



WNHS: Words Inspire, Nourish and Grow the Spirit

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Frequently Asked Questions



Can you just read my short story/
poem/manuscript and give me some
feedback?

Okay, I admire the chutzpah (for those who don't know what that is, it's a Yiddish word for 'ballsiness' or 'cheekiness').

Just as it's probably stretching the bounds of a relationship to ask a doctor friend to 'just write a prescription' or a lawyer friend to 'just give some legal advice,' it's also putting me in an awkward spot to ask me to 'just read and give feedback' (never mind that I don't have the time.)



Let me explain why. I don't 'just read' anything. I'm a professional mentor and author. When I read with a view to giving feedback, I need to understand why the writer has written this particular piece, who it's for (the intended audience) and what it's for (a competition, a newsletter, a submission to a publisher?) Any feedback without this context is a little meaningless and unhelpful, don't you think?

If I had the time to take on this sort of reading, I'd charge for it. But I don't. Not unless I'm mentoring you. And to be mentored by me, you have to come on a writing retreat first.

My suggestion is to work out what kind of feedback you're after. If it's a structural edit, a professional manuscript assessor is the way to go (google them in your area). If it needs a copy or line edit, a professional editor is the way to go (google them in your area). You will have to pay someone to do this. Because it's work, even if writing it was just fun for you.



I've written a book - can you help me get a publisher?

I know how frustrating it can be to get past the gatekeepers of agents and processes that make it difficult for first-time authors. However, these gatekeepers are there for a reason.

Publishers and agents are inundated with submissions and unsolicited manuscripts. They have what's called a 'slush' pile for these manuscripts, and they employ junior editors to read the first few lines of each manuscript looking for a gem. Most manuscripts are rejected. I get about 3 requests a week from people – often strangers – asking me to please introduce them to a publisher.

Imagine if I simply agreed to introduce writers I've never met and whose writing I have never read to publishers. The publishers I've worked with over the years, and have a great relationship with, would get the hell in with me.

So I cannot introduce a writer whose work I've never read to a publisher. And I only read the writing of the writers I mentor. And I only mentor writers who have been on writing retreats with me. I sometimes do introduce writers I've been mentoring and working with for a long time to a publisher – when I believe their manuscript is ready.



How do I find a publisher?



It depends.

Is your book ready for a publisher?

If you have never had any feedback on your manuscript, your book is not ready. Please trust me on this. Even the most accomplished authors get editors to work on their writing. If you have never studied the craft of writing, the chances are that you don't know what you don't know.

Do you have all the elements of story present?

- A sympathetic, flawed character?
- A plot?
- A character arc?
- Themes?
- Throughlines?
- A setting?
- Three beats to your story?

If not, please do some writing courses or read some books and then go back to your book. My book *Your Story: How to Write It so Others Will Want to Read It* is a good start if you're writing memoir or any kind of fiction (www.joannefedleryourstory.com) and I have even created a workbook to help guide you through all the technique.

Here is a list of great books on writing you should have read before you approach a publisher with what you think, is a publisher-ready book:

Urgent Books to Help You Learn the Craft

- *Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott, Anchor Books, 1994
- *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser, Collins, 1976
- *If You Want to Write* by Brenda Ueland, Graywolf Press, 1987
- *Writing for Emotional Impact* by Karl Iglesias, Wingspan Press, 2005
- *On Writing: A Memoir* by Stephen King, Hodder & Stoughton, 2000
- *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer* by Roy Peter Clarke, Little, Brown and Company, 2006
- *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear* by Elizabeth Gilbert, Riverhead Books, 2015
- *The Right to Write: An Invitation and Initiation into the Writing Life* by Julia Cameron, Pan Books, 1999
- *Still Writing: The Perils and Pleasures of a Creative Life* by Dani Shapiro, Grove Press, 2013
- *The Writing Life* by Annie Dillard, Harper Perennial, 1989
- *Do the Work* by Steven Pressfield, The Domino Project, 2011
- *The Icarus Deception* by Seth Godin, Portfolio Penguin, 2012
- *Wild Mind: Living the Writer's Life* by Natalie Goldberg, Rider, 1991



Which country do you live in?

Every country has different conventions around the publishing industry. In some countries you have to have a literary agent (and they can be impossibly hard to get – I struggled for ten years to get one in the U.S. despite having sold more than half a million copies of my books internationally). Some countries, like Australia are hybrid – some publishers only accept manuscripts that come via agents, and some accept unsolicited manuscripts. Some, like Allen & Unwin have The Friday Pitch where you can submit the first chapter of your book to them and if they like it, they'll ask to see the rest. But please, if your book is not ready, don't submit yet. You get one chance to impress.

And if you can't get a traditional publisher, think about self-publishing. It is a great way to get your writing out there without having your heart and self confidence annihilated by the grueling process of trying to get published. Make sure the book is Fan-Frigging-Tastic. Invest money in a manuscript assessor, an editor, a great cover and a well-established self-publishing group. If you'd like a list of self publishing houses in Australia, I have compiled one and am happy to share it with you. Email admin@joannefedler.com and we will be happy to pass it on to you.



Can you endorse my book or write a shout for it?

Maybe. It depends on whether:

- your book is well-written (if you haven't had a manuscript assessment or any kind of editorial feedback, please do this - and work on the rewrites - before sending me a query);
- your book is on a subject matter that aligns with my values (words that inspire, nourish and grow the spirit – irrespective of the genre);
- I have time.

If you'd like me to endorse your book, please send a query email first with the synopsis, blurb and the first chapter attached, as well as the deadline for when you need the blurb to admin@joannefedler.com.

I will let you know if I want to read the rest and whether I have the time to meet your deadline.



Can you promote my book for me?

Ah, Sorry, I don't promote anyone's books but my own and the writers I mentor.



Can you teach me how to promote my book?

I am working on an online course to share what I know about book promotion. I learned this through an early adopter campaign I ran around one of my books that got it to #1 on Amazon in its category. If you'd like to be alerted about when this course will be available, email admin@joannefedler.com.



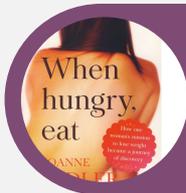
Can you mentor me?



I only mentor writers who have been on writing retreats with me. I run retreats for women once or twice a year: www.joannefedlerwritingretreats.com

If this sounds like something your heart is aching for, please fill in the questionnaire under NEXT STEPS and someone from my team will be in touch with you to arrange a discovery session.

I also run free online writing challenges and courses which is sort of like me mentoring you – except that it's virtual. To sign up for these challenges, please email admin@joannefedler.com and we will make sure you get immediate notification as soon as we run our next challenge or course.



I've had such an interesting life,
can you write a book about me?

As interesting as your life has been, I don't write other peoples' stories or act as a ghostwriter. You can google 'ghostwriters' in your area and find someone if you believe you can't write your own story.

But here's what I think: what makes your story yours is not only what happened to you, but your voice – that unique, ineffable part of you that shines through the writing that a ghostwriter can never capture. It's your take on the world. The way you see and experience life. So I'd encourage you to try writing your story, and getting some support and help along the way. My book *Your Story* (and the workbook) are a good place to start.



Is there another way you can
help me?

Of course.

1. Subscribe to my **newsletter** – I send out writing tips and inspiration once or twice a month, you'll learn a lot. Email admin@joannefedler.com to be put on the mailing list.
2. Do one of my free **7-day writing challenges**, where I'll teach you 7 writing tricks and you'll get to practice your writing skills. Email admin@joannefedler.com to be alerted when the next challenge is.
3. Join my online **Author Awakening Adventure** course which teaches you EVERYTHING you need to know as a writer. I work with mindset as well as the craft. There is no other writing course like it anywhere else. I run it a few times a year and you will be able to interact with me in a private Facebook group and ask me questions. Email admin@joannefedler.com to get the heads-up on when the next course is starting.
4. Subscribe to my YouTube channel **SpoonFed** writing tips www.youtube.com/user/SpoonFedWriting.
5. Grab hold of a copy of my book, ***Your Story: How to Write It so Others Will Want to Read It*** www.joannefedleryourstory.com as well as the workbook.



What else can I do to improve my writing and my chances of getting published?

1. Read lots of books on writing, and in the genre you're writing in.
2. Join a writing group and get feedback on your writing.
3. Do a writing course – either face to face or online (one of mine?)
4. Keep writing.
5. Get a manuscript assessment.
6. Make writing a commitment, not a hobby.
7. Join writers' centres in your area.
8. Send off your writing to writing competitions.
9. Subscribe to writing magazines or blogs.
10. Learn the craft diligently and apply it to your writing.

Good luck.

I know it's tough. But you can make this happen.

 Joanne

