

Address it however you address letters. Obviously, email requires different treatments. What you see here is more traditional. All that matters is that the contact information is clear.

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Mr. Agent Person
Upstart Crow Literary
P.O. Box 25404
Brooklyn, NY 11202

Dear Mr. Agent Person:

I saw you speak at the SCBWI Mid-Central Southern Writers Conference last May, and I liked what you said about the ineluctability of the visible and middle-grade fantasy. It was kind of pretentious, but sort of inspiring, so I thought I'd try you with my middle-grade comic fantasy *Archie McPhee and the Bucket of Glory*. I've published one story in *Cricket*, am a longtime member of SCBWI, and have been writing seriously for seven years.

Archie McPhee and the Bucket of Glory is the story of nine-year-old orphan Artie, who comes across a strange, magical object while scouring the beach for driftglass during one lonely summer vacation. The Bucket of Glory is blackened and rime-encrusted and can pour forth whatever it's owner desires—whether it is a flood of Bulgarian Banana Barf Blast ice cream (Artie's favorite flavor), a shower of tears, or a river of gold. Where does the bucket come from? Who made it? Who cares? All that matters is that this lowly bucket has the power to transform the world! But when the bucket falls into the wrong hands—Artie's arch-nemesis, Silas Spears—Artie must navigate a series of amusing, increasingly desperate challenges, undoing the damage Silas has wrought and restoring order to the world. And in so doing, he meets the bucket's owner and discovers his true family.

Archie McPhee and the Bucket of Glory is complete at 45,000 words, and I am sending it to you exclusively. I hope you enjoy it, and I look forward to hearing from you at the email address above!

Sincerely,

Raoul McPhee

I always prefer the first paragraph to (a) tell me of any personal connection (you know someone who knows me, saw me at a conference, or read an interview); (b) to quickly tell me what kind of book is being submitted (genre, age range, any other positioning); and (c) a sense of the writer's accomplishments & memberships, if any.

The second paragraph is where I look for a short summary of the story itself. People will advise you to write this like the back cover of the paperback of your book, but that can be a difficult art. Mostly what I look for is a sense of where the story is going, what sort of goals the book has (do the author's aims fit the genre? is the author moralistic? and so on). If I like the first 20 pages, this is where I go for reassurance that the rest of the book follows through.

And don't forget to proofread! Is it Archie or Artie? If you're serious about your work, you'll be serious about presenting it and yourself well.

I look for the third paragraph to tell me the length of the manuscript, whether or not I have it exclusively and for how long, and how the author prefers to hear from me.

And that's it. Really, the letter is what most agents read *after* they've read the pages and decided whether it works for them. The letter is where we find out more about someone we're interested in representing. Good luck!