

Rejection Isn't Failure: It's Part of the Process

Janet Reid, in response to someone who thinks they are failing after ten rejection letters

Rejection at the query stage is like learning to shoot hoops. You're going to miss a lot of baskets as you develop technique and practice. Is missing a shot "failure"? No.

Is losing a game failure?

No.

Failure is not lacing up your sneakers and getting in the game.

Failure is quitting before you've had a chance to find out if you're any good.

Failure is a mindset, and it will **KILL YOUR CAREER** if you let it.

Now, about the place you are in the query process.

For starters, ten is nothing.

You've barely scratched the surface of the number of agents you can query.

You should assume nothing about your query based on these results. You can NOT interpret rejection to mean anything other than "no."

Do you assume you are short and ugly (no matter your gender here!) if you are standing in line with the top ten finalists for Miss America at the United check in counter for Atlantic City?

In the alternative, you can be as handsome as George Clooney but if the movie is about Miss America, you're not going to get the starring role.

1.2 BILLION people are able to speak some form of Chinese, but you can't. Does that make you stupid?

When it comes to querying, you don't know if you're in the wrong line, or trying out for the wrong movie, or just not speaking my language.

Do not assume you are stupid or ugly, or that your query is a failure.

You know NOTHING about your query from rejection.

I pass on materials that are good and publishable every day of the week.

I pass on things by mistake.

I pass on things that are good because I already have Jeff Somers writing magic and I don't want to sign another author in his category. I pass on what I'm sure is great horror because Laird Barron is on my list but I don't actually read horror (Yes, you read that right.)

Right now the only thing you can do is persevere.

Hit a writing conference if you can afford to. Instead of pitching agents, have them look at your query.

Buy a query and page critique at an auction (they have these ALL the time.)

Take a Writer's Digest webinar on queries. Often there's a query crit attached to that.

Check out your local writerly groups like Sisters in Crime, Mystery Writers of America, Romance Writers of America. Here's a tip: you don't actually have to write crime or romance to join. These are kind and generous writers who welcome new writers into the fold and help you figure stuff out. The reason to join is to take advantage of the educational opportunities they offer.

For example, I'll be flying to Phoenix Arizona in February (yes, on my broom) to give a workshop on Effective Queries at the local SinC chapter.

I'm giving the same workshop at Binder.con here in New York in October.

These kinds of opportunities abound.

It's up to you to find them, attend them, learn from them.

The one thing all successful writers have in common: persistence.

Having a writing career of any size, shape, or success requires persistence.

You have a choice about what to do here.

You can make yourself crazy with fretting, or you can buckle down and write.

The choice is yours.

(Originally published at <http://jetreidliterary.blogspot.com/2016/09/the-one-thing-all-successful-writers.html>)