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December 20, 2009

# **SAMPLE RESEARCH PAPER C**

## **CAREER RESEARCH PAPER**

“Hitting the Big Time as a Novelist can be Like Trying to Win the Lottery”

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Fall 2009

### Career as a Novelist

**Thesis Statement:** Making it big in the world of being a novelist takes hard work and a little bit of luck.

**Purpose:** To provide the author with information necessary to decide on a career choice.

**Audience:** Professor

**Outline:**

- I. Introduction: The novelists profession is highly competitive
  - a. An educational degree is not a requirement but helpful
  - b. Salary can range from \$0 to six figures depending on experience
  
- II. Body: The road to becoming a published novelist is long and tough
  - a. Education - A degree from an accredited university is not necessary.
    - i. B.A. in English, Journalism, Writing
    - ii. Can use degree for a career to fall back on
  - b. Salary – Varies widely
    - i. Some writers only write as a 2<sup>nd</sup> job
  - c. Experience – Writing is the best experience a writer can have
    - i. Internships
    - ii. Writing for publication
    - iii. Writing for personal gratification
  - d. Industry Overview – Stable for those already published
    - i. International industry
    - ii. Stable growth
    - iii. Salary can vary widely
  - e. Profession and my assessments
    - i. Fits my personality type
    - ii. In alignment with my interests
    - iii. Works with my abilities
  - f. Evaluation – Writing is for me
    - i. Can support myself with something I love
    - ii. Immense freedom and flexibility with working hours/conditions
    - iii. Freedom of creative expression
    - iv. Can take years for publication
    - v. Pay can vary widely and is not predictable
  - g. Conclusion – Novelist is my dream job
    - i. Transfer to 4 year college
    - ii. Write frequently for practice
    - iii. Attend seminars for creative writing
    - iv. Have a back up plan to use the degree I'm pursuing

It is the dream of most writers to become published and earn a great living from their work. Hitting the “big time” as a novelist can be like winning the lottery. The market is highly competitive and quite fickle. If successful, a novelist can rake in fame and fortune. According to [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) the novel is a long narrative in literature. Although many disagree on the actual definition of a novel, none can disagree that a novel captivates and entertains. “A good book is the best of friends, the same today and forever.” ~Martin Farquhar Tupper. There are many obstacles to overcome if one wants to become a successful published novelist. A person does not necessarily need a higher education degree to become a published novelist but time and perseverance are a must. If fame and fortune are the driving factors for an aspiring novelist, than that person should rethink their career goals; novelist pay can range from \$0 to six figures, with the former being more common. Experience and number of published works are large factors in pay range.

A degree from an accredited university or training from a certified program can be advantageous but is not necessary. A high school diploma is expected but a college degree is recommended. I interviewed Dr. Susan Anguiano, Ph.D Psy, a published writer in the field of Psychology, and inquired what educational requirements she thought necessary to become a published novelist. Dr. Anguiano stated:

In order to obtain the skills and tools necessary for writing successfully, a person should obtain a minimum of a 4 year degree and possibly higher. Some writers pursue a Master's degree or even a Ph.D. The process of researching, outlining and writing takes guidance and experience and a college education can be the starting point.

I agree with Dr. Anguiano; I feel more confident writing with the training, skills and tools that a higher education institute offers. However, even though all novelists have excellent writing abilities, there are those who have exceptional abilities and propensity for writing that I believe diminishes the need for formal training.

The majority of published novelists or writers possess a B.A. in English, Journalism or Creative Writing. Usually if a writer has a specific genre of writing, they typically have specialized degree in that field. Fiction writers use their own creativity and ingenuity more than a form of education, though a college degree is useful for a wider perspective.

A formal degree is not necessary but is helpful in more ways than acquiring tools and skills for writing. Since the chances of making a living at being a novelist are slim, the aspiring novelist with a higher education will have more prospects to fall-back on. Some writers do not support themselves by writing alone. The United States Department of Labor reports that 16.8% of writers write as a second job, whereas 49.2% write for their primary job. Many writers teach writing for a living at the college level to supplement their incomes.

Everyone's writing methods and process differs. It is impossible to state there is a writing method that works for everyone. Some people, although rare, write from start to finish, some outline, others begin with free-writing. Regardless of their method, all writers need to write for experience and practice. Whether in a personal journal, in a publication or in an internship, the best experience a writer can have is to write. All research I have conducted on the topic of becoming a writer, including the American Association of Journalists and Authors and Eureka.org, is to constantly and consistently write. Whether writing in a personal journal, writing for a magazine, school newspaper or publication, writing is the necessary component. A person should not expect to make a three-point basket if that person rarely shoots basketballs. It is the same for someone who wants to write for a living; write for the practice and experience.

The market industry for a novelist is endless. Books can sell in the United States or internationally. Eureka.org states that first time novelists find it easier publishing their first novel than their second. If their first novel does not sell well, then their chances of publishing another work from the same publisher are slim. Another opportunity to make a living is through the film industry. The film industry has been producing films based upon novels for years. In 2004, 4 out of the 5 Academy Award nominees in the category of Best Picture were based on a novel. It is reported by [www.chasingthefrog.com](http://www.chasingthefrog.com) that an average of 30 novels per year are made into movies.

Receiving payment for one's writing is finicky; it is unpredictable at best. One cannot tell if their work will be published and if any advance or royalties will be offered. Ferguson's Career Guidance Center states that many of the books or articles submitted for publication are rejected, meaning that payment is \$0. Usually the initial advance for first time novelists is minuscule until they have a proven track record. Once their track record is established, advances become larger and profits from royalties (usually 10% of book sales) is a higher pay-out. It is common for writers to wait months or even years to sell their books. After being published, an author's chances of getting other writings into print increase significantly. If a writer's work continues to be published, the prospects for new writing with the same publisher increases. As mentioned earlier, if a novel sells well, there is a chance the film industry could produce a movie based upon the novel. That could mean the "big time" for a novelist if their novels are bought by the film industry.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor 2007 the average annual salary for a writer (non-specific) in California is \$96,640. For the entry-level writer in California, the average annual salary is \$32,570. Not too shabby for an entry-level position that can supplement the salary for an existing job. The national growth rate for employed writers in California from 2006 to 2016 is projected to be +12.8%. It is projected that there will be 4,159 job openings for writers from 2006-2016. Bridges.com states that the writing industry is "stable"

but could change at any time. During my interview with Dr. Anguiano, she stated that the market for books is opposite than the market for manufactured goods. Basically, when the economy takes a dive, the entertainment industry soars. There is always a market for a good book or a good movie.

The novelist or any profession in writing is a perfect fit for my ENFP personality type. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator pegs the ENFP as a creative enthusiast who loves to get taken away by their imagination and are good at expressing it (MBTI results: MBTI/ENFP – Blue). As an ENFP I have a creative mind; I let my imagination soar and can express my thoughts, feelings and emotions in verbal and written form. I share a love for writing that all novelists have. I love all aspects of the creative writing process, from researching to writing. It takes discipline; writers need to treat writing as any other job. Restraint and determination are needed to sit for long periods of time and write when not in the mood to write. ENFPs are known for getting bored easily and not finishing projects, so this aspect of career writing can be an obstacle. Although a great attraction to writing for my personality is the flexibility and freedom in scheduling. What a conundrum!

The process of evaluating a career in writing has unleashed a swell of encouragement and excitement for a writing career. I will keep researching a career as a novelist, but it is not a cut and dry path. There is not a formula for becoming a published novelist just as there is not a clear path to becoming a

famous actor. Even though there is the possibility that I will not reach my dream job, I believe that novelist/writer is a near perfect fit for my personality and abilities. There are limitless possibilities in this highly competitive market and those possibilities entice me. I eagerly anticipate all classes in my pursuit of higher education because I believe it will lead to my dream job. Cypress College offers courses in General Education and when I complete those requirements, I will be applying to 4 year colleges with an excellent Writing or English program. My aspirations are high as I tend to reach for the stars.

In conclusion, the road to becoming a published novelist or writer is uncertain and can be rocky. There is not a set course for a novelist profession nor is there a guarantee that one can be successful in this career choice. The pay varies widely and cannot be depended upon. Regardless of the uncertainties and possibilities, my dream is to become a published novelist/writer. I believe that I have the abilities and determination to succeed in this field. I will stay my course pursuing a B.A. in English, will continue writing and will pursue course and seminars for creative writing. The prospect of having the freedom for creative expression, flexibility for working conditions and to support myself financially doing what I love is more than enough encouragement to forge ahead. If I do not make it in the world of writing I will have a college education to fall back on and can pursue another dream-to become a teacher.

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