



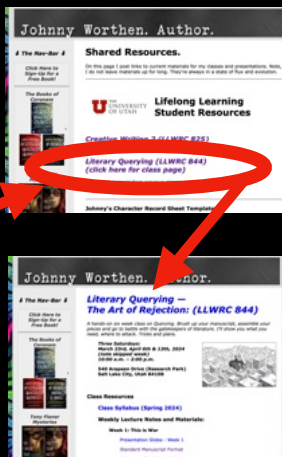
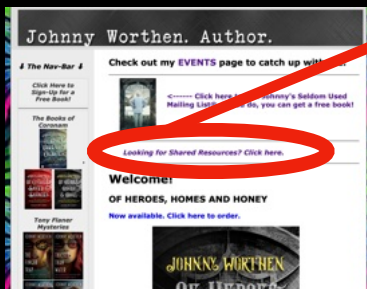
# Week One Goals

- The Class
- Introductions
- Goals
- The War
  - Killer Manuscript
- Sharp Points
  - Log line
  - Meet Comp
  - Tag Line
  - Blurb
- Synopsis



I'll be talking at you a lot today.  
— Sorry

# Online/Shared Resources



<https://johnnyworthen.com/SharedResources/LLWRC844/SharedLLWRC844.html>

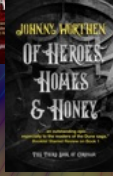
# Class Structure

- Workshop Homework Together
- Lecture
- Break
- Homework assignment



# WHO IS JOHNNY WORTHEN?

- Utah Writer of the Year
- Best-Selling Author
- Associative Instructor, University of Utah
- Multiple-genre hybrid author
- Past President of The League of Utah Writers
- Lifetime Member, League of Utah Writers
- SFWA, Full Member



## PUBLISHED BOOKS

- Beatrysel
  - Dr. Stuart's Heart
  - What Immortal Hand
  - Eleanor, The Unseen Book 1
  - Celeste, The Unseen Book 2
  - David, The Unseen Book 3
  - The Brand Demand
  - The Finger Trap
  - Thicker Than Water
  - The Knickknack Case
  - In the Wake of Captain Lord
  - The Counterfeit Connection
  - The Hermit of Big Horn County
  - The Real Deal
  - Of Kings, Queens, & Colonies
  - Of Civilized, Saved & Savages
  - Of Heroes Homes & Honey
  - The Gaia Chime (coming soon)
- Tons of Short stories

## TRAINING

- BA English
- MA American Studies
- 23+ Novels
- Professional Editor
- Old & Wise
- Tie-dye connoisseur

# “Who goes there?”



- Introductions
- Name
- Experience
- Project

# Motivation

- Why are you doing this?
- Why do you write?
- Why do you want to SHARE your writing?
- Who is your audience?



# Goals

- What is success?
  - Published?
    - Traditional?
      - Big Five vs. Small Press?
    - Self-Pub/Indie?
    - Hybrid?
  - Money?
  - Fame?
  - Validation?
- Career Planning

"A goal without a plan  
is just a wish."

-Antoine de Saint-Exupry

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# My Experience

- This Class: *What I'd wished I'd known.*
- *I'm twelve years into my ten year plan to be an overnight success.*
- *Every authors has a different journey*
- Attitude and endurance
  - 5 queries per week
  - Agents/Publishers/Awards
  - Find success where I can
- Placed everything myself (so far)
- I've had 2 agents; currently don't have one



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Realities

- **A career in art is... tough.**
- **The odds are against you.**
  - "Writing can feel more like a skill-based lottery"
  - And even then, it's not a meritocracy
  - Cultural shifts, political whims, chasing consumers
- *If you can be something other than a writer... do that*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

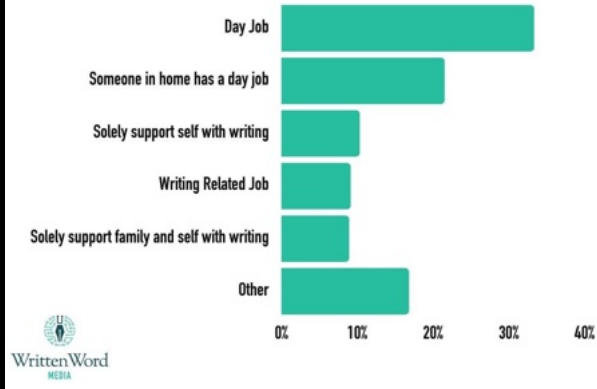
---

---

---



## Indie Author Occupation



<https://www.writtenwordmedia.com/the-state-of-indie-authorship-in-202>

## Publishing's Changing Landscape

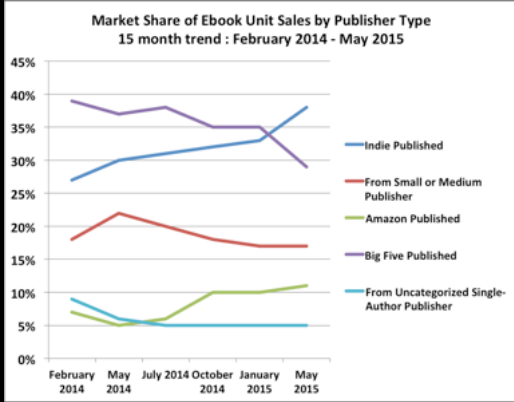
- *It has never been easier to be published; it has never been harder to be read.*
- **Candle makers in the Age of the LED**
  - Competition for money and attention
- Gatekeepers
- Shifting Paradigm
  - eBooks, audiobooks, and technology,
    - Kindle, POD, streaming
      - The end of brick and mortar?
- Self Publishing
  - Noise and still there are Gatekeepers
- Declining literacy

## Traditional Gatekeepers

- Big agents receive 1,000's of queries per WEEK!
  - Have maybe 40 clients, 20 active (rest in residuals)
- The best way to get a publishing contract is to:
  - *Be born the only child of a Big 5 Editor*
  - *Bring your own audience*
  - *Keep trying*



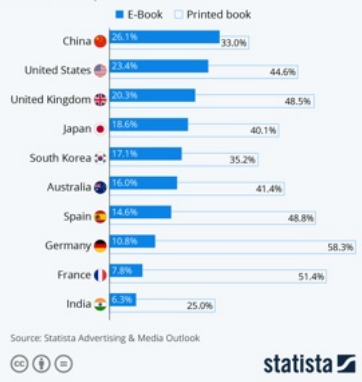
# Changing Paradigms



Amazon ebook Sales Report <http://authorearnings.com/report/may-2015-author-earnings-report/>

## E-Books Still No Match for Printed Books

Estimated share of the population that purchased an e-book/a printed book in 2021



<https://www.statista.com/chart/24709/e-book-and-printed-book-penetration/>

There are lots of books out there



<https://wordstrated.com/number-of-books-published-per-year-2021/>



# Self Publishing?

## PROS

- Complete Control
  - *Editing*
  - *Cover*
  - *Content*
  - *Marketing*
- No Gatekeepers
- Keep all the profit
- Avoid rejection

## CONS

- Complete Responsibility
  - *Editing*
  - *Cover*
  - *Content*
  - *Marketing*
- No Gatekeepers
- Do all the work
- Considered inferior

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

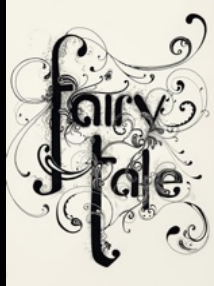
---

---

---

# The Traditional Route

- Write a Great Book
- Query an Agent
- Get a big advance
- Go on Oprah
- Sell Books
- Be rich and famous
- Live happily ever after



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Gatekeepers

- Editors choose what to print
  - Staff / Interns (young and poorly paid)
- Big Publishers Won't Touch\* an Un-agented Author
  - Filter the dregs
  - Personal relationship
    - *Who you know...*
- Remember - Agents get 1,000's of queries per week but...
  - Usually keep a handful of active clients



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# Rejection

- *We bleed on paper and then try to sell the bandages.*
- The soul-crushing reality of the life of an artist
- Rejection, self-doubt, depression
- Exposure and criticism
  - It never stops
    - Really... it's constant and crushing



**BEWARE**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Subjective!

- *"You have no business being a writer and should give up."* To Zane Grey
- *"Too different from other juveniles on the market to warrant its selling."* To Dr Seuss
- *"It is so badly written."* [The Da Vinci Code](#)
- *"Nobody will want to read a book about a seagull."* Richard Bach's [Jonathan Livingston Seagull](#)
- *"An absurd and uninteresting fantasy which was rubbish and dull."* To William Golding, [The Lord Of The Flies](#)
- *"An absurd story as romance, melodrama or record of New York high life."* F.Scott Fitzgerald for [The Great Gatsby](#)
- *"Stick to teaching."* Louisa May Alcott, [Little Women](#)
- *"We suggest you get rid of all that Indian stuff."* Publisher to Tony Hillerman
- *"He hasn't got any future."* John le Carré [The Spy Who Came in From the Cold](#)
- *"Hopelessly bogged down and unreadable."* To Ursula K. Le Guin

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Good Company

- J.K. Rowling, [Harry Potter](#) - 12 publisher rejections
  - *Connects with daughter of publisher*
- Frank Herbert, [Dune](#) - 23 rejections
  - *Prints with Chilton - known for car repair manuals*
- Stephen King, [Carrie](#) - 30 rejections
  - *Established short story author*
- Louis L'Amour, 300+
- Alex Haley, [Roots](#), 200+
- Agatha Christie, 5 Years trying
- Jack London, 600+ before first story

**A PROFESSIONAL  
WRITER IS AN  
AMATEUR WHO DIDN'T  
QUIT.**

*Richard Bach*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

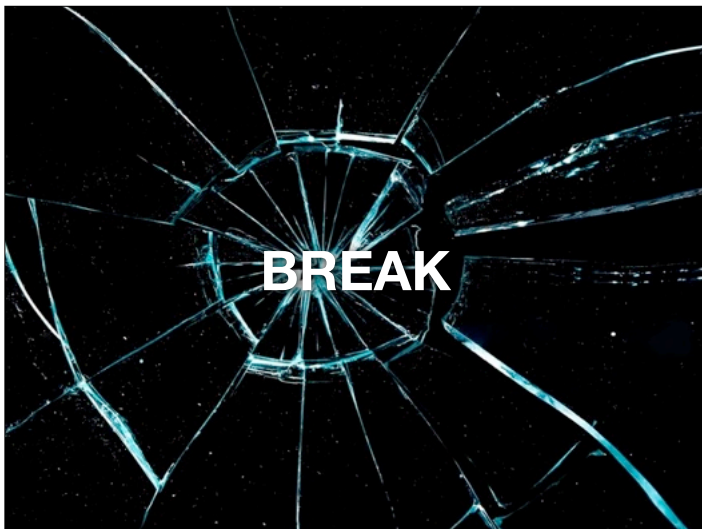
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





## Six Weapons To Assault the Gates

- **Killer Manuscript**
- **Sharp Lines**
- **Excellent Synopses**
- **Superb Query Letter**
- **Flawless First Pages**
- **Undeniable Presence**



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## ROBERT A. HEINLEIN'S FIVE RULES OF WRITING

1. You must write.
2. You must finish what you start.
3. You must refrain from rewriting (except to editorial demand).
4. You must put it on the market.
5. You must keep it on the market until sold.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Killer Manuscript

- Beyond the scope of this class
- Do the best you can
  - Be happy with it
- Feedback
  - Readers and Editors
- Remember:
  - Even if perfect and great, there's no guarantee
  - Right place, right time, right thing, right demographics, right sunspots...



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Sharp Lines

- Short Versions to Pitch
  - Log Line
  - Tag Line
  - Comarables
  - Blurb
  - Elevator Pitch\*



\*Next Week

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Log Line

- “What is it?”
  - “High Concept”
    - A striking and easily communicable idea.
  - Summed Up – A brief statement/explanation.
- **Save The Cat!**
  - Extensive discussion on this subject (limited use to writers)
  - *A group of people hide from bloodthirsty zombies in a farmhouse. – Night of the Living Dead*
  - *A listless and alienated teenager decides to help his new friend win the class presidency in their small western high school, while he must deal with his bizarre family life back home. – Napoleon Dynamite*
  - *A couple of high school grads spend one final night cruising the strip with their buddies before they go off to college. – American Graffiti*



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Log Line

- “High Concept”
- Bare Bones
- Marketing Description
- A good concept sells better than anything else
- A test before writing

**Protagonist + Struggle with Antagonist + Death Stakes**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Example Log Lines:

- In 1936, archaeologist and adventurer Indiana Jones [protagonist] is hired by the US government to locate the ancient Ark of the Covenant before the Nazis [struggle with antagonist] and stop them from becoming the most powerful army the world has ever known. [death stakes] (**Raiders of the Lost Ark.**)
- Two detectives—a rookie and a veteran [protagonists]—attempt to catch a serial killer who uses the seven deadly sins as his modus operandi [struggle with antagonist] before he kills again. [death stakes] (**Se7en.**)
- A young couple [protagonists] becomes increasingly disturbed by a seemingly demonic presence in their new suburban home [struggle with antagonist] and must figure out how to stop it before it's too late. [death stakes] (**Paranormal Activity.**)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## This ain't a movie (yet)

- Short Attention Span Culture
- Log Lines can be **super useful** or **totally useless**
  - Log Line will never contain your work (unless your work is shallow and easily digestible in soundbites)
  - Could contain enough to start— a door, give a very brief roadmap of where it goes while suggesting possibilities, twists and conflicts.
- Gives another angle for you (and others) to grasp your book
- Condensed Blurb / Seed of the Pitch
- Start with it / Figure it out after

### HIGH CONCEPT

- A man goes on a mission to save the environment from evildoers. He must complete multiple missions and defeat multiple bosses.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Tag Line

- A catch phrase or slogan
- Marketing tool
  - *In space, no one can hear you scream* — Alien
  - *The mission is a man* — Saving Private Ryan
  - *There can be only one* — Highlander
  - *Bring him home* — The Martian
  - *Michael was chosen of God. Just not that God.* —What Immortal Hand
- Again borrowing from Film
  - Limited use but a good exercise and specialized tool

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Comparables

- **Book Comparables** (useful):
  - What book is yours like?
    - Setting, Plot, Character, etc.
    - Shows you know the genre
    - *Readers of A Fault in Our Stars will find much to like in my book*
  - Find some! (Recent is better than older, nothing too grandiose)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Meet Comp

- **Meet Comp**
  - A specific mash up of comparable titles
    - *“Breaking Bad meets My Little Pony”*
    - *“Where the Red Fern Grows meets Game of Thrones”*
    - *“Jackie Brown with a touch of Romancing the Stone”*
  - *“High Concept®”*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# The Blurb\*

- **A SALES PITCH**
  - *Think back of the book*
  - Not a synopsis
- **A TEASER paragraph (or a couple)**
  - 100-200 words
- **Used in selling to everyone**
  - Partner (part of the query, demonstration)
  - Reader (hook on the back of the book)
  - *The second thing after the cover a reader looks at*

*\*not to be confused with an “review/author blurb”*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---











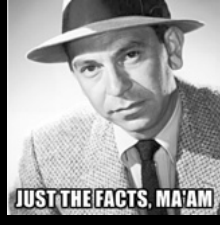






# Definition

- **Synopsis**: a brief summary or general survey of something.
- It is a technical document
- It is **NOT** a blurb
- Think “Cliff Notes”
  - only shorter



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Internal Document

- Is **NOT** intended for **readers** (consumers) of the book.
- It is Intended for **partners** who need quick access to the book’s broad strokes to sell it.
  - *Non-fiction can use bullet points.*
- Still a sales tool so do it well.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Concentrate!

- First step in concentrating your story for mass consumption and fast delivery.
  - *It will get harder, denser, more artful*
- Often part of the documentation requested in the query (80%+)
  - At the get-go
  - At the **Request For Manuscript**



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# What you must do

- Reduce your 300 page story into
  - 4 pages
    - 3 pages
      - 2 pages
        - 1 page
          - 1 paragraph....
- 1-2 page synopsis is your goal



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

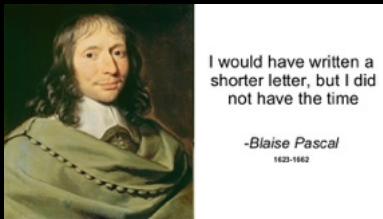
---

---

---

# With any Luck...

- You'll come up with an excellent two page synopsis and run with that.



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Synopsis Considerations

- Limit the scope
  - Stick to main plot points and ideas
  - Limit characters
  - Who, what, where, and why
- **INCLUDE SPOILERS & ENDING**
  - Dealing with a partner not a consumer

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Synopses Format

- **Standard Manuscript Formatting** with a few differences
  - No cover page, basic info at beginning
    - Name, immediate contact information (phone, email)
  - Can play with spacing—WON'T BE EDITED,
    - Avoid single space, can get down to 1.25 spacing if necessary and .75 margins
  - Header all pages; Author, Title-synopsis and Page
    - Worthen / BRAND DEMAND—Synopsis / 1
  - **OFTEN: ALL CAPS** the first mention of a character who'll be referred to again in the synopsis. If referred to only once, don't name them—identify with function.
    - ex: HUNTER BLAKE, a drunk truck-driver, finds a bag of money.
    - ex: The school headmaster saves Harry.
  - Succinct and to the point
  - Include the ending.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## SYNOPSIS

Worthen / THINGS BEQUEATHED synopsis / 1

THINGS BEQUEATHED – Synopsis  
By Johnny Worthen  
[Johnny@JohnnyWorthen.com](mailto:Johnny@JohnnyWorthen.com) / (801) 652-4416

Fourteen year-old, MIRANDA KENDRICK (ANDI) has a magickal creature she named DAMON. He's nine inches tall, bright red leathery skin, winged with a barbed tail. He looks like the devil and just appeared one night. He can disappear at will, blend into his surroundings like a chameleon, and share senses with Andi including his unearthly ones.

Andi is an orphan. Her mother MAYA was killed. She never knew her father. She is cared for by her grandparents but feels an underlying dislike from them that may explain why Maya never mentioned them and moved around constantly. From a drunk uncle, Andi learns that her father, COREY DOUGAL, supposedly killed her other uncle, ran away with Maya, and got her pregnant. The uncle's anger at Corey is bent to Andi in his drunkenness and he moves to strike her but is thwarted by Damon. The uncle doesn't see the monster and passes out leaving Andi upset at being compared to her disliked father.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Hints

- Pretend like you're writing to your mother.
  - "Hi Mom. Send money. I just wrote this great book. It's about..."
- To shorten later drafts remove subplots and/or characters.
- Compound sentences are your friends.
- Though plot oriented, try to include in your synopses other aspects of your book that make it unique (setting, theme, arcs, emotions, etc.)
- Google examples of similar works to get ideas
- If you make chapter synopses as you write, you're far ahead

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Synopses Examples

- Handouts:
  - Rowling, *Harry Potter & The Sorcerer's Stone*
  - Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*
  - Worthen, *The Brand Demand*
  - Worthen, *The Gaia Chime*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Homework

- For Critique
  - Log line
  - Tag Line
  - Comparable Titles
  - Meet Comp
  - Blurb
  - 1-2 Page Synopsis
- **Send to me by Thursday April 4th** (you actually have 2 weeks)
- We will **Workshop** these together



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---