

The Writers Network News, May 2019

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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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Writer's Quote of the Month

"By writing, you learn to write." —Samuel Johnson

Samuel Johnson was an English poet, playwright, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor, and lexicographer. After nine years of work, Johnson's A DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE was published in 1755. It had a far-reaching effect on modern English and has been acclaimed as "one of the greatest single achievements of scholarship." Until the completion of the OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY 150 years later, Johnson's was the pre-eminent British dictionary.

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ONE: FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Dear Fellow Writers:

I enjoy water aerobics, a low-impact exercise I began doing some fifteen or more years ago. Even though it works my muscles and, with the addition of water-resistant barbells and ankle weights, is considered a weight-bearing exercise, I don't know I'm sweating when I'm up to my armpits in water. After a good workout I enjoy relaxing in the spa, a smaller pool with hot, swirling water that massages my muscles and lowers my stress level. I prefer not to converse with others in the spa and often close my eyes and meditate in the soothing bubbles.

Today, though, I noticed a woman of about thirty who climbed into the spa with her cell phone. She sat scrunched into a tight, tense ball, her elbows on her knees, looking at her phone, typing into her phone, swiping at things on her phone, and more. I doubt she even noticed or cared about the calming effect of the spa. I don't know why she bothered to put on a swimsuit and get in the water.

I do my best not to judge others, but we all have unconscious biases. If we were aware of them, they wouldn't be unconscious, would they? Instead of relaxing, I found myself staring at that woman who refused to succumb to the delights of the hot tub and instead devoted all her attention to her phone. I felt critical of her and thought she should be relaxing the way I wanted to.

At times I did close my eyes and chill out. I let my mind flow, and several creative ideas came to me that I jotted into my phone later, after I left the gym. Mostly, though, I kept opening my eyes and watching that woman who refused to relax, refused to relinquish her cell phone even for a fifteen-minute session in a hot, bubbling spa.

Not until later did I recognize that I let my judgment of her, my unconscious bias, reduce my experience in the spa. At first I wanted to write about how our attachment to social media can ruin our real experiences, and even though it may be true, my judgment of her, my unconscious bias, ruined my real experience as well. Who am I to judge, then?

Much has been said lately about unconscious bias, and I've seen it reflected in manuscripts I've edited. In one a female executive was described as pretty, whereas the male executive was actually described—his build, color of hair, and cut of jaw.

When we write and when we live each moment, we would do well to be aware of our unconscious bias, our leaning toward people who look like us and our dismissing people who aren't in our social circles or who don't act the way we want them to. Have you uncovered any unconscious biases within yourself? What have you done to correct them? Share them with me, and I may share them with our readers. Maybe together we can conquer our unconscious biases and live in a world of love and acceptance of all.

I can only hope.

Yours in writing,  
Bobbie Christmas Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or 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: Shipping Agreements, I Could Care Less, and Referrals

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: What is the most popular shipping agreement for when buyers want me to ship them a book?

A: I don't know what the most popular, but I pay the shipping when I order something, and when someone orders from me, I add a shipping charge. I think the buyer should pay the shipping fee, and if the buyer wants to return books for a refund, the buyer should pay the shipping again. I don't think the seller should have to pay.

Q: In your article for the South Carolina Writers Workshop newsletter, you say, "We who have the editing gene must live with errors that show up so often that some people think they are correct. 'I could care less,' instead of 'I couldn't care less' is one formation that makes me cringe when I see or hear it, but it crosses my path (and makes me cross) at least once a month."

I agree with most of your points, but in this case, usually when someone says, "I could not care less," they're being honest. When they say, "I could care less," they're being ironic or sarcastic.

A: I beg to differ, and I'm not alone. When people say, "I could care less," it means they care, which is not what the person really means. The intent is to say that they do not care at all; therefore, the correct term is "I could not (or couldn't) care less."

A cartoon that appeared in the November-December 2005 edition of SPELL/Binder, the official newsletter of the Society for the Preservation of English Language and Literature, supports my point. It shows a woman carrying a suitcase and headed for the door while her husband sits in an easy chair watching TV. She says to him, "You could care less? Don't you mean you couldn't care less? That kind of crummy English is why I'm leaving."

I have no idea how the misuse, "I could care less," crept into our language, but the earnestness with which people defend it proves that it has been used incorrectly so long that people think it is right. We sticklers fight against mistaking the incorrect for the correct. Hey, some people still defend the use of "irregardless," when the formation is not even a word. It is the incorrect blending of "regardless" and "irrespective."

As an interesting addition, when I tried to send my answer by email, my automatic AOL spellcheck highlighted the section that said, "I could care less" and remarked, "Misspelled expression. Consider 'couldn't' instead." It continued: "The real meaning of a sentence like 'I could care less about their priorities' is more logically phrased with 'I couldn't care less about their priorities.' Even clearer is the paraphrase 'Their priorities don't concern me.'"

Thank you, AOL, spellcheck, and the Society for the Preservation of English Language and Literature for backing me.

Q: Maybe you can refer my nonfiction book to an agent. I'm sure it would be lucrative for him or her because I would be willing to pay more than the normal commission, my main motivation being widest possible readership for my book, rather than profits.

A: Your request has several components that I must address.

First, I would never refer or recommend a manuscript that I have not read thoroughly and edited, and even then I would refer or recommend only the absolute best of those. If I referred any book anyone wanted me to refer or even worse, paid me to refer, my contacts would have no respect for my referrals.

Next, legitimate agents do not change their fees from one client to the next, so to offer an agent a greater percentage than usual could be construed as a bribe and might be taken as an insult. Be careful.

Last of all, because your book is nonfiction, it may not require an agent. Consider writing a book proposal and submitting it to nonfiction publishers that accept unagented submissions.

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

In my response to last month's Letter from the Editor wherein I said that professional editors charge large fees, but hiring a cheap editor is a major financial mistake, Pam Rauber wrote, "My only grievance is paying in full in advance. I paid \$2,900 in advance for a developmental editor experienced in my genre. Sadly, she failed to deliver an edited manuscript, nor did I receive a refund. I got ten chapters dribbled over nine months and then nothing more." She goes on to say that an indie publishing website offers freelance editors who offer payments broken over a period of sixty days.

She adds that editing by an editor is "the absolute most essential part of the process. It's expensive, but your story soars after an expert puts his or her touch on it."

I responded, "Yes, the difference between an unedited manuscript and a professionally edited one is so critical to agents and publishers that most no longer accept unedited material. As for using a website that offers editors, unless you know which editor you will get, I'm not sure it's a good arrangement, but then I'm prejudiced, since I work alone. If you hire my company, you get me. As for offering payment options, I accept credit cards, and credit card companies let you spread your payments out. If I should die before I finish editing a manuscript, those who used a credit card can get their money back from the credit card company if for some reason my executor doesn't respond. I can't think of any other reason anyone would be dissatisfied. It hasn't happened in my quarter of a century of editing books. Perhaps the website you mention has folks who can track payments and chase after anyone whose account is overdue. I don't have that privilege, because again, I work alone.

"I'm so sorry that you had a bad experience with an editor who claimed to be professional. I've heard horror stories like that one from other people too. It's for that reason that I recommend checking editors' references and prior clients before hiring an editor."

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Randy wrote, "Your lament about receiving only \$29 [as payment in royalties for a book I edited] ignores what little the author probably received for far more effort. After writing thirteen books, my experience is that the only money made in books (with rare exceptions) is by all the support services--editors, printers, cover designers, agents, publicists, marketers, and so on. There is a huge industry preying on desperate authors dreaming that their work will be a bestseller. Authors often spend thousands of dollars on such services, being led to believe that such professional help will create sales. They don't. One publicist told me that even if I paid him \$100,000, he couldn't guarantee any book sales! The reality is that tens of thousands of new titles flood the market yearly. The odds of even an exceptional book getting recognized, much less making any money for the author, is practically nil. If a person wants to make money in the publishing industry, don't be an author, be in the industry."

I responded, "I have to note that the author received an equal amount of the royalties, so she received only \$29 too. Yes, I spent only two weeks editing the book, while she probably took a month or more to write it. Most writers write because they have a passion for writing, though. They are not motivated by money. Editors, however, edit for a living. We must make money, while writers write because they like to write. Nevertheless you make a good point. Those who work to support the publishing industry are the ones making the most money off books these days. It's a sad but true commentary and possibly the result of the tremendous influx of indie publishers, self-publishers, and e-books in the past decade. Instead of hundreds of new books being produced each month, now there are thousands of books produced each month, so the competition has gotten way out of hand. Publishing is a business, and publishers, book designers, promoters, and editors must all get paid for their time. Writers almost never get paid for their time. For writers, however, publishing is like a lottery. Few writers hit the lottery, but occasionally a book, a series, or an author will hit it big. People keep buying lottery tickets, and writers keep writing."

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#### TERMS WRITERS SHOULD KNOW

##### STYLE

Style has two meanings. It can refer to writing style and creativity, the way a writer puts words together. Style can also refer to publishing style, a publisher's preferred rules for punctuation, capitalization, abbreviation, etc., as in Chicago style, Association Press style, academic style, or business style. Book publishers follow Chicago style, which differs in some ways to academic style, the way most of us were taught in school. For example, I was taught always to capitalize the word "president" if it referred to the president of the United States. Chicago style does not capitalize the word "president" unless it is attached to a name, as in President Obama. If you are not familiar with Chicago style, be sure to use a book editor who is familiar with Chicago style and ensures that your manuscript complies with it.

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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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#### NATIONAL RECOMMITMENT MONTH

May is National Recommitment month. National Recommitment Month challenges us to evaluate important areas of our life and refocus. Many of us have ideas in our head that we want to write or partially written books that we meant to finish. This is the month to recommit to finishing that writing project. How do you recommit to your goals? Share on social media using #NationalRecommitmentMonth.

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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. My latest addition is a little scary, because it happened when I was only six years old. Read it here: <https://neuroticas.tumblr.com>.

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VERY INTERESTING ARTICLE

A Washington Post columnist has written a very interesting article on the word "very," which he sees as very superfluous and very overused. I very much agree. He takes the point to some very interesting places, though. Read all about it here:

<https://wapo.st/2TDRLOi>

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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:

Q. Why does a comma follow Washington, DC, in running text?

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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THREE SAUDI WOMEN ACTIVISTS RECEIVE PEN FREEDOM-TO-WRITE AWARDS

The PEN awards come at a time of heightened scrutiny of Saudi Arabia, since the journalist Jamal Khashoggi was murdered at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul last fall. Read the full AP article here: <https://apnews.com/b762afb02bb04c70956f855d230de178>.

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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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HOW FAKE NEWS WRITERS MAKE MONEY

Let me be clear that I discourage anyone from writing fake news, but this article explains why it gets written and how the writers make money doing it.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/11/18/this-is-how-the-internets-fake-news-writers-make-money/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.44c2c0329c24](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/11/18/this-is-how-the-internets-fake-news-writers-make-money/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.44c2c0329c24)  
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FOUR: CONTESTS, AGENTS, AND MARKETS

Skyhorse Publishing is launching Arcade CrimeWise. The imprint will launch its first titles this fall and will publish six to eight titles annually. For Skyhorse Publishing submissions information see <https://www.skyhorsepublishing.com/submissions/>.

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CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL: LAUGHING

I Can't Stop Laughing!

We have all had this kind of thing happen. A situation that is not necessarily supposed to be humorous turns into something that makes us laugh. And laugh we do. Out loud! We can't seem to help ourselves. And if we try not to laugh, that only makes it worse. And if someone says, don't laugh... well, you know what happens.

We are looking for stories about something that happened to you in your life - in your relationship with a partner or spouse, a parent or child, a family member or friend, at work or at home - that made you and the people around you laugh out loud. Did you mean for it to be funny? Did the other person mean to make you laugh? Did a situation just get out of control? Did a misunderstanding turn into a comedy of errors? We can't wait to hear your true stories. We want them to be silly, outrageous and hilarious, and they absolutely must make us laugh!

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

Stop laughing. That's not funny!

I love you but... really?

I thought you said...

Compulsions

Obsessions

Annoying habits

Embarrassing moments

Wedding mishaps

Funeral foul-ups

Holiday meltdowns

Kitchen/dinner party disasters

Family foibles

Zany vacations

Moving-day mayhem

Good intentions gone wrong

Please submit your story or poem using your real name but if your work is selected to be published in the book, we expect many of you to use a pen name and/or change the names of the people in your story to protect the innocent (or guilty!).

The deadline date for story and poem submissions is JULY 31, 2019

Pays \$200 per accepted story. See full guidelines here: <https://www.chickensoup.com/story-submissions/story-guidelines>.

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#### THE PHOENIX SPIRIT SEEKS ARTICLES

We welcome articles that help our readers explore how to improve their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being. We use informational, inspirational, how-to, and personal experience stories. Stories that address one of our themes, fit one of our columns, or deal specifically with recovery from addictions and Twelve-Step programs have the best chance of acceptance. Study content and mission statement in sample issues (free with 9 x 12 SAE with three first-class stamps).

Our tone is personal, and supportive of people reaching for richer, more conscious personal lives. We look for practical, positive articles.

Cash payment of \$100 – \$150 per lead article and \$35 per article (within thirty days of publication) or an extended byline of three to four sentences in which you can mention your classes, professional services, or products you have available. You may include two of the following: telephone, postal address, email, or web site. If your piece is for "First Person," we pay \$25.

Submission guidelines here: <https://thephoenixspirit.com/about-us/editorial-guidelines-2/>

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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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<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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