

The Writers Network News, December 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

"The wastebasket is a writer's best friend." —Isaac Bashevis Singer

Isaac Bashevis Singer (November 21, 1902 – July 24, 1991), a Polish-American writer who wrote in Yiddish, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1978.

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One: From the Editor's Desk: In time for Christmas

Dear Fellow Writers:

The Florida Writers Conference in Altamonte Springs, Florida, took place near the end of October 2018. As always I planned for time at the end of each of my seminars to allow for questions. One participant said she'd been told it was too late to get her book ready for the market by Christmas, because it had not been edited yet. She asked, "When is the best time to get a self-published book ready for Christmas?"

I answered tongue in cheek that October is a fine time to start getting ready for the Christmas season...for the following year. The Christmastime market is a good one, and it's a shame to miss it, but it takes a long time to go through all the stages of getting a book ready. If you want your book ready for Christmas 2019, today is a good day to start. Why? First you have to finish what you think is your final draft (it probably won't be). Next you have get your book edited, which can take as long as two months. After your book is edited, you will want to go over it to accept or reject your editor's suggestions. You may have to add sections or delete some copy, too, depending upon your editor's recommendations. This process can take anywhere from weeks to months, depending upon how much time you have to spend on your revisions.

Once you have your truly final draft, you'll need to have the inside designed and laid out, which takes a month or more. After you get the layout back, you'll need to have the whole book proofread to ensure the layout didn't ruin any of the copy and that it doesn't have odd lines, extra spaces, widows, or orphans in the layout. Your proofreader will know what widows and orphans are and point them out. The proofreader will also ensure that no other typos have been missed; the proofreader, however, does not edit. The editing has to be done in the manuscript stage, not the layout stage. Proofreading can take a month or more.

When the proofreader finishes, the layout person must add the repairs the proofreader suggested, so more time is taken up there. You'll need to plan for time for the cover design too, which also can take a month or more.

Last of all, the printer has to schedule your run; you aren't the printer's only client. Printers get busier as the holidays near, don't forget, so if you schedule a printing in July or August, you might get a price break while also ensuring that you have a book ready for the Christmas market.

You'll also need time if you want your book formatted for Kindle and iBooks; it's not as simple as a push of a button.

With all the steps needed to self-publish, you can never underestimate the amount of time it takes to get a book to market.

All this detail is to say that if you have a book inside you that hasn't been published yet and you plan to self-publish, today is a good day to start, especially if you want to have your book ready to sell in November and December 2019.

Let me know if you need any help along the way. That's why I'm here.

Meanwhile, happy holidays 2018. May you find joy and good material, despite potential Christmas chaos, and may you stay calm and write.

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: All about Characters

By Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas

Q: I have a challenge with keeping up with the characters in a trilogy I'm writing. From one book to another I forget small details that could be embarrassing. For example, I have messed up and given a character blue eyes in one of the books and hazel eyes in the next book. Is there a secret to keeping up with characters in a series?

A: Whether you write a single novel or a series, I recommend keeping a written list of traits for each character. I addressed that issue in my book *Write In Style*, where I list a Character Trait Chart that readers can copy and fill out for each character. The chart asks for things such as name, aliases, birth date, hobbies, physical descriptions, education, handicaps or flaws, problem or conflict, and so on. It goes into great detail, and you can imagine all the details authors need to know about each main or returning character. If you fill in the details of each character in a chart form, every time a character appears in a scene, you can look up that character's trait chart to ensure you are being consistent. I don't sit down and fill out these charts in advance, though. Instead I start a chart for each character and then add to it whenever the character appears, does something significant, or is talked about, so the next time that character appears, I can check to be sure the character's description, actions, motivation, and other details are always consistent. The information in the charts grows longer each time a character reveals more about himself or herself by appearing in a scene.

Q: My fiancée thinks I should change my main character to a woman, to make my novel more marketable. What say you?

A: Marketability is something to consider, but few men can write well from a feminine point of view. If you do not feel confident writing from the perspective of the opposite sex, the book will be less marketable, not more marketable. Show caution with any suggestion; always follow your writer's gut. We all have things we do instinctively, and we do them for a reason.

I'm a woman, so I write from a woman's point of view. The one time I tried to write from a male perspective, the men in my critique circle pointed out serious flaws in the thoughts and actions of my male character. Few of us understand the opposite sex. I say stick with what you know.

Q: One of my characters is a ghost, and I'm really not sure how to have him reply in dialogue. Should I write that my protagonist is hearing him (she heard) versus "he said" or "he answered?"

A: My guess is that you have not ever met a ghost. If you had, you would know they talk in normal dialogue. Yes, I met one, and she spoke my name clearly and out loud. I didn't merely hear her in my head, and her voice was not even a whisper. Her speech didn't include any "woo" sounds as they might in a cartoon. After my encounter with a ghost, I would use ghost dialogue the same as if the person were alive and present in the flesh. As an author, however, you may choose to use whatever method feels right for you.

Q: When a character speaks in dialogue, are terms of endearment such as honey, love, buddy, etc., always capitalized?

A: The Chicago Manual of Style has always preferred to lowercase pet names and terms of endearment unless they appear at the beginning of a sentence.

Examples:

"I love you, honey, but your feet sure stink."

"Hey, buddy, can you spare a dime?"

"Ma'am, may I be of help?"

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...

Bob Berrigan wrote from Ontario, Canada, "In your November newsletter, you talk of your sister and her self-deprecating journal and how her sense of humour pervades each of her entries. I honestly had to smile, because I'm of an identical bent in autobiographical writing. I don't look for publication, but I do want to share what I believe might be a similar writing." He sent a hilarious account of his tangle with a watering hose made worse by his blindness as well as a rusty nozzle. He submitted it to the Alliance for the Equality of Blind Canadians. He says it "isn't exaggerated or overblown; I wrote it in truth as it happened." He asked that I pass it along to my sister because of his "similar sense of humour, viewpoint, and joy in the ability to laugh at ourselves." I did. I won't print it here, but I'll bet you'll get a big laugh out of it too. If you want him to send it to you, contact him at [sleetburger@bell.net](mailto:sleetburger@bell.net).

Jill Jennings reports that her poem titled "Beyond One's Ken" was published in the fall issue of Oberon Poetry Magazine. Her third full-length book of poems, PINEAPPLE WINE: POEMS OF MAUI celebrates the mystery and beauty of Hawaii inspired by her years in Kihei, Maui. To order contact [www.yawnsbooks.com](http://www.yawnsbooks.com) in Canton, Georgia. Congratulations, Jill; you're one of the most accomplished poets that I know personally.

By the way, Jill earlier wrote some great advice in response to something that appeared in this newsletter, and I failed to include it. Here goes: I

"In response to the author who lamented that his poetic muse has dried up since the angst of his youth has disappeared, I offer these thoughts. First, I think anyone who has suffered severe depression or other significant psychological event will agree that getting back to normal is well worth it. True, Edvard Munch's painting, The Scream, had no sequels because he got well and had a happy life. He didn't regret that! But it doesn't have to be an either/or. I have found that when things are going well, I can listen to or read of the tribulations of others and write about them as if they were my own. That is where real talent is revealed. Secondly, not all poetry is confessional. Being upset all the time may give you an idea for a poem but impede your ability to focus on rewriting it, editing it, sending it off for publication, etc. Without those abilities, your work tends to languish unappreciated. If newfound sanity makes the world seem boring, there are many books with excellent poetry-writing prompts. Enjoy being happy!"

Thank you, Jill, for good advice from a highly successful poet.

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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 manuscript this month garbled the language in a way that made me giggle. Here goes:

He ordered stuffed medallions of veal with white beans from a waiter garbled in clothes he'd worn since morning chores.

I'm sure you caught that the writer mean "garbed," not "garbled."

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WHY YOU SHOULD NOT WORRY ABOUT REJECTIONS

Did you enjoy the sci-fi classic, THE TIME MACHINE by H. G. Wells? First published in 1895 and still in circulation, that classic book has been the basis of several successful movies, as well, yet here's what one acquisitions editor said in a rejection letter to Wells: "It is not interesting enough for the general reader and not thorough enough for the scientific reader."

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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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WINNERS OF THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS ANNOUNCED

[https://www.awpwriter.org/magazine\\_media/writers\\_news\\_view/4536/winners\\_of\\_the\\_national\\_book\\_awards\\_announced](https://www.awpwriter.org/magazine_media/writers_news_view/4536/winners_of_the_national_book_awards_announced)

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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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WORDS OF THE YEAR

It's far from an honor to be named word of the year, because it's an indication that the word has been overused, misused, and abused. Oxford Dictionaries named "Toxic" its word of the year, while word experts at Collins Dictionary selected "single-use" as their word of the year. Dictionary.com, however, selected "misinformation" and its word of the year.

What word would you select as overused this year?

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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

This month someone wrote to The Chicago Manual of Style Online asking the following: "What is the proper way to write Dr. Tom Smith Jr., M.D.?"

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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EDITOR'S FRUSTRATION

It's strange to me when idioms get misused and then are picked up and misused by others. Here's one that comes to mind: "based out of." Example of misuse: The company is based out of Chicago. Folks, things are based in, not out. Correct: The company is based in Chicago. Also correct: The company does business out of its Chicago offices.

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Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

CHICKEN SOUP SEEKS STORIES ABOUT MIRACLES AND THE GOLDEN YEARS

Guidelines: <https://www.chickensoup.com/story-submissions/story-guidelines>

Miracles do happen each and every day. Everyone has experienced events in their lives that cause wonder and astonishment and give them hope for a better future. Why did these things happen? Is there an explanation? Or did these things seem to happen for no reason at all?

We are looking for true stories of no more than 1,200 words for this multi-faith book that will awe you with examples of amazing events and unexplained happenings. Share your inspirational stories with us to remind us that each day holds hope and to never give up. A miracle can happen at any time.

Here are some suggested topics but we know you can think of many more:

- Everyday miracles
- Dreams and premonitions
- Miraculous healings or recoveries
- Visions and revelations
- When something, against all odds, worked out
- Unexplained happenings
- Amazing coincidences
- Near misses and astonishing luck
- Stories that make you say, "you're not going to believe what just happened..."
- Stories that have people exclaiming "really?!!!" when they finish reading them

If you submitted a story for a previous book title and we DID NOT publish it, please submit it again if you think it will fit in this title. If we have already published your story in a previous Chicken Soup for the Soul book, please do not submit it to us again. We do not republish stories that we have already published.

Deadline for story and poem submissions is DECEMBER 31, 2018.

The Golden Years or Second Wind

So, you're a certain age now, and you're ready for what's next. You might be enjoying an empty nest, or starting a second career, or winding down a first one. You might be downsizing, or traveling, or caring for elderly parents.

You might be going on the adventure of a lifetime or taking long walks in the woods. The one thing you know for sure is that you're not

ready to stop living! You feel energetic and young and there is still so much more to see and do and give and enjoy.

We are looking for stories about the humorous or serious sides of life after 60. Here are some suggested topics but we know you can think of many more:

- Time for a new career
- Trying new things
- Bucket lists and adventure
- Volunteering and mentoring
- Exercising and sports
- Sports cars
- New love interests
- Internet dating
- The wisdom of age
- New passions
- Raising grandchildren... or still raising grown children!
- Moving to a new place
- Moving to an active retirement community
- Taking the time to do what you've always wanted to do
- Handling loss and illness
- Caring for elderly parents
- Using new technology
- Reinventing yourself, in big ways and small
- Handling a spouse's retirement or new career
- Travel
- Downsizing and moving
- Divorce and recovery

The deadline date for story submissions is DECEMBER 30, 2018.

If we publish your story, you will be paid \$200 one month after publication of the book and you will receive ten free copies of the book your story or poem appears in. You will also become part of the Chicken Soup for the Soul family and will be entitled to buy cases of your books from us at half price.

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DIVERTIR PUBLISHING

Divertir Publishing is an independent publisher located in Salem, New Hampshire. We use a combination of print-on-demand and distribution in electronic formats for the majority of our books. We understand that relying solely on digital printing and eBooks limits our access to some distribution channels (such as brick-and-mortar bookstores). We believe the cost savings resulting from the use of these technologies will allow us to publish in niche areas that are not currently served by many publishers, such as publishing short-story collections. We limit the number of books published each year to guarantee that each book receives the individual attention required to create the highest quality product possible.

Divertir Publishing feels the most effective way to introduce up-and-coming authors to our readership is through the use of short stories. To this end, our strategy is to publish several short story collections each year, in addition to an online magazine. Each collection will have a common theme, while the magazine will feature an assortment of stories.

Please note queries that do not follow our submissions guidelines, do not contain the correct information in the email subject, or are sent to the wrong email address will automatically be rejected. See the submissions guidelines here:

<http://www.divertirpublishing.com/submission.html>

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THE CRAZYHORSE PRIZES IN FICTION, NONFICTION, AND POETRY

Submit short stories and essays up to twenty-five pages or a set of up to three poems. Winners in each genre earn \$2,000 and publication.

Submit between January 1 and January 31, 2019. For details see <http://crazyhorse.cofc.edu/prizes/>.

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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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