

The Writers Network News, December 2016

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THE WRITERS NETWORK NEWS

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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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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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

"I loathe writing. On the other hand, I'm a great believer in money." --S.J. Perelman

From Wikipedia: Sidney Joseph Perelman (February 1, 1904 – October 17, 1979), known as S. J. Perelman, was an American humorist, author, and screenwriter. He is best known for his humorous short pieces written over many years for The New Yorker. He also wrote for several other magazines, including Judge, as well as books, scripts, and screenplays. Perelman received an Academy Award for screenwriting in 1956.

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ONE: FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: MY BLESSINGS JAR

Dear Fellow Writers:

This past January I saw a meme on Facebook that said to keep a jar in which to write down my blessings. I believe in having an attitude of gratitude, so I grabbed an old storage jar and made it my blessings jar, with no idea what lay ahead. I perched my blessings jar atop my microwave, where I saw it every day, and at first I found something to write down almost every day. I wrote brief notes whenever I felt blessed or thankful, and sometimes the notes were as simple as "I had a good night's sleep." As the weeks passed, I found something for which to be thankful almost every day. If I connected with an old friend, received unexpected income, or simply had a deep talk with my sister, I felt blessed, and I wrote down the event and put it in my blessings jar.

The weeks and months passed, and my blessings piled up. They included a delightful river cruise through the Netherlands and Belgium, for example. In April, though, I hit a medical snag. Dealing with chronic pain, I grew grumpy and introverted. I turned into a recluse, concentrated on my bad health, and forgot about the blessings jar. I tried various methods and medications for my pain, but nothing provided much relief. I went from doctor to doctor and endured test after annoying test. Although I continued to work, I had to cancel several speaking engagements and avoid other commitments, because I was in a fight with my mind and body. I forgot to be thankful for the good things that were still happening, even amid the bad.

One day I put something in my microwave, and on top of it sat my blessings jar, begging for attention. I quickly jotted down the fact that one

doctor finally gave me some medicine that relieved the pain for a good four hours at a time, allowing me finally to get some sleep. The next day I found something else to be thankful for. As the days passed, my jar again begin filling with notes as I recognized more and more blessings. Eventually I learned that I had a tumor that had to be removed, and I faced a major operation. Nevertheless, I felt thankful that I finally knew what was wrong and had a treatment plan. While in the hospital I felt thankful for all the caring staff members and especially thankful that pain blockers helped reduce my discomfort while I learned to live with my new, slightly changed body. When I was released from the hospital, I was thankful my sister begged me to stay with her for a few days, until we were both sure I could once again live alone and take care of my dog on my own. As the days passed, I was thankful that with the help of drugs, I was able to endure less pain from the major operation than I endured before the operation. I could take far less pain medicine, too, which was also a blessing. Yes, even as I was recovering from a serious operation, I found reasons to be thankful, reasons to feel blessed. It's odd how a big setback can make a person feel more thankful and more blessed with each passing day. I continued to find good things and blessings in my life, and I continued to feel better and better.

After months of recuperating, I'm almost back to normal, and my large blessings jar is filling up. I continue to be thankful for every little and big blessing that comes my way. Some days my biggest blessing is a good pedicure, but it is still a blessing.

When I think back on the year, I wonder which came first, the return of my attitude of gratitude or the improvement in my health. It's hard to say. All I know is that I've started a tradition, and I'm going to keep it up. I may empty my 2016 blessings jar at the end of this year, but I'll gradually fill it again in 2017, I'm sure.

We are writers. Writers write. From childhood I have kept diaries and journals. I've always written about important events in my life. For the first time this year, though, I've written down my blessings and kept them in a jar. On some days all I could write was that I had four hours without pain that day, and those four hours were a blessing. Now I can write that my life is returning to normal, I've regained my strength, and I am thankful to return to normal life again. Soon I will be thankful for having a house full of family members and friends at Christmas, too. The blessings never cease, if we but look for them.

Never in all my years of writing have I had such physical evidence of all the blessings in my life.

If you are reading this message, you are a writer, too. Consider starting a blessings jar in January and watch your blessings increase visually, right before your eyes. Let me know how it goes for you.

To all my readers, I hope you have happy holidays, however you celebrate. Even if you don't celebrate, I hope you have a happy life filled with blessings, whether or not you write them down.

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

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## TWO: ASK THE BOOK DOCTOR about How to Integrate Your Opinions into Fiction and the Value of Print Ads

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: I have strong political opinions, especially in light of the recent presidential election in America. I'm not one to write a letter to the editor or other nonfiction essays and opinions, but is there a safe way to express my opinions through fiction?

A: Absolutely, and you can have great fun doing so. Conflict and suspense drive fiction, so you have the perfect setup in fiction to voice your opinions through one or more characters. You can then add conflict by having other characters disagree with the character or characters' opinions and act based on that disagreement.

When two or more characters disagree, argue, attempt to make their points, or act out of anger or disagreement, conflict arises. Remember, though, that a strong plot must unfold and carry the story. Perhaps the plot could even involve the characters' differing opinions and therefore place one or both characters under suspicion for a crime.

Fiction does have to be believable and somewhat based on truth. As a result, an interesting side effect of creating conflict through differences of opinion is that you will be forced to study, understand, and write about the opinions that oppose your own. While the exercise may not change your opinion, you will be even more informed than you already are, and your readers will learn a great deal of interesting details when they read your work of fiction.

Q: I've been given a 45 percent discount on an ad in The New York Times, where I can promote my self-published novella. The ad would cost me only \$3,000. What do you think?

A: I'm not a book promoter, but an editor, so I cannot professionally evaluate the worth of such an offer. I can advise you only of my opinion of the financial aspects, which means I'll speak from my gut feelings, rather than giving professional advice on the subject. Nevertheless, here goes:

Do the math. I will pick a number out of the air as an example. If you are fortunate enough to make \$5 per book sold, you would have to sell 600 books on the one day the advertisement appeared, simply to recoup your expenses, before you even made a profit. I suspect, but have no knowledge to back up my suspicions, that only the bestselling books by well-known authors might sell as many as 600 copies in one day. I also wonder if an ad in a newspaper in print or online would compel readers to stop reading the paper and either put the newspaper down and go online or switch to another website to order a book online.

It's been my experience that I sell the most books wherever I appear in person. Print ads, on the other hand, have given me weak responses in terms of sales. For example, one particular ad resulted in my selling one copy of one of my books. Pitiful.

I won't delve into the fact that few people even subscribe to a newspaper anymore, because in the end it is up to you how you spend your promotional dollars. I suspect you can find cheaper, more effective ways to promote a novella, however. I suggest reading a book on how to

promote a book. I'll bet (but I don't know for sure) that such books do not recommend buying advertisements in a daily newspaper.

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: BAD/BADLY

Even though it may not sound right, people do not feel badly, they feel bad. Badly is an adverb that describes the manner in which something is done. He felt badly means he did a poor job of feeling with his fingers. Correct: He felt bad, because he played tennis badly.

If you suspect you or your characters may have used the word "badly" incorrectly, you can easily repair the flaw. Use my Find and Refine Method and hunt through your manuscript. In this case you will search your manuscript for the word "badly." To do so in Microsoft Word, use the Find function (Ctrl + F on a PC and Command + F on a Mac) and search for every use of the word "badly," to be sure you used it correctly.

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

#### MEMBER'S BOOK HITS BESTSELLER LIST

Member Susan Klaus sent me the following note: "Harpy II made Amazon's Bestseller List in Epic Fantasy." Wow! Way to go, Susan!

Klaus calls WAYLAID "Harpy II" because it is the second in a fantasy trilogy involving half-man, half birds called harpies. Tor purchased the first in the three-book series, FLIGHT OF THE GOLDEN HARPY, but the publisher did not buy the entire series, despite the book's great reviews and strong following. Susan wisely chose to self-publish the second in the series and may eventually self-publish the third, as well.

In the interest of full disclosure, Susan is a client of mine. I've edited quite a few of her books, most of which have sold to traditional publishers. I admit a special affinity for the Harpy series, though. I simply love how she layers her stories and peoples them with fascinating characters with distinct motivations that often conflict with the motivations of other characters. To purchase WAYLAID, see <http://tinyurl.com/zu9y7u8>.

#### ~~~~~ 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.

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

#### ~~~~~ NEED A NONDISCLOSURE AGREEMENT FORM?

As an editor many clients have asked me to provide a nondisclosure form that I've signed promising not to disclose the contents of the books I am about to edit. I explain that I'm not an attorney and won't supply the form, but if a client wants to provide a form, I will gladly sign it. I have made a living editing books for a quarter of a century. I could not have stayed in business if I disclosed the contents of my clients' books, so I see no need for such a form. If a client wants to go to the trouble to send me such a form, though, I'll sign it. Where can a client (or you) find such a form for free? Check out <http://tinyurl.com/j97cn8p>

#### ~~~~~ POV: THIRD PERSON OMNISCIENT VERSUS LIMITED

Reedsy has posted an informative blog on the advantages and disadvantages of various types of point of view. See <http://tinyurl.com/gm8xxv9h>

#### ~~~~~ SALE PRICED! 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. E-book: \$8.95. Paperback is usually \$14.95 plus \$4.99 S & H (total: \$19.94 US), but read on. To pay the full price or to order the e-book, go to <http://tinyurl.com/lexp7n>.

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Order ASK THE BOOK DOCTOR: HOW TO BEAT THE COMPETITION AND SELL YOUR WRITING directly from me. Send me an e-mail ([bzebra@aol.com](mailto:bzebra@aol.com)) to ask me how.

#### ~~~~~ MORE E-BOOK PRICE-FIXING NEWS

Apple lost its final appeal in the e-book price-fixing lawsuit. Learn how Apple's loss is Amazon's win, and how the loss will impact the e-book market and publishing business. See <http://tinyurl.com/zsbjn9r>

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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>.

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CMOS ONLINE Q & A

This month's Chicago Manual of Style Online answers the following good question:

"Which is the proper spelling of a generic age: 30s and 40s or 30's and 40's?"

The answer may surprise you, so I recommend that you read the answer to this question and many more at <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>

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WRITE IN STYLE

WRITE IN STYLE: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing: The second edition, has won four awards; the first edition won three awards. The book has won seven awards in total, and readers are praising it on Amazon. Copies are selling fast on Amazon, but to be truthful, I make a little more per book if you order it through my publisher, rather than through Amazon. To order go to <http://tinyurl.com/zeq6z5g>.

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FIVE: CONTESTS, AGENTS, AND MARKETS

AUSTRALIAN BOOK REVIEW ACCEPTING POETRY

ABR publishes new poems in each issue. We publish established and emerging poets - from Australia and elsewhere. We welcome submissions of no more than six poems in a single Word file or individual Word files. Poems appearing in the print magazine currently attract payment of \$400 (Australian dollars). Submit poems in English only.

Poets should submit their work to ABR via email: [poetry@australianbookreview.com.au](mailto:poetry@australianbookreview.com.au)

Also, ABR publishes Poem of the Week podcasts via our website, soundcloud, and iTunes.

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GEORGIA AUTHOR OF THE YEAR (GAYA) OPEN FOR NOMINATIONS

To be considered a Georgia author and thus eligible for nomination for GAYA, the author must have been a resident of Georgia when the nominated book was written, though she or he may have since moved out of state; or the author must be currently living in Georgia when the book is nominated. See <http://tinyurl.com/jjk7hsp> for submission guidelines and forms. Yes, if you and your book meet the guidelines, you can nominate your own book; most people do.

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SCREENPLAYS WANTED

Screencraft  
8306 Wilshire Blvd #622,  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211  
Phone: (855) 503-5500  
[support@screencraft.org](mailto:support@screencraft.org)

Competition rules and entry found here: <https://screencraft.org/family/#rules>

This Screencraft competition calls for family-friendly feature-film screenplays. Families are the most influential movie-going audience, yet there's a surprising lack of high-quality films that appeal to the whole family. This contest avoids the genre bias of some other contests by seeking exclusively screenplays that are life-affirming stories of faith, courage, hope, and love. Whether you have a family drama, comedy, animation, or action-adventure film, we want to read your script. We have producers who are hungry for high-quality "four-quadrant" projects to package and produce. Winners will be announced in February. Will your script win? Submissions are accepted via electronic submission through the website only, between November 4, 2016, and Dec 30, 2016. Entry fee for each screenplay is \$59. There is no limit to the number of projects you may submit.

First place prize, \$ 1,500 cash travel stipend, a phone call (or in-person introduction) to a top Hollywood literary manager, and circulation of winning screenplay synopsis to our network of more than sixty entertainment industry professionals, including targeted introductions to relevant family-friendly film producers and development executives.

Second place prize, \$500 cash, a phone consultation with a top Hollywood literary manager, and circulation of screenplay synopsis to our network of industry managers, agents, producers, and studio executives.

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SIX: GOT MUSE? Jabberwokly

Jabberwokly

“Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe . . .”

Do you recognize the beginning of the poem “Jabberwocky” from Lewis Carroll’s THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS? That poem has been stuck in my head since my father read the Alice series to my siblings and me, way back in the 1950s. As a kid I was told that the words to the poem meant nothing, but scholars greater than me have translated it using old English words, and Lewis Carroll admitted to combining some words to make new ones.

I found the entire poem and some interesting potential translations here: <http://tinyurl.com/jog82fj>.

For this exercise, whether you are a poet or a prose writer, you will read the full poem and then do one or more of these things:

1. Rewrite the poem using your own words, whether real or combined words, following the rhythm of the original, but not necessarily using the same rhymes;
2. Rewrite the poem in free verse using your own words, whether real or combined words;
3. Write in prose your own translation of the meaning of the poem; and/or
4. Write your own prose inspired by the poem.

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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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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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