



## SUCCESSFUL QUERY LETTER EXAMPLES

**If you ask my agent, he'd say he requested pages only because of how I described the story in the second paragraph—not because of my credentials. Which goes to show, it's all about the novel. You don't need any degrees or publications if you have an intriguing story.**

**—Nadia**

Dear Mr. Lawrence<sup>1</sup>, (*Addresses agent by name.*)

I am currently seeking representation for my novel, a magical realist contemporary YA called HERE TO THE HORIZON.<sup>2</sup>

HERE TO THE HORIZON is the story of Sam, little sister of Lily, who happens to be the most beautiful girl their prairie town has ever seen. She's the girl everyone looks to and longs for, who can't be captured or caged. When a night Sam spends with Lily's friends goes horribly wrong and she discovers the dead body of a girl left floating in the pond, she's sent away from town, and away from Lily. But her sister will do anything to get her to come home—even if it means turning back time as if

that night never happened. Can an illusion be set over an entire town and can Lily be responsible? And if so, what happens when it starts to crumble?**4** *(5 sentences describing the major details of the plot line, without giving the ending away.)* HERE TO THE HORIZON is a contemporary YA novel about the everyday mythical figures that walk among us and the tall tales you tell yourself about the people you know and the places where you're cursed to live.**3** *(A book that evokes the mythical mood of the novel.)*

As for me, I have an MFA in fiction from Brown University and have been awarded fiction fellowships from the Providence Foundation and Yaddo. My short stories for adults have been published in multiple literary journals, including *The Iowa Review*, *In Posse Review*, and *The Gettysburg*, and under various pseudonyms I have ghostwritten more than seventeen children's books, media tie-ins, and middle-grade series novels for Abrams Books and Dutton Children's Books. In addition, I am a senior production editor in the managing editorial group at Holiday House.**7** *(This is a long bio for a query letter, but in this instance it's a positive because Nadia has extensive experience in writing and publishing.)*

Thank you for your time and consideration.**8** *(No gushing required. A quick thank you is all that's needed!)*

Sincerely,  
Nadia Lam

Dear Ms. Ralston,<sup>1</sup>

I am currently seeking representation for my novel, NOWHERE, an adult magical realism, complete at 86,000 words.<sup>2</sup> *(Directly states the purpose of the query, and the genre and word count of the manuscript.)*

Twenty-four year old Lucie McMahan can make wishes come true just by thinking about them. She's pretty sure that's how she accidentally erased her little brother from existence twelve years ago. That, or she's bat-shit crazy. Lucie can't tell which.<sup>3</sup> *(An excellent example of a book! It supplies just enough detail about the novel to build intrigue. A woman who "makes wishes come true just by thinking of them" and may have disappeared her little brother is unique enough to sell a story!)*

When she moves to Nowhere, Tennessee and starts seeing a teenager who looks like a grown-up version of her brother, she's convinced she's losing it—again. Even worse, wishes start appearing on slips of paper everywhere she goes. She collects them, unread, which only makes them more determined to get her attention. And the elderly woman she lives with bakes the town's secrets into pies to keep them from getting out like it's perfectly sane.

But the most distracting of all is Wade Brennan, her on-the-rebound backyard neighbor. There's something about his Southern manners and sad eyes that makes her want to give into the crazy. Lucie must learn to trust herself—and her ability—if she wants to know what's real and what's not.<sup>4</sup> *(A description of the main plot line of the novel that is succinct yet thorough, but does not reveal the ending. You want agents to request your full manuscript and read the ending for themselves!)*

Dear Mrs. Sloan,<sup>1</sup>

I am seeking representation for THE WHISTLE, my YA novel complete at 76,000 words. The novel is told in a combination of narrative and blog entries.<sup>2</sup>

Meg McClain's dad is good at coaching basketball; what he isn't good at is communicating with Meg and her brother Brad.<sup>3</sup> When her mother dies, he shuts down, throwing himself into basketball as a way to cope with his grief, leaving Meg alone in silence. When he lands a job at Deacon, Meg finds it easy to fit in when she starts dating a player on the team, while her brother, shy and weak, is rejected by the school. Meg quickly learns to overlook the perks given to the athletes who openly disgrace her brother for not being one of them. However, the players take their power too far one night at a party and Meg is raped. Meg doesn't stay silent about the rape, but her accusations aren't accepted by the Deacon community. The school rallies with the team and lashes out at her. Ugly rumors are created to destroy Meg and her credibility. She's not praised for her decision to be truthful, but instead, it brings terrible consequences. The final blow comes when her dad tries to silence her in order to protect the team. The world that Meg believed was safe is now her worst enemy, and Meg must decide whether to stay silent or expose the corruption, destroying her father's career and bringing down a town's heroes.<sup>4</sup>

*(This query was obviously good enough to secure a full request and offer of representation at the time it was written.*

*However, if I was advising Charlotte before sending this out now, I'd recommend she pull out and revise her book, cut down the plot description by nearly half, and add some comparable titles.)*

I am a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin, where I earned a Masters in English Education, and I am currently working on a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative

Writing (Fiction) at Midwestern State University.<sup>7</sup> I may not be in high school anymore, but I am a high school English teacher and experience daily the struggles teenagers have trying to find their own voice among the heavy influence of their peers. I have seen first hand what hooks my students into a book or series.<sup>5</sup>

*(Charlotte's experience as a high school English teacher is relevant because she is writing for teenagers and has a strong understanding of what they like to read.)*

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to sending you sample chapters or the completed manuscript of THE WHISTLE.<sup>8</sup>

Thank you,

Charlotte Auberge

Dear Mr. Flores,1

I'm a 2013 debut YA author looking for representation for my 52,000 word MG novel THE FIRST KISS PROJECT. I read that you were looking for middle grade novels with heart, and I think my main character has just that.2 *(The first sentence is unconventional, but 100% acceptable in this instance. Charlotte is immediately letting the agent know she already has a book set to be released, and is seeking representation for her next novel. The second sentence is in response to a call for submission for "middle grade books with heart" that this particular agent posted on Twitter. This is a quick and effective way to let the author know Charlotte picked him intentionally.)*

When Millie's dad walked out, she survived just fine with her mom and little sister as part of the "Terrific Three." But all that changes when her dad shows up on Pizza Night and announces he's moving back in. The Terrific Two open their arms to the man who abandoned them, but Millie can't simply forgive and forget. What if he leaves again? Is it worth the risk?3

If that weren't bad enough, she's been cast as the lead in her junior high's production of Snow White...which would be cool if she didn't have to kiss Prince Charming...on the lips! She's never kissed a boy, and the idea of experiencing that "first" in front of an audience makes her knees turn to Jell-O. To help, Millie's two best friends propose The First Kiss Project—a plan to score a kiss before opening night. She reluctantly agrees, but as the plots become more ridiculous and everyone in her house is too busy playing happy family to help, Millie begins to think this whole love stuff is way too complicated.

When The First Kiss Project goes horribly wrong, she realizes life isn't cut-and-dry,

and sometimes people deserve second chances. As opening night approaches, Millie is determined to achieve her happily ever after, both on stage and with her family.4

My first YA novel, THE WHISTLE, will be published by Olympia Publishers in August, and it has already received blurbs from authors such as Megan Baird, Erin Lee Gray, and Jessica Bright.5 I'm a MFA fiction candidate at Midwestern State University, teach high school Language Arts, and hold a Masters in English Education from The University of Texas at Austin.7 *(5 - While this sentence is about Charlotte's pending debut, it's establishing her credentials as a published author. 7 - Includes degrees in relevant subject matter.)*

I've recently parted ways with my agent, and would love to work with you on this and other drafted novels. THE F.K.P. has not been submitted to publishers and the summary/partial for my next YA novel is also available. Thank you for your time and consideration.8 *(Another instance where slightly breaking the rules is acceptable. Charlotte added a couple of extra sentences before her "thank you" to give this agent pertinent information about why Charlotte needs a new agent to represent her next book.)*

Sincerely,

Charlotte Auberge