

The Writers Network News, October 2016

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THE WRITERS NETWORK NEWS

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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WRITER'S QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Walker Evans (born in 1903) wanted to be a writer but suffered from terrible writer's block, so he became a renowned photographer and produced some of the most famous images of the Great Depression. He said, "Stare, pry, listen, eavesdrop. Die knowing something. You are not here long."

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ONE: FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: BIRTHDAYS

Dear Fellow Writers:

In September I can't hide from my Facebook friends that my birthday is the eighteenth. Yes, I'm a Virgo, if you believe in astrology, and although I'm not a strong believer, I do admit that I have most of the traits of a Virgo. I am detail-oriented, for example, which makes me a discriminating, thorough editor. I want to thank all those who wished me a happy birthday this month, but let's examine birthdays in general.

I often question why birthdays are special. Some religions don't celebrate birthdays, and I can see the logic in that belief. After all, everyone has a birthday, yet none of us did anything spectacular to earn the right to celebrate it; our mothers did all the work. We simply had to keep taking one breath after another.

Why then do we find such joy in birthdays? I can't explain it, but every year I look forward to my birthday and hope it's special. I can't help it.

In my teens and early twenties, I always wanted to go out on a date with a boyfriend or potential boyfriend on my birthday. When I grew older, I simply wanted family to acknowledge my birthday. Now that I'm even older, I look forward to hearing from my friends, family members, and grown son on my birthday. He and I never had good singing voices, but laughing all the way, we struggle through the birthday song. It's a tradition. This year my daughter-in-law joined in the cacophony, to my delight.

Sadly I spent time recently taking people off my list of birthdays, people who have gone on to the next world. One of the hardest to delete was Dan Poynter. Many writers know him as the man who legitimized self-publishing. He had a mission to help writers get their books into print. A great speaker, he was also a sweet, caring man. He and I got to know each other because we often spoke at the same conferences

and sometimes shared quiet time sipping a beer. We laughed when we learned that our birthdays were only one day apart, which explained why we had so many interests in common.

The author of some 130 books, many of which helped others, Dan Poynter wrote his final book, *TRANSPLANT HANDBOOK FOR PATIENTS: REPLACING STEM CELLS IN YOUR BONE MARROW*, while he battled leukemia. He died last year, after helping countless thousands of people get published. He often said he did not want people to die with a book still inside them.

When a new numeral ticks into my age column, I take time to think of what I want to accomplish in the time I have left. I'm aware that each day means one less day to finish writing my latest book, for example. That knowledge drives me forward to do what I need to do. So many words, so little time!

Whether our age numbers are high or low, though, we writers work best with a deadline, so I hope all my writer friends have a concept of when they want to complete their first draft, second draft, revisions, and final draft of their books. Let's not leave this earth with a book left inside us!

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.  
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**TWO: ASK THE BOOK DOCTOR**  
About Commas, Believability, Book Promotion, and Testimonials

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: Do I need a comma in dialogue after "Oh" here:

"Oh no, I can't do that."  
"Oh my, that's a good question."

A: No comma is required after "Oh" in your examples; the commas after "no" and "my" are sufficient.

Q: My protagonist had his eye was shot out, but discovers he is a proficient shot himself. He earns the nickname Deadeye. The double meaning seems too awkward and obvious, so do you have any other suggestions for a cool nickname for him?

A: I have no issue with using an obvious nickname such as Deadeye. My concern instead is the fact that depth perception is lost when someone has only one eye, and I am not convinced that someone with no depth perception could be an excellent marksman. I'm not an expert on the subject, though, so I suggest checking with an expert in marksmanship and an expert in vision to be certain such a thing is possible, because even in fiction, every premise must be possible and believable.

Q: I've written a book in philosophy but am having a hard time getting it promoted. Do I need a literary agent for book promotions?

A: The job of a literary agent is to sell your book to a publisher. If the book is already published, a literary agent will be of no help. If you wish, you may want to hire a publicist. Many can be found on the Internet, but be sure to check each publicist's references and successes before hiring anyone.

Q: Referring to your book *WRITE IN STYLE* on the subject of dialogue interruption, your example shows a quotation mark following the em dash. I've just heard from my editor. I hadn't put quotes at the end of interrupted speech because the quote hadn't ended. She put them in, but they went in backwards, so she wondered if she's wrong; perhaps they shouldn't be put in. I checked your book for reference and see that after the dash you do have quotation marks, and they face the correct way. Can you shed some light on the subject?

A: I certainly can. Even if the person speaking did not finish a sentence, the dialogue ended. Quotation marks must appear at the beginning and end of dialogue.

As for which way the quotation marks turn, computers are fallible. When we use curly quotes, an option with some fonts, the computer often get confused, because some keys have more than one function. For example the apostrophe and the single quote mark are the same key on the keyboard, but an apostrophe turns to the left, and an opening single quotation mark should turn to the right. Opening and closing double quotation marks also share the same key on the keyboard, so it is up to the person typing the manuscript to ensure that the marks are turned the intended way. Sometimes typing a period and then quotation marks will fix the issue of quotation marks turned wrong, but then the person typing must go back and delete the period and leave the quotation marks. I am glad the editor knew that every piece of dialogue must begin and end with quotation marks. Let's not let a computer glitch make us question our knowledge.

Q: I can't find anything in Chicago Manual of Style Online about how to edit testimonials for my mom's book of memoirs. How do I find out how to edit testimonials for a book jacket and what to include and omit?

A: No rules govern how to choose, edit, or omit testimonials. It's a matter of taste, room, and message. Each testimonial you include should have a unique message; no two should be too similar. Use the ones that seem appropriate, and edit them for length, grammar, and punctuation. That's about it.

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>.

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

Because some writers find it awkward to write sentences that use “his or her,” they rely on “their” as a pronoun and write sentences such as this one: “Each student turned in their paper on time.” Wrong!

Pronouns ABSOLUTELY must agree with the nouns they modify.

Incorrect: A dancer must practice their steps.

Correct: Dancers must practice their steps.

Incorrect: Each person took their bath.

Correct: Each person took a bath. Each person took his or her bath. Each person bathed. All the people took their baths.

Incorrect: AbaBank offers free checking to their senior account holders.

Correct: AbaBank offers free checking to its senior account holders.

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

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 pronoun “their.” To do so in Microsoft Word, use the Find function (Ctrl + F on a PC and Command + F on a Mac) and search for any use of the pronoun “their” to be sure you used it correctly.

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

#### BODY DONATION: MEMBERS RESPOND IN DROVES

My letter in last month's issue of The Writers Network News struck a chord with some of our members. Here's what some wrote:

“I applaud your decision to donate your body to science. My dad was a science teacher and an educator his entire life, so he (and my mom) decided to donate their bodies when they die. When Daddy died in 2011, it was such a comfort to all of us that he was continuing to help people learn even though his physical life was over. Truly a legacy that keeps on giving. I followed a Quora question for a while that you might find interesting. I was surprised at how many expressed gratitude to the person who used to inhabit that body. <https://www.quora.com/What-is-it-like-for-a-medical-student-to-dissect-a-body-for-the-first-time>. Thanks for sharing!” ~Vanessa Lowry

“You're the second person in three weeks to recommend body donation at end of life. The first recommendation came from a husband and wife about to turn ninety-one who recently made this choice in their own planning. I looked into the process, and based on their comments, probably will go that way myself. So yes, an idea whose time seems finally to have come.” ~Meredith (Rutter) Marple

Member Pam Rauber wrote, “Both my in-laws donated their bodies to science. I was their medical power of attorney and given strict instructions when they passed to call the Emory phone number immediately for pickup. Jokingly the family referred to them as body snatchers.

“After three years, we received a call that my in-laws had been cremated. We chose to take half for a family hike up their favorite mountain. We left the remainder to be buried with other donors in . . . a designated location just for those who donate to science. A large monument marks the location. Each year the names of those who donated are added to this monument.

“We attended the memorial service that is held every spring. A table held vases of roses for family members to drop in the grave. Wreaths from Emory and Mercer Medical Schools cupped the head of the grave.

“We were deeply moved by the doctors from Emory and Mercer who stood before the loved ones and described with dignity what they learned. Each doctor, poised and eloquent, thanked all those who attended for granting the wishes by their loved ones to donate themselves to science. In this particular term, each doctor had his or her very own corpse, unlike doctors before, who had to share, sometimes three to a cadaver.

“This uplifting experience was beyond my expectations, and I came away from that ceremony with the decision to donate [my own body to science.] Glad to hear you jumped on board.”

Longtime fellow editor and friend Chris Roerden wrote, “I said to the Duke specialist that I wonder if I might donate my brain to science. The neurologist said they do have quite a brain bank at Duke, so we are currently exploring that.”

Cyn MacGregor, a member I also admire, wrote, “I read [the book] Stiff some years ago and was similarly captivated. I told my significant other there and then that I wanted my body donated when I die. I don't care if I become a crash test dummy or a medical student's practice cadaver or am put to some other scientific use. I just want to know that my body is going to be helpful to some form of science. My S.O. listened to me and agreed to become a medical cadaver himself. Let's hear it for the power of books!”

Member Joyce Bowden, also a fellow editor, had a different take on the subject of death. She too finds gravesites sad, and because her former husband was a manager with NASA who received a presidential medal for his contribution to the success of the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Shuttle, and Space Station programs, she says, “We're a space family. My daughters plan to honor my desire to have my ashes launched into space. About once a month, cremains of a number of people are launched from Kennedy Space Center. Each person's cremains are placed in a separate tube within a launch vehicle and released at the appropriate distance from Earth. Since it appears we all came from stardust, I figure it's the ultimate recycling.”

Dawn Bell, a member from Florida, wrote, “You've intrigued me with Stiff, and I'll have to add it to my nightstand pile.”

On a different topic, Ruth Hill, a member in British Columbia, had a comment about an answer in last month's “Ask the Book Doctor” column.

She wrote, "Thank you for your well-balanced answer to the dialect question. We have a highly nuanced society, and many people are sick of stereotypes, especially in dialogue writing."

To read 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).

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104 PUBLISHERS THAT ACCEPT UNAGENTED MANUSCRIPTS

Authors Publish offers its 2016 Guide to Manuscript Publishers free for a limited time.

The book includes detailed reviews of 104 publishers that accept submissions directly from writers. If you want to get published, this book is for you. To download, go to <https://www.authorspublish.com/manuscript-guide-2016/>.

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Order PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS today at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

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MORE COMPLAINTS ABOUT CREATESPACE

Granted, the source comes from a competing company that helps people self-publish, but this article is worth reading if you are considering CreateSpace. It could help you fend off potential problems. See <http://writersweekly.com/angela-desk/createspace-complaints-part-iv>.

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CAPITALIZING TITLES

This month's Chicago Manual of Style Online answers the following good question, something I repair often in manuscripts I edit:

"I'm editing a Regency-era romance, and there are several references to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, shortened to Foreign Secretary in some places and Secretary in others. I'm aware of Chicago's preference for lowercase in such circumstances. I find myself using lowercase for the prime minister with ease, but the secretary is giving me pause. I'm worried about creating confusion with the modern idea of clerical secretaries."

To read the answer, go to <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>

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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>.

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TERMINOLOGY WRITERS NEED TO KNOW: SERIAL COMMA; OXFORD COMMA

Many of us learned in school that some commas were not required. We may have learned that sentences do not need a comma before the word "and" in a series, for example, as in the following example: We ordered hot dogs, hamburgers and fish sandwiches.

Along comes Chicago style, however. Because it strives for complete clarity, it's the style of writing that most book publishers prefer. To avoid an unnatural connection between the last two items in a series, Chicago style advocates using a comma before "and" in a series. That specific comma can be called the Oxford comma or the serial comma, and it often differs from the style taught in many schools and used in many newspapers and magazines.

Newspaper and magazine (AP and UPI) style: We ordered hot dogs, hamburgers and fish sandwiches.

Chicago style: We ordered hot dogs, hamburgers, and fish sandwiches.

The use or absence of a comma before "and" in a series is one of those "rules" that are right both ways. If you write for newspapers, you may not use a serial comma, but if you write books, you should know to add a comma before "and" in a series.

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<http://shop.booklogix.com/Write-In-Style-Second-Edition-6295.htm?categoryId=-1>

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ARE PERIODS A THING OF THE PAST?

Say it isn't so! David Crystal, OBE, FBA, FLSW, and honorary professor of linguistics at the University of Wales, Bangor, says sentence periods may be on the way out. He claims that text messages and instant messaging on social networks rarely use periods, so the use of the period at the end of sentences may be coming to an end.

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

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

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BE WARY AND SAVVY

I just read a disturbing statistic: 156,000,000 phishing e-mails go out every single day. Every day! More disturbing is that I've heard from fellow writers who mistakenly responded to a phishing e-mail and met with bad consequences. Phishing e-mails can collect your valuable data and use it for fraud or install malware on your computer, so we need to be aware, alert, and savvy about the cunning ways criminals con cyber victims. Here's an excellent video to help us identify and avoid falling victim to phishing e-mails: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7tbjVSIInvo>.

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I NEED YOUR REVIEWS!

Many people have reviewed WRITE IN STYLE on Amazon, and the reviews are great, but no one has written a review on the website of the publisher of Write in Style. If you've read the latest edition of WRITE IN STYLE, please write a review at <http://shop.booklogix.com/Write-In-Style-Second-Edition-6295.htm?categoryId=-1>

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FIVE: CONTESTS, AGENTS, AND MARKETS

WRITERS DIGEST SHORT SHORT STORY COMPETITION

<http://www.writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions/short-short-story-competition>

Early Bird Deadline: November 15, 2016 - entry fee \$20

We're looking for short fiction stories! Think you can write a winning story in 1,500 words or less? Enter the 17th Annual Writer's Digest Short Short Story Competition for your chance to win \$3,000 in cash, get published in Writer's Digest magazine, and a paid trip to our ever-popular Writer's Digest Conference. The winning entries will be on display in the 16th Annual Writer's Digest Competition Collection.

Final Deadline: December 15, 2016 - entry fee \$25

All deadlines are at 11:59 PM EST on the specified date. The deadline at which time you are entering is also the date that all related materials (when applicable) must be shipped. Mailed in payments must deliver within 5 days of the current posted entry deadline, as listed on the website at the time of your submission. For proof of delivery, please track your package with your shipper - we are not able to confirm individual deliveries. Mailed in payments can take up to 60 days (after the entry deadline) to process.

Shipping address for mailed in payments:

Writer's Digest Short Short Story Competition  
10151 Carver Road, Suite 200  
Blue Ash, OH 45242

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MYSTERY WEEKLY

<http://www.mysteryweekly.com/default.asp>

Submissions: <http://www.mysteryweekly.com/submit.asp>

"Published monthly, our 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.

"Use the form on the submissions page to send us your 1,000 to 10,000-word mystery. Submissions must be original works of short fiction that have never appeared online or in print in any form. We currently pay a half cent per word for accepted stories with a \$25 maximum, but this will increase as our readership grows."

Hm. Mystery Weekly is published monthly, but don't let that confusion stop you from submitting to this online magazine.

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Call for Entries: 2017 NEXT GENERATION INDIE BOOK AWARDS

The Next Generation Indie Book Awards is the largest not-for-profit book awards program open to independent publishers and authors worldwide who have a book written in English and released in 2015, 2016, or 2017 or with a 2015, 2016, or 2017 copyright date. See guidelines at <http://www.indiebookawards.com/enter/guidelines>  
Enter online at: [www.IndieBookAwards.com](http://www.IndieBookAwards.com)  
Entry Deadline for the 2017 awards program – February 17, 2017.

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BOOK REVIEWER YELLOW PAGES  
Accepting submissions for its first anthology series.

We're looking for essays between seven thousand and fifteen thousand words (we are somewhat flexible on the length if the work is of exceptional quality). The genres we are accepting are:

- Romance (Amish Romance, Traditional Romance, Clean Romance) No erotica
- Spooky Stories (creepy stories with ghouls, ghosts, or paranormal phenomena)
- Humor Essays
- Uplifting Stories (non-fiction/true life stories, similar to the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" essays)

For essays that are accepted and published, we will pay between \$100 and \$125, depending on the word count. There is no fee to submit. Accepted authors will also receive a free copy of the printed anthology.

The deadline for submissions is November 30, 2016. The anthology will be published in early 2017 (either spring or summer 2017, depending on the number of submissions we have to review).

Please make sure you have read our genre guidelines before you send in your work. When you send us your submissions, write "ANTHOLOGY SUBMISSION" in the subject line of the email. All submissions must be sent as a word doc and attached to the email.

Send submissions to:  
[sarah@bookrevieweryellowpages.com](mailto:sarah@bookrevieweryellowpages.com)

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2017 ERIC HOFFER BOOK AWARD  
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The Eric Hoffer Book Award recognizes excellence in publishing. There is a category for every book. E-books and chapbooks also accepted.

- \* \$2,000 GRAND PRIZE
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Early entry deadline January 21, 2017.

AWARDS ARE OPEN to academic, independent, small press, and self-published books released or copyrighted in the last two years.

One grand prize will be awarded for the entire contest. In addition, each category will be awarded a winner, runner-up, and multiple honorable mentions.

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SIX: GOT MUSE? OPPOSE YOURSELF

Most of us have strong beliefs, whether religious, political, ethical, or other. For this exercise think of something you believe in and then write a strong essay in opposition to your belief.

Yes, this exercise may require some research you wish you did not have to undertake. You will probably read information you prefer not to read and don't trust. You may also find yourself wincing when you write an opinion you don't believe. Regardless, researching and writing an opinion that opposes your own is a robust exercise to test your powers of persuasion, your writing skills, and your ability to keep an open mind, if only long enough to write a one-page essay.

If it makes you feel better, add a disclaimer or destroy the essay when you finish.

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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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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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