

The Writers Network News, July 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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Some links in this newsletter may be 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

"There's no money in poetry, but then there's no poetry in money either."  
—Robert Graves

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Robert von Ranke Graves (July 24, 1895–December 7, 1985) was a British poet, historical novelist, and critic.

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CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS? DON'T MISS AN ISSUE!

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One: From the Editor's Desk: VACATION, ORGANIZATION, AND SUCCESS

Dear Fellow Writers:

After a long period of attending to my health and my business rather than taking vacations, I'm excited and happy to announce that I'm leaving in July for a small-ship cruise across all five of the Great Lakes. The trip includes tours of several American and Canadian cities along the shorelines, many of which I've never visited. I'll learn a great deal about those cities as well as the lakes themselves. My sister and I travel well together, and we've booked the trip through Road Scholar. Booking the trip has further implications for me. It means that even though the radiation I endured while fighting cancer has deteriorated my hips, I trust my aging legs and hips to perform well enough for me to travel. It also means I'll be even more behind on getting my vacation pictures culled and put into scrapbooks.

In the past I've used Shutterfly to produce books of my vacation travels to South and Central America and Belgium and the Netherlands, but I still haven't put together my photos from my long-ago trips to Greece, Midwest America, or Alaska and Canada. Work always seems more important than getting my photos organized.

Speaking of getting organized, as I face my mid-seventies I am in the getting-rid-of-things mode. The Salvation Army has been the recipient of many boxes and old suitcases filled with things I no longer use. In rummaging through old things, though, I sometimes come across an old story I wrote and never sent anywhere for potential publication. I've decided to follow my own (ahem) advice and submit stories to some of the sources I publish in this newsletter. By golly, I'm going to submit things again!

Years ago my teenage son asked why I considered myself a writer, when he never saw me write. Working as a journalist at that time, I did not write at home and rarely wrote anything creative. His words inspired me, and since then I've written and published several books, sold many articles and personal-experience essays, and even had a few poems accepted for publication. Lately, though, I spend most of my time editing books for others, and the only writing I do is for this newsletter or for evaluations of clients' books. I haven't run out of ideas; I've grown lazy. In my spare time the TV calls to me more often than the computer, especially after I've already spent the day at the computer editing the works of others. My son is in his fifties now, yet I can still recall his young voice asking me why I considered myself a writer when he never saw me write. When I come across some of my old stories I'm reminded again that I really am a writer. When I reread those stories, some of them still bring a tear to my eye or a smile to my lips.

Being open about my intentions has always been a great motivator for me, so I'm declaring that I will again submit some of my works for potential publication, and I'll take vacations too. In addition I'm getting back to the visual arts. I used to draw and paint, but I haven't done either in many years. Reading *DRAWING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BRAIN* has inspired me to put pencil to paper again.

Writers need to balance their work lives with enjoyable hobbies and recreational activities that bring them satisfaction. I'm going for it. Are you?

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, coordinator of the Florida Writers Association Editors Helping Writers service, and senior editor of *Enjoy Cherokee Magazine*.

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Two: ASK THE BOOK DOCTOR:

Critique Circles for Introverts, Formats for Editing

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: I'm unhappy with my critique circle, and it took me a long time to find this one. I need advice. Our circle is open, so anyone can show up and get feedback. It sounds ideal, but it isn't. Quite often the crowd is so big that we never get around to critiquing the pages I've brought. Everything goes downhill from there, if that's possible. During the critiques, the bravest, boldest, or loudest people jump in with suggestions for improvement, and many of the folks repeat the same things, which is a waste of time. If I have anything to add, I'm too overwhelmed—or maybe too polite—to jump in and speak.

It gets worse. Some people bring so many pages that there is hardly any time left for anyone else to read. When the leader asks who wants to go next, the boldest or loudest people get priority again.

In addition, some of the regulars email their pages—sometimes long chapters—for us to evaluate at home and bring in to the next circle, and that's a problem too. I could spend all my time critiquing the work of others at home and have no time to write my own novels. It was hard enough to find this critique circle. Is something wrong with me? What can I do?

A: Shy people, quiet folks, introverts, and newcomers often find themselves overwhelmed in similar situations, so don't beat yourself up. You're not alone, and you have several good options.

If you want to improve the critique circle you're in, you will have to take the leader aside or write the leader an email and outline your specific suggestions for improvement. Good leaders appreciate constructive suggestions. When I was in charge of a circle more than twenty years ago, someone in the circle approached me after a meeting and said she wanted to quit. She said, "I have things to add, but everyone talks over me, and I can't get a word in." She made a good point, and I promised the next meeting would be better. At the next meeting I handed out a printed agenda of how our circle would operate. First I would pick the first person to read up to five double-spaced pages, and no more. Next the person to that person's right would give constructive criticism, followed by the next person to the right, until we went around the full circle. If something had already been said, rather than repeat the same suggestion, a participant was to say, "I pass," or "I have nothing more to add." After everyone had a chance to speak, the person to the right of the prior speaker read his or her five pages next, until everyone had a chance to read and critique, without interruption or repetition.

In a critique circle that's always open to newcomers, I suggest the following: The first time people come to the critique circle, they should get to introduce themselves briefly and then listen and respond to other readers, but not read anything until they come a second time. When I had open circles, sometimes people came once and never came back, so not letting newbies get instant gratification helped keep things under control.

If indeed you decide you need to find another critique circle, though, I highly recommend starting your own. In that way you set the rules, you choose the members, you pick the genre or type of writing the circle will address, and you can decide whether it's open or closed. I have a complete report on how to start and run a stress-free (no homework) critique circle. If you'd like the free report, send me an email at Bobbie@zebraeditor.com.

Q: I composed a children's book in Microsoft PowerPoint. The font is twenty-four point Ariel. I drew the illustrations myself, scanned them as separate documents, and copy/pasted them into the PowerPoint page containing the text. I may have violated a style/format rule by doing what I did, so I need to know if I have to reformat the document to meet the criteria for editing. Must I submit my electronic document as a Microsoft Word document? Is Word the prerequisite for all editors?

A: First, do not panic! Yes, Microsoft Word is the software program I prefer to accept when I edit electronically, and most editors prefer it as well. Publishers prefer it too, so a good habit to form is to write all manuscripts in Word in standard manuscript format (twelve-point Times New Roman, double-spaced). I will not edit in PowerPoint; however, you have several potential solutions. While I cannot speak for other editors and their requirements, I will accept files several ways. First, you can print out the pages and mail them to me. I will edit the hard copy with red ink and mail them back to you.

Your next alternative is to turn the file into a PDF document and email it, and I will print it out, edit the printed copy with red ink, and return it to you by mail.

You can also copy the text and paste it into a Word file and email it, to have me electronically edit it. You can then copy and paste the edited text into the PowerPoint document to replace the unedited text.

In short, even if you plan to self-publish, it's always better to create the original manuscript in Word. Doing so makes it easier for you to make changes and makes editing easier as well. In addition Word is the program most publishers prefer. After the editing is completed, only then is it appropriate to design the layout of the actual book. If you have already made the mistake of laying out your book in a design program before the book is edited, though, all is not lost. As I have explained, most editors will find a way to work with you anyway. I cannot speak for potential publishers, though. I understand that most of them prefer a Word document, which they

BOOKSHOP BAND TOURS AMERICA

In January and February English singer-songwriters Beth Porter and Ben Please, who together form the Bookshop Band, traveled across the United States performing their book-inspired music in libraries and bookstores. The Bookshop Band composes music inspired by books and writers, from classic authors such as Shakespeare and Lewis Carroll to contemporary writers such as Yann Martel and Ben Fountain. Most of their songs start with a single book. Read the whole article at https://www.pw.org/content/the_bookshop_band_0

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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

GAY MAGAZINE SEEKS SUBMISSIONS

<https://gay.medium.com/>

Gay is a new publication partnership between Roxane Gay and Medium. We will be publishing work weekly, covering a wide variety of topics. We will also assemble ambitious, compelling quarterly themed issues. We seek submissions on a rolling basis, and look forward to hearing from new and established writers with new and fresh voices.

Gay will offer some of the most interesting and thoughtful cultural criticism to be found on the Web. We are interested in deep explorations, timelessness, and challenging conventional thinking without being cheap and lazy.

We pay \$1 a word for work up to 3,500 words in length. We seek your best work and we cannot wait to read it. Please note that we will publish many more short essays (in the 1,200 word range) than we will longer (3,500 words) ones. PLEASE ONLY SUBMIT ONE ESSAY, STORY OR PITCH AT A TIME.

Submission guidelines here: <https://gay.submittable.com/submit>

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WRITE DATING PROFILES

<https://www.vidaselect.com/>

We're currently hiring new dating ghostwriters to get dates for our clients on sites and apps like Match, OkCupid, Tinder, and Bumble. (To learn more about how VIDA Select helps people find love, feel free to visit our website here.)

Depending on your performance, you'll earn somewhere between US \$14 and \$18 per hour. And you'll do this from the comfort of your own home. It's fun, flexible and rewarding.

Here's What You'll Do:

Craft honest, charming profiles that grab the reader's attention right from the start and hold it as she reads every last word.

Come up with creative, eye-catching icebreaker messages that can be used over and over again.

Handle the back-and-forth messages with your client's matches until you get a phone number or set up a date.

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NEXT TRIBE

NextTribe.com

Aging is a fact of life. Aging boldly is a state of mind. Our mission is to offer information and inspiration with a healthy dose of irreverence for women over 45, to make you feel heard and understood, and to connect you with women as smart and cheeky as you are. NextTribe believes that now—at midlife—is our shaken-Etch-A-Sketch moment, when the slate is once again blank. Today, our conversations question which direction we are headed in and how to get there. How to drink it all in and how to give back. We'd like your voices and humor to be heard, your ideas to be shared, and for you to hear ours. We like topics that demonstrate how women at our age are at the peak of their lives in so many ways and stories that confirm we won't be leaving the stage quietly. Please familiarize yourself with the categories in our menu bar, which will let you know the breadth of our topics. For submission guidelines see <https://nexttribe.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/submission-guidelines.pdf>

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FUNNY TIMES WANTS YOUR FUNNY STORIES

The Funny Times  
C/O The Editors  
P.O. BOX 18530  
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

They tell you you're funny, huh? Great! That's exactly what we're looking for! Here are a few things you should know to submit your funny cartoons and stories to Funny Times: Our print publication pokes fun at politics, news, relationships, food, technology, pets, work, death, environmental issues, business, religion (yes, even religion) and the human condition in general. Not much is off limits, so do your best to make us laugh. Plus we're advertising free, so whatever we like, we use.

Stories—the funniest you have ever written — should be about 500 to 700 words. Send your top three to five stories. Tell us where you've been published before and let us know who else thinks you're funny (this will not necessarily be held against you). Don't take rejection too hard; it could be that the third time is the charm and we just didn't "get" you before then.

Our website is not a complete reflection of the type of material included in our magazine. Might we suggest you send an 8.5"x11" SASE with proper return postage (about \$1.50 these days) for a recent issue sample?

See full submission guidelines here: <https://funnytimes.com/about/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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The Writers Network News: a newsletter for writers everywhere. No Rules; Just Write!

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