

WELCOME TO BOOK PUBLISHING, an old-school branch of the media known for low salaries.

HOW DOES THE BOOK PUBLISHING INDUSTRY REALLY WORK?

Great question! It doesn't really work. But the good news is that the industry's ass-backwardness makes it an easy mark for domination. Virtually anyone can become a bestselling author, a leading editor, or a book publisher. All it takes is basic literacy and a few decades of free time.

EDITORS: HOW TO SPOT A FUTURE BESTSELLER



Snickering over that 700-page submission about a Roman centurion vampire who had a gay affair with Jesus Christ? Well, instead of Xeroxing the first few pages to pass around for giggles at the ed meeting, maybe you should be putting it up for acquisition. These days, it's becoming harder and harder to tell "crap" from "the kind of crap that sells hundreds of thousands of copies."

YOU SHOULD BUY IT IF . . .

- 1 Your first concern is "Are we sure the target audience for this is actually, you know, literate?"
- 2 Your first concern is "Are we sure that the celebrity 'author' is actually, you know, literate?"

- 3 The title fits this template: The _____ [intriguing compound noun]’s _____ [daughter, wife, or mother]. Book clubs are preordering it already and we haven’t even filled in the blanks.
- 4 The plot involves the Bible/the Masons/any old secret society, really—and some kind of cryptological twist. Yes, still.
- 5 The mere thought of having anything to do with the conservative-pundit author makes you want to run screaming from the room and take four hundred consecutive showers.
- 6 The celebrity “author” seems likely to die or be convicted of a felony within the coming year (but not before signing off on everything).
- 7 It’s a “harrowing” memoir (“harrowing” = lots of puking scenes, basically). Yes, still.
- 8 It’s a lifestyle guide by a celebrity whose lifestyle is worth emulating . . . if your idea of a life goal is to be “#1 in upskirt photos on the internet.”
- 9 It’s a catchily titled, easily digestible novel or memoir about an area of the world that’s in the news a lot (e.g., Afghanistan, Tehran). People will snap it up like the liberal-guilt-assuaging vitamin that it is, no matter how purple the prose.
- 10 It’s a novel about an average-looking middle-aged lady who somehow ends up with money, babies, romance, or fame (ideally all four).

There you go. You now have the instincts of Judith Regan, but you bypassed the whole messy selling-your-soul-to-Satan part.