

The Writers Network News: Everyone Needs an Editor/April 2023

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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

"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. He authored several award-winning novels, including Ragtime and Billy Bathgate.

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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: Everyone Needs an Editor

Dear Fellow Writers:

I had lunch yesterday with the man who was the first person to edit my writing. He and I have stayed friends over many decades, but forty years ago he was technically my boss, several pay grades above me, even though younger than me.

Around 1984 I took a job as a writer, reporter, editor, and coordinator for the corporate communications department of a huge international Fortune 500 company. Up to that time I had been the editor at several much smaller companies that had only one editor—me. I was good at those jobs at smaller companies, or at least I was the strongest writer there.

Working under a stronger editor for the first time, however, showed me that I didn't know what I didn't know. With his guidance, input, and corrections, my editing abilities took a huge leap. Later our department head sent one of our publications to an even more experienced editor for evaluation, and everyone in the department learned about even more oversights and errors we all were making.

Yes, we don't know what we don't know, which is the very reason everyone—obviously even professional editors—should use an editor.

As a more current example, today I edited a sports story for a local writer and found the story well written for the most part. I tightened the lede (yes, the opening of an article can be spelled lede or lead), but the remainder flowed well until I

reached a sentence that read something like this: "The team follows the tenants of good sports." What's wrong with that sentence? The correct word is "tenets," not "tenants." The wrong word looked right to the writer, I'm sure, and a spell check wouldn't correct it. Everyone needs an editor.

I may harp on this subject because I welcome the business, but I wouldn't be in this business if I didn't believe that what I do for a living helps others—both writers and readers.

Do you use an editor? What did you learn from your 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*

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Members Write:

Jennie Inglis responded to something mentioned in my last newsletter: "What is the problem with this?: 'How about the more recent use of "fun," as in "The party was so fun"?' Is it the 'so' that is problematic?"

My response: Our language is ever changing, and such a usage has become common; however, strict grammarians stand by the fact that "fun" is a noun and therefore can't be modified by an adverb such as "so" or "very." Over the years, though, "fun" has come to be used as an adjective. Regardless, "so fun" and "very fun" still strike me as awkward wording.

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Jill Jennings gave some excellent advice regarding my questions about whether poetry should be happy, sad, or what: "Write about what keeps you up at night. Write when you feel compelled to do something about the injustice, the horror, the unfairness of something. I write about things I can't stand, things that break my heart. People respond to what they know is authentic. You don't have to have experienced it, but you must write it so they think you experienced it. This is when details become so important. The details can be funny as well as sad. Usually when I give a reading, a lot of people nod, many laugh, and one or two cry. Later one of them comes up to me and says, 'You put into words exactly what I felt but didn't know how to.' This is when I know the poem is successful."

Jill Jennings is a successful poet, author of three full-length works of poetry, and winner of numerous awards, including the Congressional Commendation of 2013 for her poetry and teaching. Originally a teacher and resident of Georgia, she now lives in Fort Myers, Florida.

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Randy Wysong wrote about a subject reported in the last newsletter: ""Woman Combats White-dominated Book Industry." He wrote, "How wonderful. Now let's have some books about . . ." He then gave several subjects about which he had strong opinions.

I responded with this: Thank you for your note, Randy. It sounds like you are passionate about the subjects you mention. Perhaps these things should be the subject of a book or several books you should write. We write best when we are passionate about our subject matter. I wish you much success.

He answered, "Thanks. You're right. I'm continuing to give it a good shot. But beliefs are hard to overturn."

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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: About Success with Writing

by Bobbie Christmas

Q: I have several acquaintances who have given up writing because they could not sell their first book or two. One is a woman who wrote two excellent stories, so it is really a shame. I do not know what to tell them. Any advice?

A: If only we could sell the first book we write! Talk to many published authors, and most will tell you their first book turned out to be practice, but a future book finally got accepted. Some authors were able to sell their first or second book, but often only after selling their third, fourth, or fifth book and then going back to sell the first, once the authors had a following.

If writers wrote only for the purpose of selling books, few books would be written, because a dismal percentage of books get sold to publishers, and self-published books rarely sell more than a few hundred copies.

What advice would I have for writers who stop writing because they didn't sell their first or second story? None. Anyone who quits writing because of a little rejection is not a writer at heart. True writers write because they have a passion. They have stories, information, or opinions they feel compelled to put on paper. That's what passion is about.

Look at Olympic athletes. They had a passion for their sport. They didn't one day decide to high jump, practice for a few weeks, and then expect to be accepted into the Olympics. No, they spent years learning, practicing, competing, and honing their skills. Writers—serious ones—do the same. We write for years. We learn, practice, and produce multiple stories, articles, essays, or books. We may submit them and get rejections, yet we still write more. Writing isn't an easy craft to conquer. It takes time, patience, knowledge, and dedication.

Like sports, success with writing takes a great deal of practice before reaching a level of proficiency. A strong story is a great start; following the tenets of good creative writing helps. Sometimes getting to know the right people helps too. Many writers have found success by attending conferences where they pitched their books to agents or publishers seeking new clients. Even combining our writing skills with perseverance and good marketing doesn't guarantee success in sales. Luck also plays a part. In the interim writers must learn to brush off rejection and keep going.

Most writers have faced rejection. Those who were successful didn't give up. I've been successful in selling enough of my writing to feel satisfied, but trust me, my works have been rejected more often than accepted. I recently recycled all the rejection letters I kept in a thick notebook. In this era when writers submit works through email and Submittable, most publishers and agents simply don't respond at all, if they don't accept a submission. Maybe no response is better than a rejection letter. At least we don't end up with copious rejection letters to recycle.

Success? Maybe writers need to redefine the word. Simply having completed a writing project should be considered a success, because success can otherwise be temporary. I was successful in selling the first edition of *Write In Style* to a publisher. Ten years later I created an expanded and updated second edition, but by then my publisher had closed the imprint that bought the first edition. With much help from BookLogix, I self-published the second edition. Sales have been moderately successful, but nothing like the sales of the first edition, when my publisher distributed my book to bookstores and libraries across the country, a feat nearly impossible with self-published books.

I've written three more books that have received rejections, but I keep submitting them to agents and publishers, and I keep writing. I feel joy while writing. I lose all sense of time. The mere act of writing is my true success. I will keep writing as long as I am able because I am a writer.

Writers write, which is the reason I can't give advice to those who stop writing when they don't meet with immediate success in selling their work.

I hope your friends don't stop writing, though. Quitting is a foolproof way to fail.

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: Cast Off/Castoff

Cast off: (verb) untie mooring lines, finish knitting, get rid of somebody or something. The teachers cast off their old students when the new year started.

Castoff: (adjective) discarded. Jill wore castoff clothes when she painted.

(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 Adrenalin or Adrenaline? Lay or Lie? Breach or Broach?

When to use one word or two? What needs to be hyphenated? Where do the commas go? 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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Worried About Book Bans?

This Story Says You Should Be: <https://tinyurl.com/nn83vt5b>

In addition The Authors Guild issued the following statement: The Authors Guild is appalled by the recent spate of book removals from Florida school libraries in response to House Bill 1467, a law enacted last year that gives the state broad oversight of materials used in schools. We are equally disappointed that Florida Governor Ron DeSantis called these book bans a "hoax," claiming that only pornographic books are being removed, despite his impetus and the many factual reports of books suitable for children and young adults (including those dealing with BIPOC\* and LGBTQ+ individuals and topics) being banned. We stand in solidarity with all Florida librarians, educators, and activists who are fighting to defend the right to read and write freely.

\*BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Pronounced "bye-pock," this is a term specific to the United States, intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of color.

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Bobbie's Blogs

At What Point Can You Call Yourself A Writer?

Read the answer here:
<https://tinyurl.com/mr3bnubt>

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I'm obsessed with . . .

An adorable way to promote your book: earrings featuring your book cover. <https://tinyurl.com/bdhpnhnp>

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Free Report: Find Your Fresh Voice

With excerpts from Write In Style, "Find Your Fresh Voice" is a report that gives you some secret ways to tighten and personalize your writing to make it your own. To ask for this free report, shoot me an email at bzebra@aol.com.

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MANUSLIPS

I recommended changes to the following excerpts and dozens more were like them in a single manuscript recently. Can you identify why I suggested changes to each one? How would you handle these attributions?

"When did you see him doing it?" she questioningly asked.

"With his head?" she unbelievably requested.

"What happened to him?" he curiously asked.

"Wow!" he eagerly said.

"How did you find out about that?" she inquisitively inquired.

He blurted out laughingly, "That's funny."

[Mistakes and missed opportunities for improvement 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. I searched in vain for guidance about the use of the word "early" in expressions like "in the early twentieth century." What is the maximum number of years (five, ten, twenty-five) that would still make sense? Could we consider this to mean "in the first quarter of the twentieth century"?

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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Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

## Food Tank Wants Articles

Food Tank is looking for creative writers and journalists who can produce high-quality content. Professional writers and editors, as well as passionate wordsmiths with experience in food justice, food policy, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture, are encouraged to apply. This is a remote opportunity and international topics are also encouraged. We have two types of writing opportunities at Food Tank, including paid freelance articles and unpaid guest articles.

<https://foodtank.com/write-for-us/>  
<https://foodtank.com/write-for-us/>

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Flame Tree Publishing

Based in London, Flame Tree Publishing is a sci-fi and fantasy publisher that also accepts horror, supernatural, crime, and mystery novels.

It prefers novels to be within 70,000 and 120,000 words.

Flame Tree occasionally accepts short story submissions for specific anthologies, which it announces on its social media pages and website, <https://tinyurl.com/bdcmuamp>.

Send unsolicited, unagented submissions via email to submissions@flametreepublishing.com.

Book synopses must be a maximum of three paragraphs. Include the word count. Send the entire manuscript in .doc, .docx, or .rtf format. Your name and email must be on the manuscript itself.

Include a writer's CV or bio with mention of previous publications/awards, recognition of your work by institutions or other parties. Tell the publisher if you've submitted your manuscript elsewhere. Flame Tree does not accept previously published books.

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## The Guardian Seeks Articles, Humor Pieces, and More

Read more about how to pitch to The Guardian, an Australian publication that accepts works from writers around the globe and pays in Australian dollars.

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8235ja>

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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 will never share your address or send out spam.

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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!

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