



SEPTEMBER 2010 NEWSLETTER

WRITER'S TIP

Teresa's Three Ps of Writing

Practice:

Writing is a craft. It involves skills both learned and instinctive. It goes beyond the lessons you absorbed in high school. Throw out your memories of five paragraph essays and ten-page term papers. You're moving on to a whole new type of writing adventure. If you were lucky enough to be born with some writing talent, you are admittedly one step ahead. But talent isn't enough. So even if your college professor praised your writing and read samples of it to his class, that doesn't mean you can automatically sit down and produce a masterpiece. Think of it this way; if you set out to learn to play the piano, you know it will take a year or two before you can tackle a Beethoven sonata. Give your writing the same respect as you would your music. Don't get ahead of yourself. You would never sign up for golf lessons and sign up for the tournament on the same day. It may be months or even years before you have a piece good enough to submit for publication. So plan to buckle down and spend some serious time finding the genre that fits you, developing your style, finding your voice and perfecting your skills.

If you've already written your book or have already been published, you still have a lot of learning to do. The publishing industry is changing and now, more than ever, writers need to understand what happens to their books once they leave their hands and how to best promote their work and get it out in the world. Writers are life-long learners.

Patience:

Learning to write is not an easy task. Neither are submitting or marketing your book. You will encounter many moments of frustration along your writers' journey, just as you will embrace many moments of sheer joy.

Be patient with yourself as you learn to discover who you are as a writer.

Be patient with your ideas as they unfold in your head.

Be patient with your characters as they reveal themselves to you.

Be patient with your book's structure as it grows and evolves.

Be patient with busy editors and agents who take months to review your submission.

Be patient with the marketing process as you grow interest in your book.

Be patient with your career. If your first book doesn't catch on, your second book might.

When you enter the world of writing, you must throw out your personal timelines. Books are organic beings; they will form when they are ready. You can't force your projects into being, just as you can't wish them into existence. It takes butt-in-chair time to produce a book. It's quite often a two-steps-forward-one-step-back experience. Just remember, as long as you are moving forward, you are heading toward your goal, no matter how zigzagged your approach.

Persistence:

Many new writers say they only want to write for themselves, or maybe for the enjoyment of their families. If you are still in that stage, enjoy it. Embrace it. There is any number of good reasons to write, and personal gratification is as good as any. If, however, you have already crossed that line and want to bring your book out into the world, you are going to have to take it on the same way a young parent takes on a newborn child. You're going to have to be your book's champion, teacher and guiding light. It's up to you to get your message out there. Fantasize all you want about some editor calling out of the blue to offer you a contract. Fantasy is fun. It's what helps us keep our sense of humor. But when the daydreaming is done, get yourself to the mailbox and post those submissions. It's you who will have to write that enticing query letter. You who will have to pitch to that agent at a conference. You who will have to pull those rejection letters out of the mail. And you who will have to keep going.

So be persistent. When you get those rejections—and you will—try to learn from them. Use those harsh critiques from your writer's group to improve your work. Enter those contests and take heed of the judge's comments. Strive constantly to improve your work and then send it out again and again. If it's any good, it will find a home. Remember, REJECTION IS PROGRESS. Every rejection letter brings you one step closer to an acceptance. It's a numbers game, and you have to play to win.

If you've already published a book you're going to need just as much persistence as you did when you wrote it and sold it. Your baby is going off to college now, but he'll be calling home for money and stopping by to do laundry and asking for your advice. This is no time to abandon your child. Be persistent in your marketing efforts. If that newspaper editor ignores your press release, call him on the phone. If that book club organizer turns down your book, move on to the next club. If that bookstore owner still isn't stocking your book, have fifteen of your closest friends call and request it. It's a busy world we live in. People aren't going to go looking for your work; you have to bring it to them. Play the proud parent. Get out there and tell the world about your book!