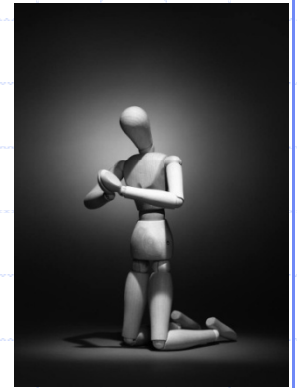


BOOK MODELING: If You Write It, Will They Come?



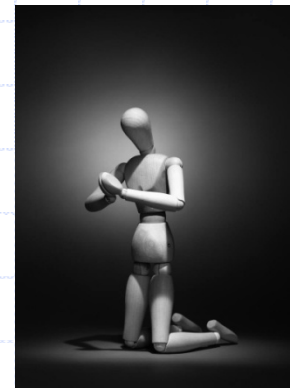
Building Your Book from Start to Finish

LaJolla Writers Conference, November 2009

Melanie Rigney, www.editorforyou.com

State of Publishing Today

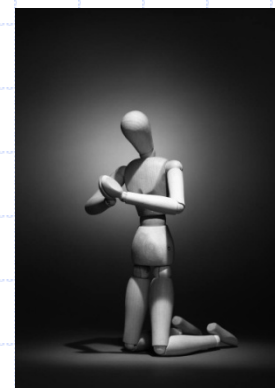
- ◆ Fewer people are reading because there are so many other entertainment/education options...
- ◆ More books are published every year, thanks to self-publishing...
- ◆ Large publishers are part of conglomerates that expect a quick profit...
- ◆ In short, it's a MESS!



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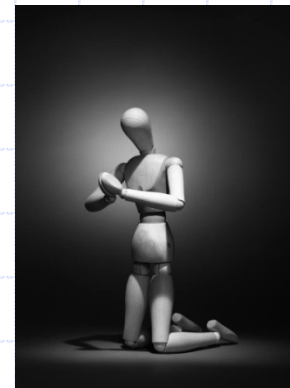
What Does That Mean to Me?

- ◆ It's riskier for publishers to take on first-time authors.
- ◆ While nonfiction still represents a safer choice, publishers are looking for:
 - Authors with a proven track record
 - Authors with a platform (contacts, a name in their field, marketing savvy)
 - A story/idea they can't resist



It's All About Goals

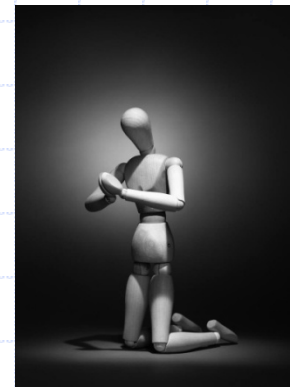
- ◆ Why are you writing this book?
- ◆ Who will read it?
- ◆ Why will they read it?
- ◆ Where will they read it?
- ◆ *What else do they read, and what is their expectation from your book?*



Your Editorial Vision

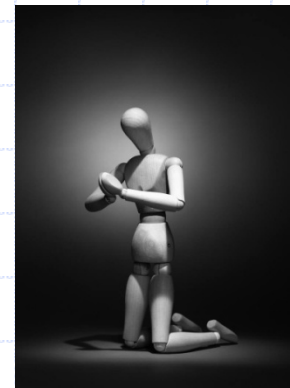
I'm writing this because:

- ◆ I want to fill a need I or the readers have
- ◆ I want to help people solve this problem
- ◆ I want to share knowledge
- ◆ I want to change the world
- ◆ I want to be a famous author
- ◆ I want to make a million dollars and retire



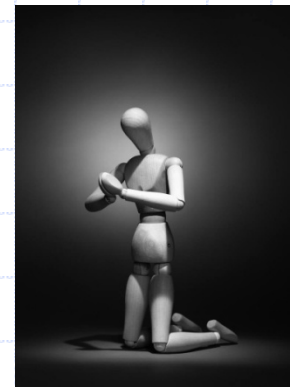
What's It About?

- ◆ How to make and keep friends and get rid of toxic friends
- ◆ What men need to know to lose weight and keep it off
- ◆ How a man bucks the religious establishment at a church conference center and ends up with the girl, job, and home of his dreams
- ◆ How a plucky girl of twelve becomes a sailor in the French and Indian War and ultimately reunites her family
- ◆ How twelve everyday people helped me find my way back to the Catholic church after thirty-five years
- ◆ How having a sense of humor can help you as a parent of kids with disabilities



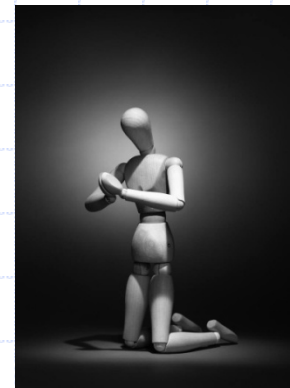
Some Specifics-Fiction

- ◆ Standard elements of storytelling: plot, characterization, theme, motivation
- ◆ Mainstream vs. Literary Novels: Generally around 80,000 words; mainstream is more plot-driven, literary more character-driven
- ◆ Romance Novels: Typically 50,000-60,000 words; plot and tone are determined by the couple's relationship
- ◆ Mysteries: Cozy is set in a small English or New England town with an amateur sleuth; think "Murder, She Wrote." Police procedural features a detective or officer. Hardboiled features a more seasoned, hardened detective.
- ◆ Science Fiction/Fantasy: SF involves science, fantasy relies on magic, mythological beings and devices, etc.
- ◆ Horror: Fear of the unknown
- ◆ Picture Book: 150-1,500 words
- ◆ Mid-Grade: For kids too old for picture books but younger than twelve
- ◆ Young Adult: Twelve until they move into the adult stacks, usually around 30,000 words



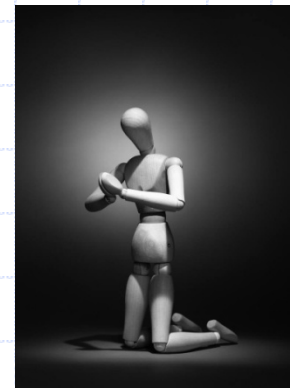
Some Specifics-Nonfiction

- ◆ Memoir, Biography, Autobiography
- ◆ Self-Help
- ◆ History
- ◆ Humor
- ◆ Travel
- ◆ How-to



Start with the Action

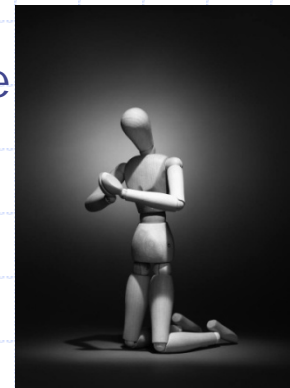
- ◆ As with novel writing, nonfiction books begin with a problem.
- ◆ Every scene or chapter must move the book along to its logical, satisfying conclusion.
- ◆ Show, don't tell.
Write in the moment.



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Dramatic Arc

- ◆ You need a beginning, middle and end
 - This is the case whether it's nonfiction (setting up the problem, showing how to solve it, showing how happy everyone is once it's solved) or fiction
 - We don't do it like the Greeks anymore; figure 15-20 percent of your page/word count for the setup, 70-75 percent for the middle, and 10 percent for the conclusion/climax
- ◆ Something happens, somebody changes
 - They fall in love, they lose weight, they find God, they make friends, they save the planet before bedtime
- ◆ Every scene/exercise/example must move the book to its logical, satisfying conclusion



Great Expectations

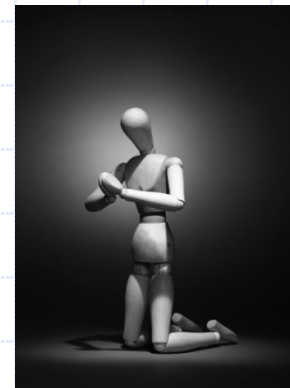
- ◆ Start with a single target audience; in general, the more specific the better
- ◆ Determine where in the bookstore your book would be shelved, even if you don't expect to see it there
- ◆ Analyze, as a reader, three books similar to yours published by a first-time author in the past three years.



Modeling

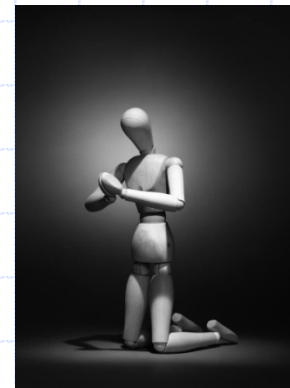
Study the competition:

- ◆ Page count/word length
- ◆ Writing style/pacing
- ◆ Use of charts/pullquotes/illustrations/photos
- ◆ Title words



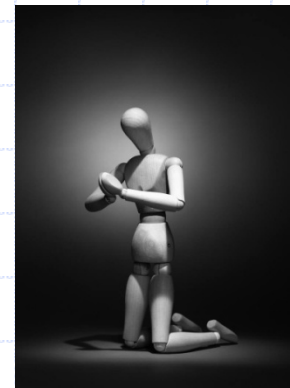
To Outline, or Not to Outline...

- ◆ How long/how many chapters or words?
- ◆ What must each chapter or section accomplish?
- ◆ How should the information be communicated?
- ◆ What special issues must you consider for your genre?



Your Turn to Model

- ◆ Share your goal
- ◆ Tell us what it's about
- ◆ Share your vision
- ◆ Share the model(s) for your book and what makes your book different... yet similar



Leave room for some magic!

Melanie Rigney

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