

**Freestyle Note:** Kia ora whanau - use this space to write a message & let your loved one know why you thought they'd be interested in this article.

## **EDITING 1-4** *Message to a budding writer*

I've always found learning and retaining any information hard. When I read an instruction I forget it and when people explain to me how to do stuff, I unintentionally start day-dreaming. Surprisingly I did okay out in the work-force - but that was because there were patterns and repetitions for me to learn and once I knew how to do something I was okay.

In prison I started to educate myself. I started to learn how to write and do basic math's too. When I got out of prison I continued on with my schooling and finally two years after leaving prison I got my New Zealand Level one Math's and Level 2 (University Entrance) English.

One of the reasons I stuck with my education was because of my love of writing. Just like me I bet that you'll have a whole life-time of valuable stories to share and to help you on your journey you need to know this: **You have to be able to write & present your work in a professional way.**

**I'd always had an idea that when you submitted any work to a competition or a publisher that they'd see past the spelling and grammar mistakes and just 'judge' the merit of the story - but it doesn't work that way.**

So if you've a passion for writing (short stories, a novel, poems etc) then you're going to have to learn to present yourself professionally.

For Opal people still inside prison this is doubly important because you won't be able to pay people to professionally edit your work.

**As an extra note here:** editing is bloody expensive & so to get value for money you need to give an editor your best version anyway - otherwise you'll pay extra for them just to fix the basics.

In my writing career my goal is to be the best writer I can be. I don't want anyone ever to give me a sympathy vote just because I'm an Opal person. I want my success or failure to be judged on my ability.

**To help you on your journey I've sent you some editing that I paid to have done on some work of mine.**

The reason I'm sending it to you is because, this is how I learnt most of the writing skills I have. Yes I passed Level 2 English, but I still haven't a clue what a noun, verb or heavens forbid an adjunct is.

But I've kept all my editing notes because **I CAN SEE** exactly what I'm 'supposed' to do and overtime and through repetition I've learnt the pattern of correct grammar . Like when I write now I can **sense** when I need to use the correct grammar symbol or the hyphenation of a word etc. And if I'm still not sure, I refer back to these eight sets of editing notes that I've copied sent to you to use as a self-help tool .

**So there you go - I'll bet that you have stories that can change the world. You just need to learn to write them in a way that they can be easily read by the people who can further your career.**

*Arakani to you - Darby*

## The Touchstone - Chapter 1 – The Move (anything in blue/red - was written by my editor)

My whole life is in this room. I can tell what time of day it is by the touch of sunlight on my bare skin, shining in through either one of the windows facing east, north and west. I also know where everyone in my family is by the vibrations that I feel coming from the two floors below me.

We are leaving Auckland to go down and live in Hawera, which is a no-where place in a no-where **compound word: nowhere** land called Taranaki! I don't want to move. I don't want to leave everything I know. It sucks being only 14 years old because no one really listens to what you have to say. On top of it all I have pimples and I am 100% blind.

To be honest when I was little being blind wasn't such a big deal because it was normal to me. I didn't care if I had jam all over my face or if I was wearing weirdly coloured clothes. I didn't even have to really worry about hurting myself or getting lost as my family were always there to shield and protect me. But now that I'm getting older things are all different. But I don't want to be different. I just want to be like any other guy my age and muck about with cute girls and my mates at rugby.

My lunatic parents also landed me with a really lame name! Bartimaeus! Blind Bartimaeus, yeah I know it's in the Bible and Jesus makes him see again! Well, I just call myself Bart, because I came to the realisation that I will never see! I will always be the guy that's different! I don't want to move. I am in a really stink mood. Life sucks!

Maybe reduce the no. of exclamation marks (one or more of the ones marked in red) as risk losing effect if overused plus you want a depressed/down tone for his thoughts on blindness and being different.

"Barty? Bart? Bartimaeus!" "Mum! I am blind, not deaf! Stop shouting! I'm coming all right!" "Come on love let's go! I am so excited! You'll love Hawera! You remember your cousins on your dad's side? Jack and Tama? They're nice boys and they'll be at your new college too!" I remembered them all right! They were nasty and sneaky gits. The drive down from Auckland took all day, mainly because my mum and older sisters wanted a toilet break every 5 – five / **spell out numbers under ten** minutes!

When more than one person is speaking, standard to begin each new speaker / change of dialogue on a new line.

Everyone in my family had gone crazy with excitement all because we were moving into a brand 'new' house. Like who cares about whether a house is new or not? When I had finally found my way from the car into the front door of our new home, all I could make out was the smell of wet paint and new carpet! **suggest removing this ex. mark, after carpet** Oh yeah! My mum and dad basically leave me to my own devices. They reckon that tough love is the best way to help me learn live with my blindness! **suggest removing this ex. mark** They think that if I get a few bruised shins and stubbed toes, in the process of learning, then; **remove semi-colon** I'll learn all the quicker!

I do have one bright spark in my life. Actually I have two! My sisters Huia and Hine are twins and they turned 16 in June. The year after next they are planning on going back up to Auckland to study at AUT. I will really miss them when they go because their bubbly personalities are a really good off-set **compound: offset and insert to** my grumpy one! "Hey Bart! Come on! Let's go and explore your room!"

When I walked into my room I felt an unexpected change in the atmosphere! **suggest removing this ex. mark along with unexpected– maybe sudden** One minute my hearing was normal, but as soon as Hine led me through the door, it was like the sound was squeezed out! It was only momentary though. I could tell my sisters hadn't noticed it as they were still talking 'fast as!' **don't need quote marks for way rich as kids will know or intuit meaning** "Bart! This is an awesome room! **Suggest inverting order: This is an awesome room, Bart!** It's almost as private as your old owlery on top of our old house!" Huia exclaimed.

"Look you can see Turuturu Mokai from your window!" "What's that?" "It's a really old Maori pa site. I think it's about 400 or 500 years old. No one really knows too much. They don't even know its real name!" "Then why is it called Turuturu Mokai?" My sisters laughed and started oohing like ghosts... "because heaps of people got killed there and their heads were **werestuck** up on stakes! Hey! But don't worry! **Suggest combining: But hey, don't worry!** Hine said as they were leaving my room... the kehua (ghosts) are probably all our ancestors anyway! And so they won't spook you too much!" **suggest running on in single sentence ... anyway, so they won't spook you....** Huia finished for her! **suggest removing this ex. mark / Begin each change of dialogue on a new line**

When the sound of my sister's **sisters' if both laughing, as opposed to just one** laughter had faded away the silence in my room returned. It felt as if my room was holding its breath in anticipation! **suggest dropping ex. mark** I felt my way over to the window facing the reserve at Turuturu Mokai. My hands felt for **suggest reached for to avoid repeating felt** the cool glass so that I knew I was facing the right way. "Who are you? Who are you Turuturu Mokai? What is your name?"

"Bart! Who are you speaking too and why are your hands all over that nice clean window? Come on let's get you sorted! I have a lot still to do before this day ends and I am getting tired!" "Mum, just leave me ok? **caps: OK unless spelt out okay** This is my space and I am not a baby!" I smiled at her so that hopefully she wouldn't get all huffy! **suggest dropping ex. mark** "Oh well, if you're sure?" "Honey! Whakarongo! Listen to the man! He can make his own bed!" "Hey Dad, thanks!" I said turning towards his voice. "All good son! Come on honey, let's give this guy some space!" **Lots of ex. marks fine in this context as parents positive about the move and in a cheery mood.**

Later that night after everyone was in bed **insert comma** lay there analysing all of the creaks and groans that this house made. Every house has its own sounds. I loved my old bedroom back up in Auckland. It was right at the very top of an old wooden house and it captured and magnified every single sound that emanated from below. This bedroom was totally different. Being brand new it was built onto a concrete foundation that sat right on the ground instead of being built up on piles. My bedroom was down a long corridor, away from all the other bedrooms in the house. I decided that for some reason that this house **insert comma** or the land that it sat on, sucked sound inwards, **delete comma** instead of making it! **suggest dropping ex. mark making it sounds odd — maybe instead of magnifying it.**

Just to explain! We aren't like 'way rich' or anything! **don't need quote marks for way rich as kids will know or intuit meaning** Mum and Dad had bought our house even before Huia and Hine were born! It was an old doer-upper that would have fallen down if no one had bought it! Mum

had always complained about the drafts and leaks, but I thought it was awesome! Now that Auckland house prices have gone crazy, when my parents sold it, they had enough money to buy this new 'flash as' **don't need quote marks** house here in Hawera, with no leaks! **Reduce no. of ex. marks in this paragraph.**

The next few days were really busy. We seemed to have an endless number of whanau (family) **don't need the family as NZ kids should be familiar with term whanau** living in the area and I had to put up with all the usual comments from all the Aunties and Uncles **decap aunties and uncles as not naming an individual** commenting on how tall I'd grown and how much I looked like my dad! **drop ex. mark** Like were they serious? Why would I care if I 'looked' like my dad? I can't see myself! Worse was dealing with all my cousins. I could feel their eyes all over me and their broken conversations were irritating. I just wanted to be back in Auckland with my few good mates who treated me normally!

"Mum! Why do I have to bother going to college? There are only two weeks to go before the summer holidays! Can't I just stay at home and get use to this place before I have to go to school?" "No! Your sisters are looking forward to starting school and aren't complaining and so you can go to!" My mum comes across all fluffy and nice! But when she has made up her mind about something, there is no way you can move her!

Honestly, I was feeling sick with worry about starting at a new school! **drop ex. mark** In Auckland I had gone to the local kindergarten, primary, intermediate and college all in our suburb and so I pretty much knew everyone and they knew me! Thankfully I wouldn't have a teacher aid walking around with me like I did up until year 8! Being blind makes learning harder as heaps of the stuff taught at school is 'visual'. Teachers are always writing things on the white-board, or saying 'look at this! **Insert end quote mark after ex. mark** Because of this I have to work harder just to keep up with my class mates **compound: classmates**. For most of my school life mum and dad have felt the need to pay for an afterschool tutor to help me. When I was younger I thought that this all sucked! Now I realise that being blind is hard enough! **suggest running on as single sentence ... all sucked, but now ...** But I would have felt even more self-conscious if I struggled with my school-work too! All the same, I was feeling really down about having to front up at a new school.

I shut the door to my bedroom and put my earphones on and lay back on my bed and listened to some sounds. **some sounds sounds very vague and a bit odd – maybe tracks (of music)** As I lay there I moved my hands over my body feeling my arms and legs. I flexed my muscles so that I could try and feel what other people could 'see'. 'Is my body ok? **OK or okay** What would girls think of me?' I ran my hands over my face, feeling every detail; my nose felt huge and bumpy with pimples **suggest separating: my nose felt huge and I could feel small bumps on my cheeks – that's all I needed, pimples/or equivalent** I could feel a few small patches of whiskers sprouting around my chin and I had no idea if they looked good or not. I suddenly felt so angry! And so I punched my mattress in frustration! I hate my life! I hate being blind! And just like a baby I threw myself onto my stomach and buried my face in my pillow to hide my hot tears. I guess I must have fallen asleep because when I woke up it felt late. Someone must have come in during the night and covered me with my duvet. Strangely it was the silence that had woken me! **drop ex. mark**

Feeling my way out of bed I made my way to stand in front of the window facing the reserve. **avoid repeating my way; cd begin simply Getting out of bed...** I was so close that my nose was touching the cold window pane! **drop ex. mark** "Turuturu" I questioned, "Turuturu Mokai! What is your name?" BANG! Something big had smashed against the outside of my window! Jumping backwards with a fright I landed on my ass! The silence resumed and all I could hear was my blood pumping in my ears and my fast breathing! **drop ex.** "Turuturu Mokai, what are you?"

"Everyone! Silence! This is Bartimaeus Kapo-Matakite and he has joined us all the way from Auckland!"

"Fartimass Miss? Is his name FARTI-MASS?" All I could hear was laughing! "Tama Henare! That is enough!" Typical, the class clown was my cousin! Could this day get any worse? Sadly, the answer was yes! Silence descended on the chaotic room when they saw Miss guide me to my desk. "What's up? Huh? Is he...like...blind?" I felt a light touch on my arm. "Hey, my name is Maddy. Starting a new school sucks aye?"

Maddy was cool. She had a nice group of friends who were pretty friendly and so the day became a bit more tolerable. My dumb ass **hyphenate: dumb-ass** cousins Jack and Tama Henare came over laughing and clowning about. "Hey cuzzy Farti-Mass what you doing sitting with those kids? Why don't you come and hang out with us?"

My cousin's comments bugged me because I knew what he was getting at. Being blind I really didn't get all the racism stuff you hear people talking about. How I responded to people just depended on whether they seemed nice or not! **drop ex.** Skin colour didn't come into it at all. When I listen to a person speak, I can generally pick up any inflection in their voice that gives me an indication about their culture. My family identifies as Maori. But we also have a lot of Irish in us too and I'm equally proud of both my ancestries! **drop ex. last phase, equally proud ... sounds quite formal wording and not the usual teen boy tone. Maybe: ... lot of Irish in us too and I'm cool with that.**

My new friends were all interested to find out what it was like being blind. I was ok **OK or okay** with their questions as they were genuine, and anyway, **drop comma** the talk soon turned to more normal things. When they found out that we lived in one of the new houses bordering the Turuturu Mokai reserve they became really curious. "What's it like living there? Do you get scared at night?" "Why would I be scared I asked?" "Because it's haunted!" They **decap: they, as running on** all laughingly said together in one voice! "Well I haven't 'seen' anything!" "Who's the funny guy!" Maddy laughed! **drop last ex. mark but fine to have ex. instead of question mark, after funny guy.**

I was feeling better about our move. School wasn't as bad as I thought it would be and I was beginning to feel more confident moving around our new house. When I had started at intermediate I went through a phase of not using my white cane because I just wanted to be like everyone else! **drop ex.** But I found it really hard, and so my 'being too cool to use a cane' phase only lasted for a few weeks! **drop ex.** My parents shelled out with some money and got me a good one from the USA. It folds into 5 **spell out: five** sections which is cool as it can fit into most pockets. I think most people have the idea that blind people have super-human **compound: superhuman** hearing, but we don't! Well I don't anyway! I use my cane when I am in a place that I am not familiar with. The other thing I found out is that when I use it, people around me can see that I am blind and don't jostle me so much! **drop ex.**

Both Mum and dad had come home from work early and were in the kitchen preparing dinner together and my sisters were out with their mates. Since there were at least a couple of hours to go before we ate, I thought I would explore outside. Huia and Hine had taken me for a walk all around our section when we first arrived and had told me what they could see. So I knew things like; **drop semi-colon** the BBQ was on the west side, **drop comma** and that the patio faced towards the reserve. Holding my hands out in front of me, I walked carefully over towards where I knew the rusty old 7 wire rural fence was. This was the divide between our property and the Turuturu Mokai reserve.

Someone was singing a waiata and they sounded close by. I couldn't quite catch the words and so climbing over the fence I stepped into the reserve. All sound stopped! **replace ex. mark with colon** The waiata, the birds, the cicadas, the wind. Everything fell silent! **drop ex** Then I heard a call... "Matakite!" "Huh...? Hello? Kia ora?" Silence.

All I could hear was my breathing. The birds and cicada's **drop apostrophe** suddenly resumed their chatter and chirrups and the sun came out from behind the cloud. Tilting my head about I thought I could hear the waiata again! **drop ex** I shrugged my shoulders and decided that I must have imagined it all! **drop ex**.

Reaching into the back pocket of my jeans I got out my cane and snapped it open. The grass was long and thick and the ground was really uneven. Uh! I fell into gorse bush. I had been wandering around for ages and was getting hotter and hotter. Suddenly I could hear an open space in front of me. That's sounds weird, I know! But when there is stuff around you like bushes and trees, sounds kind of bounce back at you. But when you come to an open space, it just feels different! **drop ex** I had come out of the grassy area and was now on what felt like a path or road or something. To the left of me I could hear flowing water and so I slowly made my way towards the sound of it. I must have stepped onto a bridge or culvert as I could now hear the water flowing under me.

I made my way through a wooden gate next to the small bridge and found somewhere to sit down as I needed a break! **drop ex** There was a sheep close by to me. Perhaps it had lost a lamb or something as it kept baa-ring **baa-ing (no r)** over and over! But it was nice sitting in the sun listening to the water and that noisy ole **old?** sheep. Something was digging uncomfortably into my back though and so I twisted around onto my knees to find out what it was. It felt like a rectangular metal plaque. In the middle of it were some words that I traced with my finger-tips **compound: fingertip**;

J a m e s W i n k s B r i d g e

You know when something annoys you? But you can't actually define what the 'annoying' **don't need q. mark** thing is? Well that's how I felt about that plaque! It just felt wrong. I don't **didn't** know who James Winks was, but I knew he didn't belong at Turuturu Mokai! **tense needs to be the same within sentence (past)** Settling back down in the soft grass I tuned into all the sounds around me and felt myself start to relax.

I didn't realise that I had fallen asleep until someone shouted with urgency; Matakite! **Insert Q marks** I woke with a start and saw a boy about my age beckoning to me!

*Freestyle Note*: Use this space to write a message or make some notes:

## The Opal Place

### Your Place of Inspiration



In June 1954, at the age of 15, Hulme and her best friend [Pauline Parker](#) murdered Parker's mother.

Parker and Hulme stood trial in Christchurch, New Zealand in 1954 and were found guilty on 29 August that year. As they were too young to be considered for the [death penalty](#) under New Zealand law at the time, they were **convicted and sentenced** to be "detained [at Her Majesty's pleasure](#)".

*Photo Left: Anne Perry*

Anne Perry (born Juliet Marion Hulme; 28 October 1938) is an English author of [historical detective fiction](#), best known for her [Thomas Pitt](#) and [William Monk](#) series.