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*Dishing up writing advice and inspiration every day*

# Kickstart Your Revision With Your Bookclub's Help

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One of the best decisions I made about 10 years ago was to join my church book club. As a writer who spends much of her spare time in isolation with her work, I relish the book club meetings. We women gather monthly over potluck meals, glasses of sparkling wine, and desserts that leave us with mild regret. The book selection could be a literary novel, ethnic fiction, a presidential biography, or a bodice ripper bordering on the erotic.

We are a sorority of sorts, women in our 40s, 50s, and beyond catching up on each others' lives and providing each other with emotional and spiritual sustenance, while always preserving time for the discussion of the book.

I have watched these women identify stilted dialogue, uncover the layers of a main character's motivations, rail against a novel's ending, and engage in a grueling debate over the necessity of an adverb.

That's why last fall, when I was completing a draft of my novel in progress, I knew I wanted my book club to read it.

Having your book club select your manuscript for discussion has its benefits.

**You know they'll read your work.** I've had friends promise to read my manuscript but then never heard from them again. However, book club members are committed to attending the meetings and they hate to show up having not read the book.

**You know you'll get feedback.** At my meetings we assign one member to facilitate the discussion, guaranteeing that the conversation will stay on topic and get to the heart of members' opinions.

**You'll get proofreading and copy editing services for free.** You may want to have paid professionals clear your writing of typos, grammatical mistakes, and passages that just don't work, but it doesn't hurt to have more than a dozen pairs of eyes flagging anything that seems amiss.

**You'll have an automatic fan base.** Your book club friends are your support group. They'll want you to succeed. They'll appreciate being brought into the process during the early stages. They'll be your ambassadors, telling others about your writing and their role in helping you.

To get the most out of the experience, I gave my book club friends some guidance. I included a questionnaire with the manuscript copies I handed out to get the kind of feedback I wanted. Also, I assured them that they didn't have to spare my feelings during the discussion, that I wanted them to be as candid as they would be for any other written work.

My book club friends told me the truth. While they loved my narrative, subplots, and dialogue, they didn't care for my main character. They didn't like her. They didn't feel sympathy for her plight. They also thought her best friend added nothing to the story and wasted the reader's time.

I've since revised the manuscript, keeping in mind their feedback.

Book club input may not get you an agent, but you can get thoughtful, constructive feedback in a supportive environment.

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[to Lena Dunham, From the Literary World](#)

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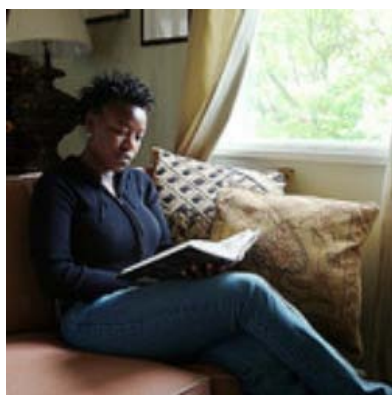


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*Lisa Braxton is former president of WNBA/Boston. She earned her MFA in creative writing at Southern New Hampshire University. Read her blog at [www.lisabraxton.com](http://www.lisabraxton.com).*

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on October 6, 2014

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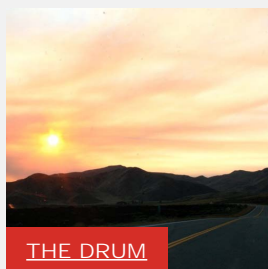
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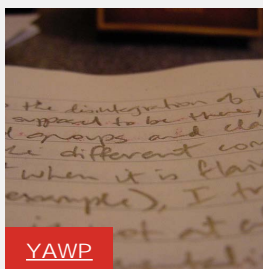
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