



Title: Your First Novel

Author: Laura Whitcomb

Description:

In *Your First Novel*, novelist Laura Whitcomb and seasoned literary agent Ann Rittenberg team up to provide you with the skills you need to write your dream novel and the savvy business know-how to get it published. In this all-in-one resource, you'll discover essential novel-writing techniques, such as:

- How to best structure your research so that you can save time later
- How to card your story before you start writing
- What to consider when developing your cast of characters
- How to adapt classic story structures to fit your own ideas
- ... and insider information on what it takes to get published, including:

- What agents do at those three-hour power lunches and how it affects you
- What makes an agent instantly reject a manuscript
- How to correctly translate submission guidelines
- What happens if you get multiple offers or no offers at all

Plus, learn about the publishing process from the firsthand accounts of such noted authors as Dennis Lehane, Kathryn Harrison, Jim Fusilli, Kathleen George, and others!

Reviews

Harlan Coben:

Superb advice on writing a great novel and getting it published.

George Hagen, author of *The Laments*:

The advice in *Your First Novel* rings so true that I found myself sighing through its pages, thinking "If I'd been told this earlier, what a lot of trouble I'd have saved myself." This book offers the spark of inspiration that gets a writer both mentally and physically geared for the task. Then it delivers something equally vital: clear-headed, positive advice about the business side of writing a novel. It'll inspire you to create, challenge you to be great, and bolster you with the wisdom of two seasoned professionals.

Peter Blauner, author of *Slipping Into Darkness* and *Slow Motion Riot*:

This book is essential reading for anyone impractical enough to try to write a first novel and anyone practical enough to do what it takes to get published. Ann Rittenberg and Laura Whitcomb offer just the right amount of encouragement and common sense. And Dennis Lehane's foreword should become to writers what the Breyer's Pledge is to ice cream.

Your First Novel Is for **All** Novelists, from Would-Be to Seasoned.

When I teach my writing students, I urge them to keep reading, keep writing, keep taking classes. Ann Rittenberg and Laura Whitcomb, the agent and author combination who have cobbled together a definitive first book of reading for novelists, urge writers to do the same thing. Having said that, this may very well be the place for a would-be novelist to start.

It's also a great place for a seasoned writer to refresh, pick up a few new hints, get inspired and get some understanding -- some real understanding -- of what it is agents do.

The reason this book is so important is that both authors come from a place of experience and both have researched their lesson plans. Not only that, Dennis Lehane's foreword will inspire any writer -- any writer! -- to dig into their craft and the business of publishing by reading farther.

Whitcomb doesn't just give good advice; she illustrates her points liberally with quotations from the classics and newer writers who have perfected their craft. The visuals she provides for, say, "Accents and Dialect" are as clear as if they had been diagrammed for you by the sternest of English-teaching nuns. Only Whitcomb isn't at all stern. Rather her voice (another subject she discusses) will convince writers of her warmth, that she cares about writing, both her own and that of others.

Rittenberg is equally engaging. The most jaded of novelists will come away from her section of the book (publishing, queries, marketing and more!) with a sense that to know an agent may -- after all -- be to love one.

This book is one that should be grabbed, read, and kept reference-handly by writers at most any stage in their careers. Okay, I'll exempt Stephen King and Barbara Kingsolver, but you get the idea.

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Laura Whitcomb, who wrote the first section of the book, is a published writer with lots of good ideas to help the writer who is not yet published, and who is floundering a little. Ann Rittenberg's section of the book concerns the business of finding an agent and getting a novel sold to a publisher. There are probably fewer books about this end of the business but those I've seen mainly seem to assume that there is a perfectly straightforward linear progression from completing a novel to handing it over to an agent who then sells it. Rittenberg goes over the basics of what happens once you've written your novel and you have to start hawking it around. Her approach is refreshingly honest. She explains what succeeds, what doesn't, and how things work from the agent's point of view. Her advice on what to do is spot on and should be required reading for everyone submitting work.

Your First Novel is an excellent tutorial and reference source for anyone who wants to become more than a weekend scribbler. The advice is clear and unambiguous, the tone supportive, but as both authors make clear, in the end it's up to you. However, with a book like this on your desk, you stand a much better chance of succeeding.