

The Writers Network News: The Curse of Being an Editor/February 2023

In This Issue

One: From the Editor's Desk: The Curse of Being an Editor

Two: Ask the Book Doctor— About Extensive Rewrites and Poetic Techniques

Three: Subjects of Interest to Writers

Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

Contents copyright 2022, Bobbie Christmas

No portion of this newsletter can be used without permission; however, you may forward the newsletter in its entirety to fellow writers.

Newsletter Sponsor

Zebra Communications

Named number one of the ten best editors in the whole state of Georgia!

Excellent editing for maximum marketability since 1992

404-433-7407 (note our new cell number; goodbye, landlines)

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

~~~~~  
Notes:

Some links in this newsletter are shortened with help from [www.tinyurl.com](http://www.tinyurl.com), a service that converts long links into short ones.

This ezine format does not support italics, so italics are indicated with underlines before and after words.

~~~~~  
Writer's Quote of the Month

"Writing is a socially acceptable form of schizophrenia." —E. L. Doctorow

Edgar Lawrence Doctorow was an American novelist, editor, and professor best known for his works of historical fiction. He wrote twelve novels, three volumes of short fiction, and a stage drama, including award-winning novels _Ragtime_, _Billy Bathgate_, and _The March_.

~~~~~  
Changing Your Email Address? You'll Have to Resubscribe

If our email to you bounces, our system automatically unsubscribes you. Before you change your email address, subscribe again with your new address. We cannot add you or change your address, because of our double-opt-in, no-spam policy. Please go to <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> and sign up with your new address, and do it before you stop using your old address.

~~~~~  
One: From the Editor's Desk: The Curse of Being an Editor

Dear Fellow Writers:

I recently downsized and moved into an active-living facility that offers all sorts of amenities, including an indoor pool, a high-quality restaurant, entertainment, and activities and games that keep our minds alert. A game called Word in a Word that showed up on the list of activities intrigued me, because I love words. When the time came, I went to the room where it was to be played to see how it worked.

A staff member stood in the front of a room called the library. It featured a grand piano and floor-to-ceiling bookshelves loaded with books alphabetized by the last names of the authors. Several tables featured boards for playing backgammon, checkers, or chess.

The staffer set up a whiteboard in front of a dozen or so of us who sat in comfortable chairs and sofas. With a black erasable marker she wrote a fourteen-letter word on the board, and participants eagerly called out other words they could make using the letters in that word.

The staffer wrote down each suggestion participants called out, and participants did their best to avoid calling out any duplicates. The game went on and on, with people calling out words they could make from the letters in the main word. I bit my lip and watched in amazement, intentionally mute and awkwardly uncomfortable. I knew something no one else in that room knew, and I dared not say it. I kept looking around the room, hoping someone else would point out the obvious,

but no one did.

After about ten minutes of hard work, no one could come up with anything new, so the staffer counted up the words she'd written below the main word on the board. "One hundred sixty," she announced with pride. "We came up with one hundred sixty words from this one word. Does anyone have anything else to add?"

I couldn't help myself. "Yes," I blurted, "but no one is going to like this."

"What?" asked the staffer.

"That main word—nutritionalist—isn't a word."

"What?"

"I'm an editor," I feebly explained, "and that word isn't a word. The correct word is nutritionist."

Flustered, the staffer stammered, "It's a word. I know it is. I got it off the internet." She picked up her phone and punched in something, apparently looking up her word choice.

All the other residents looked at each other and at me, mumbling their opinions. Some pulled out their own phones or iPads and scrolled or typed in letters.

I waited, shifting in my seat and feeling conspicuous.

For a few excruciating minutes all I heard were the clicks of people looking up the word nutritionalist, the word from which they made 160 other words. Nobody spoke. No matter how much research anyone in the room did, no one could defend the word.

Finally, after a long silence and without making any further comment, the staffer grabbed an eraser, erased the non-word and all 160 words written below it, and wrote another long word, this time a legitimate one. Joy took over the room again and people called out words they could make with those letters.

Feeling sheepish, I sat silently for the rest of the game. I felt invisible, though my face probably glowed bright red. When the game ended, people stood and chatted among themselves. No one acknowledged my presence. No one welcomed me to the group. I slinked out like the guilty person that I was, the know-it-all, the uppity person who dared to challenge a staffer and a room full of people who never noticed that nutritionalist was not a word.

Such is the curse of being an editor.

Yours in writing,
Bobbie Christmas Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com
Author of two editions of *_Write In Style_*, owner of Zebra Communications, editor of The Writers Network News, and senior editor of Enjoy Cherokee Magazine

%%

Members Write:

Last month from the editor's desk I wrote about losing a ring and changing my thinking. Instead of feeling devastated by the loss, I felt hopeful that someone would find it and be excited to find the ring.

Mark Diamond responded, "Beautiful 'Circular Story,' Bobbie. I'm teary-eyed."

--

Terry Wynne wrote, "I had a similar experience in the last few years when I packed up jewelry I didn't wear to sell. When I arrived the necklace from a man with whom I'd had an excruciating breakup was missing. I never knew why, until reading your article. Thank you for a perspective I can now enjoy—the circle of life."

--

Tricia Pimental added her own story: "A note on the anecdote in your most recent newsletter about losing your ring: It not only resonated with me, but also cheered me considerably, when I lost a pair of high-quality ski mittens recently. I will never be able to replace my Black Diamonds (they cost about \$100 years ago and now range from \$200 to \$300) and was devastated when I realized they were gone. Then I read your story and hoped that they had found their way to someone needy in this very cold Swedish landscape where I am currently. Thank you!"

Thank you for your story, Tricia. Years ago I worked with a successful inspirational speaker on a book titled *_Attitude is Everything_*. My ring incident reminded me that attitude really is everything. We can't choose or control all our circumstances, but we can control our reactions to them. A positive attitude keeps us from obsessing over things we can't control. Having a positive attitude is a choice we can make. I usually choose a positive attitude, but I admit that sometimes I have to work hard at it.

--

Mary Sides wrote to say, "Please write a note to your readers asking them not to use 'think,' which is inner dialogue, when they mean 'believe.'"

--

Jim Gilbert added some interesting information about the author I quoted in the January newsletter: "I read an article about Louis L'Amour several years ago. Being a writer myself, my attention was naturally drawn to the part of the article that described how he wrote.

“According to the article, he wrote his books on yellow legal pads. No computer, no typewriter. Handwritten and sent to his publisher that way. He was that good that they accepted his books written in that fashion.

“A special note about his Westerns: He didn't just do research for his books like you or I would. He personally rode every trail and visited each place used in his books to give them authenticity. So when he described the plants, animals, and ambience/atmosphere of a place, it was from direct observation.

“These two facts about Mr. L'Amour impressed me a great deal. Since you had that piece about him in this month's newsletter, I thought I'd share this little bit with you.”

--

Thank you all for writing. Your notes inspire me to keep providing this free newsletter for writers.

~~~~~

Two: Ask the Book Doctor: About Extensive Rewrites and Poetic Techniques

Q: A friend of mine is a male writer with a manuscript that has a female as the lead character in first person. He has repeatedly gotten rejections and comments that he has not developed her voice, and I concur that he hasn't, although his plot structure seems good. Would a book doctor's duties include rewriting all fifty of the chapters of the book to make the female character's voice come to life? Would it be too much of a complete overhaul to delegate to a book doctor? It would seem that something that huge would fall under the description of co-authorship. Would using a book doctor, particularly a female, be appropriate in this circumstance?

A: Such a rewrite would be so involved as to require a coauthor or ghostwriter. Recasting and rewriting the voice of a narrative character requires much more work than a book doctor would or should handle. A professional book doctor makes suggestions for change but does not actually rewrite the content. A ghostwriter or coauthor—preferably a female—is called for in this case.

I am a book doctor as well as a ghostwriter, but not all book doctors are skilled in both areas. Your friend needs to check to see what he will get for his money. If the ghostwriter wants acknowledgment other than payment or if the coauthor wants a portion of the proceeds of the sale of the book, all those details must be in writing before the project begins.

When I ghostwrite I charge only a flat fee and don't participate in the proceeds. I've rewritten books for authors and barely gotten a “thank you” in the acknowledgments, and I have rewritten books for authors who named me coauthor. I don't care either way, but ghostwriters differ in their opinions. If your friend does not want to name a coauthor or share in the proceeds of the sale, he can use a ghostwriter who agrees to that arrangement.

No matter what the arrangement, though, a rewrite job is too encompassing for someone who is an editor but not a ghostwriter.

Q: What do you think of echo, alliteration, and rhyme in prose?

A: Echo, alliteration, and rhyme are techniques hailed in poetry but often spurned in prose. Let me explain.

Echo is another word for repetition, and repetition, while welcome in poetry, grows wearisome in prose. A little goes a long way.

Alliteration, the repetition of a similar sound (as in the two words “similar sound”), can be great in book titles and chapter titles. It can be an interesting addition to narrative when used sparingly. “Sparingly” is the key word.

As for rhyme, it's best left out of prose. As if to back me up, Noah Lukeman, in *The First Five Pages* (A Fireside Book published by Simon & Schuster) says, “We need not mention rhymes in prose manuscripts, which should be avoided at all costs.”

Although an occasional poetic touch may enhance prose, like any enhancement, too much is too much. Readers of novels expect fiction, not poetry. Poetry may even offend some readers when it pops up in fiction. Many readers skip over poems, and if so, their purpose can be lost. Rhyme belongs in books of poetry. Leave it there.

Having said those things, however, I must acknowledge poet Vikram Seth, who wrote *The Golden Gate*, a novel completely in verse. Even the table of contents rhymed. I absolutely loved the book, but I knew it was a novel in verse when I bought it, and therein lies the difference between poetry and poetry inserted into prose.

Allow me to add my personal opinion and experience. In my fifty years in the publishing industry, I've rarely seen high-quality poetry inserted into manuscripts I've edited. Most writers are either good novelists or good poets, and few are both. I feel sad when I have to advise my clients that the poetry they've added to their novels detracts from, rather than adds to, their book.

Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas, author of *Write In Style: How to 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) or [BZebra@aol.com](mailto:BZebra@aol.com). Read Bobbie's blog at <https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/>.

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 at <https://tinyurl.com/y7p9xkbb>.

%%%%%%%%%

Three: Subjects of interest to writers

Editing Tip: Academic Degrees

Chicago style does not capitalize academic degrees when written out (bachelor of arts, doctor of dental surgery, juris doctor, master of science, master of arts, etc.). Chicago style also omits periods in abbreviations of academic degrees (BA, DDS, PhD).

(Excerpt from Purge Your Prose of Problems, a book doctor's desk reference\_, available only at ZebraEditor.com.)

~~~~~

Is The Right Choice Everyday or Every Day? When Is Insure Right, or is it Ensure?

When to use one word or two? What's the correct word choice? You don't know what you don't know, and you may think you're right. You need an editor! Every book deserves a good editor.

Zebra Communications offers three levels of service, two of which include developmental editing and an extensive report filled with advice, explanations, and suggestions on how to improve the manuscript's marketability. See our services, pricing, reviews, and more at www.ZebraEditor.com. Zebra Communications: Excellent Editing for Maximum Marketability

~~~~~

Do You Like Word Puzzles?

Only four people have ever solved the puzzle contained in the pages of Cain's Jawbone, a one-hundred-page British novel published with all the pages out of order. You must put the pages in the right order to solve the mystery. Read all about it here:

<https://tinyurl.com/28ayd27d>

~~~~~

Easy Access to Bobbie's Blogs

Read the latest blog entry (about split infinitives and more) here: <https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/to-split-or-not-to-split/>

~~~~~

Books Have Power

She wrote books about sexual abuse by her uncle. Now he's going to prison. Read the story here:

<https://tinyurl.com/ybcxxz39>

~~~~~

Free Report: Highlights of Chicago Style

Chicago style is the style of capitalization, punctuation, and abbreviation that book publishers prefer, and it differs at times from the academic style we learned in school. Email me for my free report on some of the highlights of Chicago style. It's free for the asking. bzebra@aol.com.

~~~~~

MANUSLIP

Sometimes the wrong word choice can cause a manuslip. Running a spell check won't pick up the error, because the word is still a word. Only the human eye—preferably that of a professional editor—will pick up the mistake.

Examples (actual outtakes from manuscripts I've edited):

He followed his usual workout regime. (correct word: regimen)

She scarily had time to flip through the magazine. (correct word: scarcely)

The moon was my only ally. Its rays laminated the pathway. (correct word: illuminated)

The sight of partial nudity made me flinch, as if he were something painful. However it was the opiates. [correct word: opposite]

-

Mistakes are typical; writers know what they mean to say, but sometimes their writing doesn't say what the writers intended.

Manuslip Meaning:

A slip in grammar, punctuation, or other error in a manuscript that results in humor; a manuscript blooper

Etymology:

Coined by Bobbie Christmas (1944 -) in Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing (2004, 2015).

~~~~~

Be My Friend on Facebook

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

Follow Zebra Communications on Facebook for news for writers, writing-related cartoons, immediate updates, and other good stuff. <https://tinyurl.com/ydyn3pcu>.

~~~~~

CMOS Online Q&A

This month someone posed the following question to The Chicago Manual of Style Online:

“Flyer” vs. “flier.” Please take a stand. Thanks!

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.

~~~~~

Vital to Every Writer

We’ve been told to write tight, but how can we know when we’ve overwritten? In five-time award-winning Write In Style you’ll learn how to find and delete or rewrite words, sentences, and phrases that weaken your writing.

Write In Style uses humor and expertise to show writers how to tighten and strengthen their writing and create a fresh voice.

Write In Style is also available as an e-book or printed through the following source, although you may pay for shipping for the printed book: <https://tinyurl.com/y8fp5nym>.

Want to buy the book in Kobo through Rakuten? Easy. Go to <https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/write-in-style-3> %%%%%%%%%%

Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

Mslexia
<https://mslexia.co.uk/submit-your-work/>

Mslexia is an award-winning magazine supported by Arts Council England. Its mission is to help women express themselves and get their writing noticed: in print, online and in performance. Mslexia was granted charitable status in 2019 in recognition of its work to fulfil this mission.

Winner of the Pandora Award for its contribution to women’s publishing, and the Saboteur Award for Best Literary Magazine.
Many women writers have started their careers in the pages of the magazine.

There are 17 ways to submit, from a four-line poem to a 3,000-word lead article, from a 300-word bedtime story to a 700-word memoir performance piece – so there’s bound to be something to suit your kind of writing. Including big-name commissions and as-yet-undiscovered newcomers, we publish over 60 women in every issue.
Deadline for submission slots for Issue 98: 10 April 2023.

You can submit via the website or by post to Mslexia, PO Box 656, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE99 1PZ.

~~~~~

Agent Rachel Sussman

Chalberg & Sussman (literary agency) welcomes queries via email only.

Rachel Sussman is open to queries for nonfiction only, and is especially interested in prescriptive and big think projects from historically marginalized voices. You can reach her at [rachel@chalbergsussman.com](mailto:rachel@chalbergsussman.com).

We are unable to respond to queries we don't intend to pursue. If we are interested in reading more, you will hear from us. While response times vary, we try to request materials within four weeks of receiving your query.

~~~~~

Coffee House Press Seeks Poetry Manuscripts
<https://coffeehousepress.org/pages/submissions>

Coffee House Press creates new spaces for audiences and artists to interact, inspiring readers and enriching communities by expanding the definition of what literature is, what it can do, and who it belongs to.

Our next open reading period begins at 9 a.m. CT on May 1, 2023, and will be limited to book-length poetry manuscripts. We will cap the number of submissions we accept at 200, so if you plan to send us work, please do so early.

All submissions should include page numbers and be sent as a .doc or .pdf. Please do not submit more than one work per reading period; additional submissions will not be considered.
Open reading period submissions are only accepted through our Submittable portal.
We plan to hold an open reading period for book-length fiction and nonfiction on October 1, 2023.

Please send any queries about our open reading periods and submissions process to submissions@coffeehousepress.org.

The review process for full-length manuscripts can take up to 4–6 months, or longer in some instances. We appreciate your patience when submitting your manuscript. Phone calls, emails, or letters of inquiry will not hasten the process.
For updates on future submission opportunities, sign up for our newsletter.
%%%%%%%%%
+++++

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.

+++++

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.

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.

+++++

With the exception of Zebra Communications, the 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!

+++++

[EZezine Company Terms of Service Privacy Policy](#)