

# BASICS BOOTCAMP FOR BEGINNERS

## Lesson 4 - Writer's Resources

by

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Good morning BBB survivors! I am proud of all of you for sticking with me this far. I know there's been a lot of information thrown at you these past few weeks, but remember, you don't have to know everything right away. Keep these notes and study them as you can, implementing one new item as your time allows. Writing is not a race to see who gets done first or who can become the best. Although it is important to do your best always when working for the Lord, do not compare your progress with another's. Compare it with what God requires of you, and He is a lot more patient than we are.

This lesson is mostly for your information only. There will be no homework other than to read the lesson in its entirety. My lists are not exhaustive. I am merely trying to give you the basics from which you can create your own resource lists.

Let's begin with prayer:

Lord, I thank you for each and every person who's made it through the course to this point. I pray the enemy would flee from each one who is discouraged right now. They are tempted to give in to the devil's lie that they can't do this. I rebuke the enemy's lies right now in Jesus' name. And I loose peace in each spirit reading this. Lord, may You have Your way in each person's life. Please comfort the distraught, help the confused, and give encouragement to the discouraged. We give this lesson to you, Lord, as we learn and study in order to create a little piece of writing to glorify You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Part 1. Writer's Helps**

There are hundreds of writers' helps available to the writer from the basic how-tos to advanced techniques. You will have to make your own decisions as to which books, magazines, and workbooks you wish to invest in. Make sure you use good judgment when purchasing writer's help books and materials. I know one beginning writer who had invested in over 35 books, and still hadn't produced an edited book. I am not demeaning her in any way. She noticed many were saying the same thing while some gave opposite methods. I told her if that was the case, stop buying books and start applying what she knows. If you already have a great book on punctuation and someone else recommends a different one, chances are they will tell you the same thing. The thing to remember when investing in writers' books is quality, not quantity.

I strongly recommend the following as a minimum to your writers' helps reference library:

- 1.. Dictionary (I use Webster's New World)

- 2.. Thesaurus (I use Webster's New World)
- 3.. Flip Dictionary - available through the Writer's Digest Book Club
- 4.. Christian Writers' Market Guide, By Sally Stuart
- 5.. Your Novel Proposal, From Creation to Contract, by Blythe Camenson and Marshall J. Cook (or another book on how to write a proposal)
- 6.. The Complete Guide to Writing and Selling the Christian Novel, by Penelope Stokes
- 7.. Grammatically Correct, The Writer's Essential Guide to Punctuation, Spelling, Style, Usage and Grammar, by Anne Stilman
- 8.. Woe is I, The Grammarphobe's Guide To Better English In Plain English, by Patricia T. O'Conner
- 9.. A Pocket Guide to Correct Punctuation; Punctuation Marks and How to Use Them, Clearly and Simply Explained, by Robert Brittain
- 10.. The Chicago Manual of Style
- 11.. A Christian Writer's Manual of Style, by Bob Hudson and Shelley Townsend (some writers have both #10 and 11. Others prefer only #11. This is something you will need to decide for yourself.)
- 12.. The Writer's Guide to Character Traits, by Linda N. Edelstein, Ph.D. or
- 13.. Getting Into Character, by Brandilyn Collins
- 14.. Building Better Plots, by Robert Kern

This list is not all-inclusive, and most are books I've purchased on a particular subject. The first six are must-have basics for successful writing, the rest are icing on the cake, and it is up to you which book on plotting, style, characters, etc. that you want to own.

Because I write historicals, my own writing library also includes American antique furniture books, Guides to every day life in the 1800's and the Wild West, an old hymnbook, Victorian clothing books, history books about events and people of the old west, an old King James Bible, and books of various quotes showing attitudes of people in the 1800's.

The Writer's Digest Book Club is a great way to discover what writer's books are available, and you can get free books for joining, as well as earn free books after making purchases. You can join this book club online at <http://www.writersdigest.com>

Other writer's resources are state historical societies, writers' workshops and groups, your local library, the Internet, and writer's magazines. Again, this list is not exhaustive by any means.

## **Part 2.** Christian Writers' Market Guide, by Sally Stuart

This tool is a "must have" for Christian writers. It is updated annually and contains all the pertinent information publishers require of writers interested in submitting their work to them. I encourage you to mark up this book. By underlining or highlighting specific things about a publisher, you can find particulars easily instead of having to read an entire entry to find the information you need. It is advisable to obtain a new CWMG at least every two years.

One of the most important rules when submitting your WIP to a publisher is to \*\*only

send what the publisher asks for - nothing more and nothing less.\*\* That's where the Christian Writers' Market Guide comes in. Each publishing houses lists what they are looking for and what they want to see when you submit to them.

The Guide is separated into several easy to locate sections, as you will note in the table of contents in the front of the book. I strongly suggest you read word for word, the section on "How To Use This Book," on pages four through nine.

Pages ten through twelve contain additional resources to help with your writing and marketing. You may find some great books you may want to add to your writer's resource library.

The next section, pages thirteen through fifty-seven contain additional resources for writers. Check these out to see if any would be helpful to you.

Once you've found the genre you wish to submit to, you will be able to go through the alphabetized topical listing of publishers beginning on page fifty-nine and find those that best fit what you've written.

I highly recommend to all first-time authors that you complete your manuscript before submitting it to a publisher. There are many reasons for this, but one few are aware of is that often a book changes throughout the writing process. This happened to me once.

I pitched an unfinished book to an editor at a writer's conference. The editor requested I send her a proposal, which I did. While waiting for this publisher to decide if they wished to see my completed proposal I continued working on the novel. Months passed, and during the writing process, the characters dictated the book take another course than the one I'd plotted out.

One year later, the publisher requested my completed manuscript. The trouble was they wanted to see the book I outlined in my synopsis, not the one I had written. I ended up spending a month changing the book back to what I pitched to the editor.

Had I waited until the book was finished before pitching it to an editor, I believe I would have had a better novel than the one that sat somewhere in the editor's office another year. (That's right - I just got my rejection letter in July - two years and two months after I first pitched it to the editor!)

### **Part 3. Glossary of terms**

In order to understand what is required of a writer by a publishing house, it is important to understand certain terminology used in the writing business, and found in the Christian Writers' Market. There is a glossary of terms used in the Christian Writers' Market in the back just before the general index. I will mention the most common terms I feel require more in-depth explanations than what you will find in the Guide.

- 1.. Receives 200 submissions per year - this doesn't mean the number of books they publish, but rather the number of manuscripts they request. Be sure to check what percentage from first-time authors they print, and these two factors will help

you decide your chances of getting published with a particular publisher.

2.. Writer's Guidelines (often simply referred to as "guidelines") - Once you've decided to submit to a particular publisher, it is important to obtain their guidelines either by requesting them through the mail or by printing them off their website. These guidelines vary from one publisher to the next and give particulars required, such as word count, genres accepted, religious content, taboo subjects, and what the publisher wishes to see in a proposal. Therefore, it is imperative you get these guidelines and follow them to the letter. Only send what is requested.

3.. Catalogue - this is usually mentioned with guidelines, but is a different booklet containing a listing of all their current book titles available for purchase. It is good to get the catalogue to study the titles in order to see if what you've written will fit well with what they publish.

4.. Proposal - this is the compilation of items a writer submits to a publisher, usually consisting of a query letter, cover sheet, short author biography, a synopsis or chapter outline, and three sample chapters. (It is best to submit the first three chapters if you aren't sure which to send.)

5.. Query letter - A query letter is a min-proposal that aims to

- hook the attention of the editor or agent,
- describe your project,
- tell the editor or agent who you are,
- get the editor or agent to ask for more.

The most effective query is a straightforward, polished one-page letter. It describes your novel's plot and main characters, focusing on the elements that are most intriguing or compelling; it lists your relevant credentials and publishing credits, if any; and, if you've hit the mark, it will merit you a letter, e-mail, or phone call asking to see the manuscript.

I have a five-page, in-depth lesson on how to write an effective query letter, and I would be happy to send it to anyone who requests it. Please send me your personal e-mail address and I will send it to you as an attachment.

6. Synopsis - The goal of the synopsis isn't to explain the entire book, but rather to get the editor or agent hooked enough to read the sample chapters to see the market potential of your work. You need to convey a clear idea of what your book is about, what characters the editor will care about or hate, what's at stake for the main characters, and how the conflict comes out. Basically, you must write a brief but effective synopsis instead of dry summarizations of the plot.

A. Format as follows:

1. Upper left-hand corner, provide

- Title
- Genre
- Word count of book (approximate)
- Your name

2. Single-space a one-page synopsis, but if it runs longer than one page, single-spaced, then double-space the synopsis

3. "A one-page synopsis is often the best bet." (From *YOUR NOVEL PROPOSAL: FROM CREATION TO CONTRACT*, by Blythe Camenson and Marshall J. Cook)

4. The length will depend on the complexity of the story's premise, background and motivations.

5. Indent paragraphs, but don't leave extra lines between paragraphs.

6. Don't go smaller than a ten-point type

7. Use black ink on white paper

B. Your synopsis should usually include:

1. An opening hook
2. Quick sketches of the main characters
3. Plot high points
4. The core conflict
5. The conclusion

C. Avoid adjectives and adverbs, telling every scene and background details.

D. Always write the synopsis in present tense and third person, regardless of what tense you used for the book. Example: Lacey Jean Barker lies to get a job with Cowan Brother's Logging Company. Now she must fight the whole town to keep it. (Notice I said "lies" instead of lied. I also said, "must fight" instead of fought like how I wrote the book. This is present tense.)

E. Stick with the same writing style used in your novel. A Dark, brooding novel warrants a dark, brooding synopsis. A chatty, upbeat novel begets chatty, upbeat synopsis. Dull, plodding novel? Rewrite the novel!

F. Use strong action verbs and specific, concrete nouns.

G. Use opinion words and phrases ("in the next scintillating plot twist, which will have the reader on the edge of the chair. . .") This example is way too wordy and you are trying to tell the editor how much they will like the book. Instead, show

them how interesting the book is.

H. Use dialogue sparingly, if at all in your synopsis.

I. "A one-page synopsis is often the best bet." (From YOUR NOVEL PROPOSAL: FROM CREATION TO CONTRACT, by Blythe Camenson and Marshall J. Cook)

J. The length will depend on the complexity of the story's premise, background and motivations.

7.. Chapter Outline - Heartsong Presents and a few others are now asking for a chapter by chapter outline. This is exactly what it sounds like - a short paragraph highlighting what happens in each chapter.

a. Format the outline in the following manner:

Upper left corner - Name of the book  
Under that: Type of book (genre)  
Under that: Number of words in the book  
Under that: Author's name

Example:

She Belongs To The Mountains  
Christian Historical Romance  
86,000 words  
Jeanne Marie

b. Skip a couple lines and write **OUTLINE** in bold and capital letters, centered

c. Skip a couple lines (single space) and write **CHAPTER 1** (left - not centered). Not necessary to bold. If you named the chapter, then put a hyphen - then the name of the chapter on the same line.

d. On the following line, write no more than a paragraph describing what takes place in that chapter. Hit the highlights. Don't use excess words like "beautiful" lady. Just say lady.

e. At the top of subsequent pages (not on the first page of the outline) upper left corner, all on the same line: Name of Book/Your last name - Outline, Page 2

8.. Author biography

1.. Don't panic if you can't answer the following question, or if you have no writing credits. Don't TELL them you have no credits. Just simply leave them out.

2.. Why are you the perfect author to write this book?

3.. Include your writing experience, publishing experience, work experience,

educational experience and any special experience that makes you qualified to write the book.

4.. Below is a sample of the first biography I submitted before I had any publishing credits. Don't be afraid to use everything you can to demonstrate why you are qualified to write the book you are submitting to a publisher.

Jeanne Marie  
P.O. Box 743  
Frisco, CO 80443  
970-668-5106

#### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Jeanne Marie

I studied business courses in college and throughout my business career have written pamphlets and published newsletters for churches, businesses and for the U.S. Forest Service. I won numerous awards for my outstanding work performance.

I enjoy historical research, particularly 19th century American history, and am a member of the Colorado Historical Society. Growing up in the Black Hills of South Dakota inspired a passion within me for the Rocky Mountains and an appreciation for dense, evergreen forests. My hometown of Deadwood, surrounded by logging and gold industries, spurred my gratefulness for ties to a past abounding in untamed historical significance. This made it possible for me to bring the characters and setting alive for the first book of my Brides of Glory Gulch inspirational historical romance series, Angel In The Saloon.

I am a member of the American Christian Romance Writers (ACRW). As a speaker, I have addressed women's groups on a variety of Biblical-based topics as well as conducting business seminars.

Presently, I work from a log cabin where I make my home with my husband of 26 years. Together we manage our several entrepreneurial enterprises in the tiny, historical mountain town of Frisco, Colorado.

I am active in my local church where my husband serves on the deacon board, and enjoy singing with the Praise and Worship Team, teaching Jr. Kids' church and Lady's Bible Study.

My hobbies include: snow-shoeing and hiking in the back-country, driving their 4-wheel drive SUV on old logging and mining trails to the tops of the mountains and studying local history through literature and visiting historical sites. We are proud to be Denver Bronco season ticket holders. I also clown for nursing homes, Sunday school groups, children's birthday parties, company picnics, grand openings, parades, etc.

#### 9.. Cover Letter

1.. This is the letter you send with your full manuscript once a publisher requests

it.

2.. Similar to a query letter, except you remind the publisher they requested your completed manuscript.

3.. Describe your project.

4.. Tell the publisher who you are.

10.. SASE = Self addressed, stamped envelope - always include the proper size envelope and appropriate postage for the publisher to answer your query, or return your manuscript, whichever is appropriate.

11.. SASP= Self addressed, stamped post card - it is a good idea to send a post card in your proposal packet for the publisher's use in letting you know they received your proposal.

#### **PART 4. Helpful Writer's websites**

These are some links to websites that contain helpful information for writers. \*Note: URLs were not provided in transcript copy.

"Writer's Corner" at Christianbook.com

Write to Inspire

Fiction Writer's Connection

SoYouWanna avoid common writing errors?

Writer Speaker.com

The Nonverbal Dictionary

U.S. Copyright Office

Write His Answer Ministries

Spirit-Led Writer.com - For writers "who are led by the Spirit of God." Ro. 8:14

::: Writers Lifeline :::

Writer's Village University

iUniverse Communities

rosecityromancewriters.com

Nancy Arant Williams

Author and Novelist Gail Gaymer Martin

Amber Miller - Inspirational Writer & Web Site Designer

Romancing the Christian Heart

willwrite4food.com

#### **PART 5. ACRW**

1. How to get the most out of what the ACRW offers

a. Critique groups

1. ACRW critique groups each consist of 5 members. At least one member is a published author.

2. Each group decides on a submission schedule that works best for its members. Example: Critique group 5, of which I am a member,

submits one chapter each Friday. The other 4 members have until the following Friday to critique my chapter and send it back to me.

3. This is helpful because others see errors and challenges we often can't see ourselves.

4. We learn the "rules" by observing them in others' writing, as well as from others discovering them in our own WIPs

5. To join a critique group, e-mail Marge Brooks at [margaretwrites4him@y...](mailto:margaretwrites4him@y...)

b. Monthly workshops

i. Once you sign up for one workshop, you don't need to unsubscribe and re-subscribe. All future workshops will be sent to you automatically.

ii. Past workshops are listed on the ACRW main site under the Members Only section for you to study at your own pace.

iii. Even if you aren't able to participate in a workshop, you can set up your e-mail to send all ACRWCourse messages directly to a specified box so you don't have to sort through a mound of posts to find the ones you want to see.

iv. These workshops are free to all members and teach valuable writing information on a variety of writing related topics.

c. Annual Writer's Conference

i. Great opportunity to meet editors, publishers, agents and published authors face-to-face.

ii. You have opportunities "pitch" your book(s) to publishing houses that are usually closed to new authors.

iii. Workshops for writers of all ability levels to help you learn and to encourage you in your writing.

iv. Meet people in person who you've been communicating with online.

v. Purchase books from your favorite ACRW authors and have them autograph if for you.

vi. Once you are published, you have the opportunity to sell your own books at the conference.

d. Topic of the week - participation in the topic of the week (TOTW) helps hone your writing skills while learning from others on the list by stretching

yourself in areas that may be new to you. This is a great learning opportunity.

e. The website - Take advantage of the numerous tools available on the Members Only section. You can study at your own pace.

f. Any time you have a writing-related question, regardless of how simple you think it may be, ASK IT! That is one of the main benefits of this loop - learning from those who've already been published. There is a plethora of knowledge available to you through the ACRW, so don't be afraid to use it!

There is no homework assignment for this week. Much of the information in this lesson is reference material you will want to save and refer back to often during your writing process.

I thought we'd keep this week open for questions and discussion of topics covered in this workshop as well as any other writing concerns you may have. Should you have any questions long after this workshop is over, feel free to ask me at [jlmtnlady@c...](mailto:jlmtnlady@c...), and I'll help you to the best of my ability. I am also available now and then to mentor new writers one-on-one.

Thank you all for your wonderful participation in **BASICS BOOTCAMP FOR BEGINNERS**. My goal for this workshop was to give beginning writers a springboard from which you can gain direction and understanding of the basic mechanics of writing. It is my hope and prayer that you feel less overwhelmed by the enormity of the task you've chosen and are now certain you belong in the ACRW and can participate in ACRW writing discussions with confidence.

If this four-week course has caused you to become **MORE** overwhelmed, let's talk about it! That is why I kept this week open. I and several others who've been monitoring the group will be glad to help you with any questions you may have this week.

God bless you all! You are a great bunch of writers, and I look forward to meeting several of you at the conference in less than a month!