

Effective Query Letter

Writing and Communication

Presented by: Marve Michael Anson

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About Me



Marve Michael Anson

Marve has been writing for over a decade and has self-published a thriller, HIS DARK REFLECTION, to critical acclaim. Her debut fantasy novel, FIRSTBORN OF THE SUN is out in October 2025 with Penguin Michael Joseph. She has placed as a finalist in many competitions including the 2023 Future Worlds Prize for Fantasy Writers of Colour.

She is represented by Kesia Lupo, Bindery Agency. She can be found online @justmarvewrites and [justmarve.org](https://www.justmarve.org)

Agenda

- What is a Query Letter?
- Key Elements of Query Letter Writing
- Introduction, Comp Titles, Pitch & Bio
- Query Letter Do's and Don'ts
- LIVE FEEDBACK



What is a Query Letter?

A query letter is a formal letter sent by a writer to [magazine](#) editors, [literary agents](#) and sometimes [publishing houses](#) or companies, to propose writing ideas.

For example, a standard requested format for a manuscript query letter to a literary agent could be approximately 200–400 words, expressing the following information: The topic of the work, The target audience, A short description of the plot and A short bio of the author

The literary agent would then decide whether to contact the author and request to see the manuscript, based on the contents of the query letter. In this sense, the query letter is an author's first step toward getting their manuscript published.

Key *Elements* of

Query Letter Writing



Addressed to

Research the agent the letter is addressed to. Know their name and spell correctly. Avoid common errors like typos.

Introduction

Include relevant metadata including, title, word count, comparative titles, media mashups and personalisation.

Pitch

Keep sentences and paragraphs concise. Avoid jargon and unnecessary complexity.

Bio

Use friendly, formal and direct language. Include only relevant information regarding writing experience or accolades.

Introduction

GREETING: Hi **insert Agent's first and last name**,

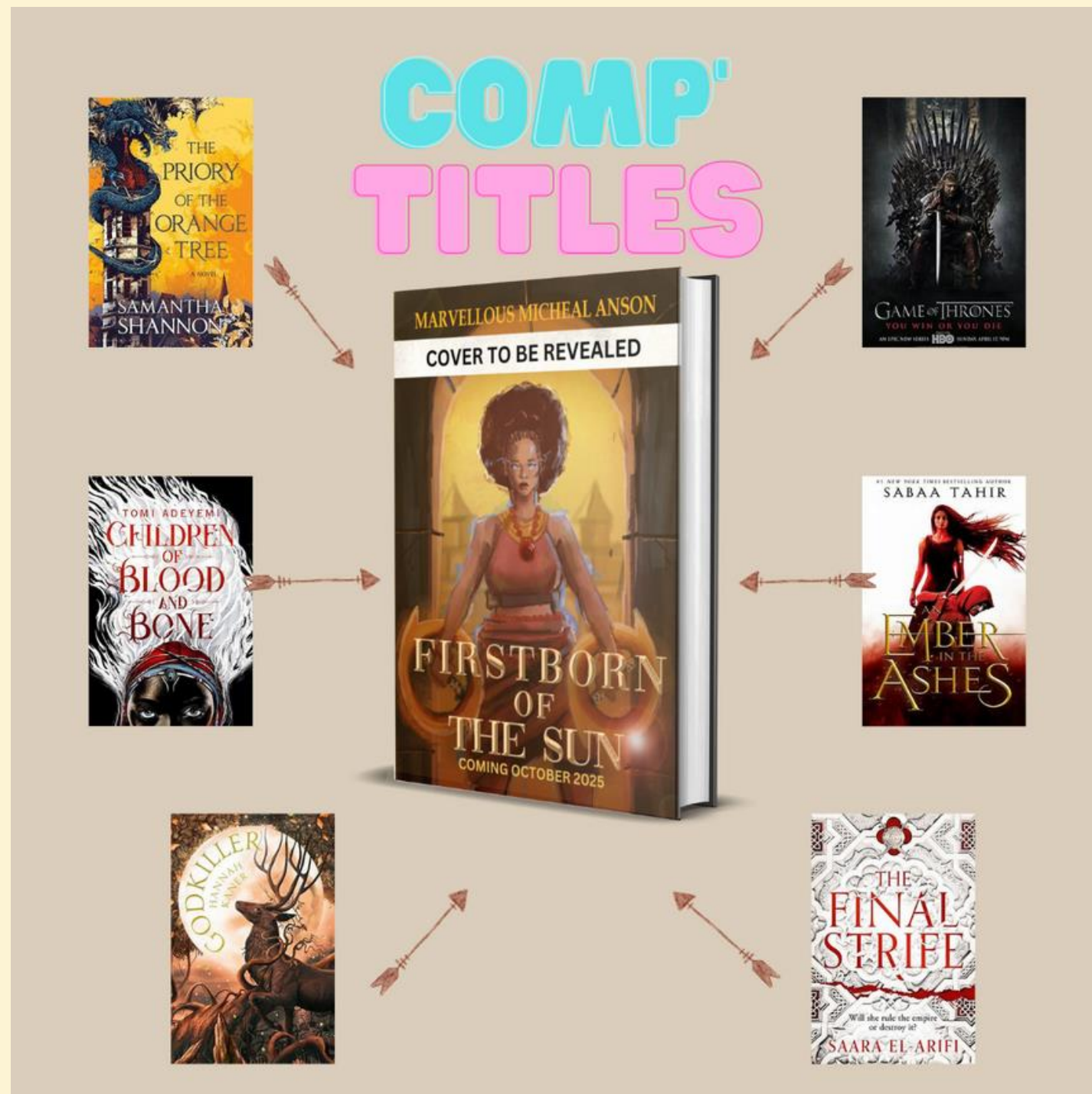
INTRODUCTION: I'm thrilled to share **FIRSTBORN OF THE SUN**, a 138,000-word New Adult Fantasy novel with crossover potential. Influenced by West African Yoruba culture, this story explores family, royalty and the politics of succession.

NOVEL COMPS & MEDIA MASH-UPS: This book would fit alongside **THE FINAL STRIFE** and **GODKILLER**, combining the intricate world-building of **Children of Blood and Bone** with the compelling storytelling of **Ember in the Ashes**.

Must include the following:

- Agent's Full Name (Personalisation)
- Title of the Novel
- Word count of the Novel (Ya=<100k, Adult =<150k)
- Genre (Fantasy, Science Fiction, Speculative, Horror)
- Target Audience (Kidlit, YA, Adult)

COMPARATIVE TITLES



- MASH-UP:

This is a media mashup or "sticky mashup." Not comps. This is a great way to pitch a book "this meets that." (Media mashups can be books, films, games etc).

- COMPS:

Comps are books that have been published in the past 2-3 years that would fit on the same bookshelf as your story. For example, this story would fit next to xxx and xxx

- Note: COMP TITLES should be in CAPS
- Also note that your COMPS can't be too successful. You can't compare to books like Harry Potter or Divergent. The key is a recent book with relatively good success.

Pitch

PITCH (PARAGRAPH ONE/INTRO): Lọṛẹ has fiery blades and ice in her veins. One of these is a secret that will get her killed. In the land of Oru, everyone is born with agbára—the ability to summon energy from the sun. Everyone that is, except Lọṛẹ. She keeps this secret close to her heart, knowing her mother was killed for the same reason.

PITCH (PARAGRAPH TWO/MIDDLE): When the gods declare Lọṛẹ's best friend, Alawani, an Agurram—a priest of the holy order. He will be stripped of his agbára in a trial that has never yielded more than two survivors each time the gods call. Unwilling to risk his life for the gods that cursed her, Lọṛẹ breaks into the temple. In a desperate act to channel agbára and save him, something else comes forth from her hands—a destructive shadow magic that draws on the energy of everyone and everything around her.

PITCH (PARAGRAPH THREE/ENDING): She and Alawani escape, but not before she catches the attention of the Holy Order. While on the run, Lọṛẹ discovers her true identity and learns that Alawani's grandfather, the Holy Order's leader, murdered her mother. He will stop at nothing to ensure that Lọṛẹ is the last of her kind. Lọṛẹ finds herself choosing between Alawani and the magic within her.

Pitch Questions

Q1: Who is your primary character?

Q2: What does your character want at the beginning that they don't have?

Q3: What is keeping them from getting it?

Q4: What's at stake if they don't get it?

Q5: What is the inciting incident in your book?

Q6: Is there a shocking twist?

Q7: What's the setting?

Biography

BIO: I am a Yoruba woman, and stories are the foundation of my culture. In this book are many tales of old as told by my grandmother. *FIRSTBORN OF THE SUN* is a potential series with multiple third-person limited POVs. This manuscript was shortlisted for the 2022 Jericho Writers Friday Night Live Competition and the 2022 Kit De Waal Bursary, was longlisted for the 2023 REVPIT competition and won the 2023 Jericho Writers' Self Edit Course Bursary. Five agents have requested this manuscript in full.

END NOTE: I have attached my opening pages. Thank you for your time and consideration! I would be delighted to provide you with the full manuscript upon request.

TRIGGER WARNING: Childbirth, Torture, Murder

Why are you the perfect person to write THIS book?

How does your life influence what's in the book?

Specific expert knowledge/ skill set?

Competition wins, previous publication etc. No writing cred NEEDED.

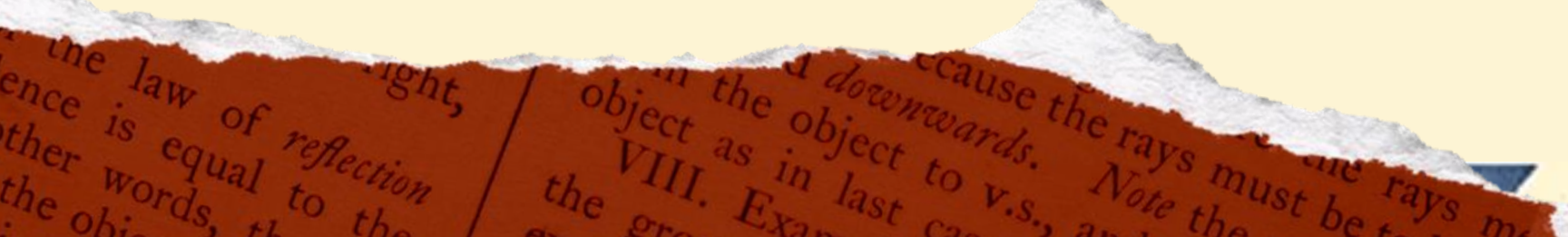
Query Letter Do's

1 **Do Your Research**
Research, brainstorm, and streamline your list of agents before submitting. Follow their guidelines.

2 **Be Professional**
Keep it succinct. Don't ramble. Don't sound apologetic, and don't sound arrogant. Keep the focus on your story, not yourself.

3 **Feedback & Revision**
Review your draft for clarity, coherence, and conciseness. (Use editors or beta readers)

4 **Editing and Proofreading**
Correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors, and refine your writing for a polished final version.



Query Letter Don't's

DON'T BE NEGATIVE

1 If you don't believe in yourself and your work, no one else will. Don't be overly apologetic in your language.

DON'T OVERLOAD

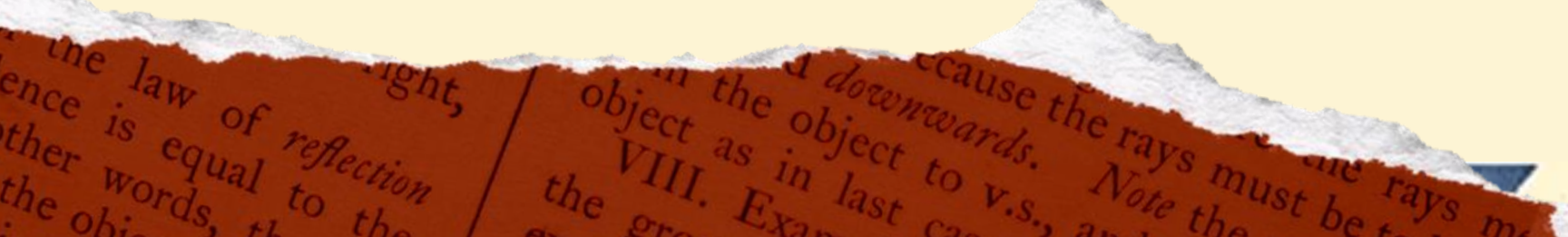
3 Don't give personal information that is sensitive or unnecessary.

DON'T LOSE THE PITCH

2 Don't go into too much detail in your hook. Fewer than 400 words is best. Don't reveal the end of your book in the query letter.

DON'T IGNORE THE RULES

4 If an agent is closed to queries, respect that. Don't be rude when you get rejections. Don't send to agents who don't represent your genre



SUMMARY: Sample Query Letter

Query letters follow a specific format and should ideally include:

- The title of your book
- A short one or two-line pitch
- The genre and word count
- A comparative book example or two (this helps the agent with market positioning)
- An outline of your plot
- Some info about the main character and their motivation
- Some information about you (past writing experience, accolades, why you wrote this story)
- Your contact details

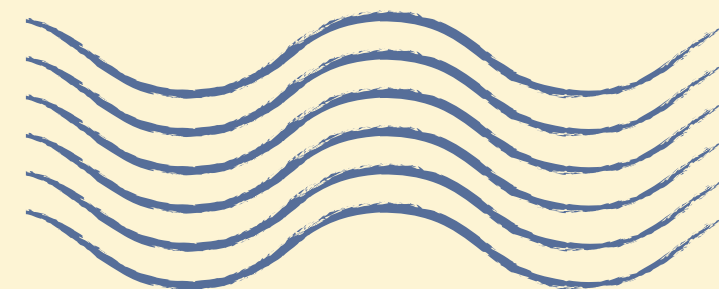
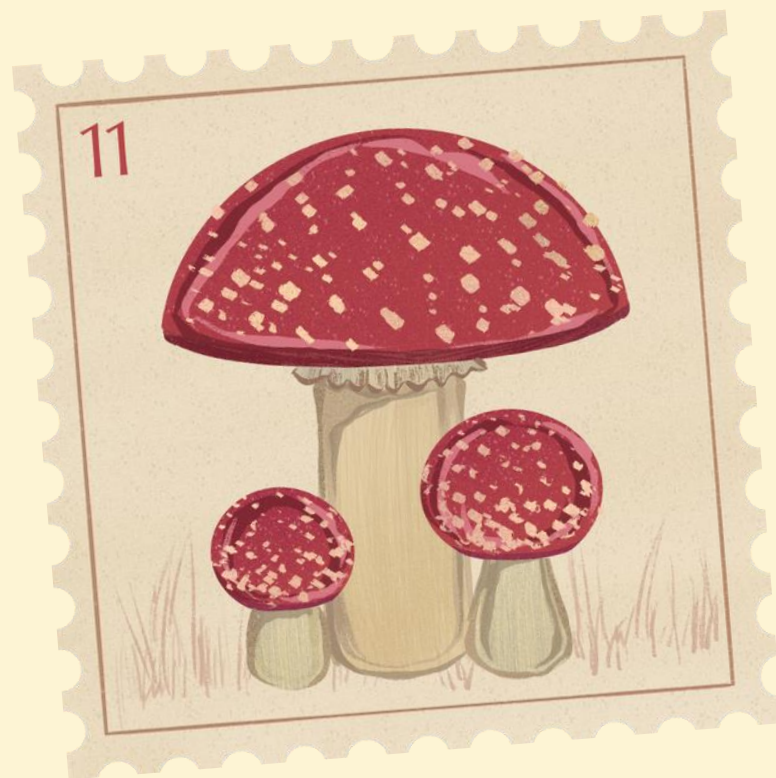
Query Letter Resources

[Query Letter/Synopsis Worksheet](#)

[Query Shark](#)

[Sub It Club- Facebook Group](#)

[JustMarve's Blog](#)



Query Letter Service

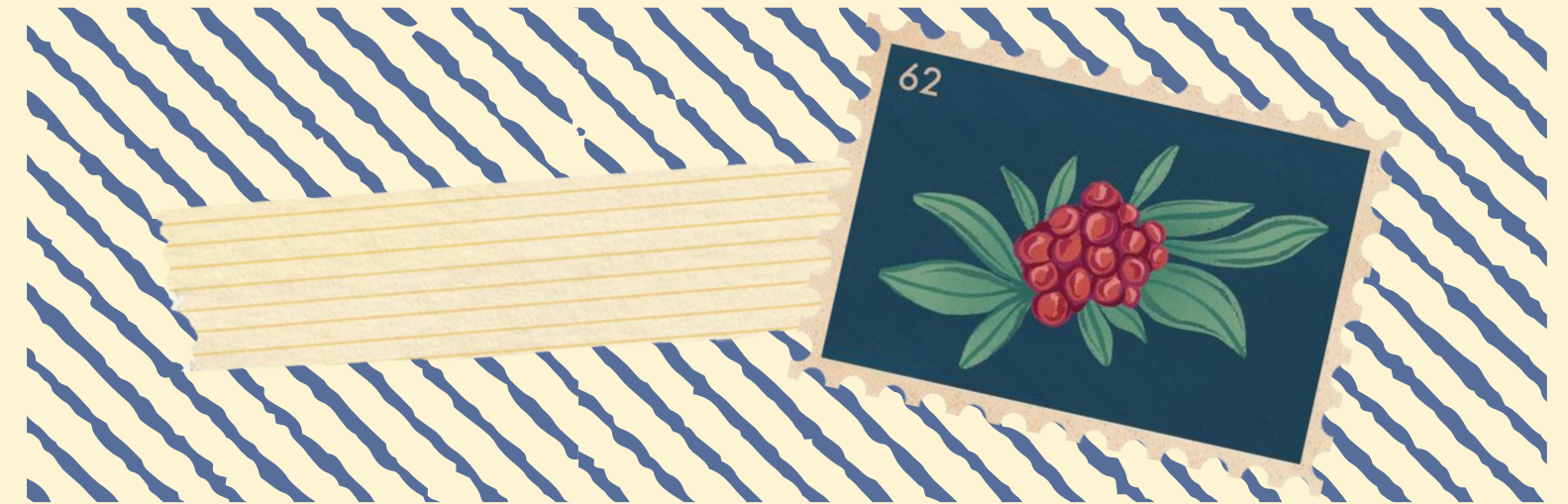
Query Letter Review

Query Letter Review + Second Look

Query Letter Review + 30 mins discussion

Query Letter Review + Synopsis

Query Letter Review + Synopsis + First Chapter



Reach out to me via my website

www.justmarve.org