

The Writers Network News: November 2024

The Writers Network News: November 2024

In This Issue

One: From the Editor's Desk: Humor in Writing

Two: Ask the Book Doctor—About Artificial Intelligence

Three: Subjects of Interest to Writers

Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

The Writers Network News

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

Sponsor: Zebra Communications

Contents copyright 2024, Bobbie Christmas

No portion of this newsletter can be used without permission; however, you may forward the newsletter in its entirety to fellow writers.

Zebra Communications

Excellent editing for maximum marketability

Founded in 1992

<https://www.zebraeditor.com/>
~~~~~

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 difficulty is not to write, but to write what you mean." -Robert L. Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson was a Scottish novelist, essayist, poet, and travel writer best known for his Treasure Island, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and A Child's Garden of Verses.
~~~~~

Plan to Change Your Email Address?

You must resubscribe with your new address before your old address expires. 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: Humor in Writing

Dear Fellow Writers:

Humorists know that embarrassing situations often can be turned into hilarious stories. Psychologists know that laughter relieves stress and that laughing at our circumstances leads to better mental health.

Last week I had a chance to prove all those facts to be true. The story begins when the management of my senior-living apartment building sent out a notice that a sprinkler inspector would be checking all the sprinklers in our apartments over a two-day period. The last time the sprinklers were inspected I must have been gone, because I never saw an inspector. I didn't give the issue a second thought. I went about my day as usual

My routine involves checking and responding to my emails in the morning. Next I play Wordle and send the results to my brother and sister. Because we're the three oldest siblings in the family, sending our Wordle results by text message is our way of telling each other we are awake and alive each day. Three days a week my next move involves donning a swimsuit and going to the indoor pool for exercise. Dripping wet, I return to my apartment to shower before I dress and get to the business of editing.

On the day in question I completed my pool workout, returned to my apartment, turned on the shower, and washed my hair and body. I stepped out to dry, and a complete stranger walked into the room. I screamed and yanked a towel against my naked body.

Equally shocked, the inspector leaped backward, stuttered apologies, and slammed my apartment door when he left. For the longest time I stood dripping wet, buck naked, and trembling, my heart pounding. The guy probably rang my doorbell while I was in the shower. I hadn't heard it, and he must have thought no one was home.

Once my heartbeat returned to normal, I pondered what had happened. The unfortunate man was as horrified as I was, and he apologized profusely. That's when I realized that I should have asked him for forgiveness. I'm an overweight eighty-year-old woman, and what that alarmed man saw he can never unsee. Poor guy! Once I thought I should have apologized, I've been laughing ever since.

Have you ever turned one of your life's most embarrassing situations into humor? Would you like to share it?

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*

%%%

~~~~~

Two: Ask the Book Doctor: About Artificial Intelligence

By Bobbie Christmas (and AI)

Q: What are your feelings about using artificial intelligence to write a novel?

A: I'm intrigued with all the discussions about AI. My opinion is that AI might generate some great ideas for novelists, but I hope those writers build on those suggestions and write fiction in their own voice and based on their own creative ideas. I doubt I'd want to read an AI-generated novel. One of my clients, however, used AI to generate figures and facts necessary to add to a proposal he was writing.

When it comes to nonfiction, however, especially for short pieces, I'm blown away by the possibilities. AI amazed me today at my very first attempt at using it. I asked it to write a column about writing and editing. The results are below. Although I had to revise some of it, AI churned out the same information I've been touting for years. It would have taken me hours to write the following, yet it took AI only a few seconds. Here's what it produced:

### The Art of the Edit: Crafting Clarity and Conciseness

Writing is a journey, a dance between ideas and words, but the true magic often happens in the editing room, where raw material is sculpted into a polished masterpiece. Editing is more than just fixing typos; it's a process of refinement, shaping thoughts and language into a coherent, engaging piece.

### The Importance of Revision

Revisiting your work with a fresh perspective can reveal hidden flaws and untapped potential. Editing allows you to do the following:

- Strengthen your argument: Ensure that your ideas are logically connected and supported by evidence.
- Improve clarity: Eliminate any ambiguity or confusion in your writing.
- Enhance style: Refine your language choices to create a more engaging and memorable piece.
- Maintain focus: Cut unnecessary words and distractions to keep your reader's attention.

### Editing Techniques

Several techniques can help you hone your editing skills.

- Read aloud: Hearing your words can help you identify awkward phrasing or repetitive sentences.
- Seek feedback: Share your work with others and consider their suggestions.
- Take a break: Stepping away from your writing can give you a fresh perspective.

### The Editing Process

The editing process often involves multiple passes, focusing on different aspects of your writing. Here's a suggested approach:

1. Global edits: Review your overall structure, argument, and organization.
2. Paragraph-level edits: Check for coherence, unity, and topic sentences.
3. Sentence-level edits: Focus on clarity, conciseness, and style.
4. Proofreading: Correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.

### The Benefits of Editing

Editing is a time-consuming process, but the rewards are well worth the effort. A well-edited piece is more likely to do the following:

- Engage readers: Captivate your audience with clear, concise, and compelling writing
- Persuade others: Make a strong case for your argument through well-crafted language
- Reflect your professionalism: Demonstrate your attention to detail and commitment to quality

By mastering the art of editing or using a professional editor, you elevate your writing to new heights and create pieces that resonate with readers. Editing is not a chore; it's an obligation. If you're not an editor, be sure to hire one, because it is your only opportunity to refine your craft and produce work you'll be proud to share.

The formatting might get messed up in an email, but it was fine in Microsoft Word. Thus ended the AI-generated report

after a little help from me. What do you think of AI-generated nonfiction now?

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 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>.  
%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%%

Three: Subjects of interest to writers

Subscribers Write

Regarding first lines

Mark Diamond wrote, "I always had my teachers and students start their narratives with a short sentence that is either dialogue, a small action or movement, or a thought or feeling. In addition to being a better start for the reader, it's a better start for the writer."

--  
Janet Hogan Chapman wrote, "My work in progress is a multigenerational saga about the relationships between mothers and daughters. It is based on true events beginning with my great-great grandmother and working down to my own words for my granddaughters. Much of it will be told in the format of letters written to daughters over the years. My opening line currently is, 'I am no one's daughter.' Would this opening intrigue you to read further?"

My response

I've thought about this line for a little while before responding. If I were to read it in a vacuum, I would have thought it might be the start of a science fiction book involving robots. That said, because anyone who saw the book would have read the title and probably the blurb saying it is a saga about mothers and daughters, the line piqued my curiosity. It made me want to read more to learn how a story about mothers and daughters could be written by someone who says she isn't anyone's daughter. For that reason I feel it's a good opening for such a saga. When an opening line makes a person want to read more, it's a good first line.

--  
Patricia Pimental responded to my mention of First Line Friday with the following first line: "It begged to be opened."

My response was this: On the bright side, it's short, which has appeal. As for possible improvement, rather than an indefinite/undefined pronoun (it) as an opener, I'd prefer a specific noun with an intriguing description. Consider adding a visual depiction, such as this: The battered box on my doorstep begged to be opened. Or this: The letter I ripped from my dead aunt's hands begged to be opened.

--  
Marsha Maurer wrote about my admission about being an introvert. She said, "I am an introspective person too. One of my favorite books on the subject is *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*. I recognize myself on so many pages." She added, "Thank you for your faithful and always encouraging newsletter."

~~~~~  
Atlanta Writers Club Self-Publishing Conference

REGISTER HERE
\$119.00 EARLY-BIRD PRICING FOR ATLANTA WRITERS CLUB MEMBERS (\$179 FOR NON-MEMBERS, WHICH INCLUDES ONE YEAR OF ATLANTA WRITERS CLUB MEMBERSHIP) THROUGH OCTOBER 31, 2024

DEADLINE TO REGISTER ONLINE: MARCH 21, 2025 at 8:00 PM EST. Walkups at the conference will be welcome based on availability (cash or card only, no checks will be accepted).

No refunds after MARCH 1, 2025.

- Included with your registration for the full day of educational talks and networking on March 22, 2025 are the following:
- Free sample edit of your manuscript sample
 - Free virtual one-on-one meetings about the professional book-related services you're interested in
 - Free pre-conference webinars on Self-Publishing 101 topics (file requirements, uploading to Amazon and Ingram, keyword selection, etc.), how to write a book, how to edit a book, and much more
 - Free ebooks (how to outline, a guide to self-revisions, more)

<https://www.atlantselfpublishingconference.com/>
~~~~~

Insight or Incite? Ensure or Insure? Pallet or Palate?

Which word is correct? A professional editor knows, 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/>

~~~~~  
John Grisham's Latest Book Comes Under Fire

The New York Times and ProPublica say Grisham went too far in his use of their reporting on a murder case in Texas, and they want changes made to his latest book, a nonfiction true crime book titled Framed. Read the whole article here: <https://wapo.st/3YrbCk6>

~~~~~  
Manuslips and Missed Opportunities for Improvement

There were also new and old blood diseases that plagued the humans that were discerning.

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

Read the answer below.

As written the word choice of "discerning" makes it sound like only discriminating humans could be plagued by blood diseases. The correct word choice is "disconcerting," so the sentence would then mean what it was intended to mean: the diseases cause concern to human beings.

A computer program would not pick up such a mistake, which is why every manuscript needs a human editor.

--  
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).

~~~~~  
Spy Novelist's Son a Writer in His Own Right

John le Carré's youngest son, born Nicholas Cornwell, for some fifteen years has put great energy into becoming known as a writer in his own right. He has published five bombastically imaginative novels under his primary pen name, Nick Harkaway, and another two under the name Aidan Truhen. Featuring futuristic truckers, steampunk clock repairmen, superheroes, and all-seeing techno-states, the books feel universes away from the brooding realism for which his father was so revered. Read the full story here: <https://wapo.st/4f1IcyE>

~~~~~  
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

The Chicago Manual of Style Online answered many questions this month, including the following one:

Q. Should the names of childhood games be capitalized in prose? For example, kick the can, ghost in the graveyard, and so on.

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.

~~~~~  
Changes in the 18th Edition of The Chicago Manual of Style

The latest edition of The Chicago Manual of Style is here! My copy arrived on October 2.

Once I've had a chance to mull over the more than a thousand pages, I will report what changes have been made since the last edition.

Here's the first change I noticed: Chicago now prefers placing acknowledgments in the back matter rather than in the front matter for most types of books.

Let me note here, too, that when I open an American book and see the British spelling, "Acknowledgements," instead of the correct American spelling, "Acknowledgments," I assume it's an unedited book, and I refuse to buy the book.

Essential to American book editors, the latest edition of The Chicago Manual of Style costs about \$75. Authors won't have to buy a copy if they use an editor who keeps up to date with the latest changes in Chicago style.

~~~~~  
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>

~~~~~  
%%%%%%%%%

Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

Zooscape

Open to submissions starting January 1, 2025.  
We pay 8 cents/word for original fiction. \$20 for reprints.

What we're interested in:  
Original stories or reprints up to 10,000 words; query for longer. Reprints should not be readily available elsewhere online. We do not discriminate against authors based on what tools they use to write their stories, nor do we ask authors to disclose that information to us, only that they be able to sign a fairly standard contract.

All stories must be furry. That means an anthropomorphic animal figure should be significantly featured in your story—it could be anthropomorphic in body or only intelligence. We'll consider any type of furry fiction from secret life of animals to foxes in Starbucks. We love science-fiction with animal-like aliens and fantasy with talking dragons, unicorns, or witch familiars.

Further information and submission guidelines here: <https://zooscape-zine.com/guidelines/>

~~~~~  
Cosmopolitan Magazine

Are you a Cosmo eader? If you're familiar with Cosmopolitan magazine and its content and think you have an article idea that would fit, be sure to send a query. It pays about \$400 a story. Send your query letter about a story idea or book to editor@cosmopolitanreview.com. You can also email social@cosmopolitan.com to contact the magazine.

~~~~~  
Wild Peach Magazine  
<https://wildpeach.org/about/#sub-guide>

Wild Peach Project is a grassroots organization with a humble little mission: to make education and creative arts accessible for everyone.

Wild Peach Magazine publishes work by unpublished and emerging creators, and features profiles and interviews with all kinds of people that thoughtfully explore the varying approaches to being a human and viewing life through a creative lens. We never charge a fee to submit.

We're pining for hyper-local narratives; unexpected pairings of art/music/literature; unsophisticated photography; personal obsessions, beliefs, or commentary on anything that matters to you; sharp, witty takes on flash-trends; playful/critical reflections on the past; stories from behind-the-scenes (of anything); on-the-ground dispatches from unexpected or unusual places; short fiction; how-to's for messy/absurd moments; sharp, insightful manifestos; any review of a book/music/film/product that is highly subjective.

Send your pitch to [pitch@wildpeach.org](mailto:pitch@wildpeach.org). Attach your 1-2-page proposal as a docx or PDF.

%%%%%%%%%

+++++

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.

+++++

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.

+++++

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 an idea, accept an assignment, spend money, or sell your work.

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

+++++

