

TAYLOR'S TIPS for a productive writing career...



Dear Fellow Writer,

It's the end of July already! Does time fly by as quickly for you as it does for me? Rex and I have had a few opportunities for fun in the sun. We hope you are enjoying your summer as well.

As promised, in this newsletter we are delving into the world of pitching. You'll understand in a minute why I want you to....

JUST CALL ME GUMBY

Pitching your project to editors and agents is nerve wracking. You only get a few seconds in a hallway or on an elevator, two or three minutes in a "pitch slam", or maybe you are lucky enough to get an appointment and you have a full 10 minutes. No matter which way you approach talking about your project, you need to grab their attention and you need to be succinct.

And that's why I feel like Gumby. I bend and shape myself to the time constraints I have and the surroundings I am in.

Most often we pitch book ideas (nonfiction or fiction). Take the time to answer these three questions about your project:

1. Who is the main character?
2. What is the problem?
3. What is the resolution?

This will help you narrow your focus. Write down the answer to #2 and #3 in only 2-3 sentences. Fine-tune your pitch by working with it over and over. Here's an example of one I worked up:

1. Who is the main character? Rex.
2. What is the problem? He has too much energy (he digs and chews and barks).
3. What is the resolution? He finds a job.

So here's a rough pitch:

Rex is a loveable dog, but he chews, digs and barks incessantly. He needs to find a job! Together, Rex and his owner discover occupations that provide an outlet for Rex's exuberant personality and tender heart and secondarily, help his owner to feel good about giving back to the community she loves.

When I say become like Gumby, I mean that this short, easy-to-memorize pitch can be rolled off the tongue in an elevator when an editor or agent says, "So, what are you working on?" Then you respond by saying, "I'm writing a nonfiction book about Rex. He's a loveable dog.....etc." If it's a novel, begin by saying, "I'm writing a novel about...." If you have more time in an appointment setting, begin with your succinct pitch and elaborate from there.

Practice your pitch over and over. If you are having trouble narrowing your focus, take a book you have read and do the 1. 2. 3. exercise for that particular book. You'll get the hang of it.

Here's a challenge for those of you working on a book project. Send me a reply email with your three-sentence pitch. It's not something I'm going to show anyone, it's just for you to practice, fine-tune, and share with someone other than family and friends. ☺

The next thing I challenge you all to do is **attend a writers conference** in your area. Make it a one-day or longer conference—whatever you can fit into your budget and time schedule. Peruse the conference itinerary to be sure that it provides you with an opportunity to pitch your work-in-progress.

I attended a one-day conference that had a “pitch-slam” session. This was all new to me, but boy, did I have fun! All the agents lined up against the walls of different rooms. Rows of chairs led up to each seated agent. There was a moderator in each room with a stopwatch and when he said “go,” and if you were in the chair sitting right in front of the agent, it was your turn to pitch your project. You had three minutes. Time was called when the three minutes were up and you exited the hot seat and the next person in line moved in. SLAM! BAM!

We had been given a bio sheet on each agent, so we knew what kind of projects they represented. The secret to success in meeting with agents is in knowing what they want. Do they represent children’s books or do they like science fiction? Maybe they do romance and not curriculum. Do they represent only nonfiction? Three of the four I pitched to liked my book idea and said to send it to them in the form of a full proposal and sample chapters. Hooray!

So what’s next on **your** agenda? A conference this fall?

What’s Happening...

The Summertime Exchange Program is going strong. We’re one month into it. How are you doing? I hope your challenges and rewards are going well. Be sure to keep a list. I’ll be writing to you in October to find out the top three achievers who will receive a special gift (it’s a great surprise, and you’ll like it). If you haven’t signed up yet, there’s still time. Write to me and ask for last month’s newsletter if you want the particulars. :)

Check out these upcoming conferences - Maybe one is in YOUR area –

August 7-9: Greater Philadelphia Christian Writers Conference, Langhorne, Pa.
www.writehisanswer.com/philadelphia.

September 18-21: American Christian Fiction Writers Conference, Minneapolis,
www.americanchristianfictionwriters.com/conference.

October 22-26: Glorieta Christian Writers Conference, Glorieta, N.M. (near Santa Fe),
www.glorietacwc.com

October 24-25: American Christian Writers' Southern California Conference, Fullerton, CA (Southern California, Orange County), <http://xariscomhosting.com/acwconferences.html>

Follow your dreams...

B.J.

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“The Complete Guide to Writers Groups That Work”

Available on Amazon.com or <http://www.buybooksontheweb.com/product.aspx?ISBN=0-7414-4099-7>

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