

ENVVIE!

A MAGAZINE FOR THE LITERARY CURIOUS

MAY 2020 EDITION

FEATURING
CONTEMPORARY DRAMA
& ROMANCE AUTHOR
DB CARTER



INTERVIEWS

ALLEGORY ALLEY

WRITING ADVICE

SHORT STORIES





From Twitter Tips to Writer Help *Ask Emma*

Featuring:
Emma Lombard



May 2020

This month's column has a strong focus on query letters, for those heading down the traditional publishing route. We also take a look at handling rejection, which is a part of every author's life, no matter which publishing route you've taken. The number one question I keep getting asked is about book promotion. So, I've gathered a group of reputable marketing folks who have loads of free information to share, as well as paid or subscribed info you can access if you want more. Whether you are traditionally or self-published, it's always wise to be clued up on the current marketing strategies for books. In these uncertain times, it may pay you to learn a new online platform to balance out the inability to meet readers in person.

Query Letter Dos and Don'ts

14 Literary Agents Share Their Query Letter Top Tips and Pet Peeves (in 2020)

I recently asked a bunch of literary agents what their query letter top tips and pet peeves are. Many agents responded, offering helpful information for querying authors, including:

Lauren Bieker, FinePrint Literary Management

- 1) *Misspelling my name.*
- 2) *Querying me with a genre that I have explicitly said I do not rep.*
- 3) *Querying with a story that is "unlike anything the world's ever seen". If you can't find comp. titles for your book, neither will any publisher/marketing team.*
- 4) *Following up hourly/daily on a query (yes, this has happened).*

To see what everyone else had to say, here's my full [blog post](#).

Old Archives of Literary Agents Top Tips and Pet Peeves

Authors should be learning all they can about their craft and the publishing industry. As you will see from these 2016 blog posts—agents have been giving similar advice for years:

- [38 Query Letter Tips from Literary Agents](#)
- [Agent Pet Peeves: Review these 34 Submission No-Nos Before You Query](#)

Query Letter Examples

FREE Literary Agent Critique

A literary agent who offers FREE (and often humorous) critique on real (but anonymous) query letters is The Query Shark. Another literary agent, Miss Snark, has an archive of query letter critique back to 2005. With names like Query Shark and Miss Snark, you can expect the feedback to be laced with dry, biting humour—so submitters beware. The trade-off for the Query Shark's free critique is that your query letter is posted on her blog for other authors to see.

As authors, we keep being reminded that we need a thick skin, and what better way to test our resolve than putting our query letter in the hands of an expert who calls it as it is. To get a proper understanding of how to (and how not to) write query letters, be sure to check out **ALL** the archives of both these blogs:

- [Query Shark Blog](#)
- [Miss Snark](#)

PAID Critique

If this type of tough-love approach is not your style, The Query Shark does offer a [private, paid critique service](#) where your query letter isn't blasted all over the internet. When she's not hiding behind her snappy online persona, Janet Reid is a personable and excellent communicator who is generous with her time and knowledge (but don't tell her I told you this!)

Another reliable source for paid query letter and synopsis critique is publishing expert, [Jane Friedman](#). Her 20+ years in the publishing industry gives her street cred, while her meticulous endeavours to keep abreast of the latest trends in the publishing industry makes her my number-one-go-to for all things publishing.

Handling Critique and Rejection

This is a natural part of being a writer, including when our query letter is being chewed up by the Query Shark, our manuscript is being picked apart by our editor or critique partners, our first pages are being rejected by agents, or our published novels are being given a scathing review by readers.

Here is literary agent, Jessica Faust's advice about [What Query Backlash Says About the Author](#). Authors who lash out at agents online or on social media risk burning their bridges. And let's not forget, there's a real person on the other end of that query we send, so please be polite and professional. We're all doing it a bit tough right now—authors and literary agents alike—as Jessica explains in her blog post, [Rejections in Tough Times](#).

Here's my personal approach to editorial critique: [7 Steps for Authors to Handle Constructive Criticism Like a Pro After a Developmental Edit](#). Before opening your feedback, repeat after me, "Editors are friends, not foes."

Alex J. Cavanaugh, author and founder of the [Insecure Writer's Support Group](#), shares this advice: [10 Ways to Handle Bad Book Reviews](#). His very first take away: As much as you might want to respond (either politely or with harsh words), don't do it.

Book Marketing Advice Givers

Follow these fine folks on Twitter (and sign up for their newsletters), and you'll have enough FREE marketing tips at your fingertips to last you a year! There are so many different avenues for marketing books, just as these advice givers all share their information from different platforms, be it from a PDF download, newsletter, podcast, YouTube channel or blog. The key is to not get overwhelmed by all these different platforms, but to rather start out with one or two that you are most comfortable with and build from there. Don't forget, most of these marketers have been in the publishing industry for years, and book marketing comes second nature to them.

Research and read, then pick your favourite marketer or two and try out their suggestions:

- [Shayla Raquel](#) — excellent free [Pre-publishing Checklist](#)
 - [Joanna Penn](#) — has a well-established [podcast](#) about writing, publishing and book marketing
 - [Jenna Moreci](#) — great [YouTube channel](#) about self-publishing, costs and the differences between common sites to publish through
 - [Tim Grahl](#) — brilliant free [Book Marketing Plan: The Definitive Checklist](#)
 - [David Gaughran](#) — free copy of [Amazon Decoded: A Marketing Guide to the Kindle Store](#)
 - [The Empowered Author](#) with Sam Missingham— great blog filled with suppliers and services, including a free copy of [25 Book Marketing Ideas](#).
 - [Build Book Buzz](#) with [Sandra Beckwith](#)— including this current and relevant blog post: [Book marketing in the time of quarantine](#).
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Before you go...

I aim to keep a blog packed full of helpful information for writers, especially newbies. Here are some of my latest posts, including guest articles:

1. [How to Format Manuscripts for Agents](#) (includes a free fully formatted Word template)
2. [When a Twitter Thread Becomes a Book or a Movie](#)
3. [The Joys of a Multi-author Facebook Hop](#)
4. [Voices from the past: The Lydiard Chronicles](#)

Until next month, happy writing! — Emma

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