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GETTING STARTED



WRITING A QUERY LETTER IS
ALL ABOUT MAKING A
STRONG FIRST IMPRESSION.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- IS YOUR MANUSCRIPT READY FOR QUERYING?
- HAVE YOU ASKED EXPERIENCED BETA READERS AND OTHER WRITERS TO REVIEW THE BOOK?
- HAS THE BOOK BEEN THROUGH AT LEAST ONE MAJOR RE-WRITE?
- IS THERE A HOOK IN THE FIRST TEN PAGES? IS IT CLEAR WHY THE BOOK STARTS WHERE IT DOES?
- DO YOU HAVE A STRONG LIST OF COMPARATIVE TITLES?
- DO YOU KNOW THE IDEAL AGE MARKET AND DEMOGRAPHICS BREAKDOWN OF YOUR AUDIENCE?
- HAVE YOU BEGUN RESEARCHING AGENTS WHO REPRESENT SIMILAR TITLES TO YOURS?
- ARE YOU READING WIDELY AND REGULARLY?
- ARE YOU READING MORE THAN YOU'RE WRITING?



LINE EDITING CHECKLIST

ARE THERE TOO MANY -LY WORDS?

DO YOU SEE ANY PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE
PILEUPS?

DO YOU USE THE WORD "IT"?

ARE THERE ANY DANGLING MODIFIERS?

CAN YOU TURN A GERUND INTO A STRONGER
VERB?

ARE THERE ANY AVOIDABLE INSTANCES OF THE
PASSIVE VOICE?



QUERY LETTER FORMAT

DEAR AGENT,

I AM SEEKING REPRESENTATION FOR MY DEBUT
NOVEL _____, COMPLETE AT _____
WORDS.

[LOGLINE]

[SUMMARY]

[COMP TITLES]

[AUTHOR BIO & PUBLICATIONS HERE]

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND
CONSIDERATION.

SINCERELY,

*hot tip: keep it short and sweet. do not mention
any pre-reviews or raving reader comments. do
not tell them how to interpret the manuscript.
give the pitch and then be done.*



LET'S DISCUSS COMP TITLES

A COMPARATIVE TITLE IS A WAY OF SITUATING YOUR BOOK IN THE LITERARY MARKETPLACE. YOU NEED TO SHOW THAT READERS ARE INTERESTED IN THE TYPE OF WORK YOU DO. COMP TITLES SHOULD BE BOOKS PUBLISHED IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS. THEY SHOULD BE SUCCESSFUL, BUT NOT A WORLD-FAMOUS-BLOCKBUSTER HIT. (I.E. DON'T CALL YOURSELF THE NEXT J.K. ROWLING OR MARGARET ATWOOD **PLEASE.**) IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAT THE COMP TITLE REFLECTS YOURS IN TERMS OF STYLE, STRUCTURE, GENRE, AND VOICE THAN IN TERMS OF SPECIFIC PLOT ELEMENTS LIKE SETTING OR ARCHETYPES.



**SO YOU HAVE A BOOK & QUERY
LETTER. NOW WHAT?**



THE RESEARCH STAGE

- DO NOT RUSH THROUGH THIS! TAKE YOUR TIME TO MAKE A SUBMISSION PLAN.
- YOU CAN ONLY QUERY AN AGENT ONCE: IF THEY DECLINE THE PROJECT, THAT'S IT! SO MAKE SURE YOU'RE READY.
- LOOK UP WHO REPRESENTS AUTHORS ON YOUR COMP LIST. USUALLY, WRITERS THANK THEIR AGENTS IN THE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS SECTION OF THEIR BOOKS.
- READ ONLINE INTERVIEWS WITH AGENTS. SEE WHAT THEY LIKE AND DISLIKE - WHAT DO THEY WANT TO SEE IN THE SUBMISSION PILE?
- MAKE A SPREADSHEET AND GROUP AGENTS INTO DIFFERENT ROUNDS FOR SUBMISSION. ROUND ONE: DREAM AGENTS. ROUND TWO: NEWER NAMES AT BIG AGENCIES, ETC.

THAT PERSONAL CONNECTION

REMEMBER ON THE OUTLINE WHERE IT SAYS "DEAR AGENT"? THAT'S WHERE YOU SPECIFY WHY YOU'RE QUERYING THIS PERSON.

DID YOU MEET HER AT A CONFERENCE?

DID YOU READ HIS INTERVIEW IN POETS & WRITERS?

DO YOU LOVE ONE OF THE WRITERS ON THEIR CLIENT LIST?

TELL THEM!

hot tip: check out conference opportunities like the AWP Writer to Agent program. that's how I met my agent!





PREPARE FOR NEXT STEPS

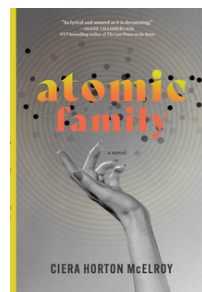
EVERY AGENT HAS A DIFFERENT LIST OF QUERY SPECIFICATIONS. SOME REQUEST ONLY A QUERY - OTHERS WANT THE FIRST 10 PAGES OR FIRST 5 OR FIRST 20. IT VARIES! ALWAYS MAKE SURE YOU CHECK WHAT THEY REQUEST. THEN, MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE MANUSCRIPT READY TO GO, SHOULD THEY REQUEST THE FULL BOOK.



*You've got this!
Believe in your book.
Take the risk & put yourself
out there.
Be strategic, but also give
yourself grace.
Cultivate a patient spirit.*

CIERA HORTON MCELROY

CIERA HORTON MCELROY IS THE AUTHOR OF
ATOMIC FAMILY, AVAILABLE IN HARDBACK, E-BOOK,
OR AUDIOBOOK WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD.



DON'T GO IT ALONE

ENTERING THE QUERY TRENCHES CAN BE AN EMOTIONALLY EXHAUSTING PROCESS. BUT IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE!

IF YOU WANT TO TAKE YOUR QUERYING PROCESS SERIOUSLY, YOU CAN JOIN OUR COMMUNITY OF WRITERS AND GET PERSONALIZED 1 ON 1 CONSULTING ON YOUR MANUSCRIPT, QUERY LETTER, OR SUB LIST.

BOOK YOUR FREE DISCOVERY CALL TODAY.



