

FICTION WORKSHOP: THE SHORT STORY

REVIEW OF THE MARKET

I just try to warn people who hope to get published that publication is not all it is cracked up to be. But writing is. Writing has so much to give, so much to teach, so many surprises. That thing you had to force yourself to do—the actual act of writing—turns out to be the best part... The act of writing turns out to be its own reward.

—Anne LaMott, *Bird by Bird*

This assignment is the most straightforwardly critical one of the term. I'm looking for two typed, single-spaced pages that review the market you're hoping to publish in. By "review," what I mean is this:

1. I want you visit at least 10 (yes ten) websites that publish literary, fantasy, horror, romance, sci-fi, or postmodern/experimental fiction. Note, however, that there are two restrictions: first, the journal/zene must be published in hard copy (even if it has an on-line presence); second, you must choose a literary or small-circulation magazine (as with your journal subscription assignment, slicks such as *The New Yorker*, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, *Ms.*, *Playboy*, and even *The Atlantic* are not allowed). If you are having trouble finding 10 journals/zines that you might be interested in, here are my suggestions:
 - Look at the list of literary journal addresses/names that you used when you selected your journal subscription from the back of the current *Best American Short Stories*;
 - Take a look at *The Writer's Market*, a journal SMCM's library subscribes to;
 - Poke around on the AWP website (<https://www.awpwriter.org/>), specifically under "Contests."
2. Once you're at a journal's website, I want you to read/skim **at least two stories or parts of stories (whatever's available)** from a current issue **for each site** that you visit. Get a feel for the kind of fiction they publish: traditional, regional, genre, city, women's, erotic, etc. Take notes on the journal—when does it come out? How often? How many stories do they accept a year? Do they pay anything for stories? Who is listed under "editor" or "fiction editor" or "readers"? Do you recognize any names on the list of the editorial board? Do they sponsor writing contests? Do they encourage submissions from writers who have never published before? Or do all of their author bio's contain writers who are clearly established? Do they accept longer pieces or just flash fiction? Do they accept fragments of longer pieces? (These notes will come in handy when it comes time to submit your work at the end of the term.) Make sure to cull out direct quotations from the stories you're reading/skimming as evidence of the kind of fiction you've found in your market;
3. Write it up. Specifically, convince me in two pages why you're choosing this particular market, and how you see your work operating within in this market. Be concrete (hence the direct quotations **from the sites you visit**) as well as savvy; and
4. Tell me which of the 10 journals that you've looked at you've decided to submit to and why.

Make sure that you type, single-space (yes, single-space), and spellcheck this assignment. It's not a throw-away just because it's not creative. Indeed, in some ways—particularly if you hope to make it as a published author—it's the most important assignment of the term.