



Perfecting the Query Pitch

Query Letter 2-Part Intensive

By Kristin Nelson



Agenda



What is a query letter?

Are you ready to query?

Prepping your email submission

The four-part query letter

Things to Avoid

Agent Kristin's 9 Query Tips

Word counts

How Agents Use the Pitch

+ What is a query letter?



- A **professional, one-page business letter** that introduces a complete manuscript and its author to prospective agents, editors, and/or publishers.
- Not too long, not too short.
- Use your one page wisely; spend most of your real estate on your pitch paragraph(s).

+ What a query letter is not

- A summary of a 350-page novel.





Email Submissions



Etiquette

CCs and BCCs

Flagged
Urgent!!!

Attachments

Format

Images and
links

Multiple fonts,
sizes, colors,
bolds, italics,
all caps, etc.

When good
formatting goes
bad



The Four-Part Query Letter



Greeting

Brief

Professional
and
personable

Optional

Project Summary

Title

Genre

Word Count

Pitch Paragraph

1-3
paragraphs

Think back-
cover copy

This is your
audition!

Bio

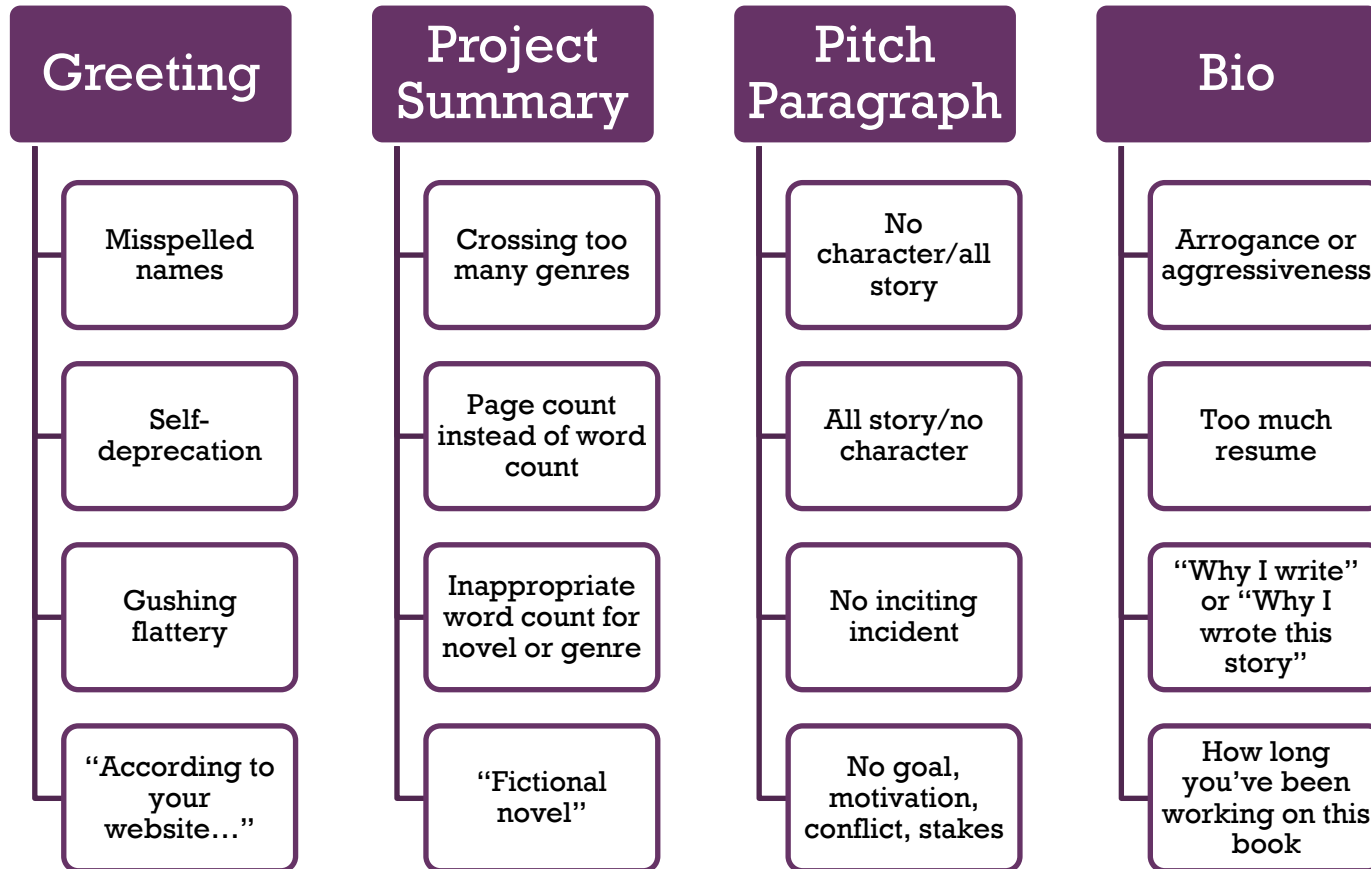
Education

Experience

Memberships



Things To Avoid



+ Other Things To Avoid

1980s Movie- Trailer Voice Overs

- “In a world where...”
- “What would you do if...?”
- “How would you feel if...?”
- “Imagine...”/“Picture...”
- “Allow me to transport you to...”

Pitching your devices instead of your story

- “The **themes** are universal.”
- “The **characters** are unforgettable...”
- “The **dialogue** is snappy...”
- “The **descriptions** are lyrical...”
- “The **voice** is unique...”
- “I’ve created a **story world** in which...”



THE SECRET



Should read like jacket copy/back cover of book



Develop the pitch around your Plot catalyst



That catalyst should be in the first 30 pages of manuscript.



If you can't find it or if the catalyst appears after page 50, trouble!



Check out local bookstore/library and read jacket copy



Spot The Catalyst



My name is Madame X.

I'm the best at what I do...

Hired to transform the uncultured, inept sons of the wealthy and powerful into decisive, confident men, Madame X wields culture and wit like a knife. But behind her sophisticated facade X is a woman adrift, trapped between a dangerous past she can't remember and the protection of a seductive man who claims her body—and her soul.

Undone time and again by his exquisite dominance, X craves and fears his desire in equal measure. And while she longs for the safety of her tower penthouse, she also yearns to escape. But X has never known anything or anyone else—until *he* came along...



More Pitch blurb secrets



Pitch
Paragraphs
are short

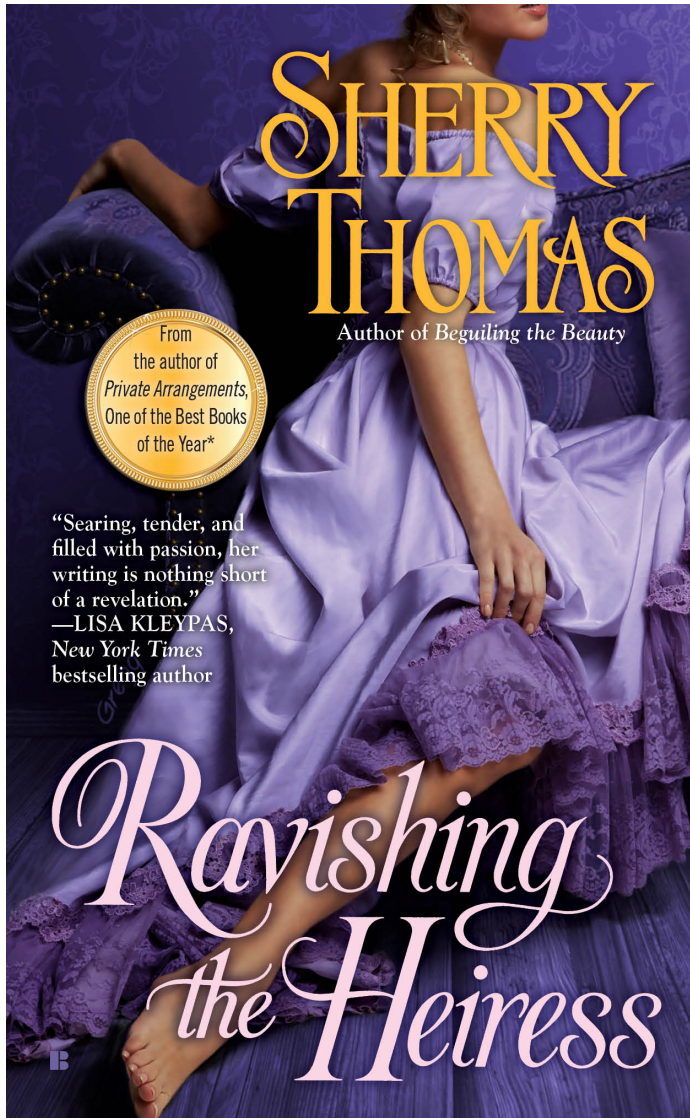
5 sentences
for Madame X

Catalyst
can start
the
Paragraph

Catalyst
can come
later in
Paragraph



Spot The Catalyst



Millicent understands the terms of her arranged marriage all too well. She gets to be a Countess by marrying an impoverished Earl. And in return, Earl Fitzhugh receives the benefit of her vast wealth, saving his family from bankruptcy. Because of her youth, they have agreed to wait eight years before consummating the marriage—and then, only to beget an heir. After which, they will lead separate lives.

It is a most sensible arrangement. Except for one little thing. Somehow Millie has fallen head over heels in love with her husband. Her husband, who has become her very best friend, but nothing more.... Her husband, who plans to reunite with his childhood sweetheart, the beautiful and recently widowed Isabella, as soon as he has honored the pact with his wife...

As the hour they truly become husband-and-wife draws near, both Millie and Fitzhugh must face the truth in their hearts. Has their pact bred only a great friendship—or has it, without either of them quite noticing, given rise to a great love?

+ Next Steps



Step 1

- Start with the inciting incident/plot catalyst.

Step 2

- Decide which element of your book (backstory, character, plot) will best support your explanation of it.

Step 3

- Craft your pitch paragraph. Nail it in 9 sentences or fewer.



Plot Elements



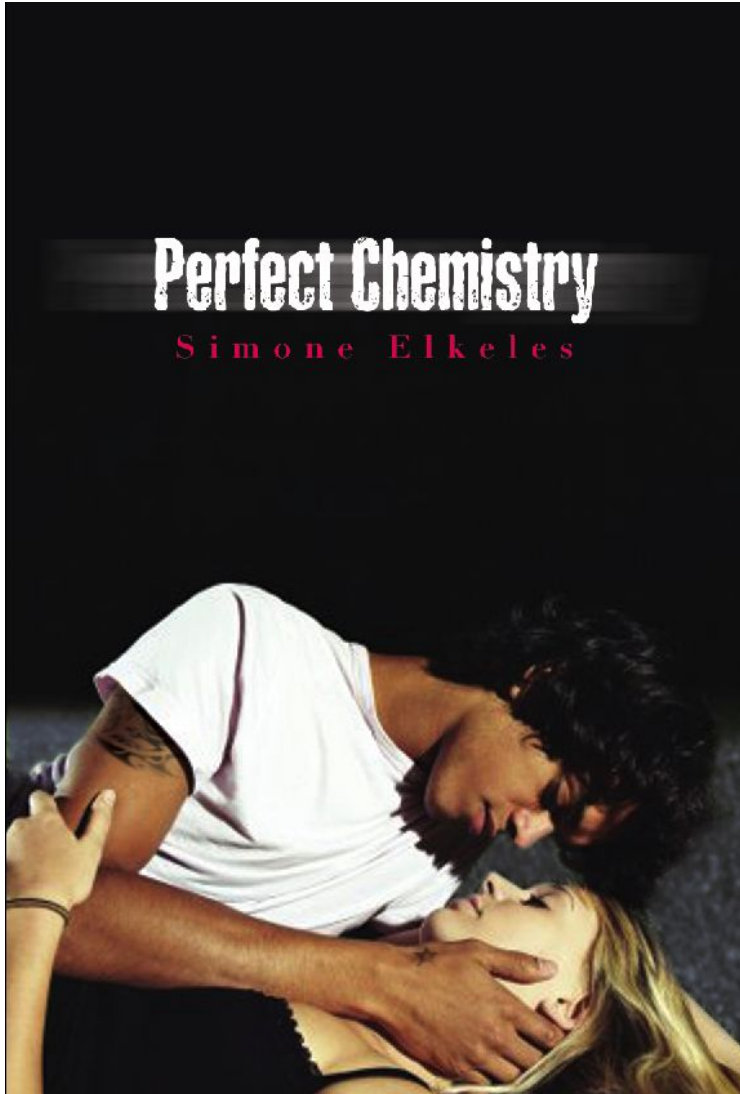
Alexia Tarabotti is laboring under a great many social tribulations. First, she has no soul. Second, she's a spinster whose father is both Italian and dead. Third, she was rudely attacked by a vampire, breaking all standards of social etiquette.

Where to go from there? From bad to worse apparently, for Alexia accidentally kills the vampire -- and then the appalling Lord Maccon (loud, messy, gorgeous, and werewolf) is sent by Queen Victoria to investigate.

With unexpected vampires appearing and expected vampires disappearing, everyone seems to believe Alexia responsible. Can she figure out what is actually happening to London's high society? Or will her soulless ability to negate supernatural powers prove useful or just plain embarrassing? Finally, who is the real enemy and do they have treacle tart?

SOULLESS is a comedy of manners set in Victorian London: full of werewolves, vampires, dirigibles, and tea-drinking.

+ Character Elements

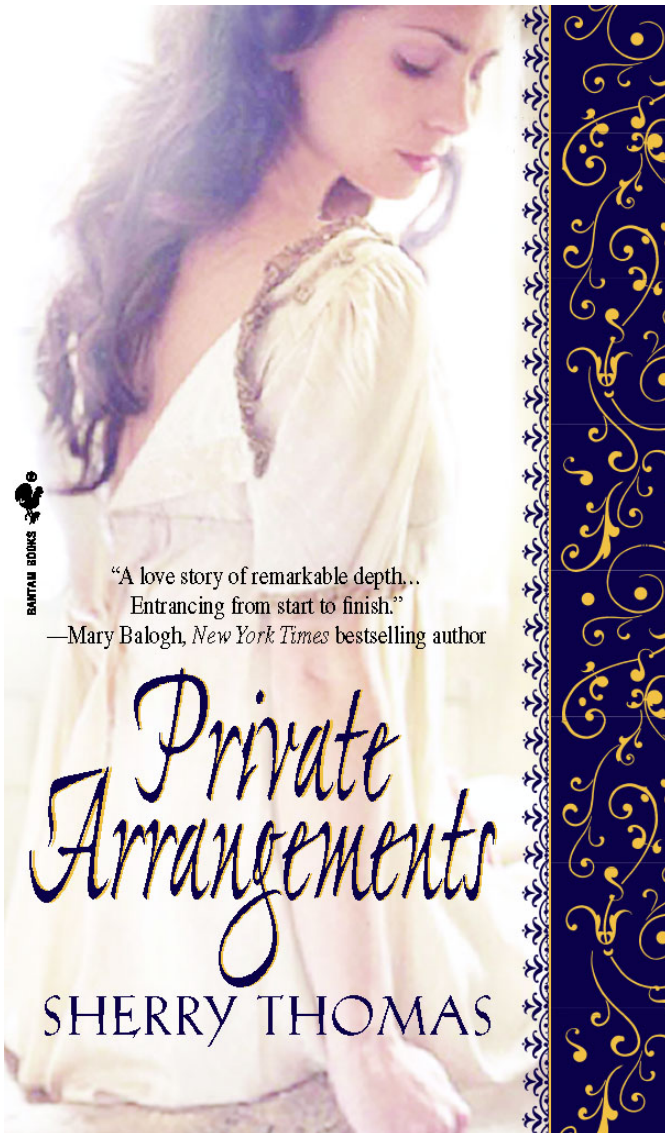


A modern tale of star-crossed lovers with a fresh urban twist

At Fairfield High School , on the outskirts of Chicago , everyone knows that south-siders mixing with north-siders can be explosive. So when Brittany Ellis and Alejandro “Alex” Fuentes are forced to be lab partners in chemistry class, this human experiment leads to unexpected revelations – that Brittany ’s flawless reputation is a cover for her troubled home life, that Alex’s bad-boy persona hides his desire to break free from gang ties, and that when they’re together, life somehow makes more sense.

Breaking through the stereotypes and expectations that threaten to keep Brittany and Alex apart, Perfect Chemistry takes readers to both sides of the tracks in a passionate love story about looking beneath the surface.

+ Back Story Elements



To all of London society, Lord and Lady Tremaine had the ideal arrangement: a marriage based on civility, courteousness and freedom—by all accounts, a perfect marriage. The reason? For the last ten years, husband and wife have resided on separate continents.

But once upon a time, things were quite different for the Tremaines...When Gigi Rowland first laid eyes on Camden Saybrook, Lord Tremaine, the attraction was immediate and overwhelming: she simply had to have him. But what began in a spark of passion ended in betrayal the morning after their wedding—and Gigi wants to be free to marry again. Now Camden has returned from America with an outrageous demand in exchange for Gigi's freedom—a proposal that defies propriety and stuns his wife. For Gigi's decision will have consequences she never imagined, as secrets are exposed, desire is rekindled—and one of London's most admired couples must either fall in love all over again...or let each other go forever.

+ Kristin's 9 Query Tips

Shorter queries get a better response rate.

Agents rarely read the entire query.

Mentioning where you fit in the current market will make an agent pay closer attention to your query.

A really good title will catch an agent's attention.

A terrific concept won't save you if the query is poorly written.

Word count matters.

Including your prologue with requested sample pages will kill your chances 99.9% of the time.

A perfected pitch is the gift that keeps on giving.

A mediocre query is rarely supported by excellent opening pages.



Agents Use the Pitch to talk to Editors



Editors Use the Pitch

**For Ed. Board,
Marketing launch,
Sales Conference**

Sales Reps Use the Pitch

**To sell-in to
Booksellers &
Librarians**

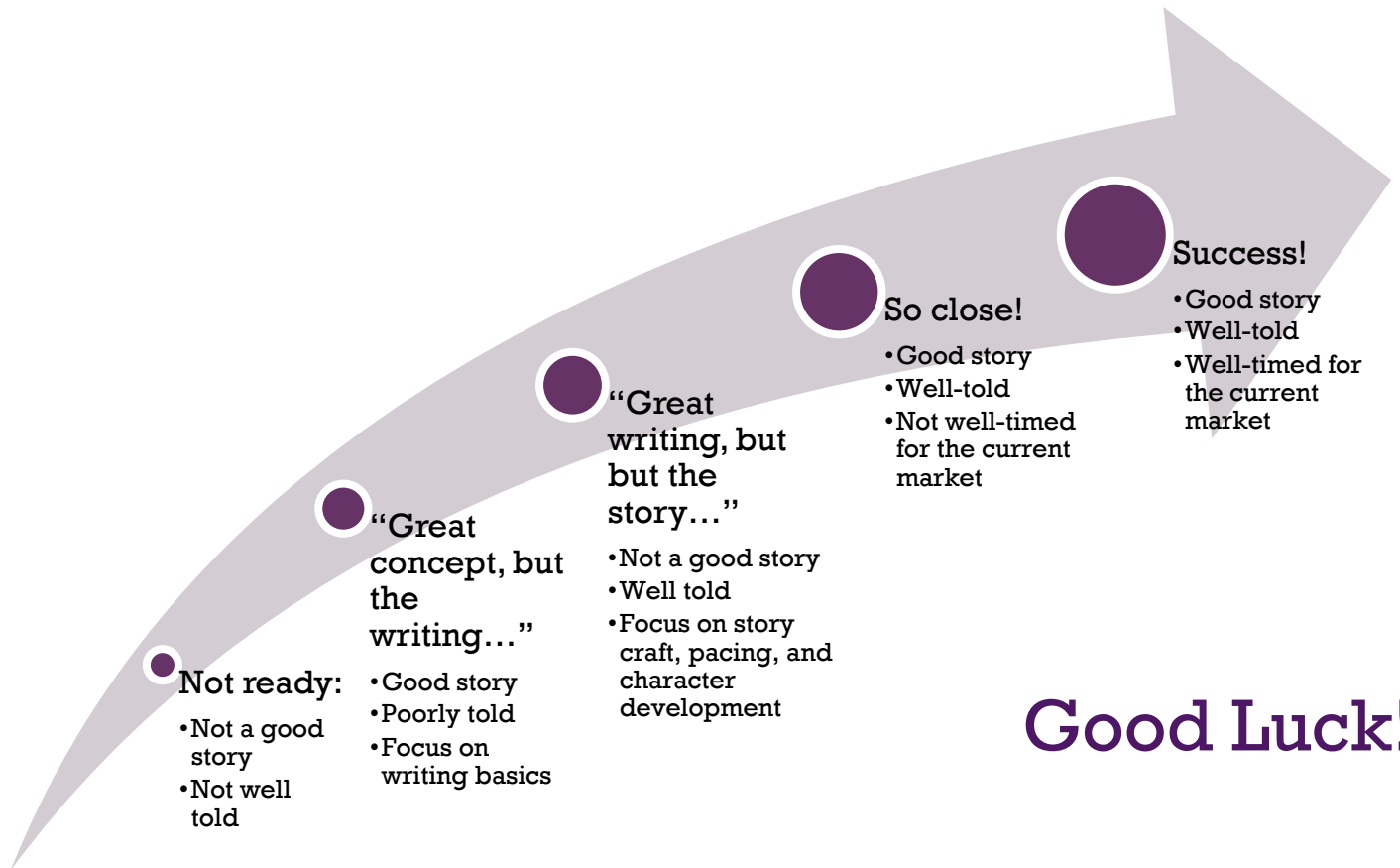
Booksellers Use The Pitch

**To Entice Customers
to Pick Up the Book**



THE LAST WORD

It's all about writing a good book!



Good Luck!

For more tips, visit Pub Rants at www.nelsonagency.com