

## Editorial Notes

Sample Copyedit Passage – Excerpt from *Runewrought*, Chapter 1 (Stephens)

Style Guide: Chicago Manual of Style, 18<sup>th</sup> Edition

This sample demonstrates a fiction copyedit of an original prose passage set in a colonial American town. The edit was performed using tracked changes in Microsoft Word, allowing the author to review, accept, or query every correction at their own pace. A total of eight editorial interventions were made across four categories: punctuation, word choice, capitalization, and style consistency.

The author's voice, pacing, and narrative choices were preserved throughout. No sentences were rewritten and no stylistic suggestions were imposed. All corrections address clear grammatical or style guide errors only.

### Editorial Interventions by Category

#### **Punctuation:** 3 Corrections

Two missing apostrophes were corrected: *moment's hesitation* and *Hamlet's hooves*. Possessive apostrophes are among the most common errors in fiction manuscripts and are frequently missed by spellcheck because the surrounding words are spelled correctly.

A missing hyphen was also added to *tight-knit community*. Per CMOS 7.89, compound modifiers preceding a noun are hyphenated. This is a subtle but important correction that affects the professionalism of the final manuscript.

#### **Word Choice:** 3 Corrections

Three homophone and near-homophone errors were corrected:

1. *Loose* was corrected to *lose*. This is a very common confusion in fiction writing. *Loose* is an adjective meaning not tight while *lose* is a very meaning to misplace or fail to retain.
2. *Accept* was corrected to *except*. This is another frequent error. *Accept* means to receive or agree to something. *Except* means excluding or with the exception of.
3. *Then* was corrected to *than*. This is one of the most common word choice errors in fiction manuscripts. *Then* refers to time or sequence; *than* is used for comparisons.

#### **Capitalization:** 1 Correction

*Colony* in *New York Colony* was lowercased per CMOS 8.51 which states that generic geographical and political terms are not capitalized when used descriptively. *New York* remains capitalized as a proper noun, but *colony* functions as a descriptive term rather than a formal title in this context.

## **Style Consistency: 1 Correction**

An en dash (–) was corrected to a closed em dash (—) per CMOS 6.85, which specifies that em dashes are used to indicate a break in thought or a parenthetical aside within a sentence. CMOS also specifies that em dashes appear with no spaces on either side: a formatting detail that differs from AP style and is one of the most common style inconsistencies found in fiction manuscripts.

### Disclaimer

Several stylistic choices in the original passage were intentionally preserved even where an editor might personally prefer a different approach. The narrative voice, sentence rhythm, paragraph structure, and descriptive language are all the author’s own and reflect a confident, distinctive prose style. The final line, “That was the case for most people, at least,” was left exactly as written as it is clearly a deliberate and effective narrative choice.

A copyeditor’s role is to serve the author’s vision and not to impose their own. Every correction in this edit was made in service of clarity, consistency, and style guide compliance—never personal preference.

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