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Arouse Your Short Story And See It Published

By Ronnie Smith

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Are you ready to abandon your short stories? Before you toss your newest story in the trash, revisit it using many of the same guidelines editors keep in mind when they review your work. If you follow these guidelines, you will be many steps closer to placing your short story in a well-known literary journal.

You can make submissions on your own, or hire some help. Every story, on average, must be submitted to 100 markets before it is accepted. For short story authors, these numbers are sad, but true. Even the best stories must cover a lot of territory before they appear on the printed page. A reputable author's submission service may offer you more time to write while they take care of the submissions. Remember that a good submission service screens potential writers for quality work. They don't take everyone.

Once your story has passed the following tests, it's time to send it out into the world.

1. Is there an opening hook that grabs the reader? Does it surprise/amuse/intrigue? Does it establish the mood of the story?
2. Are the characters interesting to read about? Are their interactions with each other believable? Are they properly motivated? Do they each have flaws as well as virtues? (Or vice-versa in Horror stories.)
3. Does each character have his or her own voice? Is dialogue flowing and natural, not stilted? Does the dialogue move the story along?
4. Are secondary characters, if any, vivid without overwhelming the main characters? Do they serve a useful purpose in the plot? Do they add interesting elements to the story?
5. Does the narrative show action, not just tell about it? Do descriptive passages evoke vivid mental images? Is the balance between narrative and dialogue appropriate for this work?

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6. Is the emotional situation and/or appropriate level of tension set up between the characters? Is the conflict clearly presented?

7. Is the story paced so it holds the reader's attention? Are transitions smooth? (Does the action proceed logically?) Are flashback scenes and background information worked into the plot appropriately for fiction of this length?

8. Are facts, figures, locales, believable and/or correct? Are the language, actions, and attire of the characters appropriate for the time period and setting of the story?

9. Is the writing fresh, free of clichés? Does it show the author's own unique style? Are viewpoint changes clear and well handled?

10. Is the grammar correct? Is the spelling accurate? Is the manuscript professionally prepared?

11. Reveal your characters primarily through their actions, not by telling your reader about them. Keep in mind that good fiction reveals rather than explains. Your goal in each piece of fiction is to provide your reader with actual experience, not merely with concepts and outlines of events.

12. Read each of your drafts carefully, aloud. If you can't experience a scene as if you were living through it yourself, work on it some more.

13. Your ending must leave your readers satisfied—even if it is unhappy, unexpected, or inconclusive. Above all, your readers must feel the piece was worth their time and attention. Pay special attention to your final sentence, image and/or line of dialogue, because your readers certainly will.

14. Remember that stories over 4,000 words are very difficult to place.

Building a list of publication credits in your cover letter will open new doors for your writing. In addition to your stories being well crafted, they must be submitted regularly and extensively. Beat the odds with strong writing COMBINED with a powerful and tenacious submission strategy.

If you need help building a personal submission strategy, contact Writer's Relief, Inc. Their author's submission service has been around for more than ten years.

You can learn more about Ronnie and how to get your work published at www.wrelief.com.

Four Secrets to Energizing Your News Story

By Rusty Cawley

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Every news story must have a FACE. If your forget to put a FACE on your story proposal, your

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chances of interesting a reporter are nil.

All true PR Rainmakers faithfully practice this fundamental every time they design a story proposal for the news media.

By FACE, the PR Rainmaker means:

- F: Feelings
- A: Analysis
- C: Crisis
- E: Energy

These are the elements of a well-crafted story proposal. Let's look at each part one by one.

1. Feelings are the emotions that your story stirs within the reporter, and thus the reader.

The seven basic emotions are love, hate, anger, fear, sorrow, envy and greed.

There are endless degrees, combinations and variations on these seven. (For example, "pity" is fear blended with sorrow.

"Rage" is an extreme form of "anger."). Your story must strongly arouse one, and only one, of these basic emotions. (Note that only one of these emotions, "love," is positive. This is one reason why news is almost always negative.)

2. Analysis provides the logic that sells the story. Feelings open the door with a reporter, but logic closes the sale.

Analysis may come in the form of numbers, statistics, data, studies, surveys or expert commentary.

The key is that the analysis must at least appear to be objective and accurate.

The analysis allows reporters to take your story seriously. It also gives reporters a subconscious excuse to listen to their feelings.

3. Crisis is the inherent conflict within the story. Without conflict, there is no news. This is what reporters mean when they talk about getting "both sides of the story."

Every story must have at least two sides. Ideally, for the news media, the story has a hero on one side and a villain on the other.

You want portray your company as a hero that is solving a problem.

4. Energy is what results from mixing feelings, analysis and crisis in the right proportions.

Energy is what drives the story.

It is what compels the reporter to want to write the story. It is what compels the editor to give the story good play.

It is what compels the reader to finish the story, to remember your story, to pass it along to friends.

The PR Rainmaker knows: You never take on the media without putting on your game FACE.

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