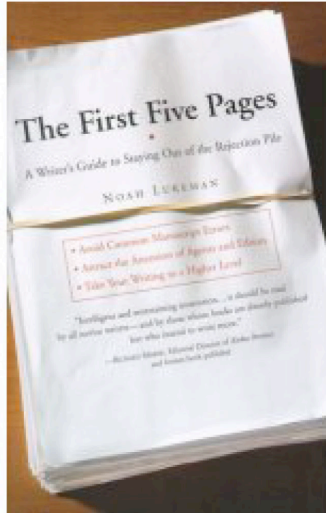


IN REVIEW:



The First Five Pages

by Noah Lukeman

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...Helps to level the playing field

By Beryl Hall Bray

[Noah T Lukeman](#) is correct. A newcomer has a big enough hurdle to overcome when the manuscript doesn't have the name that will make their bank account overflow. So it becomes very important to know what can add or take away from the aspiring writer's impression on the agent or editor.

Most are aware that he wrote *FIVE PAGES*, among other reasons, to help agents and editors do their job, which is a blessing for all. He made the point that it was important for them to know why they were rejecting a manuscript, beyond the fact that it didn't hold their attention. We would like to feel it wasn't just a fight with someone that kept us off the best seller's list.

Nevertheless, I'm not an agent or editor for a publishing house; so what was I looking for? A mindset. And, that is what *The First Five Pages* delivers.

Think about it, where in life can you be successful if you don't know how the people you will be working/playing/living with—think...

A football coach knows more than how to play football, he learns all he can about the opposing teams.

A skydiver knows more than how to fall out of a big opening in the side of a plane, he's learned something about gravity, airflow, etc.

Five Pages teaches an author how agents and editors think and feel before she sends the fruitage of her labor to them.

Note: Mr. Lukeman, in the interest of simplicity, stated he would use only the masculine, though it would refer, of course, equally to men and women. In keeping with his good sense, I too embrace simplicity— of course, I will be opting to use only the feminine.

I will, this is a very good book to help writers understand and believe the unbelievable. Our masterpiece won't captivate every reader, despite the fact that it read so beautifully—before we had the courage to send it to *one of them*.

He makes it clear that agents and editors don't read manuscripts to enjoy them. Their desire to deplete their workload can become the driving force for them. *Five Pages* sheds light on the ways Mr. Lukeman lightened his load. We can be thankful, because this is our opportunity to learn the mindset of the recipients of our genius. We can learn ways to quit shooting ourselves in the foot, as it were.

He starts with Presentation. He includes, and goes beyond, telling us to make sure we contact appropriate agents or editors and let them know why you contacted them. He's not shy in pointing out specific things that get our work thrown to the side or can increase our chances of being read.

He deals with the overuse or misuse of adjectives and adverbs. His succinct description of the results of neglecting his advice should make just about anyone clean up her act.

Some writers dislike the exercises he puts at the end of the chapter. They feel they are ridiculously tedious. I won't say that I have completed them all. I will say that I haven't done any exercise that didn't improve my writing. It's easy to get lazy; reminders can benefit all.

There's good instruction on how to let agents and editors to recognize how serious we are about our work. It's a good checklist to make sure we're putting our best foot forward.

The detail that the chapter goes into dealing with sound, rhythm and grammar of prose will separate the girls from the women, if you will. While on the one hand, you may find yourself asking if that is more than you really want to know, on the other hand, if you find you feel that way...maybe writing and getting published isn't all that important to you anyway. This book helps cut through the glamour of being published and takes a newer author into the art of writing better.

Dialogue, he explains in Part II, not only can get you thrown out—*before it's read*—but it tells an agent or editor just how skillful you are at writing. All that takes place before she even read the cleverly written dialogue—now that is sad, but a reality.

As I read, I was thinking it was a good thing dialogue wasn't a prescription drug, because those serious side effects would convince me I couldn't be sick enough to take the chance.

Mr. Lukeman only covers five deathtraps for your novel and devotes a chapter to each one. We know well-written authors are sending novels to agents and editors and are rejected, albeit, not as often as a newcomer. Since the new writer has to compete with authors at all levels, it only makes sense to get rid of the obvious signs that say, "I'm really not what you're looking for. You will suffer much more than you should have to, in order to discover my great story."

He points out that an editor or agent may receive two great stories, one that needs a little work and one that calls for a lot of work and handholding of the author; that scenario can make it an easy decision for her.

Part III covers The Bigger Picture. Since we all want to be in the one percent, this is an important section because he points out that the agent or editor might be even more agitated because she knows that she will have to read it now.

If you devote as much care and devotion to all the pages, as you did the first five pages, then Mr. Lukeman did his job well and, hopefully, your novel is accepted.

His reading may get a bit tough at times, but it's a tough business! If we can't *read* a brutally honest book, chances are we can't live our part.

I recommend his book for opening the door to quality writing by showing how to overcome the most common causes of rejection. The idea behind the quote, "Gentlemen, this is a football," is in order to be winners we must all return to the basics, occasionally.

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