

- An idea isn't worth anything if it isn't executed properly
- Expect resistance.
- There isn't any magic.
- Put everything you have on the line.
- You are in this alone. Be wary about clubs; don't become dependent on other people.
- You don't write the book, the book writes you.

**BE A WRITER. Think like one, join groups, network, get in the game.**

**INVEST IN YOURSELF. Find a good editor, find classes that will help.**

**RESEARCH JUDICIOUSLY. Don't let the research derail the train.**

**PERSEVERE. Then do it some more. Edit, edit, edit.**

#### SHOW AND TELL

- How often do you use narrative summary?
- Which can be converted to scenes?
- Do you use too many scenes?
- Do you mention emotion outside of dialog? Are you telling how they feel?

#### CHARACTER AND EXPOSITION

- Look at where you introduce characters. Do you describe the character's character?
- Do you tell too much of a character's life story?
- How much information do readers need about locations, past history, etc. & when do they need it?
- If this info is conveyed via dialog, does the dialog sound real and natural or are you just relaying information?
- If it's through interior monologue, is it something the character would actually think?

- Don't take yourself so seriously. You're just writing a book.
- It's all right to be afraid. So you get a rejection. So what? You're still alive.
- It's not about the money or fame. It's about the writing.
- Take responsibility for where you are.
- Work from passion. Write the book you'd like to read.

**KEEP GOING. Don't wait for an agent/editor to set your schedule. Don't wait. Keep writing.**

**OUTDO YOURSELF. Raise the bar every time.**

**WRITE NO MATTER WHAT. Sit in the chair and write. Good writing comes from doing.**

#### POINT OF VIEW

- If in first person, how reader-friendly are you? Is this someone you'd like to spend time with?
- If in third person, do you stay in one character's head for an entire scene?
- How quickly do you establish point of view? Where in the scene is an unambiguous pointer to whose head you're in?
- Are you writing in the character's voice, so the reader can tell quickly whose head is being used?

#### DIALOGUE

- Do you use dialogue for explanation? Check if emotion is mentioned in dialogue.
- Mark every 'ly' verb. How many describe an emotion (hysterically, angrily).
- Check speaker attributions (he grimaced, she said wryly). Don't use emotional descriptions as attributions.

### HOW DOES IT SOUND?

- Read dialogue (and entire book) out loud. Does it sound natural?
- Is it too smooth and polished? Do you need fragments, contractions, run-on sentences?
- How well do the characters understand each other? Do they ever mislead each other? Lie?

### BEATS

- How often do you interrupt your dialogue?
- Do your beats describe everyday actions (looking, moving, seeing) or are they unique to the character (tugging, chewing, evading)?
- Do the beats illuminate your characters?
- Do the beats fit the rhythm of your dialogue?

### REPETITION

- Are you using a lot of different ways to accomplish the same end? Think of the mood you're trying to create, the character you're trying to establish: are you doing it over and over?
- Do you have more than one chapter that accomplishes the same thing?
- Have you rounded your villains -- are they villainous in more than one way?
- Check for word repeats and avoid at all costs.

### SOPHISTICATION

- How many 'ing' and 'as' phrases do you use? (*Pulling off her gloves*, she turned to face him. *As she pulled off her gloves*, she turned to face him).
- Do you use 'ly' adverbs in dialogue AND narration?
- Try stringing together short sentences with commas (the way people talk).
- Do you use italics for emphasis and exclamation points?
- Do you use a lot of profanity?

### INTERIOR MONOLOGUE

- How much do you have? Is some of it actually dialogue in disguise?
- Are you using interior monologue to show things that should be told? Or should it be turned into a scene?
- Do you use speaker attributions in interior monologue? Can you drop the attributions?
- Can you make it a question? (*He wondered why he always ended up killing them. Why did he end up killing them?*)

### PARAGRAPH LENGTH

- Notice the white space: how much is there? Do you have big blocks of paragraphs?
- Do you have chapters with chunky paragraphs, more than 10 lines in length?
- Do you have a balance of long and short paragraphs?
- Have your characters made little speeches to each other?

### PROPORTION

- How much time have you spent moving your characters around? Do you cut from location to location or do you fill in the space in between?
- How much detail do you include to describe a character's actions?
- Look at flashbacks: are you interrupting the forward flow of the narrative? If it were cut, would the present story be harder to follow?
- Do you have subplots that don't necessarily advance the main plot? Are all of them effective?

### VOICE

- Develop your own voice but don't let it overshadow the voices of your characters
- Read aloud all dialogue of one character: is it consistent?
- Highlight passages that make you smile, and those that make you wince. Is it flat? Forced? Vague?
- If flat, look at surrounding sentences and see if they have a similar problem. Too many straight declarative sentences? Too much simplicity?

**A novel is about CHANGE.**

**CHANGE equals DANGER**, even if it's just emotional danger.

**CHANGE equals CRISIS.**

**Every thought and action is directed toward ending that CRISIS.**

**I HAVE SEEN THE ENEMY & HE AIN'T US!**

Do your hero and heroine have an enemy greater than themselves to fight? Give them someone/something more powerful than themselves to fight. The villain forces them into physical/emotional isolation.

They must rely on each other to save themselves, even if it's just emotionally.

**NO QUITTERS ALLOWED.**

Is there enough at stake emotionally for them to keep on fighting?

At the end of each scene: What is keeping your heroine/hero from simply walking away

**ENTER SNIDELY WHIPLASH-Keep him circling.**

Is this villain in every scene? The villain or the implied threat of the villain must be present in every scene. Does his implied threat hover in conversations, etc. If you're not dealing with the villain that opposes your h/h goals, you don't need that scene in your book.

**No villain = no tension or suspense.**

**WELL BEHAVED WOMEN RARELY MAKE HISTORY.**

No wimps allowed. Your story is about people at the end of their rope and the rope is unraveling. You want your characters desperate, beat down, pushed around, shoved around -- BUT NOT THIS TIME!

**BURN THE HOUSE DOWN!**

If you're having trouble getting your Hero and Heroine together, BURN THE HOUSE DOWN. Make them need to rely on the person they don't trust -- each other.

**DAVID vs. GOLIATH**

Hero/Heroine AND Villain -- are they evenly pitted against each other? Or is one overwhelmingly powerful, intelligent or evil? How do you even up the score? Give your Hero/Heroine tools to defeat the villain--give them smarts, cunning, skill, talents, a secret to give them an edge.

**WHAT WERE YOU THINKING? MOTIVATION is the key.**

Why does your Heroine want what she wants? What does it represent to her? What does it mean to her emotionally if she gets it? Readers can relate to that. The CRISIS must be such that your Heroine must be forever changed.

**TEST CONVICTIONS: Test your characters'**

**beliefs and convictions.** If she's against something- put her in a position where she must defend it, must be for it. Does that conviction hold up? Show the Heroine/Hero the flipside of their beliefs. What is the greatest fear--confront her with it. If it's drowning, make her rescue the Hero from a rushing river, etc.

**BE IN YOUR RIGHT MIND: If stuck, perhaps**

**you need to change your POV.** Do you have the wrong narrator for that scene? Are you in the right head? Who has the most at stake emotionally? Write from that POV.

WHAT'S YOUR POINT? What's your theme?

Honor challenged, Truth revealed, Justice, Revenge, Love conquers all, Restoration of Family

Identify your theme and stay true to it during the story.

**TIME BOMB: Maintain the pacing and focus.**

Do you have a hard and fast deadline past which everything must be completed? No negotiating. Set an imminent deadline that forces your characters to act **now**.

Do something or die/never be happy again.

**SURPRISE! If your story slows down or is boring, change a story element!**

Change day to night, a former enemy turns into a friend, a missing person appears, find the jewels that were lost, etc.

**OF ALIENS AND PICNICS:** Look at your scenes & make sure you don't go off on a tangent. That's usually when you don't know what to write, so you send them off on a picnic or stage an alien abduction.

What does your character know at the end of the scene that he didn't know at the start? If nothing is revealed, take it out. Does the scene show them involved in the fight and trying to solve the CRISIS? If not, **leave that scene out!**