

Author Niche: a 4-step definition

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<http://greatstorybook.com/author-niche-4-step-definition/>

This entry is part 2 of 2 in the series [Author Business Plan](#)

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The Author Niche is where you consider what kinds of stories you love to tell, how you fit into the publishing market, and what makes you different from other authors in your niche. This is where you define your specific market and how you fill it.

*This article is about defining your Author Niche and is **Part 2 in a series** on how to create an [Author Business Plan](#).*

In order to show readers, editors and agents the type of writer you are, you need to first know, completely. Take these 4 steps to find out.

Artwork by Orlando "Piro4d."

Whether you have been writing for years or just starting out, clearly defining your Author Niche is a key ingredient to successfully promoting your work.

Consider this: If you don't know what you are, how can I know?

This is the best way I can think to whittle this down, the need to define your Author Niche. If you don't know what kind of author you are (or want to become), you'll have an incredibly difficult time doing these two things:

1. pitching your stories to professionals and
2. selling your books to readers.

If we don't know what it is, we will not buy it.

Curiosity killed the cat. But our resistance to picking up a book we can't readily identify is more than that. We don't have the time or patience for those writers who bang out material without bothering to figure out what they really want to achieve with their story.

Define your niche and you define yourself as a writer.

Even if you're just starting out as a writer, you still know and can point to an ill-defined story. It's when a story starts out as one type of genre and then suddenly switches, unexpectedly, to something else – and in doing so, doesn't quite hit either all that well. You put the book down feeling unsatisfied.

So defining an Author Niche isn't just about being able to pitch or explain to others; it's also for our sake, as writers – so that we know what we want to do, right from the beginning.

Author Niche in 4 Steps

There are 4 key elements you need to determine for your Author Niche. I'll list them here first, and then explain each in greater detail.

NOTE: The Author Niche document you'll be writing is one that you should consider organic. Over time, as you learn more about specific publishing houses and organizations, you'll add new contacts to enhance your niche information.

1. Decide what sorts of books you want to bring into the world and why.
2. Decide how, specifically, your books will meet your readers' needs.
3. List the people (read: an avatar of a type of person, not a famous person), organizations and companies that might be interested in your stories – and why.
4. Write down why you're the one who needs to write what you write.

Last thing first.

Write down why you specifically are the one who needs to write what you write.

I'm going to start with the 4th reason first, because I suspect this is the point that will stop most writers from completing the steps. Go through this with me and I promise you'll feel better. It's cathartic, because it forces you to get over that hump and more fully define yourself.

This isn't about bragging, it's about more clearly defining who you are as a writer and why you're meant to write what you write (or want to write).

You might at first think – or feel – that you write what you write purely out of joy or emotions that are part of who you are. *That's all true, but there's more.*

Your location in the world, your cultural background, your personal history, your experiences in life – these are the things you bring with your pen. They're the reasons your emotions have brought you to writing what you write.

So that's the type of thing you need to write down. What ability or knowledge or experience do you have that makes you want to write AT ALL? Jot that down.

Your Niche(s), the bit of the market that you're going to fill, has to make sense. If you consider yourself to be a particular kind of person, then you're also a particular kind of writer. You just are. Maybe you're still quite early in learning to write as you go, and you're really not sure what kind of writer you are or what niche you should fill.

Let's draw that out right now. Ask yourself these questions:

1. What about my childhood makes me want to create This Type of story?
2. What about my work experience has given me better insight into This Type of story?
3. What about my education – the good and the bad – helps me perceive aspects of This Type of story?
4. What about my hobbies provides me with deeper understanding for This Type of story?

For example, if I consider myself here – I'm a teacher with a technical writing background. I have a BA in English and Philosophy. I'm also a certified Interior Designer. I love to learn, every day. I'm a mom, and that determines my priorities. I've been living abroad for over 15 years, which means I've been a permanent tourist for most of my adult life.

This is all about me – but none of it is bragging. It's just how it is. So now let's look at this stuff and break down how some of it might possibly relate to my being a writer.

Key ways my personal background influences and informs my writing.

1. Because I'm a teacher, I know about language development and the different methods of learning. I can apply that to my writing for any age group.
2. I learned Spanish, German and American Sign Language. So I have certain insights into different cultures (as learning a new language also means learning about the cultures). It's important to me that my stories be inclusive, and that background supports that.
3. As a kid, I hated to read. I didn't learn to enjoy reading until I was in high school. That means I totally get what sorts of books turn kids off and why – because I was one of them. I also know what sorts of stories I wanted to read and couldn't find. That's what I write.
4. I'm a mom, so that of course influences the types of stories I want to write. But in talking to a lot of agents and publishing professionals, I've come to find that no one really cares. **This isn't a selling point; it's a personal one** – just for me. Still, I'm including it in my Author Niche because that too is for me.

That brings me to Step 3: determining your readers.

Who should read you.

List the people (read: an avatar of a type of person, not a famous person), organizations and companies that might be interested in your stories – and why.

For example, if you've written a story about a child with ADHD, then you should research organizations and publishers that would be interested in your story.

Maybe you don't plan to tackle any tough topics with your writing. You just want to entertain. There's nothing wrong with that – you just need to seek the types of organizations and publishers that are looking for Your Type of Entertainment.

There's something for everything.

That said, you cannot write everything. So you determine who you want to have reading your stories. This is about creating an avatar, a picture of who reads you. Try to be as specific as possible.

If you're writing for kids, this is tougher – because you're also writing for their parents and grandparents, teachers and librarians. You may want to create 2 avatars (child and grown-up).

If you're writing vastly different types of books, like cozies for adults and toddler books, then you should definitely have 2 avatars.

You may wonder why you need to know this at all – especially if you plan on self-publishing. Well, as my great grandma used to say, “No amount of learning is ever wasted.” But it's more than that.

You cannot delve into the publishing market without knowing a thing about it. If you do, you and your work will belly flop.

To be clear, *you need to know enough about the publishing world to approach the right people* about your work. That's [how you get an agent](#), it's how you [land a publishing deal](#), it's how you [successfully market your own books](#). You've got to be in-the-know.

Meeting Needs of Readers

Decide how, specifically, your books will meet your readers' needs.

You've already determined who will read your stories, established an avatar or two and listed the organizations and publishers who would be particularly keen on knowing about your work.

Now you need to list their needs. What is it they wish others knew? How will you deliver that insight in your writing?

What if I can't think of anything?

Everyone has needs. Absolutely everyone. Even if you just want to write pure escapist fun with lots of explosions, you've got to know that pure escapist fun is maybe what your readers need.

If there's a demand for something, there is a need. As a writer, you've got to use your perceptions, observations and research abilities to figure out what those needs are.

Now the most fun part.

Decide what sorts of books you want to bring into the world and why.

This is my favorite part, and it's probably yours as well. Sit back and imagine your favorite books, the ones that make you feel good. If those are the books you want to bring to the market, then write it down.

What calls you to write? How do you want readers to feel when they read your stories?

Also, why do *you* want to write this stuff?

This is just the beginning!

If you only do this one part of the [Author Business Plan \(details on that HERE\)](#), you'll already be way ahead of most other writers in terms of understanding where you fit in the market and who you should contact with your manuscripts.

Keep in mind too, that once you've written this all down, it isn't a done deal. You'll always be adding new publisher names and organizations to your list. This is a fairly organic piece of writing you'll create here – in part because of changes in those businesses, but also as your knowledge base expands.

Next Up: Market Analysis. Wahoo! (Trust me, it's really a wahoo-moment.)

Keep creating, no matter what. (Even if you don't really know what.)

This entry is part of the series

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