

The Writer's Workshop (Part 6 Of 6): THE DEDICATION



The dedication

In past installments of this [column](#), I offered tips on writing. Perhaps you are already underway in completing your best seller. This final column, let's talk about one of the most important, yet often overlooked, pages in the book: the dedication page. It's the most heartfelt and personal page in the book conveying love, admiration, and thanks. It lasts forever. And it can be reason enough to compel a writer to complete their project.

“This Is Dedicated To The One I Love”

The memorable song by The Mamas and the Papas says it all: “This is dedicated to the one I love.” A dedication is an expression of the utmost affection to a personal or professional friend or lover, or a cause, that impacted their life. If you need inspiration to finish your book, remember you can dedicate it to the one you love. That should be enough to sustain you. In fact, if you haven't done so already, pull out your manuscript now and write down the dedication. Mark my words; the dedication provides motivation to complete the project. Here are a few dedications worth noting.

The old man and the dedication

The dedication of Ernest Hemingway's classic *The Old Man and the Sea* is:

“To Charlie Scribner and To Max Perkins.”

Scribner was Hemingway's publisher and Perkins, his literary agent. The two men were the most prominent individuals to recognize Hemingway's genius. Together, they were influential in Hemingway's rise to prominence as one of the most significant American writers of the 20th Century.

Both men died prior to the publication of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Neither lived to see how the book rejuvenated Hemingway's career, and led to his awards for the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction in '53 and the Nobel Prize for Literature in '54. In the twilight of his life, Hemingway recognized the people who mattered the most to him in his profession. Through the dedication, they continue to exist as quintessential pieces of the Hemingway mystique.

Praise to the vicarious adventurer

Agatha Christie dedicated *The Secret Adversary* to:

“All those who lead monotonous lives in the hope that they may experience at second hand the delights and dangers of adventure.”

That dedication is, of course, to us, her devoted readers. Christie, the greatest fiction writer of all time with over two billion copies of her 66 detective novels in print, understood the importance of the audience.

Devoted readers vicariously joined [Detective Hercule Poirot](#) on the hunt and traveled on exotic trips on the Orient Express. Christie introduced us to despicable villains, entertaining us with surprising twists and turns in her stories. For all that, she said '[thank you](#)' to us.

Dedication as a social or political statement

Often, a writer uses their dedication to make a statement about the current state of affairs. For example, James Baldwin's dedication of *Blues for Mister Charlie* is poignant and inspirational:

“To the memory of Medgar Evers, and his widow and his children, and to the memory of the dead children of Birmingham.”

A white supremacist murdered Evers in his driveway in 1963 in front of his family. Three months later, the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama was bombed, killing four young black girls attending Sunday school. In 1955, Emmett Till, put to death for allegedly whistling at a white woman, provided the inspiration for Baldwin’s *Blues for Mister Charlie*. Both the story and the dedication are powerful statements about the evils of racism.



From Fitzgerald with love

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s marriage to Zelda Sayre was, in a word, turbulent. Many referred to the couple as the *enfants terribles* (terrifying children) of the Jazz Age of the 1920s. Wild parties and excessive drinking were often the order of the day. Yet there was also deep affection and sentimentality in their

relationship. Fitzgerald dedicated *The Great Gatsby*:

“Once again to Zelda.”

Ironically, though *The Great Gatsby* became Fitzgerald’s most famous novel, it initially failed to attain the popularity of his two previous best sellers, *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned*. Fitzgerald’s and Sayre’s lives spiraled, culminating in Fitzgerald’s sudden death at age 44. Zelda died seven years later in a fire at a hospital in Asheville, NC, where she was undergoing electroshock therapy. Buried together in a family plot in Rockville, MD, their tombstone is inscribed with the final sentence of the book he dedicated to her:

“So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

The greatest compliment

Soon after the publication of *Jane Eyre*, which Charlotte Bronte published under a pseudonym, the book fell into the hands of W.M. Thackeray. Thackeray was the author of *Vanity Fair* and one of England’s foremost writers of the 1800’s. He wrote that *Jane Eyre* “interested me so much that I have lost (or won if you like) a whole day in reading it.” Bronte so appreciated his compliment that she dedicated the second edition of the novel to him. Thackeray in turn replied that the dedication was “the greatest compliment I have ever (received) in my life.” Over time, *Jane Eyre* became one of the most popular love stories of all time, far eclipsing Thackeray’s prose.

Dedications tell their own story

A book’s dedication tells its own story. It becomes part of the legend of the book, the author, and the person to whom the book is dedicated. In fact, the story of the dedication can outlive the popularity of the book itself, or adopt a significance equal or greater to that of the story.

So, continue with your writing. If you get bogged down, remind yourself about to whom your book is to be dedicated. It might inspire you to finish the project. A name or simple phrase in a dedication may, over time, eclipse your

book. In fact, could turn out to be the greatest expression of the idea you want to convey.

About the author:



John Adam Wasowicz is a practicing attorney and author of the Mo Katz mystery series, including the newly published [*Roaches Run*](#). His other Katz stories include [*Daingerfield Island*](#), which introduced readers to Mo Katz, a defense attorney who had previously worked as a city prosecutor; [*Jones Point*](#), with Katz in the role as U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; and [*Slaters Lane*](#), about a fictitious criminal investigation that takes in 2020 during the pandemic. All of the books are available in paperback, ebook, and audiobook from major online retailers or through indie bookstores.

John dedicated his four books to his father-in-law, his wife, his children, and his nephews. He is hard at work on Book Five of the mystery series and the dedication is already written.