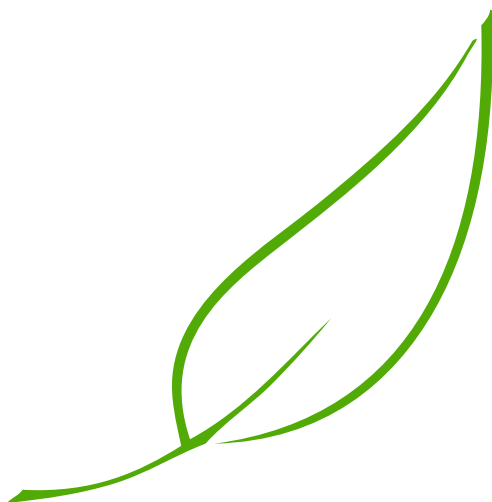


THE EINSTEIN GENE AND THE HOUDINI SYNDROME

by Robert L. Crowe



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**The Einstein Gene and the Houdini
Syndrome
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The Einstein Gene and the Houdini Syndrome

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(Robert L. Crowe is a children's author and winner of the Library of Congress Award for Children's Literature. This speech was first given to the Arkansas State Reading Association, Fort Smith, Arkansas, Saturday, March 20, 1982.)

I have already been asked about the title of my presentation "The Einstein Gene and the Houdini Syndrome" and like you I'm not real sure what it means.

I think it means that there are people who believe that authors are "hatched" from some literary cocoon with a manuscript created by a touch of Einstein genius. At first I believed that ... and thought that I was the only exception. As I got to know a lot of authors, I discovered that their experience was similar to mine ... there is no inherited genius. There is no Houdini slight of hand that magically produces a published book. The components are simple: study, hard work and persistence. The components are simple ... the process is not.

One of the most difficult processes to handle is that of rejections. I won't dwell on the topic because I don't think grown men should cry in public. I had always heard that once you had a book published, you had an "in" with the publisher. I had heard that. My publisher had not heard that. So I developed a psychological crutch and I stole the name from an Emily Dickinson poem called "Hope is a Thing with Feathers." I call mine, "Hope is in the mail." I submit 4 or 5 manuscripts at the same time and when I get one back rejected, I send it off again before I receive the other rejections. It's a great system if you can avoid a disastrous Friday when they all show up rejected on the same day.

What then is the secret to publishing? If it isn't inherited and it isn't magic, then it must be luck. Well ... I believe in luck. Luck is certainly a factor ... but it is always against those



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by Robert L. Crowe.

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