

## THE ART OF THE PITCH



### Introduction

*As writers we are constantly pitching. We pitch publishers or agents our novels, editors our stories and articles, and organisations our workshops. We need to pitch in person, and we need to be able to do it in writing. In this episode I'm going to give you tips and ideas about how to pitch.*

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### How to pitch novels

- Research publishers and ensure you follow their guidelines
  - Develop comp lists for each publisher to demonstrate why you are submitting to them
  - Research the market and find the niche that your book is filling and list titles that are dealing with your topic, but then extend as to what you are offering that is different.
  - Develop an elevator pitch, which is a brief (think 30 seconds!) way of introducing yourself, getting across a key point or two, and making a connection with someone. It's called an elevator pitch because it takes roughly the amount of time you'd spend riding an elevator with someone.
  - Identify the themes of your book so that you can present this in your pitch and within your niche
  - Include a one page synopsis which outlines the recap of the book, and the three act structure and include the ending.
  - It might be helpful to create a website and have basic information about yourself as a writer to include with the letter
  - Attached is my query letter for my memoir and a guideline about how to develop a one page synopsis
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### ***Things Nobody Knows But Me* query letter**

Your address, Website

Date

Publisher details

**RE: Submission of memoir *Things Nobody Knows But Me***

I am submitting a query for my memoir *Things Nobody Knows But Me* as you have published memoirs from Australian women writers of diverse backgrounds such as *Banana Girl* by Michelle Lee that explores her Lao background, and *Playing House* by Amy Choi.

My memoir, *Things Nobody Knows But Me* 69,000 words, is the story of a bond between mother and daughter, and of the toll that mental illness takes on an individual, a family and a community. It is also an insight into Bosnian culture, and more broadly the experience of mental illness for people who come from non-English speaking backgrounds.

I was sixteen when my wagging caught up to me and I ended up in my high school counsellor's office, and I finally learnt the medical label for the malady that had dogged my mother and affected my childhood. I had spent my whole life calling my mother's illness a Nervous Breakdown, now I found out that my mother suffered from a mental illness called Bipolar Disorder.

In adolescence I became my mother's confidante and learnt the extraordinary story of her life: when she was fifteen years old she visited family friends only to find herself in an arranged marriage. At sixteen she was a migrant, a mother, and a mental patient.

*Things Nobody Knows But Me* is about a mother-daughter-bond fractured by years of manic and depressive episodes, marked by powerful changes in mood and energy, that was eventually brought under control through an accurate medical diagnosis.

Memoirs such as *Strange Places: A Memoir of Mental Illness* by Will Elliott and *Madness: a memoir* by Kate Richards shed a light on sufferers of mental illness from an Anglo-Celtic perspective. The story that is by and large missing from the literary landscape is that of the migrant affected by mental illness.

It is my hope that this memoir, in addition to telling a great story, will have the potential to be used as an educational resource about parenting with a mental illness, and the challenges of suffering from a mental illness within NESB communities.

People from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) face the highest risk of suffering a mentally related disorder, and yet these same people often don't effectively access treatment because of cultural and religious stigma. When they do access treatment they are often misdiagnosed or not able to participate in effective treatment because of language barriers.

My debut novel *The Good Daughter* (Text Publishing, 2009) won the 2009 Melbourne Prize for Literature's Civic Choice Award, and was also shortlisted in the Victorian Premier's Awards for an Unpublished Manuscript by an Emerging Writer. I am also author of a novel for children *Amir: Friend on Loan* (Garratt Publishing, 2014) and co-edited the anthology *Coming of Age: Growing up Muslim in Australia* (Allen and Unwin, 2014) that was shortlisted for the 2015 Children's Book Council of the year awards.

I have been funded by Creative Victoria to be mentored by Alice Pung in developing this book. Excerpts have been published in anthologies: 'School of Hard Knocks' in the upcoming anthology *Meet me at the Intersection* (Fremantle Press, 2018), 'Nervous Breakdown' was published in *Rebellious Daughters* anthology, (Ventura Press, 2016), and 'Woman on Fire' in *Etchings* journal (Ilura Press, 2013).

This memoir is complete and ready for submission. Please also find attached a one-page synopsis and a stamped self-addressed postcard for a response to my query. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely

Amra Pajalic

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### **How to write a one-page synopsis**

<http://www.publishingcrawl.com/2012/04/17/how-to-write-a-1-page-synopsis/>

### **Fill in the Blanks**

#### **1. Opening image**

An image/setting/concept that sets the stage for the story to come.

*Long ago, in a galaxy far away, a controlling government called the Empire takes control of planets, systems, and people. Anyone who resists is obliterated.*

#### **2. Protagonist Intro**

Who is the main character? Give 1-2 descriptive words and say what he/she wants.

*Luke Skywalker, a naïve farm boy with a knack for robotics, dreams of one day escaping his desert homeland.*

#### **3. Inciting incident**

What event/decision/change prompts the main character to take initial action.

*When he buys two robots, he finds one has a message on it—a message from a princess begging for help. She has plans to defeat the Empire, and she begs someone to deliver these plans to a distant planet. Luke goes to his friend and mentor, the loner Ben Kenobi, for help.*

#### **4. Plot point 1**

What is the first turning point? What action does the MC take or what decision does he/she make that changes the book's direction? Once he/she crossed this line, there's no going back.

*Ben tells Luke about a world where the Empire rules and Rebels fight back, where Jedi Knights wield a magic called the Force, and how Luke must face Darth Vader – the man who killed Luke’s father and now seeks to destroy Luke too. Luke refuses, but when he goes back to his farm, he finds his family has been killed. He has no choice but to join Ben.*

## **5. Conflicts & character encounters**

Now in a new life, the MC meets new people, experiences a new life, and meets the antagonist/villain.

*To escape the desert planet, Ben and Luke hire a low-life pilot and the pilot’s hairy, alien friend. Luke, Ben, Luke’s robots, the pilot, and the hairy friend leave the planet and fly to the Death Star, Darth Vader’s home and the Empire’s main base.*

## **6. Midpoint**

What is the middle turning point? What happens that causes the MC to make a 180 degree change in direction/change in emotion/change in anything? Again, once he/she has crossed this line, there’s no going back.

*Once on board the Death Star, Luke discovers the princess is being held as a hostage. He and the group set out to find the princess, while Ben sets out to find a way for them to escape the base.*

## **7. Winning seems imminent, but...**

What happens that makes the MC think he/she will win? She seems to have the upper hand, but then oh no! The antagonist defeats her and rushes off more powerful than ever before.

*After rescuing the princess, Luke and the group try to escape. Ben sacrifices himself so they can flee, and Darth Vader kills Ben. The group flees the Death Star on their own ship.*

## **8. Black moment**

The MC is lower than low, and he/she must fight through the blackness of his/her emotions to find the strength for the final battle. What happens here?

*Luke is devastated over Ben's death, and he is more determined to fight Darth Vader and help the Rebels defeat the Empire. Luke joins the Rebel army, and helps them plan an attack on the Death Star's only weakness.*

### **9. Climax**

What happens in the final blow-out between the MC and the antagonist?

*The Death Star arrives in space near the Rebels, and the attack begins. Luke joins the assault team of fighter ships. The Rebels suffer heavy losses, and soon Luke is one of the few remaining pilots and ships. He takes his chance and initiates the final attack. Guided by Ben's voice and the Force, he manages to fire the single, critical shot to explode the Death Star.*

### **10. Resolution**

Does everyone live happily ever after? Yes? No? What happens to tie up all the loose ends?

*With the Death Star destroyed and the Empire severely damaged, the Rebels hold a grand ceremony to honor Luke and his friends. The princess awards them with medals for heroism.*

### **11. Final image**

What is the final image you want to leave your reader with? Has the MC succumbed to his/her own demons or has he/she built a new life?

*Though Luke is still sad over the loss of Ben and his family, he has found a place among the Rebels, and with them, he will continue to fight the Empire.*

### **Putting It All Together**

Long ago, in a galaxy far away, a controlling government called the Empire takes control of planets, systems, and people. Anyone who resists is obliterated.

Luke Skywalker, a naïve farm boy with a knack for robotics, dreams of one day escaping his desert homeland. When he buys two robots, he finds one has a message on it—a message from a princess begging for help. She has plans to defeat the Empire, and she begs someone to deliver these plans to a distant planet. Luke goes to his friend and mentor, the loner Ben Kenobi, for help.

Ben tells Luke about a world where the Empire rules and Rebels fight back, where Jedi Knights wield a magic called the Force, and how Luke must face Darth Vader—the man who killed Luke’s father and now seeks to destroy Luke too. Luke refuses, but when he goes back to his farm, he finds his family has been killed. He has no choice but to join Ben.

To escape the desert planet, Ben and Luke hire a low-life pilot and the pilot’s hairy, alien friend. Luke, Ben, Luke’s robots, the pilot, and the hairy friend leave the planet and fly to the Death Star, Darth Vader’s home and the Empire’s main base. Once on board the Death Star, Luke discovers the princess is being held as a hostage. He and the group set out to find the princess, while Ben sets out to find a way for them to escape the base.

After rescuing the princess, Luke and the group try to escape. Ben sacrifices himself so they can flee, and Darth Vader kills Ben. The group flees the Death Star on their own ship. Luke is devastated over Ben’s death, and he is more determined to fight Darth Vader and help the Rebels defeat the Empire. Luke joins the Rebel army, and helps them plan an attack on the Death Star’s only weakness.

The Death Star arrives in space near the Rebels, and the attack begins. Luke joins the assault team of fighter ships. The Rebels suffer heavy losses, and soon Luke is one of the few remaining pilots and ships. He takes his chance and initiates the final attack. Guided by Ben’s voice and the Force, he manages to fire the single, critical shot to explode the Death Star.

With the Death Star destroyed and the Empire severely damaged, the Rebels hold a grand ceremony to honor Luke and his friends. The princess awards them with medals for heroism. Though Luke is still sad over the loss of Ben and his family, he has found a place among the Rebels, and with them, he will continue to fight the Empire.

**FINAL WORD COUNT: 452**

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### **How to Pitch Opinion Pieces**

Opinion pieces are a powerful way to share your expertise, voice, and perspective on topical issues. Crafting a compelling pitch can help you get published in prestigious

outlets. Below is a step-by-step guide and a list of publication opportunities to get you started.

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### **1. Know Your Outlet**

- Research the publication's style, tone, and typical topics.
- Familiarise yourself with the target audience.
- Look at recent opinion pieces to understand what resonates.

### **2. Identify a Timely or Unique Angle**

- Link your idea to current events or ongoing debates.
- Offer a fresh perspective or a personal story that connects to broader societal issues.
- Avoid overdone topics unless you can provide a groundbreaking insight.

### **3. Write a Compelling Subject Line**

- Make your pitch stand out with a clear, engaging, and specific subject line.
  - Example: "Why AI in Education Needs a Human Touch—Educator's Perspective"

### **4. Keep Your Pitch Concise**

- Introduce yourself briefly (your expertise and why you're the right person to write this piece).
- Provide a 1-2 sentence summary of your idea.
- State why the piece is relevant and timely.
- Offer a brief outline (optional) and note your availability to write.
- Thank them for their time.

### **5. Follow Submission Guidelines**

- Check the publication's website for submission instructions.
- Some outlets prefer full drafts; others want pitches only.
- Note word counts and format preferences.

### **6. Be Professional but Personable**

- Use a polite and engaging tone.
  - Address the editor by name if possible.
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## **Where to Pitch Opinion Pieces**

Here's a list of outlets that accept opinion pieces:

### **Mainstream Media**

- 1. The New York Times (US)**
  - Focus: Broad topics, global audience.
  - Submit via: [Opinion Submission Page](#)
- 2. The Guardian (UK/Global)**
  - Focus: Social justice, politics, culture.
  - Submit via: [Opinion Submission Guidelines](#)
- 3. The Age (Australia)**
  - Focus: Australian politics, society, and culture.
  - Email: [opinions@theage.com.au](mailto:opinions@theage.com.au)
- 4. The Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)**
  - Focus: Australian and international topics.
  - Email: [opinion@smh.com.au](mailto:opinion@smh.com.au)

## Specialised and Niche Outlets

5. **ABC Everyday** (Australia)
  - Focus: Personal stories with universal themes.
  - Submit via: ABC Everyday Submissions Page.
6. **HuffPost** (US/Global)
  - Focus: Personal essays, identity, and activism.
  - Email: pitches@huffpost.com
7. **The Conversation** (Global)
  - Focus: Academic expertise applied to current issues.
  - Submit via: [The Conversation](#)

## Industry-Specific Outlets

8. **Education HQ** (Australia)
  - Focus: Education trends and teacher perspectives.
  - Submit via: editor@educationhq.com
9. **Scientific American** (US/Global)
  - Focus: Science, technology, and environment.
  - Submit via: [Editorial Guidelines](#)
10. **Women's Agenda** (Australia)
  - Focus: Women's rights, career, and social justice.
  - Email: editor@womensagenda.com.au

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## Tips for Success

- Be persistent but not pushy; follow up politely if you haven't heard back within a week or two.
- Keep a portfolio of published work to demonstrate credibility.
- Practice by writing and publishing on platforms like Medium or LinkedIn to build a portfolio.

Happy pitching!