

## **IWA! Open Writing Competition**

### **Checklists to Success**

As you apply the spit and polish to your masterpieces, getting ready for the "big day," consider for a moment, these *Checklists to Success*. If you can confidently mark each item off with a "job well done," then you should be well on your way to wowing your judge and eventually your publisher. Also be sure to check out the Tip Jar on the Central Houston IWA! [website](#) for more instruction on how to write in each of these genres. May you have the *best* of God's favor!

#### **ARTICLES:**

- The manuscript follows the form specified by the contest or publisher's guidelines.
- The subject is interesting and appropriate for the intended audience.
- The title grabs the reader and makes him/her want to read more.
- The article has a clear lead, body and conclusion.
- The lead grabs the reader's attention.
- The body stays on-topic.
- The conclusion is justified/supported by the material presented in the body.
- The material has been well researched (if needed), and the writing demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the topic.
- Sources are accurately and faithfully referenced.
- The article flows smoothly and logically. Arguments are well-presented and justified.
- Where the author has some flexibility in editing and grammatical preferences (e.g. capitalizations), editing has been performed consistently throughout the manuscript.
- Vocabulary is strong, descriptive and appropriate to the topic.

#### **BOOK PROPOSALS:**

**\*\* For contest entries, a book proposal is a 20-page excerpt plus a 2-page synopsis. See the Tip Jar for more on book proposals sent in for publication submissions.**

- The manuscript follows the form specified by the contest or publisher's guidelines.
- The style, vocabulary and subject are appropriate for the intended audience.
- The title grabs the reader and makes him/her want to read more.
- Contests only: The excerpt presented from the book can "stand-alone," meaning that taken out of the context of the larger text, the reader can easily follow the characters, plot, technical discussion, etc. and be left with a hook or question that makes him/her want to see the rest of the story.
- Contests only: The excerpt presented from the book gives a good characteristic flavor of what the reader can expect from the rest of the book.

- The synopsis conveys your passion for the subject, using strong vocabulary and sparking the reader's curiosity to know what you have to say.
- The synopsis provides a good overview of the material presented through the course of the book.
- The material has been well researched (if needed), and the writing demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the topic. For fiction, the plot and characters are consistent with the time period during which the story takes place. For non-fiction, the sources are accurately and faithfully referenced.
- For fiction, the plot is well-developed with a good balance of setting/action and narrative/dialogue. The main characters are well-developed, and their personalities, natures, etc. are presented consistently throughout the text.
- For non-fiction, the section flows smoothly and logically, and arguments are well-presented and justified.
- Where the author has some flexibility in editing and grammatical preferences (e.g. capitalizations), editing has been performed consistently throughout the manuscript.
- Vocabulary is strong, descriptive and appropriate to the topic. For fiction – and where appropriate for non-fiction as well, the writing makes good use of the five senses.

#### **DEVOTIONALS:**

- The manuscript follows the form specified by the contest or publisher's guidelines.
- The subject is interesting and appropriate for the intended audience.
- The title grabs the reader and makes him/her want to read more.
- The devotional has four clear sections: a hook, one scripture with interpretation, a discussion on the life applicability of the scripture, and a take-home challenge for the reader.
- The hook grabs the reader and holds interest.
- The scripture interpretation and life applicability are clearly supported by the quoted scripture, and the writing clearly relates the points made to the scripture that was given.
- The take-home challenge provides emphasis and closure to the discussion on life applicability, and it may be communicated in the form of a prayer.
- The devotional communicates a spiritual message without being "preachy."
- Where the author has some flexibility in editing and grammatical preferences (e.g. capitalizations), editing has been performed consistently throughout the manuscript.
- Vocabulary is strong, descriptive and appropriate to the topic.

#### **DRAMAS:**

- The manuscript follows the form specified by the contest or publisher's guidelines.
- The subject is interesting and appropriate for the intended audience.
- The title grabs the reader and makes him/her want to read more.

- The opening sets the scene.
- There is a logical division of scenes and acts.
- The dialogue is clear and engaging, and moves the play forward.
- The setting, character personalities, dialogue, etc. all work together to clearly convey your message.
- The plot and characters are consistent with the time period during which the story takes place.
- The scenes flow smoothly from one to the next.
- The conclusion is clearly communicated, satisfying, and justified.
- Where the author has some flexibility in editing and grammatical preferences (e.g. capitalizations), editing has been performed consistently throughout the manuscript.
- The vocabulary conveys the heart and spirit of the piece, to the point that by simply reading the setting and stage directions, the reader will be able to stage the play with the same passion with which you wrote it.

#### **POETRY:**

- The manuscript follows the form specified by the contest or publisher's guidelines.
- The subject is interesting and appropriate for the intended audience.
- The title grabs the reader and makes him/her want to read more.
- The writing style is consistent with the mood of the piece.
- The poem structure (rhyming/not rhyming, syllables per line, lines per verse, etc.) is applied consistently throughout the piece.
- The poem flows at a good pace.
- The ideas flow logically and smoothly.
- There is a logical verse division when used.
- Editing has been performed consistently throughout the manuscript.
- Vocabulary is designed to fully engage both the reader's emotions and imagination.

#### **SHORT STORIES:**

- The manuscript follows the form specified by the contest or publisher's guidelines.
- The style, vocabulary and subject are appropriate for the intended audience.
- The title grabs the reader and makes him/her want to read more.
- The material has been well researched (if needed), and the writing demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the topic. The plot and characters are consistent with the time period during which the story takes place.

- The plot is well-developed with a good balance of setting/action and narrative/dialogue. The main characters are well-developed, and their personalities, natures, etc. are presented consistently throughout the text.
- Setting elements in a short story must be kept to a minimum, due to the limited word count allowed. Therefore, all setting descriptions "add value" to the story, providing details that move the story forward, adding depth to the message, developing the characters, etc.
- The transformation of the main character(s) through the story is consistent with – and contributes to – the message.
- The message is clear, inspirational and logical based on the events of the story.
- Where the author has some flexibility in editing and grammatical preferences (e.g. capitalizations), editing has been performed consistently throughout the manuscript.
- Vocabulary is strong, descriptive and appropriate to the topic. The writing makes good use of the five senses.