

Stock Answers for Frequently Asked Questions: A Guide for the Newly Published Or How to Irritate an Author

Dara Girard

I didn't think it would happen to me. I was a lowly new author and didn't think anyone would pay much attention to my existence. I had heard whispers of the questions that authors are asked with regrettable regularity. I foolishly thought no one would ask me. I was wrong.

Even before my book hit the market I was asked to 1) turn people's ideas into books or 2) help them get published or 3) to write their biography. After much practice I came up with stock answers for such questions and I am willing to share them with you. So for those of you out there on the brink of publication or even curious as to what I might say to such questions please use the following replies:

Q. Will you read my manuscript (essay, poem, manifesto)?

"My agent instructed me to never read anything that is unpublished."

"Since I can't get you published it would be a waste of time."

"No."

"My work schedule doesn't allow me the time to give your manuscript the attention it deserves."

Q. I've lived an interesting life; will you write my biography?

"Sure. I charge \$500 per day, 4 days a week. Paid in advance. If the book is published I get 65%. If it doesn't, I still keep the money."

"I'm sure your story is so interesting that only you can do it justice."

"No."

Q. I have a brilliant idea. If I give it to you, can we split the profits?

"So you want me to turn a four sentence idea into 300 pages then give you half the credit for 1% of the effort?"

"Let me get back to you after I shoot myself."

"Thanks, but I have plenty of ideas of my own."

"I'll give you what I think your idea is worth. How does a penny sound?"

"No, I think your idea is so fabulous that you should write the book yourself and keep all the profits."

Q. How do I get published? (This is a sneaky question. They're not really asking how to get published. There are books, websites, magazines, conferences, and lectures galore to answer this question. What they're really asking is 'How can I get to where you are without any effort, determination, or talent?')

"I'll give you the secret if you pay my rent for the next ten years."

"Write a good story and submit it to the right market."

"I can't tell you since I've signed the Author's Oath of Silence."

"First you sign your name in blood..."

"You have to sleep with the right person. I have a couple of names, but it will cost you."

Q. How much money do you make?

"More than a dollar but less than a million."

"Are you always this nosy or are you trying to impress me?"

"Tell me how much you make and I'll tell you whether or not to keep your day job."

Q. Have I read anything you've written?

"Let me look at my crystal ball and I'll get back to you."

"Tell me what you have read recently and I'll let you know."

"Probably not."

Q. When are you going to write a real book? (A question usually reserved for genre writers—romance, mystery, sci-fi and horror and children's book authors)

"What's the definition of 'book' in your language?"

"When I stop making money writing fake books."

Okay, I'd better stop myself. Unfortunately, the list can go on, but I'll spare you the gruesome details. You'll undoubtedly be hit with a variation of these questions. Please resist any physical violence.

At least now you know what is out there waiting for you. You can think it won't happen to you, but you have been warned.