

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Road to Publication

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<sup>1</sup> **Vocabulary (make sure you understand these words):** manuscript, agent, editor, publishing house, publication, literary, summary, format, royalties, byline, storyline, clichés

<sup>2</sup> Stroll through the bookstore. Inhale that new book smell. Feast your eyes on the colorful buffet of tomes waiting to be read by hungry eyes. Listen to the rustle of pages as browsers leaf through manuals and novels, searching for information or adventure. Imagine the authors counting their cash. How did they do it? By following some basic rules and adding a little flair. Let's travel down the road to publication and see where it takes us.

<sup>3</sup> Someone dreams of being a published author, of touring the country doing book-signings and radio interviews, of appearing on *Live with Regis and Kelly* or *Oprah*, and of becoming rich and famous. That's a nice dream, but it will never become more than that if that person doesn't first write the book!

<sup>4</sup> If the literary world has never heard of an author, it wants proof that he or she has writing talent. That proof could be a résumé of work that has been published in newspapers, magazines, and/or e-zines. For those just starting out, the list may be small to nonexistent. Better still would be the summary and outline of a completed manuscript—the unpublished story that the author wants to sell.

<sup>5</sup> The format of the manuscript, the summary, the outline, and any letters written must follow certain guidelines. By sticking to some fairly standard matters of physical format, the author increases his or her chances of making a favorable impression. Guidelines that authors are expected to know and follow are as follows:

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- Type on white bond paper. Never use brightly colored paper! It's an obvious gimmick.
- The margins on all sides should be 1½". The white space is pleasing to the eyes.
- The title should be centered 1/3 of the way down the first page. Type it in all capitals. One double-space under the title comes the word "by." One double-space under that comes the author's name or pseudonym. After the title and byline, drop down two double-spaces, paragraph indent, and begin the body of your manuscript (the story). Always double-space. It makes it both easier to read and easier to write corrections or changes.
- The header should be ½" from the top of the page. The author's last name and a shortened version of the title go with the page number goes in the upper right-hand corner.
- Each page (after the first page) should have an average of 25 lines.
- Never print on both sides of a page.

- Never use a binder or staples to hold your manuscript together. A rubber band is fine.
- Don't *italicize* any words. Underlining is preferred.
- Use a common, normal font. No 'weird' fonts. Times Roman or Courier New

<sup>7</sup> After the book has been written, there are three ways to approach getting published. The author can peddle the manuscript to the editors of publishing houses himself (those are the companies who buy manuscripts, turn them into books, and send the author royalties made from sales of the book). He can peddle the manuscript to literary agents who will peddle the book to publishing houses. Or, if he is really into getting a workout, he can self-publish the book (spending his own money to do it) and then spend the rest of his time peddling it to friends, family, acquaintances, bookstores, libraries, and writers' conventions.

<sup>8</sup> Those authors who go the agent or editor route must first research the agents or publishing houses. It wouldn't do to send a murder mystery to an agent or editor who only deals with romance novels. A house that publishes craft books would not be interested in a how-to manual for starting a garage band. Authors find information on agents and publishing houses in books and magazines geared to the writer's market. These can be found in bookstores and libraries. The writer's market books are pricey and soon outdated, so the library is the more thrifty choice to make. The books should be located in the reference section. Look for current ones. The listings will tell the author what each agent or house wants and how the author can contact them.

<sup>9</sup> There are ten common reasons why an agent or publishing house rejects a manuscript. Students should take note and avoid these things in their own writing as well.

<sup>10</sup> 1. Telling instead of showing. If the reader can't visualize the story, the author hasn't used descriptive writing and strong action verbs.

2. The story is unoriginal, lacking in motivation or believability.

3. Someone else wrote the same type of story, only better!

4. Use of stereotypes or clichés.

5. Mechanics - errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. This is a big no-no!

6. The story starts in the wrong place. The reader's attention needs to be captured on the first page. The story should begin with drama.

7. No sense of place, or bad setting. Remember to include environment.

8. Muddled, confusing flow of the storyline.

9. Lacks conflict.

## 10. Unlikable, boring lead character.

<sup>11</sup> As you may by now realize, the road to publication is not only long, it is often rough, rocky, and riddled with potholes. It takes a lot of effort to get a manuscript finished and polished, and a lot more effort finding the agent or editor who believes in it enough to take it off your hands. Even if it does sell, there's no time to relax. Authors are expected to advertise by participating in book-signings, interviews, and writers' conferences. Rarely does an author get rich from one book, or even a string of books. However, a person with a burning desire to express himself through the written word doesn't worry about any of that. The author will let the road take him or her wherever it leads.

<sup>12</sup> Authors who attend writers' conferences receive a variety of advice. "Make sure your book is different." On the other hand, "List books similar to yours, and look up the editor and/or agent. If they liked that book, they may also like yours." Then, after someone explains all the guidelines and how important it is to follow them, someone else will say, "Don't be afraid to break the rules," followed by, "Write the story you want to tell." Perhaps the best piece of advice is, "Wow them with your book title, a one sentence summary of your book, and a dynamite opening." Who can argue with that?

1. From the context in which it is used, what is the meaning of <i>tomes</i> in the first paragraph?	2. What is the one thing an author needs to do to prove he or she has talent?
_____	_____
3. It helps an author's work stand out if it is printed on colored paper with unusual fonts. <input type="radio"/> A True <input type="radio"/> B False	4. A header is: <input type="radio"/> A Author, title, and page information that appears on each page of a manuscript <input type="radio"/> B A soccer term <input type="radio"/> C The first page of a manuscript <input type="radio"/> D The headshot of the author on the back flap of many books
5. Authors like bylines, because they tell _____. <input type="radio"/> A How many lines to type per page. <input type="radio"/> B The storyline. <input type="radio"/> C Who wrote the story or article. <input type="radio"/> D How many people bought the book.	6. The person who works for you to find a publisher is called the _____. <input type="radio"/> A Agent <input type="radio"/> B Author <input type="radio"/> C Publishing House <input type="radio"/> D Editor
7. The frugal author who is researching the market for books or articles will most likely be found where? <input type="radio"/> A At the bookstore <input type="radio"/> B In the agent's office <input type="radio"/> C At the publishing houses <input type="radio"/> D At the library	8. What are the possible three routes to publication? _____ _____

**Speakers at writers' conferences give contradictory advice. First, they tell writers to make sure their books are different. Then they tell them to look for agents and editors by finding similar books and checking to see who the agent or editor was for that book! Why do you think they make both statements? What advice do you think is best, and why?**

[illegible]

**After reading about writers' efforts to be published, has your perception of a writer's life changed? If so, describe both your before and after perceptions. If not, describe a day in the life of an imaginary author.**

[illegible]

## Limericks

Remember the rhyme scheme: a-a-b-b-a and keep around the same number of syllables for each line of rhyme; the two middle lines should be shorter. Limericks should be funny and the weirder, the better. BE CREATIVE! Use more paper if necessary. Every one in the class should have at least one to be posted to the blog. Write at least two limericks (or more) like this:

## A Clumsy Young Fellow Named Tim

1. There once was a fellow named Tim (A)
2. whose dad never taught him to swim. (A)
3. He fell off a dock (B)
4. and sunk like a rock. (B)
5. And that was the end of him. (A)

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.