

CHARACTERS

- Why is this character worth writing about?
- What is he/she on the brink of doing?
- What will force him/her to act?
- What are their goals in the book? In life?
- What are obstacles to those goals?
- What qualities help them overcome obstacles?
- How do they grow?
- What is the ending/resolution?
- What fears are faced?
- How are characters a risk to each other

THE FIRST 50 PAGES:

- reveal main characters
- the hook
- premise of the book
- establish the conflict

MIDDLE OF THE BOOK:

- plot spin or twist; must have conflict
- confrontation: characters prevented from achieving need
- move characters to their goals; conflict is the obstacles
- always keep a threat handy

RESOLUTION:

- clean up your plot points

RULES FOR SENTENCE VARIETY

- the simpler the better
- use a variety of structures (compound, etc.)
- in a paragraph of long sentences, a short sentence takes prominence
- humans always remember the last word. Save the kicker for the end
- subordinate conjunctions (if, when, etc.) weaken the sentence
- don't bury your most striking word in the middle of a sentence
- put the most active word first for emphasis

- Start the book on the day that things change
- Show, don't tell
- If you remove this scene, will the plot suffer?
- Use 1st person for thoughts
- Your story isn't what happens; it's who it happens to
- Peel off the layers of a character
- A dilemma is a choice between 2 evils: a test of character
- Add a time element (deadline) to add suspense
- Have a major plot point in every chapter:
- Learn something new in every chapter

IS IT TIGHT?

- search for keyword mistakes ("realize", "feel", etc.)
- list repetitive words and search for them

IS IT CLEAR?

- use hints, but don't be obscure OR obvious
- make a list of hints and drop them in

IS IT PRECISE?

- use the right word in the right place
- verbs are the locomotive to the train

HOW DOES IT SOUND?

- read it out loud

IS IT ABOUT PEOPLE?

- everything derives from character

IS IT HONEST?

- is this me writing? Am I imitating someone?

A dilemma is a choice between 2 evils: a test of character

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have a major plot point in every chapter

learn something new in every chapter