One Thing – Literary Edition with Stuart Brown

EPISODE 3. SANDRA PROUDMAN

https://stuartjbrown.com/podcast/one-thing-literary-edition-3-sandra-proudman/

February 4, 2026: My guest for this episode of “One Thing – Literary Edition” is Sandra Proudman, a literary associate at Galt & Zacker Literary Agency. Her advice to new authors is to “keep writing.”

SUMMARY

In the podcast episode of “One Thing – Literary Edition,” host Stuart Brown interviews Sandra Proudman, a literary associate at Galt & Zacker Literary Agency. She emphasizes that the most critical habit for a new author is to **keep writing and producing new work**. Here are the specific takeaways from her discussion:

- **The Two-Year Rule:** If you have been querying the same project for two years without success, it is likely time to move on to a new manuscript.
- **Avoid the "One Project" Trap:** Authors often fall deeply in love with their first world, but staying stuck on one project for four or five years can be a "red flag" to agents who see your history on tools like QueryTracker.
- **Market Relevancy:** Moving on to new projects allows you to create work that might be better suited for the current market than a project started years ago.
- **Building Professional Stamina:** Sustained writing helps you prepare for the professional pace of publishing, where authors (especially in KidLit) may be expected to produce one to two manuscripts every year or two.
- **Deadline Readiness:** Developing a daily writing habit, similar to Stephen King’s "thousand words a day" approach, makes meeting future professional deadlines much less stressful.

TRANSCRIPT

Stuart Brown: Welcome to One Thing - Literary Edition, a podcast that asks a simple question of seasoned literary agents: what is one piece of advice you would give to new authors? I'm your host, playwright and author Stuart Brown. Information about all my works can be found at my website, stuartjbrown.com. I am very pleased to have Sandra Proudman, a literary associate at Galt & Zacker Literary Agency. So, Sandra, what is your one thing?

Sandra Proudman: Hi Stuart, thank you so much for having me. My one thing that I always recommend for authors who are looking to get into publishing is keep writing. I think this is something that we hear a lot, but when you're in the trenches and you're still querying the same project after two years, this is something that we as agents can actually often see in things like QueryTracker, and a lot of the times authors don't realize this. And so for me, as a literary agent, I always recommend to authors to keep writing and querying new works. Don't get too stuck in the same project that hasn't been working. This is something that I think sometimes becomes hard when authors fall in love so deeply with this world, but I can assure you as an author myself, we fall in love with all of the worlds that we create. So for me, the one thing that I always suggest to authors is to keep writing and finding those new stories that excite you and continuously be trying new projects with agents, because if one project hasn't been working for a lengthy amount of time, this gives you a clue that it's time to move onto the next project. Not just that, but I think once you move on from this project,

you get used to the constant having to write, because if you want to be an author, most of the time you don't want to just be an author of that one project; you want to keep continuously putting out new work. And the way that we get used to that as authors, and the way that agents get used to working with their authors, is we typically see, especially let's say in the KidLit world, producing one or two or three books every year. And so in order to get used to this production that you might have to do once you sell your first book, in terms of working on one to two manuscripts a year or every two years, you have to get used to that constant writing. And if you don't get stuck on one project, it allows you to practice this and to practice, you know, I think it was—it was Stephen King that writes a thousand words every day, right? And so if you get constantly used to writing that thousand words, once you're on deadline, it doesn't become so stressful to be on deadline for a project, and then for your next project, and then compiling things. And so for me, it's always keep turning out new work; don't feel too attached to a project that hasn't been fruitful.

Stuart Brown: So just to clarify, you're talking about if you've been writing a project for a lengthy amount of time, and as the author it's not getting anywhere, or you don't feel you're making the connections with the plot, with the character, to say to yourself, maybe I need to put this aside and what else can I do?

Sandra Proudman: Exactly. And it's that, but also when you're querying a project for too long. And so sometimes I see authors who query the same project for four years, for five years. And you know, at that point, I kind of take a step back as an agent who can see this on QueryTracker and say, oh, like you need to be producing new work so you keep practicing writing as a skill and so you keep producing projects that might be a little bit more on the market at that time. And so don't get too stuck on any one project, whether you're drafting, querying, or anything else.

Stuart Brown: That's interesting. So as an agent on QueryTracker, you can see what works are being submitted to other agents?

Sandra Proudman: Yeah, at my agency, exactly.

Stuart Brown: Oh, Big Brother's watching, I didn't know that.

Sandra Proudman: Yeah, and I think it's something that some folks don't realize, right? And so—but I've had, you know, I'm at an agency that's been around for decades now. And so being able to see that, it kind of gives me a little bit of a flag like, oh, this person's been working on this one project for five years, and yes, maybe you might have revised it a little bit, but it does kind of make me take a step back and question whether—why the author or the illustrator or the author-illustrator hasn't tried a different project.

Stuart Brown: Is there a certain time frame that a budding author should look at their submissions and say, okay, I need to follow your advice, because you always hear at conferences and talking to other authors that it can take a while? It can take months and months before a literary agent might get back to you, and not everyone always does get back to you.

Sandra Proudman: Yeah, that is a fabulous question. I recommend after two years kind of thinking about, oh, do I want to query the same agency who's going to see that I've been querying this project for two years with the same project, or do I want to show something new?

Stuart Brown: Sandra, I think that is a very important one thing. As an author myself and also a playwright, I do like to write, but you can get into a rut, or when you're finished with a project, maybe have a letdown—where do I go to next? And as you're saying, to get into that rhythm of writing, writing, so it doesn't become a burden, it just becomes part of your everyday nature.

Sandra Proudman: Exactly, exactly. And so I always feel like this advice works in many different ways, whether it's to get you one step closer to, you know, that publishing dream or to just get you, like you mentioned, used to writing every day.

Stuart Brown: Sandra, I'm going to thank you for coming on and speaking to us. I've been speaking with Sandra Proudman, a literary associate at Galt & Zacker Literary Agency. You've been listening to One Thing - Literary Edition, a podcast that asks a simple question of seasoned literary agents: what is one piece of advice you would give to new authors? I've been your host, Stuart Brown. My website is stuartjbrown.com. I hope you would join us next time for another episode.

ABOUT THE HOST

Stuart J. Brown is an award-winning Connecticut playwright whose 10-Minute works have been staged across the country. He's also written four full one-act plays. You can see all his work at stuartjbrown.com.

Brown is a theater critic with the Outer Critics Circle and the Connecticut Critics Circle. Additionally, he operates the 24/7 online Broadway radio station, Sounds of Broadway (soundsofbroadway.com), featuring the best from Off-Broadway, Broadway, and London stages. His 'On Broadway' podcast features discussions with figures from the world of music and stage. He's aired more than 730 episodes since 2006. (broadwayradioprograms.com)

Additional podcasts include "One Thing with Stuart Brown" (stuartjbrown.com/podcast) with the latest edition focusing on the publishing and writing world. He asks a simple question of seasoned literary agents…

"What is one piece of advice you would give to new authors?"

For questions & press inquiries, email stu@stuartjbrown.com. Follow on Instagram @stuartjbrown_author. More resources available in the Press Room at stuartjbrown.com/press-room.

