

BREAKING INTO THE WRITE-FOR-HIRE MARKET

How to land your first project

Kathryn Hulick

kathrynhulick.com

This is not typical book publishing!

Trade



Author's idea

As much time as
you need

Advance plus
royalties

Targets bookstores
and consumers



Write-for-Hire

Publisher's idea

One or two
months

Flat fee

Targets schools
and libraries

The educational market needs you.

“I think it is an expanding market with many new opportunities for growth.” – Kristen Susienka, Editor, Cavendish

“There is a hundred times more work in school/library than there is in trade.”
– Jim Buckley, Shoreline Publishing

“Since the adoption of the Common Core Standards (and other standards), there’s been a real push for more nonfiction at all levels of K-12 education... [librarians and teachers are] looking for more than regurgitation of facts. They’re looking for vivid discussion of real-world ideas and events.” – Lori Shein, Managing Editor, ReferencePoint Press

“The children’s nonfiction market is thriving and will continue to thrive as publishers find imaginative ways to explore topics that get kids excited about reading and learning about their world.” – Keli Sipperly, Editor-in-Chief, Rourke Educational Media

“The demand is growing. Why? Because educators’ and children’s needs and demands for nonfiction are constantly changing; because of fears over “fake news”; and because new topics are being addressed, such as diversity, inclusion, MeToo, and lifestyle guides. And there are new players who no doubt soon will be looking to produce their own content, such as Amazon, Newsela, Lightsail Library, MyOn.” – Lionel Bender, Book Producer

It may take a long time to break in.

Internship

First book

2007

2011

2014

Conference
director



Use success in one market to break into another.

Blog posts or unpublished samples

Magazine or online articles

Book packagers

Educational publishers

Trade publishers

Breaking in = landing a job.



- Networking
- Education and skills
- Work experience

Who you know matters.

“I helped set up a workshop for my SCBWI region with an editor from a write-for-hire house because it was a topic I was interested in.” – Rebecca Langston-George, author

“[I contacted] a friend's daughter who worked at Rosen.” – Barbara Krasner, author

“I worked as an editor at a children's publishing house and made a connection with another editor who was looking for freelance writers.” – Joanne Mattern, author

“Personal referrals are a great source of new writers. When I get a referral from another writer or editor, I always try to connect with the person they've recommended.”

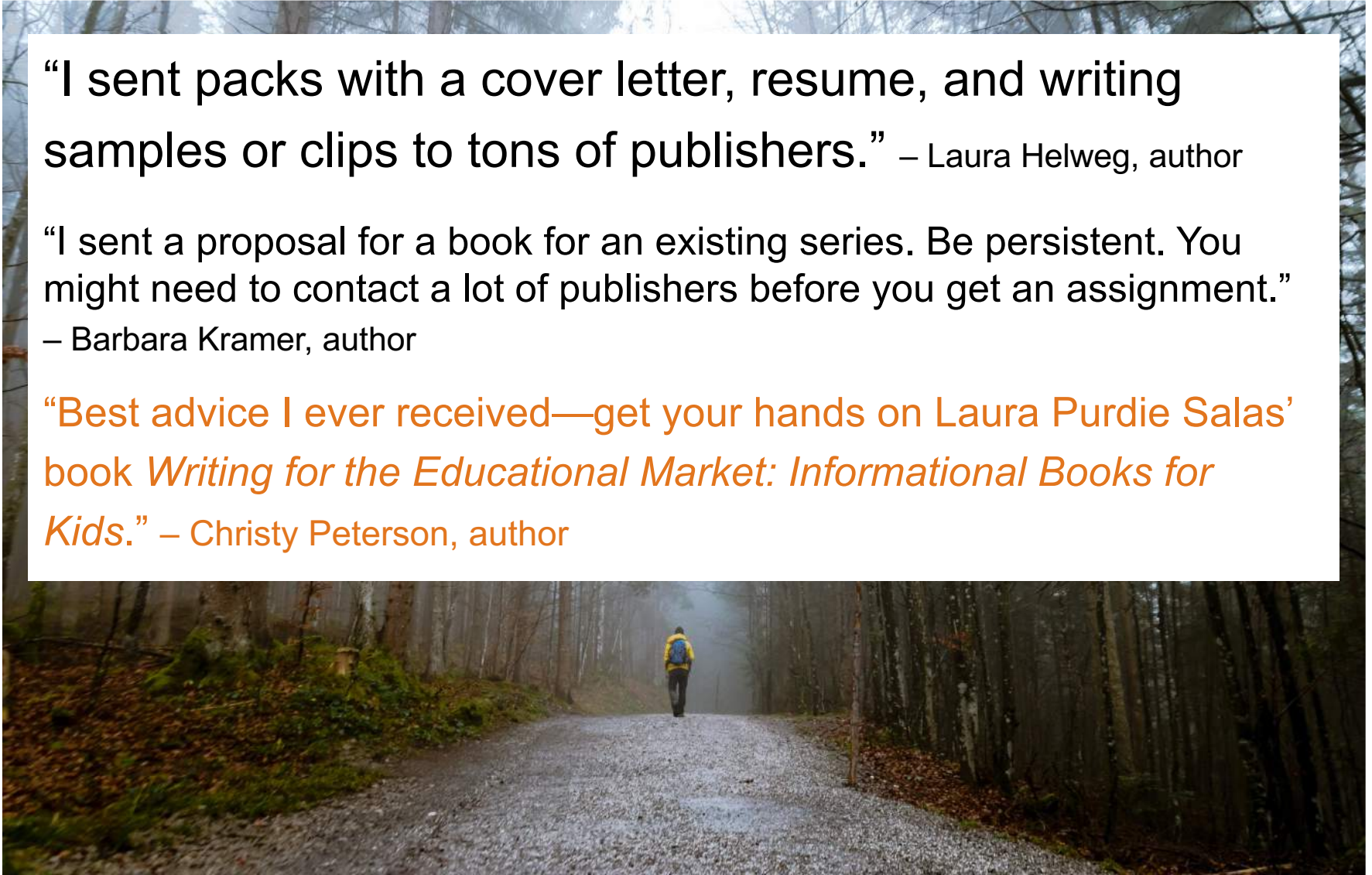
– Lori Shein, Managing Editor, ReferencePoint Press

But you can also go it alone.

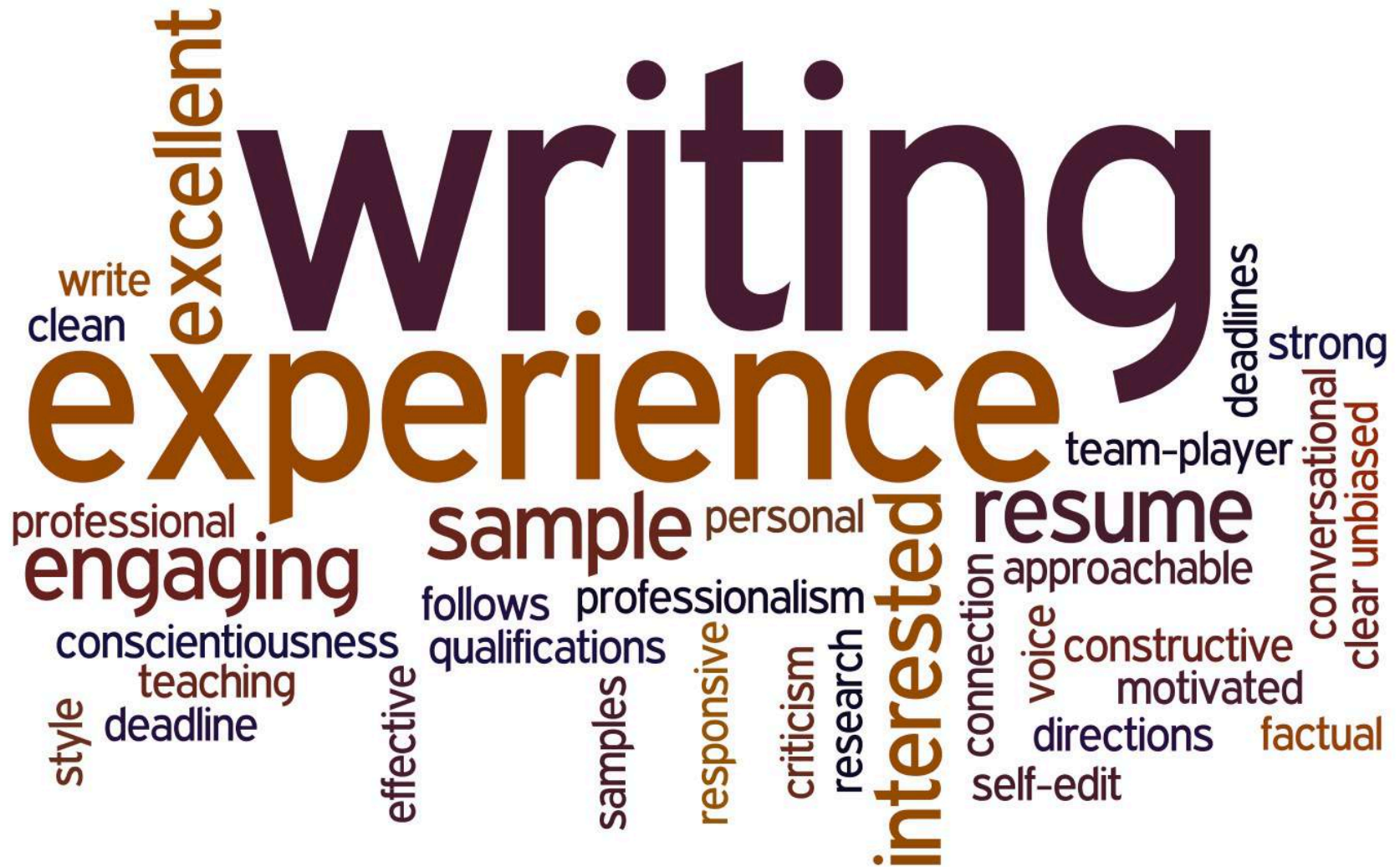
“I sent packs with a cover letter, resume, and writing samples or clips to tons of publishers.” – Laura Helweg, author

“I sent a proposal for a book for an existing series. Be persistent. You might need to contact a lot of publishers before you get an assignment.”
– Barbara Kramer, author

“Best advice I ever received—get your hands on Laura Purdie Salas’ book *Writing for the Educational Market: Informational Books for Kids.*” – Christy Peterson, author



Your writing matters most of all.



Your writing matters most of all.

“If a person has already published work in this market, that will get our attention the fastest. But even if a person is new to children's nonfiction, we're often willing to try them on a project to see how they do... Taking the effort to show that you're interested in the work is important.” – Redline Editorial

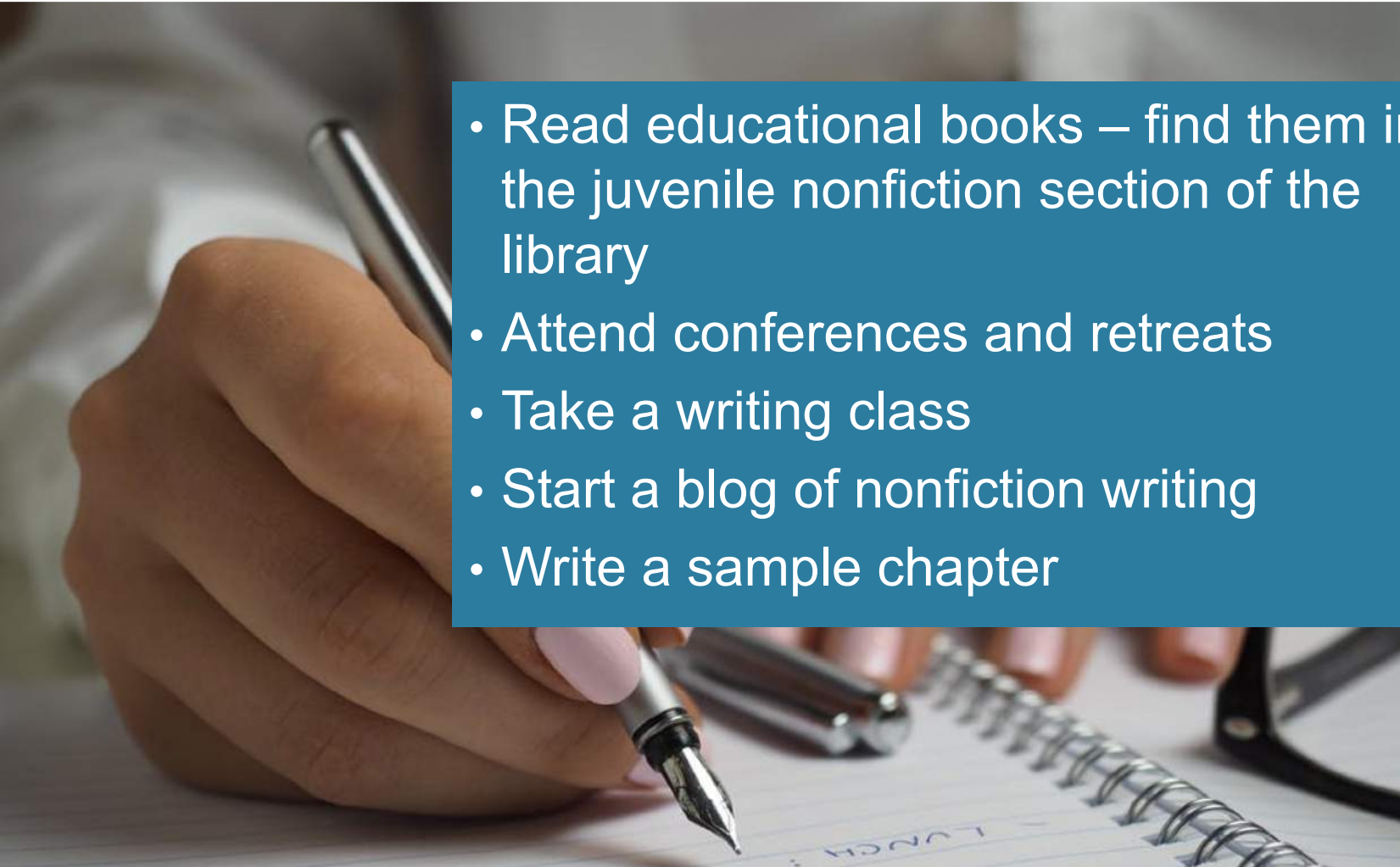
“A clean, tightly written writing sample that shows an author can write to a specific grade level, self-edit, and explain information in an engaging way. Voice is important in nonfiction. For me, a conversational tone that isn't condescending is critical.” – Keli Sipperley, Editor-in-Chief Rourke Educational Media

“First, I look for writing experience in YA nonfiction books. I also look for other related writing experience. Some of the authors I work with have journalism backgrounds, for instance.” – Lori Shein, Managing Editor, ReferencePoint Press

“Qualifications or experience in a specific genre help, as does having an excellent writing style, an approachable manner, and being someone who is able to take constructive criticism and work to produce a great title for a target audience.”

– Kristen Susienka, Managing Editor, Cavendish Square Publishing

You have no published writing? Don't despair!

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- A close-up photograph of a hand holding a silver fountain pen, poised to write on a spiral-bound notebook. The notebook has some faint handwriting, including the word 'LUNCH'. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a desk with other writing instruments and glasses.
- Read educational books – find them in the juvenile nonfiction section of the library
 - Attend conferences and retreats
 - Take a writing class
 - Start a blog of nonfiction writing
 - Write a sample chapter

Ready to query? Follow these steps.

1. **Remember that you are applying for a job.** So be professional.
2. **Research, research!** Go to publishers' websites. Read about their goals and business philosophy. Look at books they have published.
3. **Update your resume.** Include any writing or publishing experience. Include this conference and membership in SCBWI or a critique group, if applicable.
4. **Prepare a writing sample.** You may use a published (or unpublished) nonfiction magazine article for kids. Or write a sample chapter of a book similar to ones the company has on its list.
5. **Send a query.** Your email (or snail mail cover letter) should explain your relevant experience writing nonfiction for a teen audience and your interest in write-for-hire projects for that specific company.
6. **Wait and hope!**

You won't get rich. But it's a fun job!

"It doesn't pay well—at all. Establish ways to work smarter so you're earning more than a penny an hour." – Barbara Krasner, author

"The deadlines are very tight, but you are constantly writing/revising and getting editorial feedback."

– Rebecca Langston-George, author

"I've been writing for the market for 22 years and I love the topics, the freedom, and the research. Writing NF has allowed me to support myself and my family as a full-time writer."

– Joanne Mattern, author

"It may not be as glamorous as trade publishing, but you can actually make a living doing it!"

– Marcia Amidon Lusted, author

"It's a great area to work in because the work is so varied—one day you can work on a book about space travel, another day you'll be writing about sports, and on a third day you'll be creating a history book... it's hard for people who love research/writing to get bored."

– Assistant Managing Editor, Redline Editorial

Plan a group blog!

<http://www.24carrotwriting.com/>

24 Carrot Writing

HOME ▪ BLOG ▪ BOOK PICKS ▪ GOALS ▪ ABOUT



Plan a group blog!

1. Decide on a focus for your blog. Base it around interviews, experiments, current news, writing prompts, or another idea.
2. Come up with a catchy name.
3. Plan out at least one post that each person could write for the blog.
4. Bonus: Go onto Wordpress.com and create the blog!

Writer blogs to look at for inspiration:

Melissa Stewart (science): <http://celebratescience.blogspot.com/>

Mitali Perkins (fiction, multiculturalism): <http://www.mitaliblog.com/>

John Bell (New England history): <http://boston1775.blogspot.com/>

Please note: It's not OK to take photos, illustrations, or text directly from a Google search to use on a blog. You may only use materials in the public domain. Try searching for images on Wikimedia Commons or Pexels.com.

Get started on a sample chapter

1. Pick your audience: grade K-2, grade 3-5, middle school, or high school.
2. Pick a topic.
 - A biography of a historical person who is a role model for you.
 - The development and future of a technology that interests you.
 - A discussion of both sides of a current controversial issue.
 - An important event in world history.
 - The life cycle, habitat, and other facts about an animal or plant.
 - Advice on how to get into a hobby that you enjoy.
 - Any other nonfiction idea!
3. Outline the first chapter of a book on this topic.
4. If you have time, begin to research and write.

Thanks for coming!

Kathryn Hulick

khulick@gmail.com

kathrynhulick.com

Special thanks to:

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RedLine Editorial
team

Kristen Susienka

Lori Shein

Lionel Bender

Jim Buckley

Keli Sipperley

