

# The Proof Angel Summary of

## Bits and Bobs: March 2014

### A Shakespeare resolution

Are you still looking for a challenge for 2014? Here is a good idea for using commuting time. Read all of Shakespeare's plays.

Apparently it will take you 6 months if you read for an hour a day. The post gives you a link to get you started:

<http://bit.ly/1eeFOzx>

### How much time do we spend on books?

Here is a fascinating map showing the differences between nations:

<http://bit.ly/PRRWAB>

### A reminder about UK tax returns

Self assessment tax returns, and tax, are due by 31st January. If there is one thing that is more painful than paying tax, it is paying a penalty for not doing the (allegedly) simple task of filing the return.

Don't get caught. **Do it next.** Then resolve to get it done in September next year\*.

But read this poem first:

<http://bit.ly/1f8wuh2>

*\*Note: Aiming for September gives you a fighting chance of avoiding a really big panic. It probably means you'll get it done in the first week of January. That will do!*

### Having trouble getting down to it?

Make tomorrow different. Read this post & get focussed!

<http://bit.ly/1eaBJ4v>



The Proof Angel is the trading name of Sarah Perkins, freelance editor and proofreader.

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## The National Department of Poetry

We are planning a house move this year. Here is a strong candidate for the role of poster on my new office wall:

<http://www.incidentalcomics.com/2014/01/the-national-department-of-poetry.html>

Well, it is important to get the fundamental things right first, isn't it?

## Some word histories

From time to time a post catches my eye about the origins of words:

- Lady <http://alexpolistigers.wordpress.com/2014/01/08/lady/>
- Sky: <http://alexpolistigers.wordpress.com/2014/01/14/sky/>
- inglenook: <http://alexpolistigers.wordpress.com/2014/01/13/inglenook/>

A good mixture, eh? Almost tempting to see how many sensible sentences you can make up, isn't it?

## The handwriting of the famous

Manuscripts vary in quality. Often the variation from project to project can be explained by the mood of the writer at the time. It can be an indicator of how hard the piece was to write. At least these days the average manuscript is typed up legibly.

We forget how things used to be before we all had access to a keyboard. This post shows the fascinating range of neatness that came from famous pens:

<http://bit.ly/1lQl1d8>

Some of them hadn't had "tidy work leads to a tidy mind" drummed into them.

I'm so pleased I'm not editing Vladimir Nabokov!

## Not your usual library?

A library can mean a collection of books, or the place you keep a collection of books. There is nothing hard about that, is there? This one simple word can cover a cast range of places. See how wide the range is here:

<http://litreactor.com/columns/the-10-most-unusual-libraries-in-the-world>

## Amazing hidden book illustrations

I've never seen anything like this. Ordinary looking old books with a picture hidden on the edge of the pages. Fore-edge painting cannot be seen when the book is closed, but when the pages are bent together, you are in for a surprise:

<http://themetapicture.com/hidden-messages-in-books/>

I can't even work out how they could have done it. There can't be much room for error, can there?

## Is the internet good for writing?

I suspect the answer to that question depends on the same two factors as any other question that begins with those words:

- where you look, and
- how much you believe what they say.

However, for a more analytical discussion, here are two posts:

- from the yes camp: <http://bit.ly/1kr5XTG>
- and for no: <http://bit.ly/1ekHcpJ>

## Confused about typography?

Most specialist areas have their own vocabulary, & typography is no exception. In past times it was only really relevant for printers and designers to know these technical terms, but now to a certain extent we are all our own designers and printers.

As a result of this shift, these words are creeping more into everyday language. Sometimes we use the words without really understanding what they mean. Many of us know that a certain font is sans serif, but have no clear idea what a serif is. Now is the time to find out.

<http://www.mentalfloss.com/article/53569/11-vocabulary-words-typography-nerds>

## Getting the wrong end of the stick

People often get words confused. The main causes are homophones: words that sound the same but mean something completely different.

Sometimes they creep in when autocorrect or spell check leads us astray.

Another common cause is when we mis-hear a phrase & apply it without think things through. How else would anyone have thought it was sensible to say they have put someone on a pedal stool. That should be a pedestal.

See some more silly examples here:

<http://wapo.st/1ga2qCs>

I like the cartoon as well. Make sure you read the whole of the sign to get the impact.

## Language and the Debate on Scottish Independence

I don't normally do politics, but this post about the Scottish debate is worth a look:

<http://bit.ly/1i1Gb55>

## How fast can you read?

I'm not telling you my score - reading is a very different process from editing!

<http://bridgetwhelan.com/2014/02/16/how-fast-can-you-read-test-yourself/>  
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## How the UK might look by 2100

In these flood ridden times, the link in this post is rather sobering. Perhaps it is not for those of a nervous disposition. As Bridget Whelan comments, if you want to write a dystopia start with this map: <http://bit.ly/1k4laYb>

## Do you suffer from typographiphobia?

Noticing typos is a useful skill, but it can all get too much. Read one sufferer's story: <http://bit.ly/1sANtBs>

## Runologist cracks the mysterious jötunvillur code

A Norwegian runologist has translated a message in an ancient Norse code:

<http://bit.ly/1hciV5Y>

It was on a fragment of wooden stick found at the old wharf in Bergen. It seems to be a Viking equivalent text messages. The code uses the number of hairs in the beards of each face indicate the position of the character in the runic alphabet.

I'm pleased we've developed a simpler system now!

## Life lessons in books for children

Whether they set out to be moral tales or not, many children's classics teach a lesson. Often more than one. This is a nice post picking out some key lessons from a selection of famous books: <http://huff.to/LrBDrl>

Many of these appear in other classics. What are your favourites?

## Words lent by English

We have always borrowed words from other languages. Sometimes they have a word we need for something new; sometimes they have a word we just seem to like. English is now lending more words than it borrows:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-26014925>

## The benefits of reading a book

I like this depiction of just some of the benefits of reading books!

<http://visual.ly/benefits-reading-books>

## Difficult words for the Winter Olympics

For those of you who are preparing for the outbreak of the Olympics, here is a little linguistic help: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-26015120>

And now some of the odd words involved in winter sport:

- Part 1: <http://bit.ly/ODHMT7>

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- Part 2: <http://bit.ly/1g7qOUu>

## 3-D printed books? Whatever next?

It only seems 5 minutes since someone was explaining to me why we needed to spend a huge sum on a 3-D printer for the Faculty of Arts at the University where I worked. We were all amazed to hear that after a design student had drawn out their idea they could print it out with special, hugely expensive new "ink" so that it looked like a model of the design.

Now we have a kit for one sitting on our dining room table. My husband is going to use it to make cases to protect the electronic gadgets he makes to monitor & control dual fuel cars. He is very excited about the idea. Making up the kit was his project for the Christmas holiday. I suspect that is now Easter.

It isn't quite possible to print whole books this way yet, but still it is incredible what can be achieved. Just look at this!

<http://www.editwright.com/2014/01/3d-printing-books.html>

## Lists Michelangelo style

I've shared posts about lists before, but this is different. This is how a genius does the job:

<http://www.openculture.com/2013/12/michelangelos-illustrated-grocery-list.html>

## How to make presentations

I hate making planned presentations to an audience. I'm happy to speak spontaneously to a meeting, or talk to a group sitting round a meeting table. But there is something about knowing I will be standing up at the front with everyone looking at me that scares me. I'm best when I don't have time to get nervous.

As with most things, preparation is the key. Here are some useful posts:

- First a good approach to adopt when preparing: <http://bit.ly/ODIdwE>
- Next, are you ready to be a media star? <http://bit.ly/1gLuRFm>
- And finally, some links on public speaking for authors: <http://bit.ly/1qiMPq5>

## Writing styles

How many of these styles do you go through in an average day?

<http://www.incidentalcomics.com/2014/03/styles-of-writing.html>

## Taking care of your back

Some words of warning for the desk bound who want to avoid back problems:

<http://selfpublishingadvice.org/blog/writers-mind-your-backs/>

## How to convert a pdf

This can be a useful technical trick. Sometimes you need to have a Word file, but all you have is a pdf. Here is how to convert it:

<http://blog.catchthesun.net/2014/02/create-a-word-file-from-a-pdf/>

## Get the reading habit

Reading is good for us. It broadens our minds, gives us a fresh perspective, & shows us how to write. In some case it shows us how not to write, which can be just as valuable. But we've all got a zillion other things to do, haven't we?

Help is at hand. Try signing up for Dailylit. Pick that book you have been getting round to reading, & they will send you a chunk that will take about 15 minutes to read. You can set it to arrive at a time to suit you, so it is there when you are on the bus or having a tea break. It gets you into the habit of putting aside time for something you want to do.

A little every day soon builds up. And if you can't wait for the next chunk & you have the time, it is only a click away.

<https://www.dailylit.com/>

## Where does gossip come from?

Gossip is an odd word. It is also very old. Find out more about it here.

<http://alexpolistigers.wordpress.com/2014/03/05/gossip/>

## How to count sheep

Fans of old language will like this one. There are some lovely words in these systems:

<http://bit.ly/LMaC2f>

## Godless words

It can be easy to get confused about atheist & agnostic. Here is some background information that might make things clearer: <http://bit.ly/1mXUvPp>

## Daffodil time

In sheltered places, our daffodils are beginning to come out. Soon there will be clouds of yellow everywhere. Down South you've probably got them already. Here is the history behind the name of one of our most popular spring flowers.

<http://alexpolistigers.wordpress.com/2014/03/01/daffodil/>

## About Yellow

Here is a post about the background of that most spring like of colours:

<http://alexpolistigers.wordpress.com/2014/02/21/yellow/>

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## **A different perspective on the season of Lent**

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and goes on until Easter. I'm familiar with the idea of giving things up for Lent, although I was fascinated to find that many people don't realise that this tradition has a religious origin. This post explores how writers can use the ideas behind Lent: <http://bit.ly/1Ks4lb>

## **10 words deciphered in mystery manuscript**

A linguist at Bedfordshire University has managed to decipher 10 words of a manuscript that was discovered in some second hand books in 1912. Some people claimed the document was a hoax, but it now appears that it is not. The many pictures of plants & stars lead some people to suggest it is about herbal remedies:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-26198471>

## **A nice little assortment of word play**

From time to time, you just can't beat a list of silly sentences:

<https://writejudi.wordpress.com/2014/02/06/wordplay/>

## **So how do you use a dictionary?**

The dictionary sits on the shelf, waiting for us to check a spelling, or the meaning of a hard word. Is there really any more to it than that? Apparently there is. This post explains the differences in attitudes to dictionaries across the Atlantic.

<http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2014/02/british-american-attitudes-dictionaries/>