

The Hook

The hook should do two things:

1. *Grab the reader (aka the agent) and propel her through the whole letter.*
2. *Sum up the main plot of the novel.*

Note: *The Hook is the entire query in a nutshell, so try filling out this worksheet first (you'll need your answers for some of the other worksheets), but write the actual hook last!*

Creating your Hook

Who is your main character?

What must he or she do? or What does he or she want?

What is in his or her way? What goes wrong?

What is the impetus that gets your story rolling? In other words, why does your story start when it does?

Combine all of that into one summarizing sentence. Don't worry if you can't include details yet — that's what the rest of the query letter is for.

Hook examples:

- *Jonathan Clarke has everything a seventeen-year-old boy could want--except for a beating heart.*
- *Sixteen-year-old Annie Jenkins must control the magic to balance the realm--it's too bad her unknown abilities are hidden beneath her inhalant addiction*
- *In a world where Thinkers control the population and the Rules are not meant to be broken, fifteen-year-old Violet Schoenfeld does a spectacular job of shattering them to pieces*

The Setup

In the setup, you have a few goals:

1. **Provide a few details about who your main character is.** You've hooked the agent to find out more about your main character, so give them what they want.
2. **World-building information if pertinent.** For fantasy and science fiction, a little taste of the world would go in the setup section of the query. For mystery, horror, thriller or other genres, including the setting here wouldn't be a bad idea.
3. **The catalyst that moves the main character into the conflict** (next worksheet).

Creating your Setup

List your main character's most unique/important traits.

What makes your story world unique? Is the setting futuristic or historical? Is it an alternative universe? Does your character inhabit an interesting subculture? Describe that here. Then narrow that description down to a few powerful words.

Who is/are the most important supporting character/s? (Stick with one or two!) Why are those characters the most important? Villains, love interests, and other catalysts go here.

Include the same impetus you mentioned above here. You can expand on it in this section.

Incorporate these four elements into two to four sentences.

Setup Examples:

- *Whenever she's high, Annie has vivid visions of a death she can't remember and a guy she's never met. When she meets Jonathan Clarke, the ghostly boy from her hallucinations, she realizes her drug use has masked the abilities she's inherited from her magic-keeping mother. Wielding magic isn't everything it's cracked up to be; Annie discovers her newfound powers can't cure her terminally ill mother.*
- *Refusing to listen to the Tapes, stealing an old ID card, and walking in the park after dark with a boy and Vi in prison. The Good are usually separated from the Bad, but Vi finds herself sharing a cell with beautiful Bad boy, Jag Barque.*

The Conflict

This is the central thing that prevents the character from getting what s/he wants

Creating the Conflict

What does your main character want most?

What must he or she do to get it?

What is in his or her way? What goes wrong? Who is involved?

Conflict Example:

- *Because Jag and Vi are Free-Thinkers, they're banished to the Badlands, a place Vi fears but has always wanted to go. Secrets about her missing father and dead sister, combined with who—or what—she really is, lead her down a road full of difficult decisions. Falling for Jag further complicates Vi's life as she faces her new role, one she's always despised—being in Control.*

The Consequence

What will happen if your main character doesn't get what s/he wants? (Hint: if your answer is "nothing," you need to get back to the drawing board with your book and raise the stakes, because there is no real conflict if the stakes are low.)

Everything Else

Dear Ms. (or Mr.) [Agent Name]:

I am seeking representation for my [word count] [genre], [TITLE IN ALL CAPS].

or

I am pleased to submit for your consideration my [word count] [genre], [TITLE ALL IN CAPS].

Optional: If you chose that agent for a particular reason, you may want to add a sentence or two about that here.

Example for an agent who emphasized working with authors on her website: *I am seeking an agent's representation and would particularly like to work with you because of your hands-on approach.*

Optional: Tell a bit more about your book by comparing it to other books, talking about marketing ideas or a platform, or explaining how your novel is particularly unique.

Example: *I believe THE EMISSARY will appeal to readers of Brandon Sanderson, Kristen Britain, and Jim Butcher (specifically his Codex Alera series), as well as those who are fond of NBC's television show Heroes*

Include the body of your query here: the hook, the setup, the conflict, and the consequence.

Bio.

I would be happy to forward the complete manuscript at your request.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,