

Inspiration at the London Book Fair

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<http://greatstorybook.com/inspiration-london-book-fair/>

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This is about Author HQ and how it gives authors inspiration at the [London Book Fair](#).

“Yes, hello, I’ve got a question. I’ve just written a novel, and I came to the [London Book Fair](#) hoping to find some help on how to publish it – but no one seems to want to talk to me and I don’t know where to start. How do I find help here?”

If you’re an author who has never been to the London Book Fair, here’s the insider’s tip you need to know about what there is *really* for authors.

Artwork by Pexels.

What most people don’t know about book fairs is that the focus isn’t typically on authors. It’s on business.

This was a question I heard asked at an event at the London Book Fair this year. I’ve taken the liberty of

editing the gentleman's question slightly, since, having been handed the microphone, *he actually went on to describe his novel to both panelist and audience for a good few minutes* before finally posing his question.

Despite almost certainly frustrating many of the aspiring writers sitting in the audience, many of whom could also have pitched a novel idea but knew it was neither the time nor the place, his question is in fact a very valid one.

I suspect that this man is not alone in feeling slightly lost at the [London Book Fair](#). In fact, I know he's not alone because I, for one, know exactly how he feels.

You're Not Alone

Over 25,000 people, from authors to agents, editors to literary scouts, walk through the doors of the Olympia Conference Centre during the three days of the fair. Surrounded by so many publishing professionals and faced with an overwhelming 1000 stands to peruse and 200 events to attend, it is hardly surprising that the occasional author feels a little out of their depth.

Bemused as he may have been at having to listen to a two-minute plot summary before being asked the *actual question*, the panellist's answer – whilst somewhat blunt – was also a very reassuring response to the author feeling like one of the Borrowers sat on a bookshelf between the **BFG** and the **Gruffalo**: “The London Book Fair is a *trade* fair.”

London Book Fair is a Trade Fair - what that means

This means that most of the attendees are there to make deals and do business – not to talk to authors. It's nothing personal, it's not because you're a bad writer – it's just because you're a writer. And writers and authors are the last people an agent or a publisher wants to talk to at a book fair – unless you've got an appointment.

Most of them are so busy that they can barely find a moment to grab lunch in between appointments, let alone find time for a motivational chat with an aspiring author with a stack of synopses and a list of questions.

Standing at the back, I couldn't see the expression on the face of the author who'd posed the question, but I'd imagine he looked a little dejected at this point. After all, as he'd informed us, he'd traveled a long way to be there – and now he wasn't going to get any help? Luckily, the panelist hadn't finished.

Why Authors *Should* Come to [The London Book Fair](#)

The better place to find help on how to publish your book, the audience was informed, is the **Writers' and Artists' Yearbook** or the [Author HQ](#) at the fair – the latter conveniently being the very place where the panelist and audience were assembled. So it seems that the author's expensive train tickets to London weren't wasted after all – he was in the perfect spot to get help: Author HQ.

So what is Author HQ, and why should authors go there? The hall in which Author HQ – and its sister stand the [Children's Hub](#) – are located, is a space which allows those little Borrowers to feel like Big People. This is a space where the writers matter.

Author HQ 2017 = 21 Events

Across the three days of this year's (2017) fair, authors and illustrators were offered the chance to learn, to connect and to be inspired by twenty-one events at [Author HQ](#), and twelve at the [Children's Hub](#).

With events lasting forty-five minutes to an hour, and covering topics such as the creative writing process, how to build your author brand and how to find a literary agent, the breadth and extent of the input on offer is quite overwhelming – and an emotional roller-coaster.

Allow me to explain.

Your first event of the day might see you listening to an extremely successful indie author talking about how her self-published novels have allowed her to quit her day job and make a living from her writing. This leaves you itching to get back home and finish that last chapter of your novel so that you can create a cover, get a professional author photo taken, upload your novel to Amazon and start to see those sales rack up.

Buoyed up and raring to go, you find a seat for the next event – an interview with a literary agent and a traditionally published author.

Still on a high from the last talk, you are convinced that self-publishing is the way to go and that you don't need a literary agent – but you figure it never hurts to listen.

20 Minutes Later at the [London Book Fair](#)...

Twenty minutes later, as the agent explains how she works with authors and the author talks about how his fantastic agent helped him to get a publishing deal, you are *convinced* that the only way you'll ever make any money from your latest novel, or any of the other half-finished manuscripts saved in the "Work in Progress" folder on your desktop, is with the help of an agent.

What's more, you've just realized that actually, this whole novel-writing thing is so much more complicated than you'd ever realized. You might have successfully completed your first draft, but did you think about character arcs whilst you were doing it?

Did you craft your characters carefully, giving them personalities that are consistent and authentic? Have you even written something that anyone would want to read? Most importantly, have you written the sort of book that *you'd* want to read?

Apparently that's what you're meant to do.

You leave the second talk of the day convinced that your manuscript needs another year's work

before you can possibly show it to anyone other than your cat.

Like Many Book Fairs, [London Book Fair](#) is Overwhelming

This whirlwind of input and flurry of emotions continues for three days, until both your brain and your notebook are full. You've written down websites you want to check out, books you want to read and made a to-do list as long as your arm.

But most importantly, you've been inspired. Admittedly, you've had a reality-check, too, but the overall feeling you're leaving with is 'inspired'. You might have a long way to go, but you're further today than you were three days ago.

You might not have spoken to the ten publishers you had researched in advance, or handed out any of the twenty-five copies of your synopsis that you lovingly perfected the week before the fair, but you have surrounded yourself with and learnt from like-minded people who, like you, want to share their words with the world.

And by the end of the three days at the [London Book Fair](#), you know that your words are worth sharing – or they will be, once you've edited them just one last time.

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