

The Writers Network News, November 2018 issue

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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Meet Fellow Writers

Do you live in or visit metro Atlanta? Sign up for notices of local (but sporadic) meetings today! Send your name and 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

"Writing is not hard. Just get paper and pencil, sit down and write it as it occurs to you. The writing is easy—it's the occurring that's hard." —Stephen Leacock

Stephen P. H. Butler Leacock, (December 30, 1869–March 28, 1944) was a Canadian teacher, political scientist, writer, and humorist.

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ONE: FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: LIFE AS MATERIAL

Dear Fellow Writers:

This month my sister and I drove to Altamonte Springs, Florida, where I gave several workshops and many interviews at the Florida Writers Association Annual Conference. While I worked, talked, and recorded podcasts and videos, my sister attended many of the workshops.

My sister specializes in writing what she calls journals. I call them journal entries or personal experience essays, but everyone else simply calls them funny. She can take the smallest incident and turn it into an essay that would make anyone laugh out loud. As a result she's fun to be around; she finds humor in everything. As an even more rewarding result, she's pulled her journals into two books to add to her first book, which was her autobiography.

One of the workshops my sister attended focused on writing humor. I suspect she could have given the workshop, yet she still learned even more about humor writing. That's the thing about going to seminars, workshops, or conferences and listening to podcasts or watching videos about writing. We writers always have more that we can learn, no matter how much we think we already know.

Usually when I go to conferences I have time to slip into other workshops, but not this past weekend, because of my overloaded schedule. The conference leaders had scheduled almost every minute of my time. Although it tired me out, I felt thrilled to be of help to so many writers in so many ways. More than 600 people attended the event.

The Florida Writers Association is going to start a regular podcast for writers soon, and the president interviewed us speakers for podcasts to be released in the future. She had great questions to ask me about writing and editing. When she lets me know the podcasts will begin, I'll put the information in this newsletter

Author Solutions also recorded a video interview with me while I was there. The interviewer said she'd let me know when that video is available too. In addition, many attendees paid a small fee for the privilege of bringing about ten pages of their manuscripts and getting constructive feedback from me. Interestingly the most common flaw I noted was that the story started too late in the manuscript. Remember to start with a strong hook, folks.

Back to the subject of life as material, though, and how my sister can find humor in anything, my sister and I had many experiences on the way down to Florida, while in Florida together, and on our way back. We laughed ourselves through the tough times as much as we laughed at the funny things. I have decided not to tell much about the actual trip, because whatever she writes about it will be much funnier through her perspective and words. I cannot wait to see my sister's journal about our trip.

I've heard many times that everyone's first novel is also a sort of autobiography thinly disguised as fiction. I know it's true in my case. My first attempt at a novel involved a challenge I was having with my alcoholic mother. I did a great deal of research and wrote a few chapters before I realized I was bored, so my readers would be too. My second unpublished novel was about a married couple that takes in a foster child who disrupts the family in every possible way. Guess who took in a foster child when she was still married? Duh. Guess whose foster child disrupted her family in every possible way. Duh again. I changed enough of the characters and story to make it fiction, of course, but I've never tried to publish it. Now I wish I could have written the story in a humorous way, the way my sister views things, but we are not the same people, even though we have lived through many of the same events. Regardless, life has been the best material for both of us.

How do you view life? Is it good material? Is it funny? Is it dramatic? Is it illuminating a bigger picture, a revelation? Is it about overcoming obstacles? Stories are everywhere, aren't they? Enjoy today. Write about it tomorrow.

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

### SECOND-EDITION DECISIONS, CAPITALIZING TITLES, AND QUERIES

By Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas

Q: I wrote a book about fifteen years ago and sold the rights to a publishing house. The book sold slowly, but it finally sold out. The publisher would not commit to printing a second edition, so I had the publisher return my rights. When I looked the book over, I saw that it could benefit from more work, so I created a second edition. Should I try to sell the second edition to another publisher, or should I self-publish it?

A: The question of whether to self-publish or seek a traditional publisher is one that many of us face today. In "olden days" self-publishing was considered vanity publishing and was not highly regarded. Because of the difficulty of finding a traditional publisher willing to pay all expenses, much less give an advance as well, and because of technological advances, self-publishing has become mainstream and completely acceptable. In addition, self-publishing is considerably speedier than traditional publishing. The latter may take years, because you may have to go through the tedious process of trying to land an agent who then spends time trying to sell it to a publisher, and if the agent is successful in finding a publisher willing to buy your book, it still may be a year or more before the publisher actually prints and releases the book.

I had a similar situation when my publisher of *Write In Style* decided not to go to a second printing after the first printing sold out. After Union Square Publishing returned my rights, I upgraded, updated, and expanded the book and self-published the second edition. I've already made more money on the second edition than I did on the first, despite the fact that the traditional publisher paid all the expenses and paid me an advance as well. The key is that I invested in the book, so I'm keeping all the profits rather than a publisher taking the biggest chunk out of the profits.

The subject of self-publishing versus traditional publishing is too broad to cover in a short column, but send me an email at [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com), and I'll send you a full report that covers the advantages and disadvantages of both traditional and self-publishing. The report may help you create a pro and con chart based on your wants and needs, and then you will be able to make a firm decision.

Q: I know that when using Chicago Style for book manuscripts I shouldn't uppercase an office, such as "the president." How about when I address the person by title, though, such as the following: "Tell me, General, how did that happen?" Should it be lowercase, instead?

A: According to Chicago style, a title used alone to replace a personal name is capitalized only when it is used in direct address, a toast, or a formal introduction. In the case of your sentence above, your usage is correct, then, because it is direct address: "Tell me, General, how did that happen?" If the sentence read differently, it might be lowercased, such as in this case: "Tell the general how it happened."

Q: Someone asked for a detailed query about my nonfiction book. I have written one with a hook, a second paragraph briefly describing the contents, and a third saying I contacted professionals in my research. Does this information sound right, or are some things missing?

A: It's difficult to say without reading the actual query, but it sounds like it's a good start. You're right to keep it short. A query is not the same as a full book proposal.

Remember to tell the genre and subgenre of the book—if the genre is informational, explain if the subgenre is self-help, travel, or history, for example. Vital too is the word count, or if the work is not yet complete, give the estimated final word count. One more step might be to refer to a specific book the agent or publisher has handled and say why your book is better or different. In this way you show that you've done your research and know you're querying an agent or publisher that handles your type of book.

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

Many folks wrote to congratulate me for now being considered cancer free, and I wish to thank you all. Several members, though, reminded me that I can be an advocate for colon-cancer screening. Yes, folks, I too dreaded the colonoscopy, even though I'd been told it was painless. I knew I should get screened every three to five years, but the prep for it sounded dreadful, and since I had no symptoms, I kept putting off getting screened. Until I had symptoms. Too late. I do hope everyone will take my advice and get screened regularly for colon cancer. It could save not only your quality of life but even your life.

### MEMBERS WRITE...

Member C. Bernard Huesing, author of an international thriller titled KILL ABBY WHITE! NOW! reported that his novel received four out of four stars on a review by OnlineBookClub.org. The global ebook site cautions that it gives honest, straightforward critiques and claims to have a million followers. KILL ABBY WHITE! NOW! is also rated 4.5 stars out of five on Amazon Books. Way to go, Bernard!  
<http://killabbywhite.com>

Huesing added, "I really appreciate the help your newsletters, emails and PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS gave me. You saved me a lot of time and outside editing costs."

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### PEN AMERICA FILES LAWSUIT AGAINST TRUMP

On October 16, PEN America filed a lawsuit in federal court against Donald Trump. The suit seeks to stop President Trump from using the machinery of government to retaliate or threaten reprisals against journalists and media outlets for coverage he dislikes. Read the full story here: <https://pen.org/pen-america-v-trump/>

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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.

The manuslip this month makes me wish such a thing were possible. Here it goes:

"For the extra weight, however, I will extract my revenge."

The correct word is "exact." I will exact my revenge. As used "exact" means "to call for forcibly and obtain," but don't we all wish we could extract our extra weight?

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### WORDS WRITERS SHOULD KNOW

eucatastrophe  
(yoo-kuh-TAS-truh-fee)

MEANING:  
noun: A happy ending, especially one in which, instead of an impending disaster, a sudden turn leads to a favorable resolution of the story.

ETYMOLOGY:  
Coined by J.R.R. Tolkien in a letter in 1944, from Greek eu- (good) + catastrophe, from kata- (down) + strophe (turning). Earliest documented use 1944.

USAGE:  
"The contrived eucatastrophe of Dennis's play seemingly resonated with and satisfied the audiences." --Alison Forsyth; Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre, 1660-1914; Theatre Journal (Baltimore, Maryland); Oct 2007.

[Today's word came from A.Word.A.Day by Wordsmith.org. Get your free subscription at Wordsmith.org.]

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### SAVE \$\$\$ ON EDITING

The sixth edition of PURGE YOUR PROSE OF PROBLEMS answers vital questions that arise while you edit your manuscript. It settles disagreements that may arise in your critique circle, as well. Simply look up the subject alphabetically. Order the ebook or printed book here: <https://www.zebraeditor.com/bookstore/>.

Here are a few of the 700+ 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)
- 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)

Order a printed or PDF copy here: <https://www.zebraeditor.com/bookstore/>.

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### AUTHOR 101: WRITING A BOOK FROM PROPOSAL TO BESTSELLER - IN-PERSON WORKSHOP & LIVE WEBINAR

Free!  
November 3 at 11:00 a.m. EST

Author 101: Writing a Book from Proposal to Bestseller takes authors on a journey through creating a proposal worthy of a major publishing house, outlining a nonfiction book, creating a roadmap for the journey ahead, and then completing and finalizing a publisher-ready manuscript. Everyone needs help along the way, and this workshop will give authors valuable insight into the steps they can take to organize, write, and edit their books. This workshop will cover the proposal process to include the different structures and pieces most publishing houses require, how to outline and roadmap a book to prevent writer's block and to ensure you stay on course, the best writing practices, some the biggest mistakes authors make and how to avoid them, and a number of resources and tools writers can use to write a major publishing house-quality manuscript.

For details and to register see <https://booklogix.com/upcoming-events> and scroll down.

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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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INTERESTED IN FREELANCE WRITING?

HOW TO WRITE AND GET PAID is a free downloadable ebook that may help you get started. Download it here:  
<https://www.freedomwithwriting.com/write-and-get-paid/>.

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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 asking the following: "I belong to an editing group. In these two sentences, we believe the commas belong. Is there a name/description for this or a rule you can direct us to? "It's what makes a barn, a barn." "Whatever will be, will be." That comma."

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 strengthen their writing style and create a fresh voice, one that publishers and readers want to read.

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

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FOUR: CONTESTS, AGENTS, AND MARKETS

CONFRONTATION MAGAZINE

Confrontation Magazine began operation in 1968 with the mission of bringing new talent to light in the shadows cast by well-known authors. Open to all submissions, each issue contains original work by famous and by lesser-known writers.

Stories

We judge on quality of writing and thought or imagination, so we will accept genre fiction. However, it must have literary merit or it must transcend or challenge genre.

Send complete manuscript.

Length: Up to 7,200 words, one piece per submission; six pieces per submission for flash fiction (up to 500 words per piece).

Payment: \$175-\$250; more for commissioned work.

Poetry

Length of a poem should be kept to two pages.

Send up to six poems per submission.

Payment: \$75-\$100; more for commissioned work.

Nonfiction

We publish personal as well as cultural, political and other kinds of essays, and (self-contained) sections of memoirs.

Send complete manuscript.

Length: 1,500-5,000 words, one piece per submission.

Payment: \$100-\$150; more for commissioned work.

Submission guidelines: <http://confrontationmagazine.org/submit/>

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LONGREADS SEEKS LONG ESSAYS

Longreads pays \$500 per accepted essay, and the editor has written a clear outline of what she seeks and how to submit your piece. See <https://longreads.com/2017/08/18/longreads-essays-editor-sari-bottons-guide-to-pitching/>.

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BLACK ROSE WRITING  
<http://www.blackrosewriting.com>

Black Rose Writing is an independent publishing house that strongly believes in developing a personal relationship with their authors. The Texas-based publishing company doesn't see authors as clients or just another number on a page, but rather as individual people, people who deserve an honest review of their material and to be paid traditional royalties without ever paying any fees to be published.

- Accepting all fiction and nonfiction
- Accepting children's books with full illustrations only
- Not accepting poetry or short story collections

Be sure to complete the submission form as much as possible to make your submission best represent you and your work. <http://www.blackrosewriting.com/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 or 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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The Writers Network News: a newsletter for writers everywhere. No Rules; Just Write!

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