

What Author Jones Learned from Reading A Pile of Book Manuscripts

It's been awhile – did you miss Author Jones? AJ misses you, too, sweet thang. Now, let's get to shining some brass tacks. Dr. Jones, as part of a recent contest, read a whole lotta book manuscripts sent in by some fine folks from several of this globe's finer continents. These crafty works ranged anywhere from weighty, lengthy tomes delving into historical events to extolling the benefits of spiritualized exercise regimes.
How to Know if Your Book Manuscript is up to Par

It's been awhile – did you miss Author Jones? AJ misses you, too, sweet thang.

Now, let's get to bizness. Dr. Jones, as part of a recent writing contest, read a whole lotta book manuscripts sent in by some fine folks from several of this globe's finer continents. Everyone, it seems wants to know how to write a book or how to publish a book.

These crafty works ranged anywhere from weighty, lengthy tomes delving into historical events to extolling the benefits of spiritualized exercise regimes.
Oh my.

A.J. will now give to you the numericalized list form of generalized observations in regards to said manuscripts.

1. If you are writing a memoir (and good for you – these lifey stories are branding iron hot right now) you absolutely, positively, whole-heartedly must own the cojones or eggs to expose yourself and your flaws. The trick, dear reader/writer, is to learn to do this in such a manner that connects to your readers – not to gain sympathy, but to illuminate the human condition – you know, universalize.

2. Also, maybe it is not necessary to tell your whole damn story – take the time to look at how you might tell the most compelling parts of your story from different angles. What details/events are necessary, which detract. Let's lay down an example of how to write a memoir.

Your story is that your son tells you he's gay. You cannot simply relay the details of this story like a grocery checklist.

It was Christmas. I hoped my son would return from college with a girlfriend. He didn't. He acted funny. I thought something might be wrong. Then he told me that he didn't fancy girls, he fancied boys. I was shocked. Then we opened gifts. I got a blinking sweater.

This is, really now, is not far off from what some of the writing actually read like.

You gots to reveal the conflict within yourself, how people treated you, how you treated your son, the thoughts you couldn't tell your son, the things, that only later, you couldn't even admit to yourself – if you do not do this, then nobody, but nobody will be riveted to your tale. If there wasn't any turmoil or revelation, as the case may be if you are say, a robot, then maybe you need to take a long hard stance in front of the mirror and ask yourself why you are bothering to tell this story.

Lastly, read a smattering of memoirs, if you haven't already. Take note of what you like and what works. Take note of what you don't like and what does not work. Do some book learnin', people.

3. For crying out loud – if you send a manuscript to someone – BIND IT. A. Jones received an unbound 500 + page manuscript. Come to think of it, this is the way most of the fine folks sent in their unpublished prizes. Now, Author Jones is many things, but one thing Jonesy is not, is graceful. Consider that your manuscript will be in a STACK, say that stack falls and your pages go flying – I don't know about you – but A.J. has better things to then reshuffle some papers back in order. Frankly, it is a fairly easy way to eliminate a manuscript – you do not want to have that happen – now, do you.

In addition, you are a sucker if don't number your pages. A SUCKER.

4. Check this out. One fitness lady took the time to create a table of contents. How pleasant. Chapter 5 had a particularly interesting tidbit that Author immediately flipped to. Once flipped to, the juicy item was nowhere to be found. This was true for another chapter as well. Author Jones does not have a current plot-hunting license, nor is AJ a mystic. Does your book have some kind of Da vinci code????

Make sure your chapters and info therein match up. Seems pretty damn obvious.

4. Put your glorious name/address/phone number ON THE MANUSCRIPT.

5. The usuals. Double Space. Courier/Times New Roman – use a font that is plain and easy to read – resist your urge for curly q stupidity or other 'fun' fonts. Have someone professionally (read: not your friend who is real good at writing thank you notes) proof and edit your masterpiece before you send it to anyone -- do not let your out of control ego get in the way of your doing this.

6. If your manuscript is fiction, you might just consider writing a compelling pitch letter that tells the reader specifically who your book is aimed at -- what books like yours have done well and so on. Fiction is a more difficult sell, for reals. Doctor Author Jones loves good fiction – but apparently in these war torn times, fiction is not flying off bookshelves.

That said, A.J. can feel the angsty vibes from some you – you are cringing because your book is ART and you shouldn't have to write a letter such as this. I know, I know, A. J. feels your pain. Consider that if you want your hard work to reach the masses then it is up to you help that book get the hell out there. It is just the cold hard reality of the book business. As it is, many great books get passed up – so you gotta do your level best to get your book on the playing field.

7. If your book is instructional, especially if it is some type of instruction about something technological – say How to Make Killer PowerPoint Presentations. May A.J. suggest you look into making it an ebook? Let's face it people – technology is moving like a number 5 rapid – no one wants to buy, much less publish a book that will outdated in two weeks. With ebooks the purchaser can elect to buy chapters they might need – and you can offer updates of the ebook for a minimal charge, or many offer them gratis.

This goes for exercise books, diet books and so on.

Ebooks are gaining a huge market – go to market, NOW.

That's the stuff off the top of Author Jones' head. If more comes to mind you can be sure to look forward to a Part Two.