

Write a Must-Read: Craft a Book That Changes Lives—including Your Own

AJ Harper

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Write a Must-Read is a direct, substantive guide for aspiring authors who want to craft audience-centered nonfiction books.

AJ Harper, a ghost writer and a writing coach, provides would-be writers with the scaffolding and coaching necessary to write their own compelling nonfiction books in *Write a Must-Read*.

Specific to nonfiction authors, this book reflects on the writing process from start to finish. At its center is a specific idea: that readers come first, and that all else should stem from this principle. Identifying one's ideal reader, homing in on a core message, and delivering on what's promised are the core precepts that should guide the book-writing process, which Harper says begins well before authors put pen to page.

Split into three parts (develop, draft, and edit) the book first devotes five hearty chapters to figuring out one's audience—and the key ideas that will drive the eventual manuscript. Drafting merits a comparatively slim two chapters, which are given over to quelling the prospective authors' fears and anxiety; in doing so, the book incorporates charming references to notable texts.

But the longest and most useful chapters come in the last section, on editing, where the most intense interrogation of a manuscript occurs. This commentary stands to be all the more helpful in the absence of a developmental editor: it includes a detailed list of sixteen-plus actionable steps that look at different aspects of a draft, including sequencing, citations, and accessibility. (The final, unnumbered "plus" step, though, is a profound and necessary one, especially for those pursuing large-scale projects.)

The book maintains an encouraging tone throughout, adopting one of its own recommended techniques by sharing Harper's own struggles as a bonding mode with its audience. Here, such stories act as teaching points to reinforce the book's primary ideas. They are emotional and often resonant touchpoints. Further, the chapters often end with incisive questions to help root out particular issues or epiphanies.

The text moves from brainstorming to publishing in efficient order, delivering thoughtful, thorough commentary and advice at each step. In addition to its in-depth information regarding revisions, the book also provides a strong introduction to the publishing field, with information regarding which mode might be appropriate, what the benefits might be of said mode, marketing, and branding issues of import within the self-help genre.

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CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (June 22, 2022)

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