, and the writing grows in strength.

Yes, writers can break with tradition and start sentences with conjunctions, and if that construction appears only rarely and only for emphasis, it can have power. Here's an example of a weak use of the conjunction "but." She went to the store. But in no time she grew bored of shopping. Here's an example of a conjunction at the start of a sentence that adds strength: She loved him dearly. But it's hard to keep loving a jerk who runs away with your best friend. See how the second example adds punch with the unexpected information about the guy running away with the woman's best friend?

Punctuation alert: Note that rarely should a comma follow a conjunction. Incorrect: I liked him but, I did not love him. Correct: I liked him, but I did not love him.

Use my Find and Refine Method to power up your prose. In the case of searching for conjunctions at beginnings of sentences, you'll want to match the case of the words you seek. To do so, use the Find and Replace function (Ctrl + H). In the window that opens, type the conjunction you seek, capitalizing it, as it would be capitalized at the beginning of a sentence (example: And). Next press the More button and check Match Case. Press Find Next, and the computer will find a sentence that begins with the conjunction you chose. After you revise that sentence, press Ctrl + H again and Find Next, and 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>.

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### FOUR: SUBJECTS OF INTEREST TO WRITERS

#### WORD CRIMES

If you love words and hate word crimes, you'll love Weird Al Yankovich's tune. Watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Gv0H-vPoDc>.

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VOTE FOR WRITE IN STYLE FOR READER'S CHOICE—PLEASE!

WRITE IN STYLE was chosen as an INDIEFAB finalist because it represents the best indie books published in 2015 by the Foreword Review panel of judges who include librarians, booksellers, and its editorial staff. There's one other group that also deserves a voice in the INDIEFAB voting, and that's the readers. This is why we're introducing the new "Reader's Choice" category for this year's INDIEFAB Awards.

The INDIEFAB Reader's Choice Winner will be awarded to the INDIEFAB finalist that gets the most votes from fans: Please go to the Write In Style Indie Finalist page at <https://indiefab.forewordreviews.com/books/write-in-style/> and leave a comment that Write In Style is your #INDIEFABFAVE (note: commenters must login through Facebook or with a Foreword Reviews account). Although the page offers to sell the book, you don't have to buy it through this page. Simply scroll down and leave your comment.

The book with the most reader endorsements will be named the INDIEFAB Reader's Choice Winner. Please help me by endorsing Write In Style.

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#### WEBSITE FOR WRITERS

See <http://www.advicetowriters.com/>. It has great advice and quotations to inspire writers.

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#### GOT WRITERS BLOCK?

This Micah Solomon article may cure you. <http://tinyurl.com/jpc66wf>

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LAST CHANCE TO SAVE ALMOST \$10 FOR MY MOST POPULAR BOOKS

WRITE IN STYLE, my book that gives you copious tips on how to improve your writing, has won four awards and is still in the running for more. It's selling quickly, and the reviews are all positive. Creative writing teachers use the book to teach students how to write stronger, clearer prose, and writers everywhere use it to help themselves find their fresh voice. The book is easy and fun to read. WRITE IN STYLE usually sells for \$14.95 plus as much as \$4.99 shipping.

PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS: A BOOK DOCTOR'S DESK REFERENCE, is quite possibly the world's most complete reference for writers. It's great for resolving disputes among writers and critique circle members. It covers grammar, punctuation, Chicago style, creative issues, word-choice issues, and much more. Spiral bound, the pages stay open for easy reference, even while you are at your computer. PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS usually sells for \$29.95 plus much as \$4.99 for shipping.

If you buy these books individually, your total cost with shipping could be almost \$55.00, but until July 30, I am offering a crazy deal. Buy both books directly from me (not through Amazon or other sources), and you'll pay only \$45. I will pay for the shipping. Yes, FREE shipping! I'll even flat sign (just my name and date) both books. You'll save almost \$10 and get the best two books on writing that you will ever order.

To take advantage of this one-time offer, send me \$45 through PayPal.com (Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or mail a check to Bobbie Christmas, 230 Deerpurchase Dr., Woodstock, GA 30188. Be sure to give me your shipping address.

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

~~~~~ DID YOU KNOW?

Capitalized proper nouns are rarely hyphenated, according to The Chicago Manual of Style. Read more about hyphens and other issues in Chicago style in its latest column. See <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>

~~~~~ ASK THE BOOK DOCTOR, THE BOOK

ASK THE BOOK DOCTOR: HOW TO BEAT THE COMPETITION AND SELL YOUR WRITING answers 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>.

~~~~~ TERMINOLOGY WRITERS NEED TO KNOW

Normally I examine words here that writers need, but today's word is one you likely will never use. Before I give it, let me tell you something that humorist Steven Wright once said that cracked up this bibliophile and word lover. He said, "I'm looking for another word for 'thesaurus.'" Many people in the audience didn't get the joke, but I've never forgotten it. Today I found a word that makes me think it would not have been as funny if he had said, "I'm looking for another word for 'synonym,'" because "poecilonym" (pronounced PEE-sil-uh-nim) is a synonym for the word "synonym." Ah, this crazy world of words!

~~~~~ FOUR-TIME-AWARD-WINNING BOOK ON CREATIVE WRITING

Updated, upgraded, expanded, and indexed, the second edition of Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing goes even further than the award-winning first edition to show writers how to produce compelling prose. This book reveals how to uncover your fresh voice, the type of voice publishers and readers demand. This book is not a book on grammar; it's an easy-to-read yet instructional book that improves any type of writing.

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

For an unsigned copy, click here: <http://tinyurl.com/h5qstpy>

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Like Zebra Communications at <http://tinyurl.com/7vcxaxu>.

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FIVE: CONTESTS, AGENTS, AND MARKETS

Elyse Cheney Literary Associates

78 Fifth Avenue, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10011

Agency has four agents open to submission. Read about the agents and their preferences here: <http://www.cheneyliterary.com/#scrollto-agents>

Please send a query letter briefly describing your project and professional background, along with up to three chapters of sample material. We ask that you not query more than one agent.

Queries may be sent by mail, with a self-addressed stamped envelope, or by e-mail to: submissions@cheneyliterary.com. Due to the volume of inquiries we receive, we regret that we cannot respond to all queries.

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Able Newspaper has been the newspaper for people with disabilities for more than twenty years. It is widely known in the disability community; a monthly newspaper that is published for, by and about the disabled, with the focus on the Able. Able is read by a specific population that includes:

People with Disabilities  
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Volunteers and  
Other Interested Parties  
The Paper Features:  
All the News that pertains to people with disabilities  
A calendar of events  
Columns written by various experts and  
A variety of informative articles, in a large type format  
Personal Ads

Welcomes new writers. Pays on publication. Buys one-time rights. Accepts reprints. Sample articles online. Guidelines by e-mail. Pays \$50 for 500 words.

Submit query by e-mail.

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FutureScapes Writing Contest
<http://www.futurescapescontest.com/>

We are pleased to announce the inaugural theme of the FutureScapes Writing Contest: Cities of Empowerment.

No entry fee
Final awards determined by professional author
\$2,000 prize for first place, \$1,000 prize for second place
Four runners up receive \$500
Publication in anthology distributed to mayors, governors, and members of the US Congress

Professional authors are not eligible to enter the contest. A professional author is defined as someone who has accepted payment and/or signed contracts for published fiction in the amount of either; a) three paid published works of short fiction at a minimum average compensation rate of 6 cents per word with a total compensation of at least \$800; or b) a work of long fiction (40,000 words or greater) for which the author was paid at least \$2,000 in compensation.

Entries must be works of prose not to exceed 8,000 words in length.

Deadline is July 15, 2016.

For this year's theme, we ask you to envision how a city thirty years from now can create a civic experience that virtually eliminates what today we consider "disabilities." Further, how might a future City of Empowerment amplify the natural abilities of citizens to enhance the experience of living, working, and governing a city? How might a city create the super-citizen of tomorrow?

We want concrete answers with substantive details. You may focus on technology, but don't forget about the political and social realities required to create such a city. We want to see the lived experience through the eyes of your characters. We want an optimistic view that nevertheless allows the reader to feel the challenges, the hurdles, and something of the unintended consequences of creating a city that empowers all its citizens.

Complete rules here: <http://www.futurescapescontest.com/contest-rules/>.

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Mystery Writers of America  
2017 Edgar Awards

You may submit the entry form (links on website) online or mail it to the MWA National Office, 1140 Broadway, Suite 1507, New York NY 10001, or fax it to 212-888-8107.  
A completed entry form is required for submission.

All works submitted for consideration must meet the requirements for Active Status membership as described in the membership guidelines. While the author does not need to be a member of MWA, the work itself must make the author eligible for active status.

For complete submissions information see <http://tinyurl.com/zuaeluo>.

Deadlines depend upon the 2016 publication date. See submission information for details.

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SIX: GOT MUSE? Smear Your Character

Let me start with the word “unctuous,” pronounced UNGK-choo-uhs. It’s an adjective meaning “displaying insincere earnestness or piousness; oily.”

Good characters often have bad traits. Create an unctuous character without using that word. How would you describe an unctuous character?

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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.

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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