

I have written six children's poetry books, each based on a particular theme. I am ready to submit to editors and agents. What's the best way to proceed?

Q: I have written six children's poetry books, each based on a particular theme. I am ready to submit to editors and agents, but I'm not sure how. I've consulted various market publications for guidelines, but they don't address poetry books per se. My books contain between 12 to 27 poems, and average around 25 pages each. They are targeted to the 8 to 12 age group.

I've thought that the best way to pique an editor's or agent's interest would be to submit a query with a few sample poems from one book, and then to mention that I have others.

According to SCBWI Board Member Jane Yolen, who is both a poet and who has edited poetry anthologies, "If the poems are clearly for elementary readers, 14-20 is about right and they will be presented as a fully illustrated picture book. As such, especially if you are a new or fairly new author, an agent or editor will want to see them all. Someone who already has a fine reputation as a poet might not have to show the entire mss, but editors in these times are fairly leery of taking a chance on a new author being able to finish the whole thing to the same standard. Besides, they have to sell the book to their pub committee and few are really excited about poetry, alas.

"If you are thinking about a book of poems for junior high and up, you need at least double the 14-20, and probably much more."

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