WELCOME TO THE 2023 AGENTS SYMPOSIUM

WRITERS' LEAGUE of TEXAS

"PRACTICE MAKES PITCH PERFECT" PRESENTATION

W/ LANCE FITZGERALD & BECKA OLIVER

THURSDAY, MAY 4

We'll start at 7 PM CDT.
Please say hello in the chat box while you wait!

NEXT WEEK:

2023 AGENTS SYMPOSIUM

PITCH LAB

THURSDAY, MAY 11

This is when Lance & Becka introduce themselves.

What's the purpose of a pitch?

To get them to say
"yes, I want to read something."

But also, it's a great way to get to know your work and to nail down how you're going to talk about your work.

What is a pitch?

First, let’s talk about…

What a pitch is *not*…

A cast of characters.

A theme.

A question.

A synopsis.

The 4Cs

Connection.

Context.

Compel.

Credentials.

CONNECTION:

“You represent…”

Connection is all about showing the agent you have a reason for pitching them, that you’ve done your research and you’re not wasting anyone’s time.

Of course, for the Agents Symposium, you have a built in connection – you are participating in this program and so are they.

CONTEXT:

Where will your book sit on the bookstore shelf?

Context is all about dropping an anchor for the agent, letting them know what it is you are pitching.

Genre and Category

Adult

Children's (Picture Book, Middle Grade, Young Adult)

Fiction: Mystery, Thriller, Suspense, Romance, Horror, SciFi, Fantasy, Western, Short Stories

Nonfiction: Memoir, Narrative, Practical, Essays

Format:

Novel

Novella

Collection

Graphic

Type:

Coming of age

Star-crossed lovers

A journey

Fish out of water

Space opera

Scope:

Epic

Saga

Compact

Sprawling

Epistolary

Tone/ Voice:

Humorous

Dark

Darkly humorous

Noir

Lighthearted

Lyrical

Comparison Titles

Comparison titles offer valuable information – about tone, situation, genre, scope, and more *(In the way that ____ does _____, my novel…).*

Comparison titles show that you are a thoughtful reader who knows the market.

Comparison titles can do a lot of heavy lifting in a pitch, but they should be relevant and realistic. Do not oversell when using comparison titles.

COMPEL:

The compel sentences of your pitch are the meaty middle – they do the most work to fulfill that purpose, *making them want to read something.*

Think about:

Character

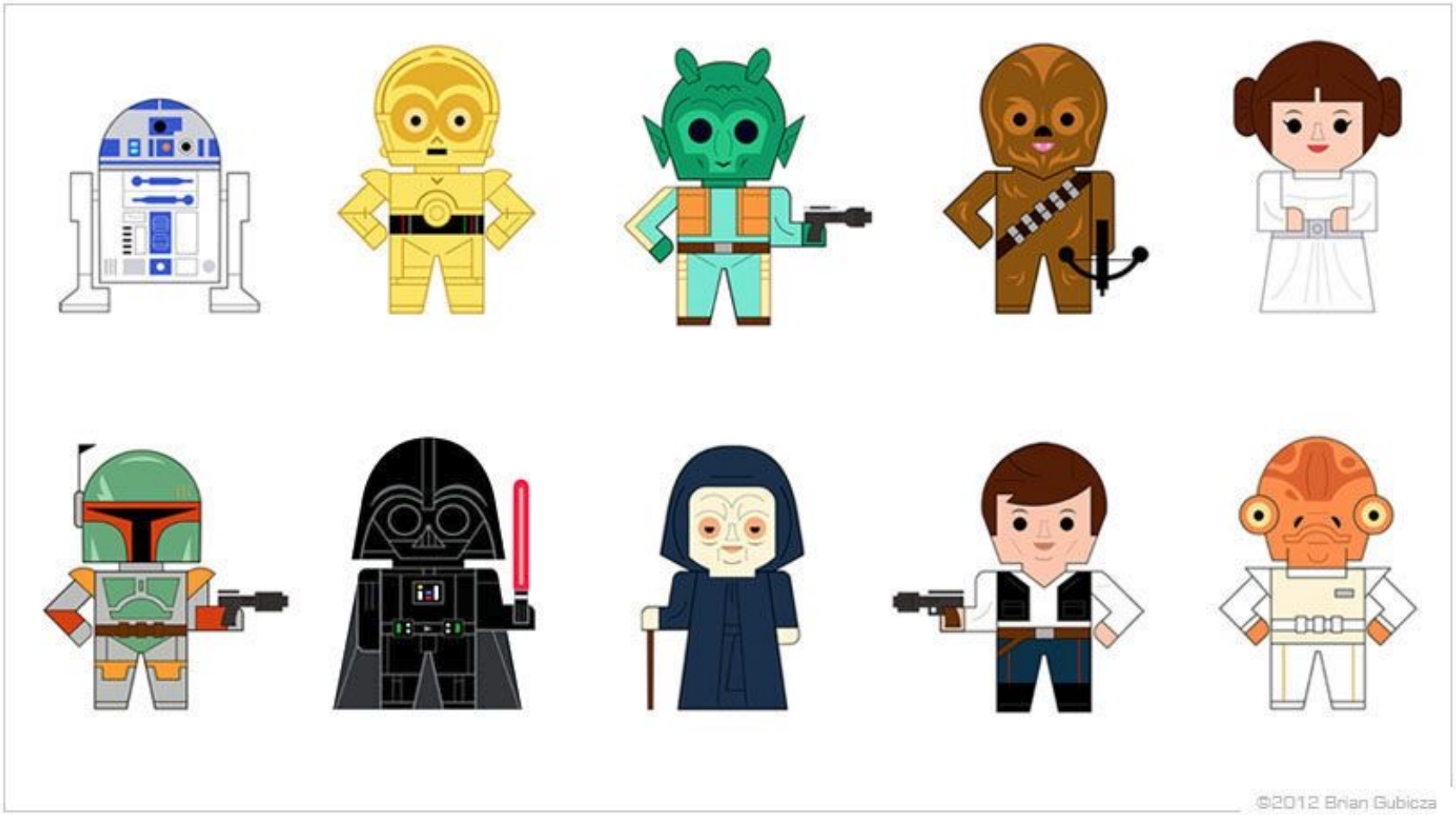
Setting & time period

The journey

The starting point

The 4 Ws work for fiction *and* nonfiction.

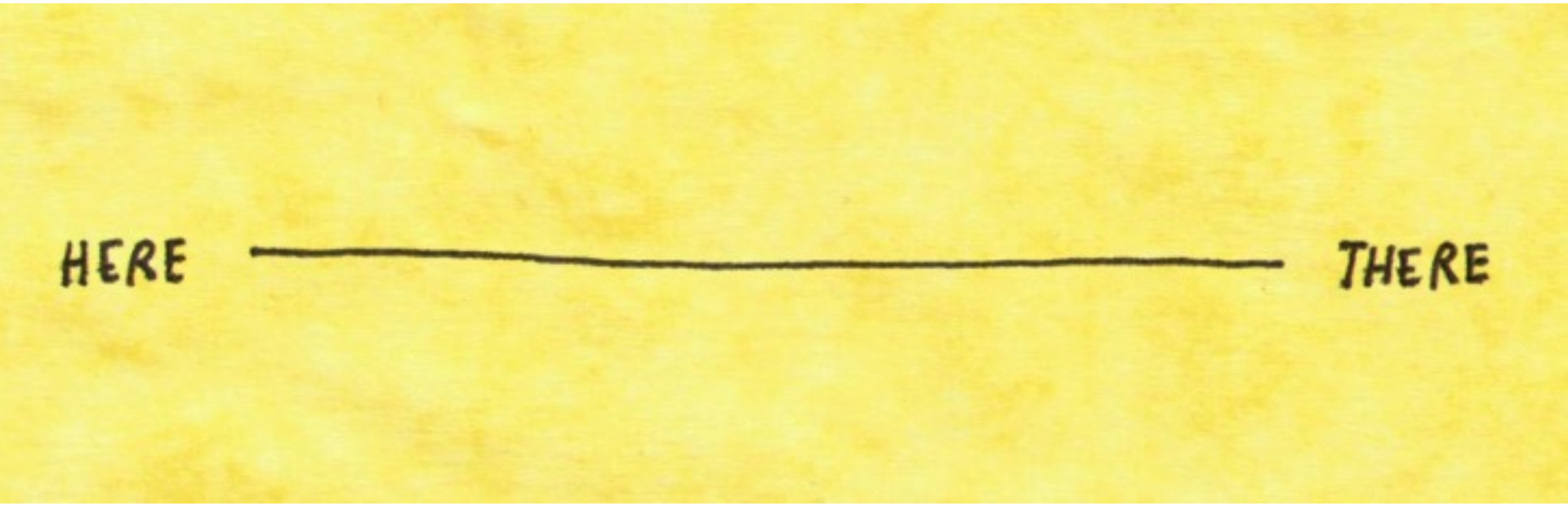
Who (Character)



Where (Setting & Time Period)

When (The Starting Point)

What (The Journey)



CREDENTIALS:

“A few words about me…”

The credentials are all about sharing what’s relevant about <u>you</u> with regards to the project you’re pitching and your writing career.

“A few words about me…”

Education – an MFA, other creative writing degrees, notable workshops you’ve taken.

Publications – journals, magazines, newspapers.

Contests / Awards – winner and finalist count!

Fellowships / Residencies – completed or upcoming.

Day Job – is your profession connected to what you’re writing?

Community – how have you been engaging with the literary community.

Using the 4 Cs to craft a pitch:

For context, create a list:

Genre/Category

Type of story

Scope

Tone/Voice

Comparison titles

Using the 4 Cs to craft a pitch:

For compel, start with a one page synopsis. (You'll probably need one eventually, why not put it to some use.)

From that, **write one paragraph**, focusing on the most unique or interesting thing.

Turn that into one sharp sentence.

Trick: Check out the jacket or flap copy for a book that's akin to yours; **how did it *compel* you to read more? Break it down.**

Using the 4 Cs to craft a pitch:

For credentials, make a list:

Education

Publications

Contests / Awards

Fellowships / Residencies

Day Job

Community

Pull it all together:

And then start reading it out loud. The long version.

Get used to it – get comfortable with it.

This is your rights guide “listing.”

Here are some examples:

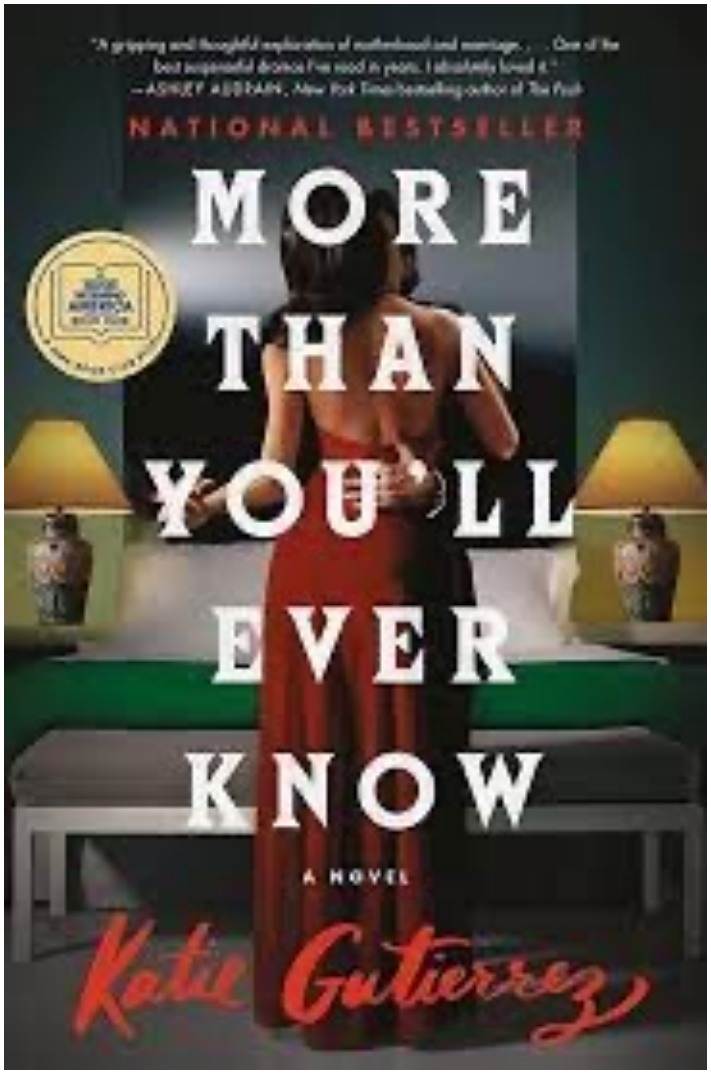
#1:

I’ve written a novel that is part mystery, part family drama.

In alternating narratives, my novel tells the story of Lore Rivera, a woman who fell in love with two men, married them both, and kept her double life a secret until they violently collided, leaving one husband dead and the other in prison for murder. The second narrative follows ambitious true crime blogger Cassie Bowman, who’s been running from her own dark past for years and sees her chance to finally make a name for herself with Lore’s story. The two women agree to work together on a book, but they don’t fully trust each other and for good reason, Cassie discovers, when the facts of the case start to fall apart calling everything into question, including Lore’s presumed innocence and Cassie’s real motivation.

I have taken classes through the Writers’ League of Texas, most recently with Gabino Iglesias and Stacey Swann, and I am a member of the Mystery Writers of America.

#1:


NATIONAL BESTSELLER
MORE THAN YOU'LL EVER KNOW
A NOVEL
Katie Gutierrez

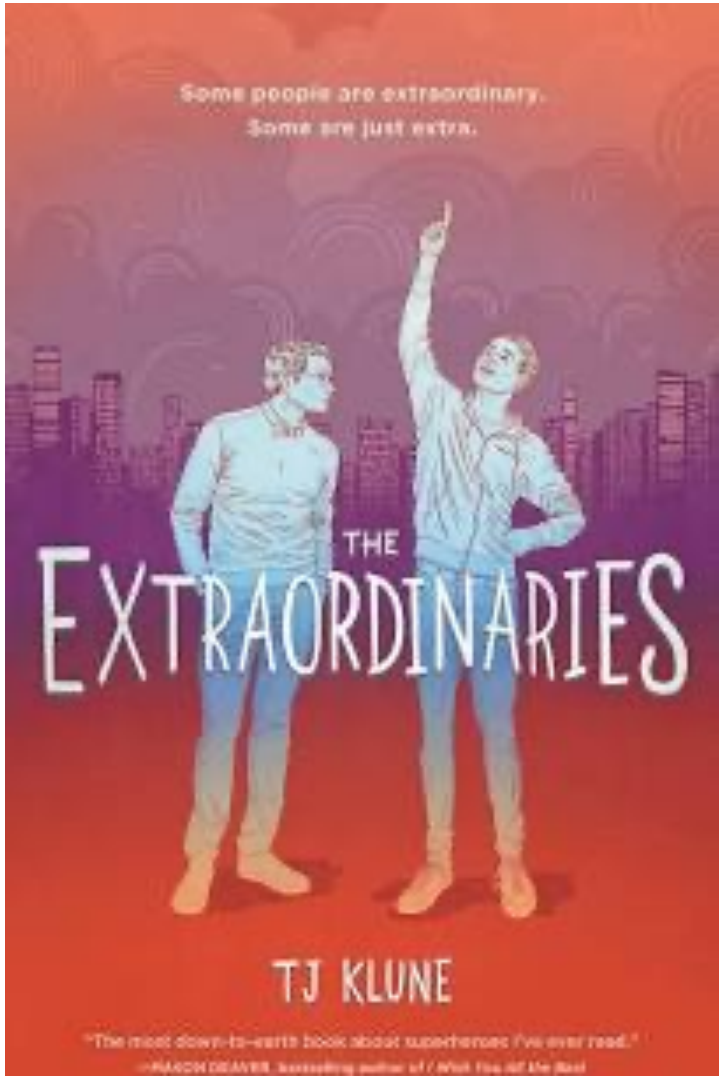
#2:

I’ve written a Young Adult Superhero Queer rom com. I think of it as a cross between the Tom Holland Spider-man films and Alice Osman’s Heartstopper series.

Teenager Nick Bell is obsessed with the new superhero in his town. When he’s not writing fanfic about Shadow Star and his battles with the evil Pyro Storm, he’s hanging out with his 3 best friends: Seth, Gibby, and Jazz and talking about the dreamy superhero. His policeman father wishes Nick would steer clear of the superhero, as the boy and his father only have each other; Nick’s mom was killed during a bank robbery. When Nick finally meets Shadow Star in person, he starts to wonder if maybe his fantasies could come true–or maybe his fantasies are all wrong. Set in an all American City, my humorous novel is about growing up, friendship, falling in and out of love for the first time, and superheroes.

I’ve self published several romances and fantasy novels.

#2:


Some people are extraordinary.
Some are just extra.
THE
EXTRAORDINARIES
TJ KLUNE

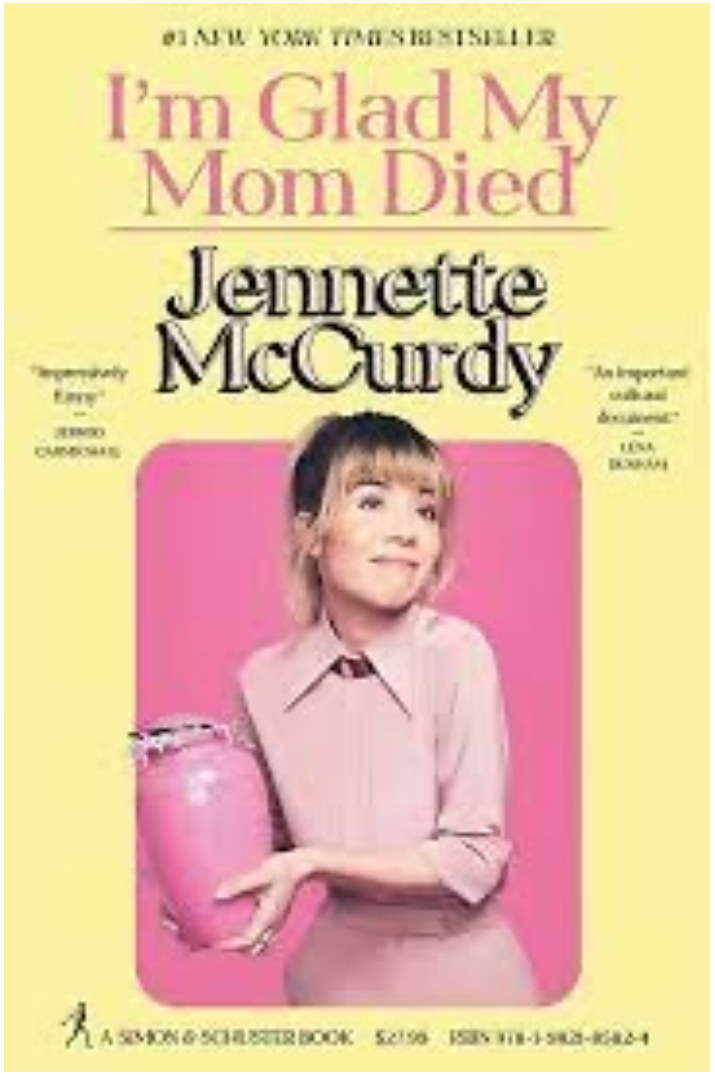
#3:

My memoir of navigating a complicated relationship with my overbearing mother - all while pursuing an acting career that turned me into a household name, if your household mainlines juice boxes and Nickelodeon - is as humorous as it is dark and it's 100% true.

I was six years old when I had my first acting audition. It was my mother's dream for her only daughter to become a star, and I would do anything to make her happy. When she suggested "calorie restriction" I went along, eating little and weighing myself five times a day. I endured extensive at-home makeovers and was even showered by my Mom until age sixteen, while sharing everything with her, my diaries, my email, and all my income. My anxiety, shame, and self-loathing grew, manifesting into eating disorders, addiction, and a series of unhealthy relationships. And then my mother dies of cancer (a terrible, painful, and also liberating moment) and I finally discover therapy and quit acting, embarking on the path to recovery and finally, for the first time, deciding what I want from this one wild and precious life.

This is my story.

#3:


#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
I'm Glad My Mom Died
Jennette McCurdy
A SIMON & SCHUSTER BOOK

DO'S
&
DON'TS

DO think about word choices:
First Debut novel
fiction novel
Fiction memoir

But **DON'T** get hung up on words like literary, high concept, upmarket, book club.

DON'T share distracting extras, including the jacket for your book that you crocheted. Remember, this is a Zoom room with just the two of you talking. Use that time to *talk*.

DON'T say your book will appeal to everyone.

DO be polite and professional.

DO do your homework- have read the bios and looked on the websites of the agent you are meeting.

DO have fun exploring your pitch ahead of time.

DO have an open mind to any feedback you may be lucky enough to receive. BUT also remember that this is your project. If you don't agree with the feedback, that's ok too.

DON'T argue or pick a fight. Again, if you don't agree with feedback, that's ok, but keep it polite.

DO have questions at the ready. If the person you meet with says he or she isn't interested in your specific project, use that time to gather information. You can also talk about other ideas you have or ask for suggestions for other agents in their agency that it might be a fit for.

DON'T pitch more than one project or multiple books in a series. If they ask, answer, but don't lead with it.

DO get very specific instructions from them on how to send materials if they request them.

DO take a breath. It's okay to be nervous.

DO bring notes with you, and yes, it's absolutely okay to read your pitch if that's what you need to do.

DO arrive on time and keep an eye on the time. These meetings will end at fifteen minutes, don't find yourself caught off guard.

Your questions:

"When pitching, do you have to have it memorized word for word or can you read it? Can you wing it somewhat?”

Your questions:

“Should the pitch sound totally different from how you describe your book in the query letter? Or should they be pretty similar? Any key differences between the two?”

Your questions:

“How much should the pitch be about the plot line or is it more the atmosphere of the story?”

Your questions:

“How can we pitch a work that's in progress - but fairly early stages - without wasting an agent's time?”

Your questions:

“Is there a different way to pitch a short story collection vs a novel?”

Your questions:

“Can you describe a great pitch that you once heard that you still remember?”

Questions?