

The Writers Network News: August 2024

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The Writers Network News

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

"The beautiful part of writing is that you don't have to get it right the first time, unlike, say a brain surgeon." -Robert Cormier, author of The Chocolate War and more than a dozen other novels

Robert Edmund Cormier was an American writer and journalist known for his deeply pessimistic novels, many of which were written for young adults. In most of his novels, the protagonists do not win. [Wikipedia]

If Your Email Address Changes, You Will Be Unsubscribed

Our double-opt-in, no-spam policy does not allow me to change your address. If our email to you bounces, our system automatically unsubscribes you. To ensure you never miss an issue of The Writers Network News, you must resubscribe with your new address. 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: Kindness, Inclusion, and Understanding

Dear Fellow Writers:

A post on Facebook touched my heart. The meme said that the fact that two people disagree about their politics shouldn't get in the way of their being friends. I liked the sentiment and do have and have had friends and even relatives whose politics differ from mine.

What amazed me, though, was the response that some people wrote without seeing the irony. Several people wrote long diatribes such as "I could never be friends with someone who was so stupid as to believe . . ." after which they launched into some political beliefs. I found it ironical that the purpose of the meme was to draw people together, yet some of the responses spewed hatred and separatism.

If I disagree with someone's beliefs, we avoid the subject. We have other interesting things to discuss and areas where we agree. Arguing politics is as much a waste of time as arguing religion. A belief is a belief, and that's it. It's personal and not likely to change.

Organizations have been formed to bring people together regardless of their affiliations. Specifically Braver Angels comes to mind. It's a nonprofit that holds workshops, debates, and other events where "red" and "blue" participants attempt to better understand one another's positions and discover their shared values.

If we get to our core, we will find that we have much in common. Can't we all agree that we're human? That's a good beginning. For me it doesn't matter our origin, our skin color, our beliefs, or our sexual orientation. I am a human being, and I love other human beings.

We are living during contentious times. Please, let's learn to love one another.

Yours in writing,

Bobbie Christmas Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com

Book doctor, author of award-winning *Write In Style*, owner of Zebra Communications, editor of "The Writers Network News," and senior editor of *Enjoy Cherokee Magazine*

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor: About Author Intrusion

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: Someone online the other day inquired about a quick, easy way to look up questions about writing. People suggested *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White, as well as *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Those are well known. I suggested Bobbie Christmas's *Purge Your Prose of Problems*.

Now I've just looked through that book and your other gem, *Write in Style*. I think I remember reading something in *Write in Style*, where you said when writing in third person, the writer's voice should not have opinions about the story or characters that they impose on the reader. I hope I'm remembering this correctly.

I want to be sure I'm not advising a client wrong about her story. If the main character says someone's a jerk, that's fine, but the narrator should not be calling that character a jerk. Right?

I'd like to quote you (if that's your position) but I can't find it in the book.

A: You're absolutely right. The issue is one of author intrusion. If the narrative calls a character a jerk, it reflects the author's opinion and is therefore author intrusion. If a character calls someone a jerk, that's the character's opinion, and it's fine.

Example of author intrusion: The jerk who stole Marie's purse threw it in a trash bin.

Example of character's opinion: Marie looked at her battered pocketbook and said, "The jerk who stole it threw it in a trash bin."

Although I may have covered the issue briefly in *Write In Style*, I covered it more in depth in *Purge Your Prose of Problems*. Here's what *Purge Your Prose of Problems* says about author intrusion:

Strong writing shuns author intrusion, which can happen when a portion of a novel is not written in the viewpoint of a character in the book.

Minor author intrusion can be a word choice that implies personal feelings, rather than using a true description.

Example: The weather was beautiful. (Beautiful is a personal opinion.)

Better: The weather was perfect for kite flying because a slight, steady breeze blew through the treetops. The sun peeked through thin clouds, imparting a warm glow to the vast green slopes of Rocky Top Park.

Sometimes a one-word intrusion occurs when an author chooses adverbs that reflect a personal opinion. Examples of minor author intrusion: Luckily, the car was unlocked. Hopefully, she would heal quickly. Better: He found the car unlocked and breathed a sigh of relief. She hoped she would heal quickly.

We also sometimes see the two-word intrusion, of course. Of course the door was locked. Delete it in narrative. The door was locked.

Sometimes thoughts not attributed to a character can sound like the author's opinion and therefore constitute author intrusion.

Example: (author intrusion) He had better hurry; someone might catch him breaking in.

Better: (action) His hands shook, even as he tried to hurry. (thoughts) I'd better hurry, he thought. What will I do if someone catches me breaking in?

Example: (author intrusion) She shouldn't have yelled at him. Now he would be angry.

Better: (dialogue) "I'm sorry. I know I shouldn't have yelled at you. Please don't be angry." (thoughts) Why did I yell at him, she wondered. Now he's going to be angry with me.

Major author intrusion stops the action and dialogue and goes into an explanation.

Example: Junior Sol wept into his hands. He felt bad because even though he was a doctor, he couldn't do anything to save his mother.

Better: Intern Junior Sol wept into his hands. A nurse patted his back. He turned to her, almost shouting. "What good were all those years of medical school and all this training? I still feel like a little boy." He pointed to the body in the hospital bed. "I can't even help my own mother."

All that said, creative writing has only guidelines and no actionable rules. If an author wants to express a personal opinion in a novel, no police officer will come and make an arrest, but in fiction it's wiser to let those opinions come out of the mouths of characters, rather than the author. Nonfiction is the place where we can express our personal opinions without going against any tenets of creative writing.

Book Doctor Bobbie Christmas, author of *Write In Style: Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*, is the owner of Zebra Communications. Send your questions 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 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 five-time award-winning *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

Subscribers Write

Last month I asked: What would you improve in the following sentence that I addressed in a manuscript I edited?

She allowed all her hope for the future to wither away like dead, fallen, brown autumn leaves skittering forlornly in the wind.

Will Bontrager responded, "Her hope withered like autumn leaves." He says he removed the word "All" because to him it implies plural, and "hope" is singular.

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When I asked subscribers how they handled rejections of their submissions, Jean Shannon reported, "When I was freelancing, I filed all my rejections, I don't know why...but as a freelancer, which is a shot in the dark, I was never dismayed or insulted. I don't know, maybe the pile gave me some legitimacy. In the pre-move cleanup. I threw them out but I kept one from a popular women's magazine that was the kindest rejection I ever got."

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Stay Focused While You Write

Do you have a tough time staying focused while you're writing? Does your laundry or other chores distract you? Try the following time-management technique.

The Pomodoro Technique helps people stay focused by breaking their work time into twenty-five-minute intervals called "Pomodoros." Each Pomodoro involves a work period and a break period. To employ this technique you work for twenty-five minutes, take a break, and then work another twenty-five minutes. Some people use a timer to help them adhere to the technique. Francesco Cirillo, an Italian who developed the technique in the 1980s, named it after his tomato-shaped kitchen timer.

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Free Downloads for Writers

Here you'll find a wide variety of articles of interest to writers, from crafting articles to submitting to agents and more.

<https://www.writersdigest.com/resources/free-downloads-for-writers>

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Crumble or Crumple? Confidant or Confidante? Toward or Towards?

Which word choice is correct based on how or where it's used? A professional editor knows the answer, but do you?

Bobbie Christmas, owner of Zebra Communications, offers three levels of editing service. See our services, pricing, reviews, and more at <https://www.zebraeditor.com/>

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Self-published Author Feels Despair

From The Washington Post:

Dear Eric: I'm a self-published fiction author. I'm really struggling with jealousy and despair. Every time I see a published book or step into a bookstore, I feel this wave of sadness. I'm trying to get my books out there, get whatever reviews I can, and promote myself on social media but it feels impossible.

Read the entire question and answer here: <https://wapo.st/3xxfAx6>

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What is an Idiom?

An idiom is a phrase whose meaning differs from the words it uses.

Idioms are usually clichés, so strong writing avoids idioms and clichés in the narrative, but idioms can add flare and

realism to dialogue.

Do you know what the idioms on this website mean? <https://www.phrases.org.uk/idioms>

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Manuslips and Missed Opportunities for Improvement

I pulled the following sentence from a manuscript I recently edited:

We were etching closer to truly seeing each other.

Can you see what's wrong with the sentence? How would you have written it?

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Manuslip: a slip in grammar, punctuation, or other error in a manuscript that often 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. In dialogue, when a character says "Nam" referring to Vietnam, is an apostrophe necessary? The official name is one word, yet "Viet Nam" is more historical. That would suggest the apostrophe is not needed.

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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Publishers Shuffled Around

Publishers Weekly reports the following: Hachette Book Group confirmed a realignment that included layoffs at Workman Publishing, as well as several promotions and other changes—including moving Algonquin Books into Little, Brown, reporting to president and publisher Sally Kim, and Algonquin Young Readers into Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, under president and publisher Megan Tingley.

In the case of Workman, the workforce reductions come after the expiration of a three-year term during which Hachette agreed to keep all Workman employees as a condition of its \$240 million purchase agreement for the company, executed in August 2021.

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"You Cannot Go on Flinching": A Conversation with Cynthia Marie Hoffman

Cynthia Marie Hoffman's Exploding Head is a courageous memoir-in-poems recounted in snapshots from the life of a speaker with obsessive-compulsive disorder as she learns to hold space for the daily realities of living in a complicated brain without letting it overtake her. Read the "Full Stop" interview with the poet here: <https://tinyurl.com/3ya622e8>.

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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.

To order: <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

Protean

If you're interested in submitting to Protean, we would be happy to consider your work for publication on our website. Submissions for the annual print issue is closed at this time, but the online edition is open. We offer fair pay in exchange

for all criticism, journalism, essays, reviews, interviews, poetry, fiction, and artwork that we publish. Send your pitch or draft to [submissions\[at\]proteanmag.com](mailto:submissions@proteanmag.com).

We do not have a submission fee.

Submit using the appropriate email inbox, as outlined below.

We publish work geared explicitly to the anti-capitalist left. Please take this into consideration before submitting.

We will always reject submissions with racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, classist, or otherwise bigoted content.

All submissions (criticism, fiction, and poetry) should include a short bio, past bylines, and other relevant information in the pitch email. When pitching an article, tell us why you're the right person to write this piece.

Our required format for sending all drafts, fiction, and poetry is a single, separate document (.doc or .docx) attached to your pitch email. (Please don't send work in .pdf format.)

If accepted, please anticipate multiple rounds of revisions, as well as intensive edits for both style and content. We may request substantial rewrites. We reserve the right to make the final editorial decisions on published works. If the editing process is unusually laborious or extended, we will offer increased compensation to reflect the additional work involved.

Due to the high volume of submissions, we are not always able to respond individually. If you have not received a response within two weeks, feel free to send a follow-up email.

All questions (not submissions) should be directed to [editorial\[at\]proteanmag.com](mailto:editorial@proteanmag.com).

Real full submission information here: <https://proteanmag.com/submissions/>

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The Twenty-First Annual Gival Press Short Story Award

Gival Press, LLC, an award-winning independent literary publishing house located in Arlington, Virginia, was established in 1998 with a focus on publishing books of literary fiction, nonfiction (essays/educational texts), and poetry.

To promote writing, Gival Press has sponsored writing contests since 1999.

Deadline for the twenty-first Annual Gival Press Short Story is August 8, 2024. To submit go to

<https://givalpress.submittable.com/submit>

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### Diem Seeks Essays

We're looking for stories to publish in our newsletter, *The Things We Don't Talk About*. We're particularly interested in stories that cover health, finance, relationships, and culture within the context of those broader themes. Some examples of our most-read essays:

Should I have kids...or not?

Are we dating the same guy?

WTF happens when you freeze your eggs?

Pitches should be submitted directly to our editor at [pitchus@askdiem.com](mailto:pitchus@askdiem.com) with a subject along the lines of "PITCH FOR DIEM." To learn the correct format of your pitch, read more here: <https://tinyurl.com/35c3j7m7>

Our rates for Diem stories start at \$200, and the majority of commissioned stories hit the 700-word mark unless otherwise specified.

To get an idea of what we're looking for, please read through some of our past pieces at

<https://diemnewsletter.substack.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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