

Caveat scriptor

Let the would-be writer beware! Anyone foolhardy enough to embark on a career as a writer – whether it be an academic treatise, a novel, or even an article – should first read this!

People think that writing as a profession is glamorous; that it is just about sitting down and churning out words on a page, or more likely these days on a computer screen. If only it were! So what exactly does writing a book entail? Being a writer is about managing a galaxy of contradictory feelings: elation, despair, hope, frustration, satisfaction, and depression – and not all separately! Of course, it also involves carrying out detailed research: first to establish whether there is a market for the planned publication, and second into the content of the book. Sometimes, however, instinct takes the place of market research and the contents are dictated not by plans and exhaustive research but by experience and knowledge.

Once the publication has been embarked upon, there is a long period of turmoil as the text takes shape. A first draft is rarely the final text of the book. Nearly all books are the result of countless hours of altering and reordering chunks of text and deleting the embarrassing bits. While some people might think that with new technology the checking and editing process is speeded up, the experienced writer would hardly agree. Unfortunately, advanced technology now allows the writer the luxury of countless editings; a temptation many of us find hard to resist. So a passage, endlessly reworked may end up nothing remotely like the original, and completely out of place when compared with the rest of the text.

After the trauma of self-editing and looking for howlers, it is time to show the text to other people, friends perhaps, for appraisal. At this stage, it is not wise to send it off to a literary agent or direct to publishers, as it may need further fine-tuning of which the author is unaware. Once an agent has been approached and has rejected a draft publication, it is difficult to go and ask for the revamped text to be considered again. It also helps, at this stage, to offer a synopsis of the book, if it is a novel, or an outline if it is a textbook. This acts as a guide for the author, and a general reference for friends and later for agents.

Although it is tempting to send the draft to every possible agent at one time, it is probably unwise. Some agents may reject the publication out of hand, but others may offer some invaluable advice, for example about the content or the direction to be taken. Hints like this may be of use in finally being given a contract by an agent or publisher.

The lucky few are taken on by publishers or agents, then have their books subjected to a number of readers, whose job it is to vet a book: deciding whether it is worth

publishing and whether the text as it stands is acceptable or not. After a book has finally been accepted by a publisher, one of the greatest difficulties for the writer lies in taking on board the publisher's alterations to the text. Whilst the overall story the thrust of the book may be acceptable, it will probably have to conform to an in-house style, as regards language, spelling or punctuation, etc. More seriously, the integrity of the text may be challenged, and this may require radical redrafting which is unpalatable to the author. A book's creation period is complex and unnerving, but the publisher's reworkings and text amputations can also be a tortuous process.

For many writers, the most painful period comes when the text has been accepted, and the writer is waiting for it to be put together for the printer. By this stage, it is not uncommon for the writer to be thoroughly sick of the text.

Abandon writing? Nonsense. Once smitten, it is not easy to escape the compulsion to create and write, despite the roller-coaster ride of contradictory emotions.

Questions 15-22

Complete the text below, which is a summary of the passage.

Choose your answers from the Word List below and write them in blanks 15-22 on your answer sheet.

There are more words and phrases than spaces, so you will not be able to use them all. You may use each word or phrase only once.

Example: Anyone who wants to be a writer should _____

Answer: beware.

People often associate writing with 15 _____. But being a writer involves managing conflicting emotions as well as 16 _____ or instinct. Advanced technology, contrary to what might be thought, does not make the 17 _____ faster.

When a writer has a draft of the text ready, it is a good idea to have a 18 _____ for friends, etc. to look at. If an author is accepted by a publisher, the draft of the book is given to 19 _____ for vetting, 20. _____ are then often made, which are not easy for the writer to agree. However, 21 _____ is compelling, even though there are 22 _____.

Wordlist

editing process	beware	readers
first draft	glamour	a literary agent
alterations	profession	publisher
challenges	writing	dictating
research	publishing	summary
ups and downs	roller-coaster	

Questions 23 and 24

Choose the appropriate letters **A-D** and write them in Boxes 23 and 24 on your answer sheet,

23. In the planning stages of a book, ...

- A. Instinct can replace market research
- B. market research can replace instinct
- C. market research is essential
- D. instinct frequently replaces market research

24. The problem with the use of advanced technology in editing is that ...

- A. it becomes different from the original
- B. it is unfortunate
- C. it is a luxury
- D. many writers cannot resist changing the text again and again

Questions 25-28

Complete the sentences below.

Use **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage to complete each blank space.

25. Once a text is finished, the writer needs to get the _____ of other people.

26. Some agents may reject the draft of a book, while others may offer _____.

27. Apart from the need for a draft to conform to an in-house style, a publisher's changes to a text may include _____.

28. The publisher's alterations to a book are difficult for a writer, as is the _____ as the book grows.

Caveat scriptor reading answer key with explanation

Check your answers with the **Caveat scriptor reading answer with explanation** provided below.

(Note: The text in italics is from the reading passage and shows the location from where the answer is taken or inferred. The text in regular font explains the answer in detail.)

Question (15 - 22)

15. Glamour

Keywords: People, writing

Keyword location: paragraph 2

Explanation: You can spot the answer in the second paragraph. *"People think that writing as a profession is glamorous; that it is just about sitting down and churning out words on a page, or more likely these days on a computer screen."*

16. Research

Keywords: instinct, emotions

Keyword location: paragraph 2

Explanation: The answer is at the end of the second paragraph. *“Sometimes, however, instinct takes the place of market research and the contents are dictated not by plans and exhaustive research but by experience and knowledge.”*

17. Editing process

Keyword: advanced technology

Keyword location: paragraph 3

Explanation: The answer is in paragraph 3, the fourth sentence. *“Unfortunately, advanced technology now allows the writer the luxury of countless editings, a temptation many of us find hard to resist.”*

18. Summary

Keywords: outline, synopsis

Keyword location: paragraph 4

Explanation: The answer is at the end of the fourth paragraph. *“It also helps, at this stage, to offer a synopsis of the book, if it is a novel, or an outline if it is a textbook.”*

19. Readers

Keywords: taken, publishers, vet

Keyword location: paragraph 6

Explanation: The answer is at the start of the sixth paragraph. *“The lucky few taken on by publishers or agents, then have their books subjected to a number of readers, whose job it is to vet a book...”*

20. Alterations

Keywords: difficulties for the writer

Keyword location: paragraph 6

Explanation: The answer is in the sixth paragraph. *“After a book has finally been accepted by a publisher, one of the greatest difficulties for the writer lies in taking on board the publisher’s alterations to the text.”*

21. Writing

Keyword: compulsion

Keyword location: last paragraph

Explanation: The answer is in the last paragraph. *“Once smitten, it is not easy to escape the compulsion to create and write, despite the roller-coaster ride of contradictory emotions.”*

22. Ups and downs

Keywords: roller-coaster

Keyword location: last paragraph

Explanation: The answer is in the last paragraph. *“ Once smitten, it is not easy to escape the compulsion to create and write, despite the roller-coaster ride of contradictory emotions.”*

Question (23 & 24)

23. A - Instinct can replace market research

Keywords: instinct, market research

Keyword location: paragraph 2

Explanation: The answer is in the last sentence of paragraph 2. *“Sometimes, instinct takes the place of market research ...”*

24. D - many writers cannot resist changing the text again and again

Keywords: countless editings, hard to resist

Keyword location: paragraph 3

Explanation: The answer is in the third paragraph. *“ Unfortunately, advanced technology now allows the writer the luxury of countless editings; a temptation many of us find hard to resist..”*

Question (25 - 28)

25. The appraisal

Keywords: After the trauma of self-editing, other people

Keyword location: paragraph 4

Explanation: The answer is at the beginning of paragraph 4. *“After the trauma of self-editing and looking for howlers, it is time to show the text to other people, friends perhaps, for appraisal..”*

26. some invaluable advice/ invaluable advice/ some advice/ advice/ hints

Keywords: some agents, reject

Keyword location: paragraph 5

Explanation: The answer is in the fifth paragraph. *“Some agents may reject the publication out of hand, but others may offer some invaluable advice, for example about the content or the direction to be taken..”*

27. radical redrafting/ redrafting/ reworkings/ text amputations

Keywords: conform, in-house style

Keyword location: paragraph 6

Explanation: The answer is at the end of paragraph 6. *“Whilst the overall story the thrust of the book may be acceptable, it will probably have to conform to an in-house style... More seriously, the integrity of the text may be challenged, and this may require radical redrafting which is unpalatable to the author.”*

28. creation period

Keywords: complex, unnerving, tortuous

Keyword location: paragraph 6

Explanation: The answer is in the last sentence of paragraph 6. *“A book’s creation period is complex and unnerving, but the publisher’s reworkings and text amputations can also be a tortuous process.”*