

Latinidad - Summer 2022: The Book Bible

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BEFORE YOU SEND IT OUT

“Working with Marcela has been such a wonderful experience. Not only is she professional but extremely knowledgeable when it comes to editing. She has a gift for seeing the full potential of my work and knows enough to lead me to accomplish it. As soon as we had our telephone conversation I began making changes to my novel. Her recommendations are easy to follow. Reading them caused a ‘eureka’ moment that clarified what is missing in my novel! I highly recommend Marcela and I will definitely keep seeking her advice throughout my writing career.”

—Miriam Oviedo-Clark

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1. Saludos

I’ve known about Susan Shapiro’s wildly successful courses for years, but hesitated to recommend them because they were only available in person, in New York City. (The writers with whom I work tend to be from all over the US.) Now Susan’s “instant gratification takes too long” class is available to anyone, anywhere within the pages of *The Book Bible: How to Sell Your Manuscript—No Matter What Genre—Without Going Broke or Insane*.

Most publishing guides focus on writing for adults or children, fiction or nonfiction. Yet many authors write books that are shelved in different sections of bookstores, and Susan’s clear-eyed guide reflects this reality. But what really makes *The Book Bible* stand out is Susan’s track record: over 150 of her former students have been published by the likes of Random House, HarperCollins, and Scholastic. An unexpected pleasure is how she generously references and quotes BIPOC agents, editors, and authors such as Reyna Grande, Mark Oshiro, and Carlos Hernandez.

All writers should read *The Book Bible* before querying agents or editors, and even before hiring freelance editors like me. To learn more, read the Q&A below.

Helping Latinos get published,
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2. Q&A

Susan Shapiro, an award-winning writer and professor, is the bestselling author/coauthor of seventeen books her family hates in eight different genres including *Unhooked*, *The Forgiveness Tour*, *Five Men Who Broke My Heart*, *Lighting Up*, *The Bosnia List* and her inspiring writing guide *The Byline Bible*. She's freelanced for the NY Times, New York Magazine, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Salon, Tablet, Elle, Oprah, Wired and The New Yorker online. She lives with her scriptwriter husband in Greenwich Village where she's taught her popular "instant gratification takes too long" courses at The New School, NYU, Columbia University and in private classes and seminars—now online. You can follow her on Twitter at @susanshapironet and Instagram at @Profsue123.

Q: Congratulations on the dazzling success of your former students! Over 150 of them have been published by highly regarded presses and periodicals. Equally impressive is the joy you take in their accomplishments, which leaps off the pages of *The Book Bible*. It goes without saying that you are a skilled mentor, but what have you learned from your students? How has teaching influenced your writing?

A: Thanks. I've learned so much from my students. I joke that I help them get published so I can steal their young editors and agents. But seriously, it keeps me younger and more attuned to the world, especially since my classes are so multi-cultural and multi-age and now that I'm online, people from all different states and countries are zooming in. Chasing editors, bylines and checks for years on end is so myopic. Helping others launch their careers has brought me great karma. I basically spent the pandemic eating popcorn and binging on Netflix and HGTV's *International House Hunters* (my husband jokes I sit on the couch never going anywhere but I can tell you the price of a one-bedroom in Brussels or Cambodia.) So remote teaching fascinated me and actually gave me something important to focus on. I wound up writing a lot about it for Salon, Wired, Oprah magazine (<https://www.oprahdaily.com/life/health/a38888542/a-zoom-with-a-view-the-surprising-upsides-to-online-learning/>) and a humor piece for the New Yorker online with a former student Nicole Whitaker who is much funnier than me (<https://www.newyorker.com/humor/daily-shouts/an-introduction-to-zoom-for-teachers>).

Q: In *The Book Bible* you wrote, “My impressive instructors assigned their own acclaimed books, yet never offered names of editors or agents. It was verboten to ask. They offered no publishing courses for aspiring authors or ways to navigate this bumpy journey, ignoring the business side that blinded me. In fine arts degrees, the focus is still more process than profession, barely mentioning student internships, jobs or freelance opportunities to pay tuition or debt. I’ve taught in MFA programs that cost \$70,000 annually, as much as an MD, JD or MBA. I love when students say they learned more about publishing in my two-hour seminar than in all of undergrad and grad school combined. To paraphrase Mark Strand: I became what was missing.” Can you define the moment when you realized you needed to become what was missing? Was this an epiphany sparked by a conversation with a mentor or mentee?

A: After I finished my masters in creative writing at NYU, a professor helped me get a job at *The New Yorker* where I worked for 4 years. What an amazing place to work right out of school. It enabled me to stay in the city and introduced me to a brilliant literary crowd. I had several wonderful generous older mentors who I wanted to emulate. I even wrote a whole book about my literary gurus: <https://www.amazon.com/Only-Good-Your-Word-Favorite/dp/1580052207>

Q: Including *The Book Bible*, you have authored or coauthored seventeen books, published articles for periodicals such as *The New Yorker*, and taught courses at The New School, NYU and Columbia University. How do you manage to juggle so many balls with grace and humor?

A: Well, I wrote professionally for 23 years before I landed my first hardcover with Random House (the memoir *Five Men Who Broke My Heart*) so on some level I’m still making up for lost time. I don’t have children (though some of my students call me their Jewish mom) and my husband is also a writer, professor and workaholic. Everyone thinks I’m so energetic but it’s because I write all day on the computer in sweats and only teach a few nights a week. So it’s very exciting to be in a room filled with real live people. My classes energize me—even lately when they’re on the computer screen.

Q: *The Book Bible* is packed with pro tips, including: “It’s rare that someone can stay home, finish a manuscript on their own, and sell it to a mainstream publisher. Writing is a collaborative process that benefits from outside perspective.” Do you have a regular critique group you rely upon? Or do you use different beta readers for each manuscript? And do you critique or edit your students’ work?

A: Yes, of course I critique and edit my students' work. I was a book reviewer (for NYT Book Review who had my own syndicated book column in Newsday) and in the NBCC for decades; I'm known to be a very tough critic. Yes, I have two weekly writing workshops with brilliant authors, editors and agents—we went online during the pandemic. I had three books due so they saved me.

Q: Your highly regarded Instant Gratification Sell Your Book class is now available online, and I intend to recommend it to my readers and the writers with whom I work, most of whom reside outside New York City. At what stage would you recommend writers take the class? When they have just an idea? After pounding out a rough first draft of a proposal or manuscript? Or should they wait till they have a final polished proposal or manuscript in hand? How can writers best prepare for your class? Please describe your ideal student.

A: I love when beginners take my online book class early so they don't waste years on a project that won't sell. One student had a few ideas but no pages yet and was inspired by the agent and kid lit editors who zoomed in. He took all their advice, threw out an idea for a picture book they loved and he just sold it (through the agent and editor he met.) So that was very exciting.

Q: Do you have upcoming projects that my readers should have on their radar?

A: I'm working on a new book, will keep teaching online and have events coming up—an in-person NY panel on June 10 and an online panel on July 5. I post everything I'm doing so people can follow me on social media:

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Susanshapiro>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/susanshapiro>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/profsue123/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/susan-shapiro-9171755/>

3. Resources

POETRY AND PROSE AWARDS

Submission Period: June 1 - July 15

The Cincinnati Review invites submissions for the annual Robert and Adele Schiff Awards. One poem, one piece of fiction, and one piece of literary nonfiction will be chosen for publication in their prize issue, and winning authors will receive \$1,000 each. All entries will be considered for publication

in The Cincinnati Review. For more information, visit <https://www.cincinnatiareview.com/contests/robert-and-adele-schiff-awards/>

FLASH FICTION PRIZE

Submission Period: June 1 - July 31

The Prime Number Magazine Flash Fiction Prize is open to writers around the world. First prize is \$251 (a prime number) and publication for a story no longer than 751 words (also a prime number). For more information, visit <https://www.press53.com/>

MEMOIR AWARD

Submission Period: June 15 - September 30

The Bridport Prize International Creative Writing Competition is passionate about discovering creative writing talent from around the world. Previous winners include the novelist Kate Atkinson MBE, Kit de Waal and Kelleigh Greenberg-Jephcott. For their new memoir prize, they seek submissions of 5 to 8,000 words maximum. For more information, visit <https://bridportprize.org.uk/memoir-award-coming-soon/>

PEACE POETRY AWARD

Deadline: July 1

The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation hosts The Barbara Mandigo Kelly Peace Poetry Award to encourage poets to explore and illuminate positive visions of peace and the human spirit. There are three age categories: Adult (award = \$1000), Youth 13-18 (award = \$200), and Youth 12 and under (award = \$200). The contest is open to writers worldwide. For more information, visit <http://www.peacecontests.org>

GRINDHOUSE PRESS

Submission Period: August 1 - August 5

Grindhouse Press seeks horror, extreme horror, transgressive fiction, sleaze, exploitation, dark humor, and general weirdness with a dark theme. They're looking for content that could remind their readers of the Grindhouse films of the 60s and 70s and the Video Nasties of the 80s. For more information, visit <https://grindhousepress.com/>

JUNIPER PRIZE FOR FICTION

Submission Period: August 1 - September 30

A prize of \$1000 and publication by The University of Massachusetts Press is offered for two original manuscripts of fiction: one short story collection and one novel. The competition is open to all writers in English, whether or not they are US residents. For more information, visit <https://www.umasspress.com/>

DIGNIDAD LITERARIA AWARDS

Deadline: September 1

Get Fresh Books offers The Dignidad Literaria Award for a poetry collection by a poet of demonstrably African and/or Indigenous ancestry descended from a Spanish-speaking country. This includes South America, Central America, the Caribbean, and Brazil. Poets of Haitian ancestry are also welcomed to submit poetry to this award. There is no submission fee. For more information, visit <https://gfbpublishing.org/>

BRITTINGHAM & FELIX POLLAK PRIZES IN POETRY

Deadline: September 15

A prize of \$1500 and publication by the University of Wisconsin Press is offered to two book-length poetry manuscripts. Four additional applicants will also be offered publication. For more information, visit <https://wicw.submittable.com/submit>

FIGURE 1 JOURNAL

Figure 1 is a digital poetry journal committed to publishing new and underrepresented voices that push against any slack thinking in the current literary scene. Send poems and sharp-edged word-objects you can't quite call poems. For more information, visit <https://thefigureone.com/>

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“If you don’t know where to start, mine your obsessions. When choosing a book topic, don’t try one that will please your parents, spouse or professors, or a subject you think agents and editors will buy. Write what you find fascinating. What would you want to read, write and talk about for the next decade? A book can easily take five years to finish, and you might be promoting it long after that. So it better be a subject you could discuss forever.”

—Susan Shapiro

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