



THE HOMESCHOOLER'S GUIDE TO BOOK PUBLISHING

Week 3: Querying and Submissions

After an author has decided to publish traditionally, picked the type of publisher they want to go with, and settled on a genre and age category, next they need to polish up their manuscript to the best it can be and sally forth into the trenches of **Querying** and **Submissions**!

Submissions refers to the process of submitting a manuscript to prospective publishing houses. The author must research what publishing houses are out there and which ones would be the best fit for their book. Different publishers often specialize in different types of books. For instance, Chicken Scratch Books only publishes Middle Grade fiction.

But there's a catch—while most small publishers accept submissions directly from authors, big publishing houses don't. If an author wants to publish with a big publisher, like Penguin Random House, they first have to obtain representation from a **Literary Agent**.



The main job of the Literary Agent is to submit the manuscript to the publishing houses that seem to be the best fit. But agents do much more than this—for a more in depth exploration of the role of the Literary Agent, see the Job Highlight for this week.

Finding a Literary Agent is a lot like the process of finding a publisher, and it can be just as difficult! The process is usually referred to as **Querying**. This is because rather than sending them an entire book proposal, most agents just want authors to send them a one page **Query Letter**, along with the first few pages of their manuscript.

A **Query Letter** is a highly formalized document containing a carefully crafted, short introduction of the story idea and the author. It's designed to pique the agent's curiosity and

prove to them that the author has studied the expected industry standards for this type of correspondence and isn't wasting the agent's time.



If the Query is intriguing and the agent likes the first few pages of the story, they will ask to see the rest of the story. This is known as a Manuscript Request. It can take weeks or months to hear back from an agent, depending on how in-demand they are (and most agents are *swamped* with submissions). But if the agent feels the story is a good fit for them, they will offer the author representation.

At this stage, the agent will then begin the process of submitting the manuscript to publishing houses. This can take months, or even years. Publishing houses make decisions based on more than just the quality of the writing. They have to take into account what is currently popular in the market, and what books they already have contracted.

Even brilliantly written books get rejected when publishers don't believe they can successfully sell them in the current market. Thankfully, markets do change. It's usually possible to get a well-written book published eventually with enough time and perseverance.



