

The Writers Network News, September 2018

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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 email 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, a free service that converts long links to short ones.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

"I write in order to attain that feeling of tension relieved and function achieved, which a cow enjoys on giving milk." —H. L. Mencken

Henry Louis Mencken (1880–1956), usually designated H. L. Mencken, was a 20th-century journalist, satirist, social critic, cynic, and freethinker known as the "Sage of Baltimore" and the "American Nietzsche." He is often regarded as one of the most influential American writers of the early 20th century.

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EMAIL CHANGE? DON'T ACCIDENTALLY GET DELETED!

If your address changes and our email to you bounces, our system automatically unsubscribes you. If you plan to change your email address, take a moment to subscribe again with your new address. We cannot change your address for you, because of our double-opt-in, no-spam policy. Go to <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> and sign up with your new address.

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ONE: FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: CLASSIFICATIONS: LIMITING OR INSPIRING?

Dear Fellow Writers:

My son and his wife are decluttering their house. I find their intentions interesting, because the only clutter I see in their house is behind the bar, which is loaded with perhaps more than a hundred bottles of concoctions ranging from alcoholic beverages to flavorings. My son, a veterinarian by trade, is an amateur bartender skilled in concocting exotic cocktails for guests.

Regardless of her austere house already, my daughter-in-law is further decluttering by scanning photos and other documents and getting rid of the originals. While I commend the concept, I worry that technology changes. I have thrown away hundreds of cassette tapes, for example, including some old seminars I had produced. To avoid being outdated by technology, I'm keeping my writing in printed form. Do other writers feel this way? I don't know. I did know a writer who wore his manuscripts. Okay, they were on flash drives attached to cords that he wore around his neck, but my point is that backup is essential, however you do it.

Some of the documents my kids scanned, it turns out, included early collections of my poetry. I used to write poetry often, and once a year I created an auto-anthology. Some of the poems my Nancy, daughter-in-law, scanned dated back as much as fifty years. Nancy sent me copies, so I read some poems I haven't seen in many decades. To my surprise some of poems still stand out. I shouldn't be surprised. I took courses led by the poet laureate of South Carolina years ago, and my poetry has won minor awards. Some of it has even been accepted into several literary magazines and anthologies. More than two decades have passed since I've even submitted a poem for potential publication, though. In truth I rarely write poetry anymore.

I have a theory that I wrote poetry when I was depressed, stressed, or distressed, which happened often when I was younger. Now that I'm older, life is easier. I'm in a good relationship, I'm doing for a living something that I love, and I'm debt free. I don't need the release (therapy) that writing poetry used to give me.

As I read those old poems and remembered where I used to be in my life, I'm relieved that I'm more relaxed about life now. A part of me, though, wishes I could still write poetry the way I used to. I might write three poems a year, now, whereas my poetry used to be copious enough to fill an auto-anthology a year.

Many poets write plentiful poetry their entire lives. Ah, maybe that's the difference. Poets consider themselves poets. While I've always been a writer, I never considered myself a poet per se. If I considered myself a poet, I would still write poetry often. We are what we think we are.

It makes me curious about my subscribers. Are you a poet? Are you a novelist? Are you a creative nonfiction writer? Are you a journalist? Have you classified yourself? Do classifications limit you or inspire you? This topic is a good one for conversation. Send me your thoughts by email.

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 subscription. Simply go to <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> to subscribe to The Writers Network News. My promise: I never share your address or send out spam.

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TWO: ASK THE BOOK DOCTOR

GIFT BOOKS, PARALLEL ITEMS IN A LIST, USING AN EDITOR, and COVER LETTER FORMAT

By Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas

Q: I've created a series of interactive gift books. I think my idea would be great for a company like Hallmark, Peter Pauper Press, or Abrams, but I am having a difficult time locating agents that state they are looking for these types of book ideas. It seems that agents are mainly interested in fiction or nonfiction manuscripts, and my idea doesn't fall under these categories. If major companies like Hallmark accept submissions only through literary agents and I can't find agents interested in this type of submission, how do I get my idea to these companies?

A: First off, if I recall correctly, Hallmark produces all its products in house and does not buy from freelancers. I could be wrong about its policy, though.

More importantly, you may have focused in the wrong direction. Hallmark aside, several gift book producers accept submissions directly from the creators, so you may not need an agent. I saw at least a handful of gift-book publishers listed on [WritersMarket.com](http://WritersMarket.com) that don't require agents, and you may be able to find even more. I recommend that you look for publishers instead of agents and follow the publishers' submissions guidelines.

Q: I read that lists must be parallel. Does that mean I have to put all lists in vertical format?

A: I fear you may have misunderstood what you read. Lists can be vertical or horizontal, but by "parallel" it means that the items in the list must be similarly structured. For example, in the following sentence, the items are not parallel: "I like to dance and swimming." Parallel would be either "I like dancing and swimming" or "I like to dance and swim."

Here are some other examples: Not parallel: The things we must take to the beach include: 1) towels 2) bathing suits 3) food 4) and to leave on time. Parallel: The things we must take to the beach include: 1) towels 2) bathing suits, and 3) food. We also have to leave on time. Not parallel: Joan learned to dance, play the flute, write music, and cooking. Parallel: Joan learned to dance, play the flute, write music, and cook.

Not parallel: Dog training includes the following:

1. Sit
2. Stay
3. Learning to come when called
4. How to walk on a leash

Parallel: Dog training includes learning to do the following things:

1. Sit
2. Stay
3. Come when called
4. Walk on a leash

Q: Does using an editor pave the way to an agent or publisher?

A: If any editing service says that using its editor means guaranteed acceptance by an agent or publisher, it is giving you a high-pressure sales pitch. Run far away!

Here's the reality of the situation: Using an editor is a wise move and definitely improves the chances of finding an agent or publisher, but even the best editor in the world can't make a bad book marketable. In addition many excellent manuscripts never reach the right agent or publisher or otherwise get rejected for reasons that have nothing to do with the contents or editing of the book. We've all heard stories of bestselling books that met with dozens of rejections before they were accepted. J. K. Rowling's first Harry Potter book is a prime example. It was rejected twelve times before Bloomsbury accepted it. One publisher even told Rowling not to quit her day job.

My advice is this: Write the book as best you can. Hire an editor to correct errors and give you feedback on anything you can improve. Revise the book if you agree with your editor, and then submit it to agents or publishers with confidence that you've submitted the best possible version of your book. If it gets rejected, submit it somewhere else.

Q: Do you have an example of a cover letter format?

A: A printed cover letter is a business letter, so any business-letter format is fine. Your name, address, and phone number should be at the top followed by the date and the name and address of where it is being submitted. It can be in any standard font, such as Times New Roman. You can choose to have all the items flush left, and if so, add an extra space between paragraphs. If you indent the

paragraphs, don't add a blank line between paragraphs.

Many publishers and agents prefer email these days, and if submitting a cover letter by email, the format is unimportant. The manuscript itself, however, should still follow standard manuscript format, which is double-spaced, twelve-point type with each new paragraph indented and no extra spaces between paragraphs except to indicate a scene change in fiction or a subject change in nonfiction. The font can be Times New Roman or Courier, and the pages should have at least an inch margin on all sides. Remember to space only once after a period or colon.

Bobbie Christmas, book editor, author of Write In Style: Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing, and owner of Zebra Communications, will answer your questions, too. Send them to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com). Read more "Ask the Book Doctor" questions and answers at <https://www.zebraeditor.com/>.

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>.

Bobbie Christmas's award-winning second edition of WRITE IN STYLE: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing is available from Amazon at <https://tinyurl.com/y7ppcdkd> or buy it directly from me at <https://tinyurl.com/y7p9xkbb>.  
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### THREE: SUBJECTS OF INTEREST TO WRITERS

#### MEMBERS WRITE...

Pam Rauber sent a photo of a menu with the following manuslip on a menu item:

Grilled chicken breast and shrimp topped with our special sauce.

It does make you wonder what the restaurant does with that sauce.

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Steve Moore reported that he used a link in my newsletter (<https://www.writermag.com/2018/07/24/self-publishing//>) to read about self-publishing versus traditional publishing. He responded, "I read it and had a comment, but wouldn't post it. Reason: some outfit called DISQUS wanted all my online info!"

Steve asked that I not encourage writers to use such outfits.

Well, I don't encourage or discourage the use of such outfits. I read the article and thought it had some good information, even though I had written a similar white paper on the subject several years ago. I didn't try to comment on the site, though, so I didn't know that those who want to leave a comment get hit with a request for personal information. In a note at the bottom of every issue of The Writers Network News I advise my readers that I don't investigate every company and therefore cannot endorse any outfit other than my own.

Steve continues, though, and says, "As a pacifier for myself I will comment on that article here: The article has two egregious errors, which I immediately noted upon reading because I'm now a mongrel (both indie and traditional): (1) Many small presses do NOT need an agent, and they will often provide more TLC than a publisher that requires an agent; and (2) upfront costs for indies become onerous for those who publish several books this way (which was my case), so \$0 upfront can be a significant positive. NO indie should be 100% DIY, because a more professional product is obtained by paying pros to do editing, formatting, cover art, and some critical PR and marketing. The publishers don't pay for the latter, though."

Steve's website (<http://stevenmmoore.com/free-stuff-contests/>) has free information, free stuff, and free contests for writers.

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Sharon Cook wrote, "In your latest newsletter, you featured Cherry Weiner, literary agent. I attempted to send her a brief email, but it was returned. Upon further investigation, there is no contact information for her and it says she's closed to queries. Please advise."

I responded, "It's a shame. Agents come and go. They accept queries and then they get overloaded and stop accepting queries. They change agencies. They go out of business. Things happen.

"I cannot research every lead; my newsletter advises that I don't endorse any business other than my own.

"My advice is to move on and look for another agent. I'll keep posting agents I hear about, but I cannot guarantee their information won't change between the time I hear about them and the time they appear in The Writers Network News. I have no control over agents' activities."

Oh, how I wish I did have control over a few agents, though!

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FREE SEMINAR AND WEBINAR

Saturday, September 22, 2018
11:00 a.m. to noon
<https://www.booklogix.com/upcoming-events>.

DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU!

During this side-splitting seminar/webinar, Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas reveals hilarious examples of flawed writing drawn directly from manuscripts she has seen during her forty-plus years of editing. Be entertained while you learn how to avoid the same errors in your own work. Once you hear examples of what she calls "manuslips," you will never make the same slips yourself. Laugh and learn your way to better, stronger, more marketable writing.

You'll learn about the following:

- Dangling participles and missing modifiers
- Word choice

- Juxtaposition
- Purple prose
- Pronoun confusion
- Huh? (things that defy description)
- Eyes (Her favorite; wait until you hear this one!)

Get your link to the webinar or save your in-person place today! Go to <https://www.booklogix.com/upcoming-events>.

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MORE MANUSLIPS

In my Manuslips file I keep a list of errors I find that either tickle my fancy or prove a point about clear writing. I use quite a few manuslips in WRITE IN STYLE too.

Here's the manuslip of the month:

The house looked empty. We thought it was a bandit.

[Frankly I had to read much farther into the manuscript to understand the author meant the characters thought the house was abandoned, not a bandit.]

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SAVE \$\$\$ ON EDITING

The sixth edition of PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS is selling quickly. It includes the latest, most important changes in Chicago style that writers and editors should know. It answers vital questions while you write or edit your manuscript. Order here: <https://tinyurl.com/y8rpo3jp>.

Here are some of the issues PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS puts to rest:

- Where do the commas belong? Where do they not belong? (page 59)
- What's the difference between "which" and "that?" (page 174)
- What is a dangling modifier? How can you repair it? (page 66)
- What is right, "towards" or "toward?" (page 180)
- Which is right, "assure," "insure," or "ensure?" (page 40)
- When should you write out a number? When should you use the numeral? (page 128)
- Which is correct, T-shirt, tee shirt, or t-shirt? (page 171)

PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS answers these and more than 700 other questions vital to writers and editors.

Order a printed or PDF copy here: <https://tinyurl.com/y8rpo3jp>.

PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS: A Book Doctor's Desk Reference is the same resource that many book editors use.

Order here: <https://www.zebraeditor.com/book/purge-your-prose-of-problems-a-book-doctors-desk-reference/>

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SIMON & SCHUSTER BACKS OMAROSA MANIGAULT NEWMAN

According to CNN, Simon & Schuster issued a reply to the Trump campaign filing an arbitration action against Omarosa Manigault Newman, often referred to by the single name Omarosa. She is a reality television show participant and former political aide to President Trump who wrote a memoir about her time in the White House. The Trump campaign claims Omarosa's memoir titled Unhinged: An Insider's Account of the Trump White House, violates her nondisclosure agreement. "At base, your letter is nothing more than an obvious attempt to silence legitimate criticism of the president," wrote Simon & Schuster's lawyer in response to a letter from Trump's campaign lawyers. "My clients will not be intimidated by hollow legal threats."

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EASY ACCESS TO BOBBIE'S BLOGS

Read creative writing tips as well as some of my personal experiences. Access the Write In Style blog here: <https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/>

On the other hand:

For my relationship-related blog, see my blog titled "Neurotica: Crazy Stories of Love, Lust, and Letting Go." If you like to read about disastrous dates and ridiculous relationships, I've got a ton of them, and they all happened to me. Some are funny, some are a little sexy, some are sad, and all true. <https://neuroticastories.blogspot.com>.

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BECOME A NEWS WRITER

An article on TheBalanceCareers.com gives great information on how to write a news article. See <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/news-writing-2316089>

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BE MY FRIEND ON FACEBOOK

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

FOLLOW ZEBRA COMMUNICATIONS ON FACEBOOK

Get news, writing-related cartoons, immediate updates, and other good stuff for writers.

Like and follow Zebra Communications at <https://tinyurl.com/ydyn3pcu>.

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CMOS ONLINE Q & A

Someone wrote to The Chicago Manual of Style Online to ask the following question:

Q. Throughout CMOS, as well as in Webster's, I see that some guidelines or spellings apply to "formal" writing and others to "informal" writing. How do you define formal and informal writing?

To get the answer to this question and many more based on Chicago style, go to <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>.

THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE sets the standard in book publishing for issues such as punctuation, capitalization, and much more. If you write fiction or nonfiction books, you will want to know about Chicago style or be sure to use a professional book editor intimately familiar with Chicago style.

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WRITE IN STYLE: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing

WRITE IN STYLE teaches writers how to improve their manuscripts and create a fresh voice.

Order your copy today at <https://tinyurl.com/y8fp5nym>.

WRITE IN STYLE is not about grammar. It teaches writers how to strengthen their writing style. For grammar, punctuation, and rules of Chicago style, order PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS at <https://tinyurl.com/y8rpo3jp>.

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FLORIDA WRITERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

Every October FWA puts on one of the best and biggest conferences in the Southeast. I'll be one of many people giving helpful seminars. My subjects are as follows:

- What is a Fresh Voice & How Can You Find Yours?
- Travel Writing for Fun and (a Little) Profit
- Chicago Style: What is It? Does Your Book Comply?

I hope to see you there.

To learn more or to sign see <https://floridawriters.net/conferences/florida-writers-conference-2018/>

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FOUR: CONTESTS, AGENTS, AND MARKETS

HURRY! GET PAID \$40/HOUR, BUT ACT QUICKLY

Deadline: August 31

<https://submissions.cardsagainsthumanity.com/>

Cards Against Humanity (a board game) is looking for new writers. "If your cards are solid, you'll join our pool of remote contributors and make \$40/hr. writing jokes as needed — which is 'sometimes.'"

To see samples of what it seeks, go to the website above. Heck, go there anyway, because the sample cards are so much fun to read.

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AWKWARD MERMAID  
<https://www.awkwardmermaid.com/>

Awkward mermaid is an online literary community and safe space for writers to share freely their experiences with mental illness. Think of it as a place where magic and mental illness can coexist. These can be personal battles you yourself have experienced, or it can be that of a loved one, a friend, a parent, etc. Whatever moves you; whatever it is you have to say on the subject. We're not here to define what an experience can be; you are. We welcome all forms of creative writing: fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. As of now, we don't believe in word length: there are no minimums or maximums.

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FIRESIDE MAGAZINE
SHORT STORY SUBMISSION OPEN FOR 15 DAYS IN DECEMBER
<https://firesidefiction.com/submissions#short-stories>

We welcome previously unpublished (including on Patreon or a blog) work from all writers, and we are especially interested in seeing work from people of color, LGBTQIA+ people, disabled people, members of religious minorities, and people outside the United States. We strongly encourage submissions from people of those backgrounds and all others whom traditional publishing has historically excluded, and we believe that any story you want to tell is a valid story, regardless of whether it centers on issues related to being part of a marginalized group. WHEN TO SUBMIT: Our next short story reading period will be from December 15 to 31, 2018.

We accept short stories up to 4,000 words. Our budget allows us to pay for up to 7,000 words per month, which means we are always going to buy more shorter fiction than longer stories. We especially love to see very short pieces that still tell great stories and make us laugh, cry, or transport us to new worlds.

For submission guidelines see the website listed above.

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28 PARENTING BLOGS AND MAGAZINES THAT PAY FREELANCE WRITERS

TheWriteLife.com gives details here: <https://thewritelife.com/28-parenting-blogs-and-magazines-that-pay-writers/>

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CALL FOR ENTRIES

2019 Next Generation Indie Book Awards
Entry Guidelines available at: <http://www.indiebookawards.com/enter/guidelines>

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 2017, 2018, or 2019 or with a 2017, 2018, or 2019 copyright date.

Enter online at: <http://www.indiebookawards.com/>
Entry Deadline for the 2019 awards program – February 15, 2019.

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STONESONG LITERARY AGENCY  
<http://stonesong.com>

Stonesong was founded in 1979 to produce and package nonfiction books. Today Stonesong has three arms: a literary agency representing a wide range of successful nonfiction, fiction, children's, middle grade, and adult authors, including numerous bestsellers; a custom publishing division that can deliver anything from edited manuscript to finished books and ebooks for organizations and institutions; and a book production/packaging division that offers design and production services to all major publishers.

Our system is set up so that every email query receives an automatic reply confirming receipt. After that, we will be in touch only in the event we would like to request more material. This is because we receive such a volume of submissions that it is impossible for us to respond individually to every query. If you have not received a request from us within twelve weeks, consider that we have passed. If we request additional material, we will of course respond with a specific reply.

We request that queries be submitted in the following way:  
– Please review the agent biographies on the About Us page and submit your query addressed to one agent: Alison Fargis, Judy Linden, Emmanuelle Morgen, Maria Ribas, Leila Campoli, Alyssa Jennette, Melissa Edwards, Madelyn Burt, or Adrienne Rosado at [submissions@stonesong.com](mailto:submissions@stonesong.com). Categories we do not represent include plays, screenplays, and poetry.  
– Include the word "query" in the subject line of your email to ensure we receive it and it isn't filtered as spam.  
– Include the first chapter or first ten pages of your work pasted into the body of your email, so that we may get a sense of your writing. Please do not send attachments.

For complete submissions information see <http://stonesong.com/literary-agency/submissions/>.

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Send it in the body of an email to [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or [bzebra@aol.com](mailto:bzebra@aol.com).  
Deadline: 18th 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 <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> and signing up for The Writers Network News.

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With the exception of Zebra Communications, information in this newsletter is not to be construed as an endorsement. Research all information and study every stipulation before you enter a competition, pitch or accept an assignment, spend money, or sell your work.

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

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