

The Writers Network News: Royalty Check/Reality Check: August 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 created through TinyUrl.com, which converts long links into shorter ones.

Our format doesn't support italics, so italics are indicated with underlines before and after words.

Writer's Quote of the Month

Writing is the only profession where no one considers you ridiculous if you earn no money. —Jules Renard

Jules Renard wrote poems, short stories, short plays, novels and his famous "Poil de carotte" (red hair), a long short story published in 1894 that recounts the childhood and trials of an unloved redheaded child.

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One: From the Editor's Desk: Royalty Check/Reality Check

Dear Fellow Writers:

A quarterly royalty check came in the mail this morning, and it led me to think.

On TV when an author sells a book, the next scene has that author living in luxury in a huge house appointed with elegant art and plush furnishings. That author may have other troubles—marital or legal—but oh, how the money has rolled in!

Years ago I got a phone call from someone who asked me, "I'm thinking about writing a book. How much money can I make off a book?"

Reality check, please.

In 1993 I sold Write In Style to a New York publisher and received a small advance against royalties. The book hit bookstores in 2004 and quite a few libraries bought editions as well. For many years afterward I received quarterly reports on my royalties, but I never made another dime, because the advance was greater than all the royalties. I got reports but no royalties for seven or eight years, until the publisher shut down that imprint and returned the book rights to me.

In 2015 I updated, expanded, and self-published the second edition. BookLogix of Alpharetta, Georgia, created a new cover, laid out and printed the book, and still handles order fulfillment of that edition. BookLogix is now the entity that sends me quarterly reports on my royalties. Because there was no advance against royalties, I do actually get checks with some of the quarterly reports from BookLogix, but none of those checks—or even all of them—will never buy me a luxury

home on a tropical isle. I'm lucky if my royalty check pays for one dinner.

I didn't write the book to make money, though. I wrote it to help other writers. The book isn't about grammar; it's about an effortless way to make anyone's writing stronger and more marketable.

Here's my point: true writers write for many reasons other than making money. Some of us write to help others. Some of us write to leave a memoir for family members. Some of us write because we have terrific stories that deserve to be written. I can think of a dozen other reasons why people write, but few of us write with dollar signs in our eyes. In reality most of us don't make much money writing, but that's okay. Nothing stops us from writing, does it?

What's your reason for writing? Share it with me, and I'll share it with our readers.

Yours in writing,
Bobbie Christmas Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com
Author of two award-winning 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:

Jean Shannon, a minister in Australia (and full disclosure, my brilliant sister of whom I'm extremely proud) wrote the following about facing a blank page/blank mind: "Like you, if nothing happens, if I'm desperate, I just start in the middle. Going for a walk usually helps too. That's where my best first lines come from. But most often the blockage is because there are too many ideas, too many big things to fit down the 'tube,' so I grab a white board or a bit of paper and write ideas/quotes in thought bubbles around the page. Pretty soon those that are connected are obvious and a theme emerges and those that are not get put away for another day."

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Pam Walker of Rome, Georgia, wrote, "I used to write a column every week for our local newspaper. A full-time paralegal, [after a while] I didn't have time to meet a weekly deadline. I then wrote the column every other week. What always helped me with a blank screen/blank page was being keenly aware of the date, the seasons, and, if a holiday was approaching, considering that holiday. Further, I often find a fresh, blank paper inspiring. I think of the possibilities and take off."

Retired now and with more time to write, she adds. "I am working on a book of stories based on my experiences through the years as a Christian single parent and the many delightful things that happened to my children and me."

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: Ask the Book Doctor: About Dialogue

by Bobbie Christmas

Q: Which of the sentences below sounds best?

- John's mother told him,  
A. "I'm beginning to regret giving birth to you."  
B. "I regret giving birth to you."  
C. "I wish I never gave birth to you."

A: I assume you are striving for the most realistic dialogue possible, rather than what sounds the best, so I will give you a fourth choice. It is the most realistic because I actually overheard it in person. Yes, I witnessed a mother saying to her fortyish son (whom I was dating at the time), "I wish I'd never given birth to you." This quote is the most realistic, but it is devastating for a child to hear. It could end a relationship between parent and child. Don't use it unless you intend for it to have dire consequences, as it did in real life.

Q: I am about to start writing a book, but I can't decide on the title so I can name the file. May I send you the outline so you can help me pick a title?

A: In a word, no. Don't send me an outline before you've written the book. Don't worry about the title before you start writing. You can label the computer file "Book 2023" or anything like that. Once you're written most or all of the book, the title will probably occur to you. As an example, years ago I edited a book with a one-word title that I found dull and unalluring. While editing the manuscript, though, I noted a piece of enticing dialogue in the middle of the book that made a great title. When I suggested the new title to the author, he fully agreed.

Q: If one of my characters says, "Land o' Goshen!" is Goshen capitalized or not?

A: The land of Goshen is named in the Hebrew Bible, so Goshen is considered a proper noun and should be capitalized. If the expression stands by itself in dialogue, your assumption is correct, that it would be written like this: "Land o' Goshen!"

Q: I have written a novel in what could be described as conversational style. There are large blocks of text in which one of my characters is telling the story of her life to someone. I am having a little trouble finding information that explains how to use punctuation marks in this type of writing. Any suggestions?

A: Without seeing the manuscript, I'll say the following:

Monologues (long dialogues without anyone interrupting) are discouraged in contemporary literature, because readers today prefer to see a story unfold with action as well as dialogue. Consider breaking up the monologues with actions and or reactions. Here's an example of using action to break up a monologue:

Elton scratched his forehead. "I don't exactly remember the date this happened, but I remember . . ." He looked up as if retrieving memories. "I remember being under a bed, afraid my brother was going to hit me with that broom, but he stuck the handle of the broom under the bed anyway and poked me with it. Hard."

Here's an example of breaking up a monologue with a reaction:

Elton scratched his forehead. "I don't exactly remember the date this happened, but I remember . . ."

"Don't stop now," the therapist insisted. "What happened?"

Elton looked up as if retrieving memories before he continued, "I remember being under a bed, afraid my brother was going to hit me with that broom, but he stuck the handle of the broom under the bed anyway and poked me with it. Hard."

Even though readers today don't want to be told a story and would rather feel as though they are watching the story unfold, monologues do have a place, and they also have punctuation guidelines.

When a character speaks for more than a paragraph, don't end the paragraph with quotation marks. Open the next paragraph with quotation marks, though. At the end of the monologue, close it with quotation marks. Here's a brief example:

"One night my father came home stinking of whiskey." John shifted his weight. "Pops yelled at us, woke us from a deep sleep. We didn't know what he was going to do next.

"To our surprise he made us all get up, Ruth, Susan, Samuel, and me, and he danced with every one of us in the living room." John shook his head. "That night turned out to be one of my best memories of my old man."

Send your questions to Bobbie Christmas, book editor, author of *Write In Style: Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*, and owner of Zebra Communications. [Bobbie@zebraeditor.com](mailto:Bobbie@zebraeditor.com) or [BZebra@aol.com](mailto:BZebra@aol.com). Read Bobbie's Zebra Communications blog at <https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/>.

For much more information on hundreds of subjects of vital importance to writers, order *Purge Your Prose of Problems, a Book Doctor's Desk Reference Book* at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>. An excellent reference book for all writing groups.

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

### Juxtaposition

Juxtaposition refers to the act or an instance of placing two or more things side by side, often to compare or contrast or to create an interesting effect. For that reason, related elements must be close together and in the correct order, to avoid awkward, unclear, or misleading sentences. Unrelated elements should not be tied together.

Examine the following sentence: A soldier saluted Thomas wearing a blue uniform. As written, it implies Thomas wore the blue uniform. If the soldier wore the uniform, keep those elements together. A soldier wearing a blue uniform saluted Thomas.

Odd juxtaposition: In any event, be well aware of any obligations generated by the seller that continue after the closing as a part of doing business. Better: In any event, be well aware of any obligations generated by the seller as a part of doing business that continue after the closing.

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

### ~~~~~ How Can I Get Published?

A guide to demystify the process and provide you with resources.

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/articles/how-can-i-get-published/>  
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Makeup, Make-up, Make up/Coffee pot, Coffeepot/Co-ed or Coed?

Which word is correct? When is it one word or two words? When should it be hyphenated? You're not the only person confused, but a professional editor knows the answer.

Where do the commas go? What is the prudent and correct use of exclamation marks? You don't know what you don't know, and you may think you're right when you're wrong. Every book deserves a professional 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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Mistakes to Avoid When Writing Children's Books

<https://tinyurl.com/4d2v443z>

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Bobbie's Blogs

Find Your Fresh Voice: <https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/find-your-fresh-voice/>

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Is Goodreads Good or Bad?

"Goodreads allows any user, not just those who've received advance copies, to leave ratings months before books are released. Authors who've become targets of review-bombing campaigns say there's little moderation or recourse to report the harassment. Writers dealing with stalkers have pointed to the same problem." Read the full article here:

<https://wapo.st/4488FVX>

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MANUSLIPS

The witness also claimed to have written a book during testimony.

Moments passed, and they heard a small, faraway voice running up the path.

Lightning flashed as thunder rumbled behind him, casting an eerie shadow on the ground.

He claimed he was holding the cigarette for someone else and was not smoking himself.

All four sentences were excerpted from actual manuscripts I've edited. Can you tell what's wrong with each one? I'll explain in brackets,

The witness also claimed to have written a book during testimony.
[As written, the witness wrote a book while testifying.]

Moments passed, and they heard a small, faraway voice running up the path.
[As written a voice ran up a path all by itself, apparently.]

Lightning flashed as thunder rumbled behind him, casting an eerie shadow on the ground.
[As written the thunder cast a shadow.]

He claimed he was holding the cigarette for someone else and was not smoking himself.
[I'm glad he wasn't smoking himself; he's not a sausage.]

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 sometimes 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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Writers Strike: Supporters' Questions Answered

Am I crossing the picket line by seeing a movie?

Should I cancel Netflix, MAX, or the sixteen other streaming services I subscribe to if I want to show support?

When will I stop being able to watch new movies and shows?

Associated Press answers these and other questions here: <https://tinyurl.com/4s445xht>

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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. Do open compounds like "face mask," "cell phone," "sea level," "high school," and "life science" (all identified as

nouns by Merriam-Webster) have to be hyphenated before a noun?

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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Write Tight: Learn What To Look For, How to Look for It, and What to Delete

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

The Book Group  
Literary Agency Open to Queries

When you're ready to send us your submission, please email a query letter and ten sample pages to [submissions@thebookgroup.com](mailto:submissions@thebookgroup.com). You will receive a bounce back to your query, which you should consider receipt of your work. Please include all materials in the body of the email, as we can't open attachments. We only accept electronic queries sent to [submissions@thebookgroup.com](mailto:submissions@thebookgroup.com), and do not accept paper queries or queries by phone. Please include the name of the agent to whom you are submitting in the subject line of your query email.

To learn more see <http://www.thebookgroup.com/submissionguidelines>

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Contests

C&R Press 2023 Awards in Poetry, Fiction (novel and short story), and Nonfiction (memoir, creative nonfiction, and essay) are open! The deadline this year is September 1. The annual prizes award \$1,000 and publication in each genre. We will announce a short list and long list in each category in December 2023 and all submissions are considered for publication outside of the prize.

For guidelines see <https://www.cypress.org/submissions/>

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Algonquin Books has published some famous books and many literary bestsellers, including *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen, *Gap Creek* by Robert Morgan and *In the Time of Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez.

Algonquin Books only considers proposals submitted by mail. They generally respond in around six months. They do not respond to phone calls about the status of a submission, so prepare to be patient.

When you submit a query, include a short (less than 15 double-spaced pages) sample of your manuscript, a cover letter, and an SASE.

Algonquin Books is a well-respected company that has the marketing budget that comes with being a more established company. If you are interested in submitting please visit their website.

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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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