

The Writers Network News, August 2016

In This Issue

One: From the Editor's Desk: Reading for Fun

Two: Ask the Book Doctor about Capitalizing Titles, Italicizing Titles, and Recognizing and Avoiding Weak Verbs

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

Four: Subjects of Interest to Writers

Five: Contests, Agents, and Markets

Six: Got Muse? Random Acts of Kindness

THE WRITERS NETWORK NEWS

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

Contents copyright 2016, Bobbie Christmas

No portion of this newsletter can be used without permission; however, you may forward the newsletter in its entirety to people in your network.

Newsletter Sponsor

Zebra Communications

Excellent editing for maximum marketability

Improving books for writers and publishers since 1992

Zebra Communications

230 Deerpurchase Drive

Woodstock, GA 30188

770/924-0528

<http://zebraeditor.com/>

Follow my Write In Style creative-writing blog at <http://bobbiechristmas.blogspot.com/>

~~~~~  
MEET FELLOW WRITERS

Do you live in or visit metro Atlanta? Sign up for notices of local (but sporadic) meetings today! Send your name and e-mail address to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com).

~~~~~  
ADDRESS CHANGE?

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.

~~~~~  
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.

~~~~~  
WRITER'S QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Terry McMillan's novel *Waiting to Exhale* (1992) was one of the first novels ever published about the lives of affluent African Americans, and it spent thirty-eight weeks on the New York Times best-seller list. When asked why she's so successful, McMillan said, "I don't write about victims. They just bore me to death. I prefer to write about somebody who can pick themselves back up and get on with their lives."

~~~~~  
ONE: FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: READING FOR FUN

Dear Fellow Writers:

One of the possible drawbacks to being a book editor is that I read manuscripts as a necessary part of my business, which leaves almost no energy, desire, or eye power to read for fun. I borrowed a copy of *The Dovekeepers*, a fictionalized version of the story of Masada, when 900 Jewish zealots avoided capture and enslavement when attacked by 5,000 Romans on a mountaintop fortress. Alice Hoffman writes beautifully, and the story is educational and inspirational, but it took me almost a year to read the book from start to finish, because I could read only a few pages at a time.

Now I've picked up a copy of Pat Conroy's book, *The Death of Santini*. Conroy, who recently passed away, has long been one of my all-time favorite writers, yet I have not read all his books, only most of them. His turn of phrase and ability to capture reality makes me long to have his skills as a writer. I hope I can finish this book in less than a year, but I can only hope.

Instead of reading for fun, I read unpublished works and look for redundancies, awkward sentences, questionable events, unclear scenes, unnatural dialogue, repetition, errors in grammar and punctuation, and all the other things that can go wrong when writers write. I envy people who can simply sit in an easy chair and read polished, published books for entertainment.

Ah, but I chose my life as an editor for a reason. Yes, the majority of my reading involves unedited material that I must edit, but at the end of each working day I have a sense of satisfaction that I helped another writer produce a more interesting, more appealing, more marketable book. I am building up good karma, and I enjoy finding and fixing things that can improve a manuscript.

I can't have it both ways, though. I'd love to read more for fun, but I have work to do, and I read for a living. Hm. Actually many people would envy me for having that privilege, so who am I to complain?

Okay, forget about it.

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

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 CAPITALIZING TITLES, ITALICIZING TITLES, AND RECOGNIZING AND AVOIDING WEAK VERBS

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: When a character is addressed by a title, would it require capitalization?

For example, which is correct:

- A. "Keep looking," said Captain Carlyle.
- B. "There is no one here, Captain," said Smith.

- A. "Keep looking," said Captain Carlyle.
- C. "There is no one here, captain," said Smith.

A: A and B are correct. If a title precedes a name or replaces a name, the title gets capitalized. Examples: I met Sergeant Herb Harrison when he was fresh out of college. I met Herb Harrison, who is now a sergeant, when he was fresh out of college. The jury rose for Judge Bryan Golson. The jury rose for the judge. I loved Mom's cooking. I loved my mom's cooking. We took Highway 85 to get home. We took the highway home. You are dismissed, Lieutenant.

Q: After initially using italics for periodicals and vessels such as these:

- The London Times (italized)
- Chicago Tribune (italized)
- USS Bremen (Bremen italized)

Can I go to roman type for The Times, the Tribune, and Bremen?

A: Because I could not find anything in The Chicago Manual of Style that indicates it is acceptable not to italicize a periodical or vessel title if shortened, I must assume that such things should always be italicized. The only time a title of this type would not be italicized would be when it appears in running text that is italicized. In that case, the title would be set in roman type to set it apart from the italicized type surrounding it.

Q. While flipping through an old issue of Writer's Digest, I came across the following puzzling comment by a reader: "I've learned to show, not tell, by circling 'to be' verbs and changing them before submitting a draft. However, you publish famous writers who use 'to be' verbs when stronger verbs might be used. Would, could and should also appear more often than my instructors have taught me."

What are "to be" verbs?

What is weak about would, could and should?

A: "To be" verbs include any form of the verb "to be." Such linking verbs are passive; they show no action. They tell, rather than show. Linking verbs simply say one thing is something else, for example, "The rain was cold." Some "to be" verbs include be, being, been, is, am, are, was, and were. While writers cannot entirely avoid the common verb "to be," whenever a writer replaces a passive "to be" verb with an active verb, the sentence becomes stronger and often more visual. To avoid using a linking verb, "The rain was cold" might be recast this way: "Cold rain poured from the sky." See how the use of the verb was did not give a visual picture, but the stronger verb, poured, does?

Would, could, and should are auxiliary verbs (verbs that must be linked to other verbs), so they, too, offer opportunities for tighter, more visual writing. Instead of this: "Every morning Mary would make pancakes for her family," consider this recast: "Every morning Mary cooked pancakes for her family."

For much more information on these subjects and hundreds of others 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 award-winning second edition of Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing is available at <http://tinyurl.com/pnq5y5s>.

%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%

## THREE: THIS MONTH'S EASY EDITING TIP FROM BOBBIE CHRISTMAS: ONLY

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

If only all writers understood the use of the word “only.” When I edit manuscripts “only” is a word I often address and correct. Here are some things writers need to know about the use of the word “only.”

#### Only—Placement

Use “only” immediately in front of the word it should modify. Notice how moving it can change the meaning of a sentence: Only I had a slight injury. I only had a slight injury. I had only a slight injury. I had an only slight injury. Only the author can decide which meaning is the correct meaning by placing “only” where it belongs, directly in front of the word it modifies.

#### Only/Except

Especially in narrative, it is wise not to use “only” to mean “except.” Unclear: He would have gone, only he was busy. Clear: He would have gone, except he was busy, or He would have gone, but he was busy.

#### Not Only—But Also

The use of the term “not only” begs for its pair, “but also.” Avoid using the first without the last. Rarely acceptable: Not only did he drink, he drank excessively. Acceptable: Not only did he drink, but he also drank excessively.

Use my Find and Refine Method to power up your prose. In this case you will want to search your manuscript for the use of the word “only,” to be sure it is 1) directly in front of the word it should modify, 2) not being used to mean “except,” and 3) includes “but also,” if the initial phrase is “not only.”

To do so in Microsoft Word, use the Find function (Ctrl + F) and search for the word “only.” Examine each instance and be sure the word is used correctly.

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

%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%

#### FOUR: SUBJECTS OF INTEREST TO WRITERS

##### FROM FELLOW MEMBERS

I love to hear from members of The Writers Network. Everyone who subscribes to The Writers Network News is automatically a member of The Writers Network. Based on my last month’s Letter from the Editor, Carole Madan, affectionately known as Momma Nature, wrote, “You make me feel so much better about not writing. I have created novels (in my mind) and have finished a poetry chapbook (in my mind). Suddenly last week I found some of my old poetry. Now I’m in the process of rewriting, editing, etc. I hope I will have a chapbook finished by Christmas. I really appreciate you, Bobbie.”

I appreciate my fellow writers, too.

~~~~~

EARN MONEY WRITING FAMILY STORIES

Interesting article with formula for how to do it and even how to price your services. See <http://tinyurl.com/jb65ddg>.

~~~~~

##### 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.

~~~~~

WEBSITE FOR WRITERS

Live Write Thrive is a helpful blog by C. S. Lakin who describes herself as a novelist, copyeditor, writing coach, mom, backpacker, and a whole bunch of other things.

<http://www.livewritethrive.com/>

~~~~~

##### SAVE THOUSANDS ON EDITING

PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS, A BOOK DOCTOR’S DESK REFERENCE, will save you thousands of dollars when you use it to edit your own book. It’s the resource editors use to edit book-length manuscripts.

Order the book-doctor desk reference book at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>. Available spiral bound, so it stays open easily next to your computer, or as a PDF to store on your computer, ready to search electronically.

Purge Your Prose of Problems covers all you need 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 hundreds of other subjects.

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

~~~~~

HAVE YOU TRULY FINISHED WRITING YOUR NOVEL?

In this day of self-publishing, too many people quit working on their novels too early and then pay to have them published. The result is abysmal sales, wasted time and money, and poor (if any) reviews. How can you tell when you're truly finished? Read this blog entry from bookbaby, and pay close attention to point number five. <http://tinyurl.com/hwq25o9>.

~~~~~  
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.

This offer ends July 30, so take advantage of it today.

~~~~~  
FREE REPORT

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.

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

~~~~~  
WHICH IS CORRECT, "YES, SIR" OR "YES SIR?"

Find out the answer in the latest Q & A from the editors of The Chicago Manual of Style. <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: Comma Splice

A comma splice occurs when a compound sentence is connected by a comma, rather than a semicolon or conjunction. Comma splice: John loved Mary, she was the woman of his dreams. Correct: John loved Mary; she was the woman of his dreams. Also right: John loved Mary because she was the woman of his dreams. John loved Mary. She was the woman of his dreams.

Yes, creative writers can sometimes use a comma splice for dramatic effect, but used more than once or twice in a manuscript, and it becomes an obvious pattern and loses its effectiveness.

~~~~~  
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>

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

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

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

~~~~~  
BECOME MY FRIEND ON FACEBOOK

Follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>

FOLLOW ZEBRA COMMUNICATIONS ON FACEBOOK

News, information, immediate updates, and other things writers can put to use.

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

%%%%%%%%%

FIVE: CONTESTS, AGENTS, AND MARKETS

ELIT AWARDS

<http://www.elitawards.com/>

The seventh annual eLit Awards is a global awards program committed to illuminating and honoring the very best of English language digital publishing entertainment.

The eLit Awards is an industry-wide, unaffiliated awards program open to all members of the electronic publishing industry.

The contest is presented by Jenkins Group, a Michigan-based book publishing and marketing services company that has operated the popular Independent Publisher Book Awards contest since 1996.

Publishers and authors worldwide creating electronic books written in English and created for the global marketplace are eligible for entry in 65 different e-Lit categories listed below. Titles published with a 2015 or 2016 copyright or that were released between January 1, 2015 and January 31, 2017.

Entry fees are based on a per-title, per-category basis. Early-bird entry fees are available offering discounts to those who register before our posted deadlines:

- Early Bird #1 entry - Now through August 31, 2016 - \$70 per title, per category
- Early Bird #2 entry - September 1st through November 30, 2016 - \$80 per title, per category
- Regular entry - December 1, 2016, through January 31, 2017 - \$90 per title, per category

Key Dates

Final Entry Registration Deadline: January 31, 2017

~~~~~  
 The Local Palate
 496 King Street
 Charleston SC 29403
<http://www.thelocalpalate.com/>
info@thelocalpalate.com

Represents the food culture of the South; the area ranges from Maryland down to Florida and as far West as Texas. Collects personal stories about chefs, farmers, vendors, as well as other culinary personalities in an effort to share the history of the varied culinary traditions across the South. Includes recipes and "how-tos" for a wide variety of dishes and drinks. Departments include Key Ingredient, Season's Eatings, Toast of the Town, EATymology, The Interview, Test Kitchen, Culinary Class, Gourmet Getaways, and Oh! Pair. Welcomes new writers in the South or with strong Southern ties. Guidelines available by e-mail. Pays \$250-\$750 for 500-2,000 words. Submit pitches by e-mail in 300 words or fewer.

~~~~~  
 ALITERATE  
<https://www.aliterate.org>

Aliterate is a literary magazine devoted to publishing "literary genre fiction." This is to say that we print genre fiction of a literary character. At Aliterate we want to publish beautiful genre writing. Think Samuel Delany. Think Margaret Atwood. (If you're either of these people, please drop us a line.)

Although submissions will not be open again until early 2017, now is the time to be writing and polishing potential submissions. Accepts science fiction, fantasy, westerns, pulps, thrillers, horror, romance, etc.

Read all the guidelines. (See <https://www.aliterate.org/submit.html>.) This isn't a trick. The robot will reject e-mail containing common errors.

We want works between 3,000 and 12,000 words that are unpublished in English. We do not publish poetry, inspirational fiction, erotica, gore, polemics, fanfic or young adult fiction. Given our small staff we can only consider one submission per author per reading period.

While submissions are open we receive nearly two hundred submissions per week.  
 Simultaneous submissions are OK. During our submission period our median time to "no" is six days, while our median acceptance time is about seventy days.  
 Review is blind. Please do not include your name or identifying information in your submitted document.

All submissions are by e-mail, sent to [submissions@aliterate.org](mailto:submissions@aliterate.org). Attach your submission to the e-mail. A cover letter is unnecessary. Please use your title as the e-mail subject. Do not include 'Submission' in the subject. We prefer .docx, .rtf, and .odt because formatting is typically well preserved. Our pay rate is \$0.06 / word.

~~~~~  
%%%%%%%%%

SIX: GOT MUSE? RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

We've all heard of random acts of kindness and how surprising yet appreciated they always seem to be. We're writers, though, and we know the best stories involve conflict. No one wants to read about everything going hunky-dory.

For this exercise, create a character that performs a random act of kindness. To introduce conflict, have his or her act backfire into something not so kind. For example, what if your character noticed that the person ahead of him in the checkout line could not find enough money to pay for his purchase? What if your Good Samaritan character pulled out his billfold and peeled off a couple of dollars to complete the stranger's purchase? What if that stranger then stood in wait for your character to emerge from the store so he could rob him of the remaining dollars in his wallet?

Think of your own scenario of a random act of kindness turning into something sinister, unkind, or otherwise unexpected in a negative way.
+++++

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.

+++++
 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.

+++++

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.

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

+++++

[EZine Company Terms of Service Privacy Policy](#)