

# **YOUR BOOK MAY BE BETTER THAN YOU (AND THEY) THINK**

THE EDITORS OF THE CREATIVE LITERARY ALLIANCE

([www.creativeliteraryalliance.com](http://www.creativeliteraryalliance.com))

As independent editors, we are often approached by writers who are “stuck.” They may have spent a great deal of time crafting their manuscript or book proposal, only to find their energy and confidence waning. Some have received repeated rejections from literary agents or publishers. Others may be grappling with confusing feedback from writing workshops, or well-meaning but indiscriminate praise from family members or friends. Suddenly — or gradually— these authors have come to feel that it just may not be worth the effort.

They may even be wondering, “Is my book really that bad?”

Perhaps it's not.

We've all heard stories about bestselling authors who were rejected by virtually every publisher before finally selling their work. Luckily for these writers, they didn't give up in despair. But you can bet they asked themselves whether their work was any good, and if anyone would find it worth publishing.

The truth is, agents and in-house editors are so overworked that few of them have time to tell a writer precisely why they are passing on his work, and what he needs to do to fix it. In fact, many of them don't read far enough into a manuscript or proposal to know for sure whether it has any value. They know that they'll have to reject a large portion of submissions, and so any of a number of fixable issues may trigger their rejection – freeing them to move on to the next in the pile.

This is where a good independent editor can help. She will look at your manuscript or proposal the way industry professionals would view it, if they had the time. She can show you exactly where the weak points are, help you formulate a plan to address them, and guide you along the way. She can help you answer such common questions as:

## **Why have I received so many rejection letters?**

You may get dozens of rejections without knowing why, and what you can do about it. If there are personalized comments in those rejection letters, an independent editor might discern some

common thread in them that would help you understand why. In addition, your editor will know the sort of material agents and publishers are looking for, and can help you bring out the elements of your work that are most likely to sell. She can also guide you in defining your market. It may be that with some shift of language or perspective, your book would appeal to a broader or very different group of people than you originally had in mind.

### **My family and friends love my book, so why can't I get an agent?**

Thank goodness for supportive family and friends – where would we all be without them? Yet the fact is that because they are so close to you, they can't possibly be objective about your work. Even a relative who is a published, successful author may not be the best person to critique your book. Enjoy the compliments, but put your trust in an independent editor who understands the publishing business *and* has your best interests at heart.

### **How do I make sense of all the conflicting feedback I've received in writing workshops?**

Unfortunately, workshops are not always helpful. The group members are not publishing professionals; they may be too kind, failing to point out your book's flaws, or too critical, because they are competitive or simply not knowledgeable. Plenty of good manuscripts have permanently ended up in bottom drawers because their authors received discouraging workshop feedback. An independent editor, on the other hand, can be like a breath of fresh air. He knows publishing from the inside out, and has no agenda but helping you to make your book the best it can be.

### **I'm really nervous about sending my manuscript out. It's my baby. What if an agent or house editor "rips it to shreds"?**

If you're sitting on a manuscript because you are afraid to let it out into the world, to possibly be exposed to harsh scrutiny, relax. An independent editor can be an excellent first reader. She will emphasize your manuscript's strong points, while gently showing you how it can be improved. She wants you to succeed, and understands the complicated emotions authors may feel. She has had years of experience in communicating with writers in ways that they can understand and use.

### **What kind of publishing is best for my work?**

Are you aiming for traditional (commercial) publication, self-publishing, or an Ebook? Would you be happy with a limited edition, privately printed for friends, family or clients? Do you see your book as part of an overall media strategy, in conjunction with a website or online marketplace? Perhaps

you want publication to help further your career, or even as a stepping stone to a new career. An independent editor can help you define your publication goals.

**I've gone over my work countless times and I've done as much as I can on my own. But how do I really know if it's ready for submission?**

Working together, you and your independent editor will review your manuscript or proposal, looking for anything that might need improvement. If your work is fiction or a memoir, your editor will be looking at such aspects as character development, point of view, plot, structure, tone, dialogue, theme, pacing, and originality. If you're writing a nonfiction book or proposal, your editor will evaluate your basic concept and idea development, your planned approach and writing style, your platform, and the market for your book.

It's very possible that with the proper guidance and some reworking, you will find your manuscript or proposal is not just better than you thought, but a work you can be proud of — and one that will catch the attention of agents and publishers.

