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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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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.

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Writer's Quote of the Month

"If you don't have the time to read, you don't have the time or the tools to write." —Stephen King

Stephen Edwin King is an American author of horror, supernatural fiction, suspense, crime, science-fiction, and fantasy novels. So far he has written at least eighty-three books.

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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.

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One: From the Editor's Desk: Encounters with Poets Laureate

Dear Fellow Writers:

This morning while doing my usual "gratitude check," I realized how grateful and fortunate I am to have gotten to know two poets laureate and one poet-laureate nominee.

As a senior in high school I had the honor of being one of only thirteen students selected for a special creative-writing course. The teacher, Mrs. DuBose, arranged a trip to McClellanville, South Carolina, for the small class to visit Archibald Rutledge, the South Carolina poet laureate at the time.

Although the visit took place some sixty years ago, I still recall the feel of that small fishing village with Spanish moss hanging from the trees and the alluring scent of salt water wafting in the air. The poet, about seventy-nine at the time, lived in a cozy old home and sat in a comfortable overstuffed chair while we kids sat on the floor in a semicircle in front of him. He rocked a little while he spoke, and when we asked him his secret for being such a successful poet, he said, "I write about happy things. People don't want to read about sad things."

While I never forgot what he thought was good advice, I've found that I write poetry more often when I'm sad. Perhaps that's why I have never been nominated for poet laureate.

My next brush with a poet laureate took place years later, when poet laureate Bennie Lee Sinclair offered poetry classes at Furman University. An excellent poet, she spoke softly but delivered great guidance and advice in the classes I

attended. The main thing she taught me was her favorite line: "The fact that it's poetry doesn't mean that it doesn't have to be punctuated correctly."

While I was in college I became good friends with the student who edited the school's literary magazine, Chrysalis. A bearded lovable character, he was well rounded in many ways. One of his opening lines from an issue started, "It was a chilly day, and the staff gathered around a warm pot-bellied editor..." I'm honored that Dale Alan Bailes, now a retired adjunct professor of English, has since been my lifelong friend.

After Dale left the University of South Carolina he went on to lead the Poets in the Schools program for South Carolina, produce many volumes of poetry of his own work and that of his students, and was nominated for poet laureate sometime in the 1970s. When someone else was chosen, he admitted to me that the committee could have passed him over because he used the F word at times in his poetry. I love his poetry, but I agree with the committee that strong writing need not rely on expletives.

I also agree with Bennie Lee, and I punctuate my poetry correctly and do the same for all the poetry I edit for others. As for the advice of "write about happy things" and "avoid expletives," my opinion falls somewhere between the two, without granting my full support to either.

What's your opinion about poetry?

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

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Members Write:

Special thanks to Charlie Farrell, a fellow writer, personal friend, and winner of many prestigious awards for his service to the community. He should win another award for pointing out a typo in my phone number in previous issues of this newsletter. I've made the correction. Thank you, Charlie!

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Several folks wrote in response to my story about my embarrassment at looking like a know-it-all editor. I do want to note that I could chuckle at the situation after some time passed, and therefore write about it, and I have since made friends with several of the attendees and even the staffer.

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David Chatfield wrote, "Your description of being uncomfortably correct in 'The Curse of Being an Editor' made me cringe on your behalf, but your departure as you 'slinked' from the room gave me pause. The word 'slunk' felt more appropriate."

I responded that he was correct that "slunk" is the past tense of "slink," but so is "slinked," which I sense sounds better. I prefer "dived" to "dove" as well. English sometimes gives us choices. I added, "Always feel free to question me, though. I'm far from perfect myself and often have to look things up."

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Stellasue Lee's note said, "I wish I had been in the group. I would have thrown my arms around you. You are a gift to writers, Bobbie."

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Sharon Cook sent her opinion: "Regarding your story about the word game at your new residential center: I could certainly identify with you. Of course 'nutritionalist' isn't a word, but there are so many unacceptable words passing for legit, it's futile to call them all out. How about the more recent use of 'fun,' as in 'The party was so fun'?"

"As you say, you don't want to be seen as a know-it-all among your new neighbors, nor do you want to embarrass the staff member. In this case it probably would have been better to keep it to yourself, to 'go along to get along,' at least until you've been around awhile. At the same time, I'd be sorely tempted to speak up, as you did. Thus I agree, it's a dilemma."

I commended Sharon on her correct use of "dilemma," which I see used incorrectly often. A dilemma isn't simply a bad situation; it's a choice between two bad or negative things.

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Dotti Hydue gave her thoughts: "I think your experience at the Word in a Word activity was a fine way to introduce yourself to some of the like-minded residents at your new home. I would bet a few will soon be knocking on your door, asking you to take a quick look at their memoir or other writing project. I hope you continue to attend the game."

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Ruth White gave me a pat on the back. "Good for you! Glad you spoke up about the word that wasn't and hope that the other attendees to the group are able to appreciate your shared wisdom by now."

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Mary Ellen Gavin of the Gavin Literary Agency sent a note saying, "I send your newsletter around to writers and wannabe editors. You understand new writers. They get embarrassed easily and can be temperamental...to be a one-of-a-kind writer you almost have to be sensitive."

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

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor: Book Coaches and Editors and Agents, Oh, My!

Q: What's the difference between book doctors and book coaches?

A: In a nutshell book coaches work on you, whereas book doctors work on your manuscript.

Coaches encourage you, guide you, give you deadlines, and check on your progress with your book. Coaches may also edit as you go along, depending on the services the coach offers, but not all coaches are editors—or good editors. Some coaches might guide you through your search for a publisher or help you during the self-publishing process, but their services differ, so you need to ask what you will be getting for your money before you invest in a book coach.

Book doctors—another term for a book editor—take what you think is a final draft of your manuscript and line edit to correct errors in grammar, punctuation, syntax, and noncompliance with Chicago Style. Depending on the services the book doctor offers, he or she might also examine it for technical flaws, gaps in the information or plot, weak characterization, unclear sentences, poor or superfluous dialogue, repetition, and any other errors that might keep it from being as marketable as it could be. Based on feedback from the book doctor, writers can then create a true final draft ready to be sent to potential agents, publishers, or printers.

Book coaches make sure you write your book, good or bad, and may help you through the publishing process. Book editors, aka book doctors, make sure the book you're written is the best it can be.

To repeat, coaches work on you; editors work on your manuscript.

Naturally no book coach, editor, or even deity can guarantee that a book will sell; however, these beings may help, depending on their credentials, your manuscript, and your trust in their advice.

Q: What is your awareness, knowledge, or opinion of a literary agent pushing for a third-party critique prior to accepting a nonfiction book?

A: If the agent asks you to pay a fee for a critique, it would be dubious indeed.

To improve a book a legitimate agent may suggest that you get your manuscript edited by a professional editor and may even provide you with several names of editors, but legitimate agents would not limit you to those editors. A critique, however, does not improve the book; it simply evaluates it. The evaluation should be the work of the agents at no charge.

A nonfiction book does not even have to be written to be shopped around to publishers; it needs only to have an informative book proposal and well-written sample chapters. For that reason I'm at a loss to understand what the agent wants critiqued. I say run! Look for agents who decide whether to take you on as a client based on your proposal or manuscript without making you pay for a critique.

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>.  
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Three: Subjects of interest to writers

Editing Tip: Sir

"Sir" is a title of respect, a courtesy title, not a name, and is not capitalized when used alone as a form of address. "May I have more, sir?"

If used as part of a name, however, "sir" is capitalized. "The call is for you, Sir Henry."

(Excerpt from *Purge Your Prose of Problems, a book doctor's desk reference*, available only at [ZebraEditor.com](http://ZebraEditor.com).)

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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
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Why Hollywood Writers Are Considering a Strike

In January 2022 the most popular movie on Netflix was "Don't Look Up," a newly released disaster comedy with Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Lawrence. But the second-most-popular movie was "Just Go With It," an Adam Sandler flick from 2011 that had just started streaming on the service.

Timothy Dowling, who cowrote the screenplay for that film, watched in anticipation as a movie he'd made more than a

decade before inexplicably climbed the Netflix charts. But when his next residual check arrived, he received an unwelcome surprise. "I saw no noticeable change in the residuals I got," Dowling says, referencing the money that film and TV talent receive when their movies or shows are broadcast, syndicated or appear on home entertainment platforms. He was baffled. "Clearly, Netflix paid money for this," he says. "But is that money trickling down to the writer?" Read the entire article in [\\_Variety\\_ here: https://tinyurl.com/jnrrh98t](https://tinyurl.com/jnrrh98t)

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Bobbie's Blogs

What's the difference between hard-copy editing and electronic editing? Read the answer here:

<https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/hard-copy-editing-versus-electronic-editing/>

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Woman Combats White-dominated Book Industry

Kelsea Johnson cofounded a publishing house that tells stories about people of color being exceptional just by living "normal lives." A story of a Black girl loving her hair. A Jewish family celebrating Shabbat. A Black grandmother using grocery shopping as a way to talk to her granddaughter about the importance of diversity. A child learning his mom is transgender. These are the stories native Washingtonian Kelsea Johnson has published through the company she cofounded with a goal of promoting and sharing narratives that reflect the kind of diversity that she said is too often ignored by mainstream publishing companies and on television screens.

Read the whole story here: <https://tinyurl.com/5c38rxfz>  
(The Washington Post)

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Free Report: How to Pick the Right Editor for Your Manuscript

Editors abound, but so do scammers and folks who aren't yet experienced enough to perform the work your manuscript needs. Some who claim to edit books aren't familiar with Chicago style, the style of punctuation, abbreviation, capitalization, and such that book publishers prefer. Order my free report and learn how to use both your head and your heart to pick the right editor for you and for your manuscript. Simply send me an email at bzebra@aol.com and ask for How to Pick the Right Editor for Your Manuscript.

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MANUSLIP

One of the strong tenets in creative writing is "Write Tight." Below are a few actual outtakes from manuscripts I've edited that depict missed opportunities to write tighter. How would you tighten these sentences?

I had no autonomy of my own.  
Our drive there together didn't take away the feeling of isolation we felt in our mind.  
She sauntered on in concentrative thought.  
She sprinted briskly.  
He asked questioningly.  
One case in particular housed a gigantic crystallized crystal ball.

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Mistakes and missed opportunities are typical. Writers are too close to their own work to spot missed opportunities for improvement, which is why every writer needs an editor.

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\\_ \(2004, 2015\)](#).

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

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CMOS Online Q&A

This month someone posed the following question to The Chicago Manual of Style Online:  
Q. Would CMOS lowercase the noun preceding the number in each below? Yes or no?  
He was called to aisle 8.  
The meeting was at building 50.  
The accident happened on interstate 90.  
Tom got off at exit 12.  
Holyfield fell in round 4.  
The cashier stole cash from register 7.  
The incident happened at terminal 1.  
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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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>

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Stylometry: Do you write like a famous author?

Fast Data Science has developed a unique forensic stylometry model that allows you to identify the author of a text by the author's unique stylistic and linguistic "fingerprint." It needs a few chapters of a book to make an accurate identification. Want to compare your writing style to that of some famous authors? Although I hope your writing style is your own and not someone else's, you can use a few chapters of your work to find out. Go to <https://tinyurl.com/d2y24tac>  
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Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

She Does the City Seeks Nonfiction Stories

Pitch us! Please email [pitch@shedoesthcity.com](mailto:pitch@shedoesthcity.com) with a brief description of what you'd like to write, why your angle or perspective is unique, and why you think it's a story that will engage our audience.

Keep your pitch simple, and show your voice.  
Please include links to other writing samples (two examples is sufficient).

Subjects We're Interested In:

- Unique perspectives within Canada's arts & entertainment industry
  - Creative projects that inspire positive change
  - Stories that explore the intersection of art and healing
  - Strong opinions, or emotional responses, to contemporary art and pop culture (films, series, books, series art exhibits)
  - Pieces that demonstrate the power of storytelling
- We don't always have a budget for freelance submissions, but we strive to publish a few stories a month from outside contributors. If you're an emerging writer, please consider applying for our New Voices Fund.  
See <https://www.shedoesthcity.com/pitch-us/>

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Writer's Digest Writing Competitions

Writer's Digest has been shining a spotlight on up-and-coming writers in all genres through its Annual Writing Competition for over 90 years. Enter our 92nd Annual Writing Competition for your chance to win and have your work be seen by editors and agents! Almost five hundred winners will be chosen.

Early-Bird Deadline: May 5, 2023
Poetry entry—\$20 for the first entry; \$15 for each additional poetry entry.
Manuscript entry—\$30 for the first entry; \$25 for each additional manuscript entry.

Deadline: June 5, 2023
Poetry entry—\$25 for the first entry; \$20 for each additional poetry entry.
Manuscript entry—\$35 for the first entry; \$30 for each additional manuscript entry.

Additional entry discounts apply only after submitting and checking out your first entry. All deadlines are at 11:59 PM EST, on the specified date. All payments must be submitted at the time of entry.

For full information and to submit go to <https://tinyurl.com/53xpe59r>

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Send The Washington Post Your Travel Hacks and Hot Takes

We all have our travel hacks, habits, and hot takes that make the journey more luxurious, more memorable, and just plain easier. The Upgrade, a series from The Washington Post and By The Way, will catalog this advice, and we want to hear from you. We're looking for travel pros, frequent fliers, and people with strong opinions on how to move through the world. If selected, you'll be asked to write a short piece on your Upgrade.

Read some of our favorites: [Dress up for your flight](#) | [Get up early on vacation](#) | [Why you need a travel uniform](#)

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8mtdpf>

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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.

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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The Writers Network News: a newsletter for writers everywhere. No Rules; Just Write!

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