

The Writers Network News: October 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

Our heads are round so that thoughts can change direction. -Francis Picabia (1879-1953)

Francis Picabia was a French avant-garde painter, writer, filmmaker, magazine publisher, poet, and typographer closely associated with Dada. When considering the many styles that Picabia painted in, observers have described his career as "shape-shifting" or "kaleidoscopic".

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One: From the Editor's Desk: Battling Being Boring

Dear Fellow Writers:

I wonder if all my fellow writers and editors run into the same issue I have had for quite some time. I spend so much of my time editing and writing that I fear I have nothing to add to any conversation.

Ask my friend who retired a few years ago what she's been up to, and she'll regale you with her stories about her travels to Colorado, Iowa, and Florida. She'll tell you about her hiking trips with her husband and her newfound interest in identifying mushrooms in their natural habitats.

Other friends are on a safari in Africa and post impressive photos on Facebook.

Ask another friend what's new in her life and she'll expound on her creation of a new business that helps companies hold more effective, interesting, and inclusive meetings.

Another friend has created an extensive network of people who like to play board games. She gives parties for gamers and is filled with funny stories about things that happened while her groups shared food and played games.

Ask me what I've been doing, and I say, "Writing and editing." That's it. I believe that if you talk about what you're writing, you drain energy from it. You must write first and may talk about it later. In addition there's confidentiality about manuscripts I edit. I won't discuss details of their contents with anyone other than the author until the books have been

published and are available to the public.

“What have you been doing lately?” my friends may ask, so I’ve taken to answering, “The usual. Writing and editing. What have you been doing lately?” On the bright side, my “boring” life makes me a good listener, because I ask questions of others. I’m not bored with my life; I just can’t talk about it, but as a listener I’m a good friend while maybe also gathering potential material and settings for my next story or book. Maybe the joke’s on my friends.

On another subject, I recently watched the movie The Wife on Netflix. Glenn Close plays the reserved wife of an author who wins the Nobel Prize for literature. She won a Critics' Choice Movie Award for best actress, and her acting is superb. Conscientious writers will find the story fascinating. I highly recommend the movie.

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

Susan Heim wrote, “Thank you for explaining the difference between ‘further’ and ‘farther.’ This mistake is extremely common in speech, and it drives me crazy whenever I hear it! I want to instantly correct the speaker, but I usually end up gnashing my teeth rather than annoy the speaker (even though he/she annoyed me first).”

Susan also asked, “How do most freelancers provide health insurance for their families (assuming a spouse cannot acquire it through an employer)?”

I recommended that she contact an independent insurance broker in her area, one who can research many companies and recommend several options. The answer will probably be dependent upon what’s available in her area.

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This interesting bit came from Mark Diamond, who shared an excerpt from a New York Times Book Review feature about novelist Lauren Groff: When Groff starts something new, she writes it out longhand in large spiral notebooks. After she completes a first draft, she puts it in a bankers box—and never reads it again. Then she’ll start the book over, still in longhand, working from memory. The idea is that this way, only the best, most vital bits survive. “It’s not even the words on the page that accumulate, because I never look at them again, really, but the ideas and the characters start to take on gravity and density,” she said.

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

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor: About Making Money Writing

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: How do we support ourselves while we’re writing our books?

A: If you’re writing nonfiction, you can write a proposal and several sample chapters instead of the whole book. If the information is current, compelling, and well written, and if the proposal follows the guidelines about how to write a book proposal, you may succeed in selling the book and get an advance against future royalties. Still, the advance may not be enough to live on while you write the full book. My advance from Union Square Publishing for the first edition of Write In Style paid only about a month’s expenses, so I continued to edit books and write articles to maintain my income while I wrote my book in my free time.

If you write fiction, you can try your hand at freelancing for magazines and websites while you also write your novel.

Writing and selling articles is a great way to make some money while you’re also writing your book, but you need to know how to write an article and how to find work, and writing articles can be a full-time job in itself.

Long ago at a local meeting of The Writers Network I asked attendees how they supported themselves while they wrote their books. The consensus was that most kept their day jobs and wrote their books at night and on weekends.

In reality most of us writers don’t make enough money off our books even after they are published anyway, so we’d better have another solid source of income, no matter what.

Q: Tell me about breaking into magazine writing.

A: Oh dear, entire books have been written on the subject. I can’t possibly give the answer the full attention it deserves. Instead I recommend reading a few books on the subject. Although I haven’t read the book, I looked at a few, and I liked Complete Idiot’s Guide to Publishing Magazine Articles by Sheree Bykofsky best of all, because it covers a great deal of territory, including how to handle your taxes when you get paid. I’m a little prejudiced because Sheree has been a help to me from time to time. She’s a literary agent in New York.

In brief, editors need to see that you can write a good article and are familiar with the jargon and craft of journalism. For example, the lead paragraph of an article can be referred to as a lede or a lead. When editors read your clips (examples of articles you’ve written), they want to see you know how to write a strong lede, follow the tenets of creative writing, and use good grammar.

At the time I began freelancing full-time—when dinosaurs roamed the earth—I used the Yellow Pages to find local magazine publishers. I made appointments to show off my portfolio and get to know the editors. In this way I was able to get articles assigned to me regularly. Today you're not limited to local publications. The internet is filled with information on periodical publishers and how to query them.

Q: How can I go from free to fee writing?

A: Good for you for writing for free! You're building your portfolio.

Many accomplished writers began by writing free articles. Some do it to get experience and build a portfolio. Others began writing as volunteers for nonprofit organizations. I began by writing and editing for my school newspapers and then for charitable and educational organizations. After I gathered enough bylined articles to build a solid portfolio, I used it to land a full-time job as a reporter and editor with a newspaper. Over the years as my skills and portfolio grew stronger, I moved into corporate communications, without ever revealing that my original portfolio had all been written for free.

I've progressed into editing books and magazines, so I no longer seek freelance writing assignments. When I did, though, I had much more success when I met with publishers, showed them my copious and varied portfolio, and asked for assignments. Nowadays I recommend that freelancers have a website that displays some of their published articles. Websites have become essential for anyone in business, and trust me, freelance writing is a business.

As a business owner you must constantly market yourself. No client lasts forever. Editors change, companies fold, work dries up, and if you aren't always looking for more and new clients, you will find yourself out of work.

Even though printed periodicals have slowly dwindled, other opportunities have arisen. Companies need copy for their websites. Businesses and organizations need newsletters and blog entries. Query all the websites, periodicals, and other paying markets that appeal to you. Never stop looking. If you hone your writing skills and approach publishers in a professional manner, you will soon go from free to fee.

Never make the mistake of undercharging, though. Rather than settle for low rates, you may need to use a few negotiating skills. Going from free to fee is one thing, but getting paid a fee that's worthy of your time is more important than merely getting paid.

Even when you are accustomed to getting paid for your work, you may find times when you want to charge less or nothing, such as when writing for a nonprofit that speaks to your heart. Don't hesitate to follow your passion and use your skills to help people and organizations that make the world a better place.

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

#### Myself and Other Reflexive Pronouns

A reflexive pronoun (such as myself, himself, herself, yourself, itself, and themselves) cannot replace a first-person pronoun. A reflexive pronoun is always the object of a sentence; it can never be the subject. The word myself trips up many astute people. Perhaps they are afraid to say I or me, to avoid sounding self-serving, or maybe they think myself sounds more intellectual. They are wrong.

Incorrect: Write to the chairman or myself.

Correct: Write to the chairman or me.

Incorrect: Manny and myself will meet you Thursday.

Correct: Manny and I will meet you Thursday.

Incorrect: I, myself, will take the responsibility

Correct: I will take the responsibility.

Incorrect: I hurt me.

Correct: I hurt myself.

Incorrect: Her words could hurt a man, even a man like himself.

Correct: Her words hurt a man, even a man like him.

(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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Poetry News

For those who say poetry books don't sell, this news comes from *Complex*: Megan Fox has words for some of the people who've done her wrong. The thirty-seven-year-old actress announced that she penned a collection of poems titled *Pretty Boys Are Poisonous*. Set to release on Nov. 7, the 176-page book is Fox's literary debut and is already a bestseller on Amazon.

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## How To Pick the Right Editor for Your Manuscript

Avoid wasting time and money on the wrong editor for your manuscript. Before you choose, you must be both objective and subjective. Send me an email ([bzebra@aol.com](mailto:bzebra@aol.com)) and ask for a free report that shows how to pick the right editor for your specific manuscript. Surprise! I might not be the best for you and your manuscript, but how can you tell, until you've done your due diligence?

### Words Writers Should Know

#### Ingeminate

Verb. To repeat, to reiterate

#### Pickup/Pick

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](http://www.ZebraEditor.com). Zebra Communications: Excellent Editing for Maximum Marketability

#### Ten Bits of Writing Advice from Steven King

<https://tinyurl.com/ysvudwje>

#### Pick Your Font

When you create your initial manuscript you should use Times New Roman in twelve-point type, which is standard and recommended. When laying out your book for publication, though, you have many choices for a font. Read what The Washington Post says about how to choose your perfect font when designing a printed piece:

<https://tinyurl.com/435ashwr>

#### Bobbie's Blogs

The book that changed my life: <https://tinyurl.com/4dyxvmte>

Do you have a book that changed your life? Tell me about it.

#### Manuslips

I've corrected the following incorrect word choices in manuscripts I've edited recently. Perhaps they will pique your interest or make you smile.

Something that always piques his interests is old technology.

An underground space that seemed to be entirely shut off from the world poked their interest.

Manuslip: 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:

Q. Would you italicize "x" in a phrase like "x number of dollars"? It seems like a variable, but I wasn't sure if this casual use merited italics.

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

Open Secrets

Open Secrets publishes one personal essay a week and pays \$100 for each.

Open Secrets is looking for ten essays to round out its 2023 publishing schedule. This call for essay submissions will change as topics are filled so check back before submitting. Submissions will be open until all available slots are filled. Priority will be given to the most unique, dramatic, and compelling among the submissions we receive. Authors will receive \$100/essay upon approval of final draft of essay preview in Substack.

Send Word or accessible Google doc that includes an unpublished 1,000-1,500-word essay with headline, 1-line subhead (tagline), and bio for author.

Essayists retain the rights to their work. While we are not issuing contracts, we are informally requesting 90-day exclusivity from the date of publication and that Open Secrets be credited as the original source with any reprints.

You will hear back by December 15, 2023, at the latest.

Read more and full guidelines for submission here: <https://opensecretsmag.substack.com/about>.

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Allrecipes

The food industry's first large-scale digital-to-print brand extension, Allrecipes magazine launched in 2013. Now published six times a year, it reaches an audience of nearly nine million. The magazine serves up a seasonal slice of recipes and real-cook wisdom from Allrecipes.com — along with the best of what's new from the greater food and cooking community (emerging trends, entertaining ideas, new products, and more). We aim for a mix of approachable inspiration and down-to-earth service in every issue.

Allrecipes is always on the lookout for talented new writers, recipe developers, equipment reviewers, and photographers who love cooking to join our team of contributors. We're currently accepting pitches for recipes, news and trending articles, and features (especially personal essays and food histories). Its rates start at \$250. Please submit pitches or inquire about potential assignments by sharing a short bio and your relevant experience in our pitch form at the bottom of our web page at <https://www.allrecipes.com/about-us-6648102>.

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Writers House, Dan Conaway, Literary Agent  
<https://tinyurl.com/92ca45b5>

Writers House was founded in 1973 with a vision for a new kind of literary agency, one that would combine a passion for managing a writer's career with an integrated understanding of how storytelling works.

Dan handles Suspense/Thriller, True Crime, Contemporary Literary Fiction, Popular History, Popular Culture, Investigative Journalism, Political Narrative  
[conawaysubmissions@writershouse.com](mailto:conawaysubmissions@writershouse.com)

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

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