SHOULD YOU PAY A SUBMISSION FEE TO LITERARY JOURNALS?

Submission fees have become ubiquitous in the world of literary journals and magazines. Ask yourself these questions before you pay.

by Valerie Lute

1 IS THE FEE ONLY A FEW DOLLARS?

Most submission fees are between $2 and $5 USD, however some charge over $20. You probably don't want to pay more than a few dollars unless it is a special contest.

2 DOES THIS JOURNAL OFTEN PUBLISH UNSOLICITED PIECES?

Check the biographical statements of the authors they publish. Do they regularly publish new and emerging writers, or do you only see established writers with books out?

3 HAS THIS JOURNAL BEEN AROUND FOR A WHILE?

Online journals can come and go in the blink of an eye. Make sure that the journals you submit to have put out a few issues already and that they have a regular publication schedule.

4 DOES THIS JOURNAL HAVE A PROFESSIONAL LOOKING WEBSITE?

Online literary journals that put effort into their web design and branding are more invested in their continued existence. Plus, you want your story to look nice if it gets published.

5 IS THIS JOURNAL TRANSPARENT ABOUT WHERE THE FEE IS GOING?

A journal should always be up front about where the fee is going. Is it covering their printing costs or web servers? Are they paying their editors or contributors?

6 DOES THIS JOURNAL PAY ITS WRITERS?

Many literary journals don't pay writers, but you might want a chance to earn back what you paid in submission fees. Journals that pay their writers also tend to be more established and have a larger readership.

7 DOES THIS JOURNAL NOMINATE FOR ANY AWARDS?

There are journals that don't pay their writers, but still nominate for prestigious awards, like the Best American series, Best of the Net or the Pushcart Prize.

8 WILL THIS PUBLICATION HELP YOUR WRITING CAREER?

Getting published in the right journals can help you publish a literary novel, or impress a hiring committee for a professorship. If youre literary ambitions are elsewhere, you might not need journal publications to get ahead.