

# “What is a book, even?”

*by Amanda Annis*

Describe the qualities of a published book.

Close your eyes: *you've been published*. What does that mean? Describe the moment you'll know that you've achieved your publishing goals.

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What book(s), published in the last 3-5 years, makes you think *I wish my book could be like that?* Pick up to three.

What did the author publish before the title you've chosen, from literary magazines to articles and op-eds to previous books? What were the author's credentials?

Read the jacket copy of this book. How is the plot or premise described? How are the characters introduced? How many words is the copy? What is the moment that hooks you, and makes you interested in reading the first page?

Look on the title page. What imprint published this book?

Look on the copyright page. What month was it published?

Read the acknowledgements section.

How did you first learn about this book? A friend? A bookseller? Browsing in bookstore? Browsing online? A review? A tweet? An ad? A newsletter? A podcast? Did you like the cover? Were you already a fan of the author? Was it personally recommended? Were you intrigued by a blurb? Did you see it on the bestseller list?

How many author readings or book-signings do you attend annually?

What publications, if any, reviewed the book?

Did you buy this book? Where did you buy it? Did you borrow it from a friend or from the library? Did you pre-order it?

What format—hardcover, paperback, audio, ebook—of the book did you buy? How many hardcover books did you buy in the last year? In the last three years?

Did you recommend this book to anyone? Who? Did you share on social media? In a book club? Did the book come up in conversation?

What makes this book successful, in your eyes?

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Do you see yourself, and your own publishing goals, reflected in any of your previous answers?

What excites you? What terrifies you? Which questions were easy to answer? Which couldn't you remember?

How does thinking through the publication of a book you admire affect your first two answers?

Think through any contradictions. For example, if your personal vision of publishing success is “seeing my name on the spine of a book in a store” but the publication you admired was purchased online as an audio digital download, what *data* does that convey to publishers about real reader habits? Does that change how you think about success?

Why do you want to be published?

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All of the following statements are true:

*Publisher is a company.*

*Publisher is a job title.*

*To Publish is a verb.*

*Publishing is an industry.*

*Publishing is a process.*

*Publishing is the commodification of intellectual property.*

*Success is measured in Net Units Sold.*

*Publishing is the alchemical process of transforming stories into the tangible.*

*Success is measured in the hearts and minds of readers.*

## The Steps:

The Query  
The Agent  
The Editing  
Transmittal  
Marketing & Publicity  
Sales & Distribution

## The Key:

3. Comp titles
4. Author Platform
5. The Pitch // Query
6. The Submission & Sale
7. Span Planning
8. Teamwork
9. Marketing & Discoverability: what works?
10. Book tours
11. Publicity
- 12 & 13. Sales & Distribution
14. Literary Citizenship