Literary Agent Guide

What agents do, how representation works, and what to prepare.

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Understanding Representation

Many authors hear the words literary agent but do not know exactly what that means. A literary agent is a professional representative who helps authors navigate publishing opportunities. An agent is not simply someone who sells a book. A strong agent relationship is built on trust, fit, professional preparation, and shared understanding of an author's goals.

What Does A Literary Agent Do?

Literary agents may help authors:

- Identify publishing opportunities
- Submit work to appropriate publishers
- Represent authors professionally
- Navigate publishing relationships

What Are Agents Looking For?

- A Strong Manuscript: A complete, thoughtfully developed project.
- A Clear Audience: Understanding who your reader is and why the book matters.
- Author Vision: Why are you the right person to share this story?
- Professional Preparation: A manuscript and submission package that reflects care.

Before Contacting Agents

Ask yourself:

- Is my manuscript complete?
- Have I revised my work?
- Do I understand my reader?
- Can I explain why this story matters?
- Have I researched agents who represent my type of work?

Common Submission Materials

- Query Letter: A professional introduction to your book and yourself.
- Sample Pages: A portion of your manuscript demonstrating your writing.
- Book Proposal: Often used for nonfiction projects and may include the book overview, audience, author background, market information, and chapter summaries.

Finding The Right Fit

The goal is not finding any agent. The goal is finding the right advocate for your story. Your publishing journey can take many forms. Some stories find independent paths. Some find publishing partnerships. Some grow into larger platforms. The important first step is understanding your options. The Harbor helps you explore where your story belongs.

Return to The Harbor

If you are considering traditional publishing, the Publishing Path ticket at Harbor Station can help you think it through.

Open this Library guide >

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Your notes (editable in a PDF reader that supports forms)

Every story has a different journey. When you are ready for personal guidance, The Harbor is here to help you discover your next step. Your PDF notes stay in this personal copy.