



Be the 10%

Make your work stand out from the pile

Hallee Bridgeman

Be the 10%

- ▶ Have you ever judged an unpublished writing contest?
- ▶ Safe to assume that what is submitted to those contests is the very best work an author can put forth.
- ▶ It is safe to assume that what is submitted to an agent or editor is also the very best work an author can put forth.

Be the 10%

According to publishers, of all the submissions they receive, only about 10%-20% are publishable.

Be the 10%

And, they only publish about
2% of that 10%

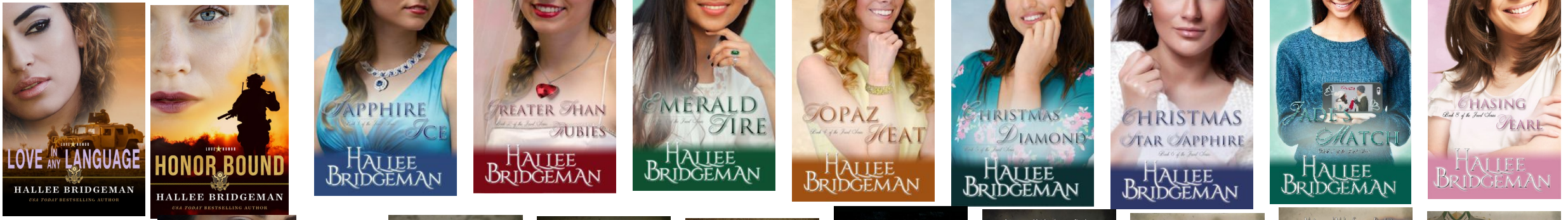
My Reader Experience

- ▶ 1999 RWA chapter conference
- ▶ 3 authors had self published books
- ▶ The experience tainted my perception of self published books for the next 13 years

My Reader Experience

“ Forget what hurt you in the past, but never forget what it taught you.

- Shannon Alder, inspirational author





**Write a GREAT book.
Be the 10%**

Conflicts: Man vs. Man



Conflicts: Man vs. Supernatural



Conflicts: Man vs. Nature (the world)



Plots: Overcoming the Monster



Plots: Rags to Riches



Plots: The Quest



Plots: Voyage and Return



Plots: Rebirth



Plots: Comedy



Plots: Tragedy



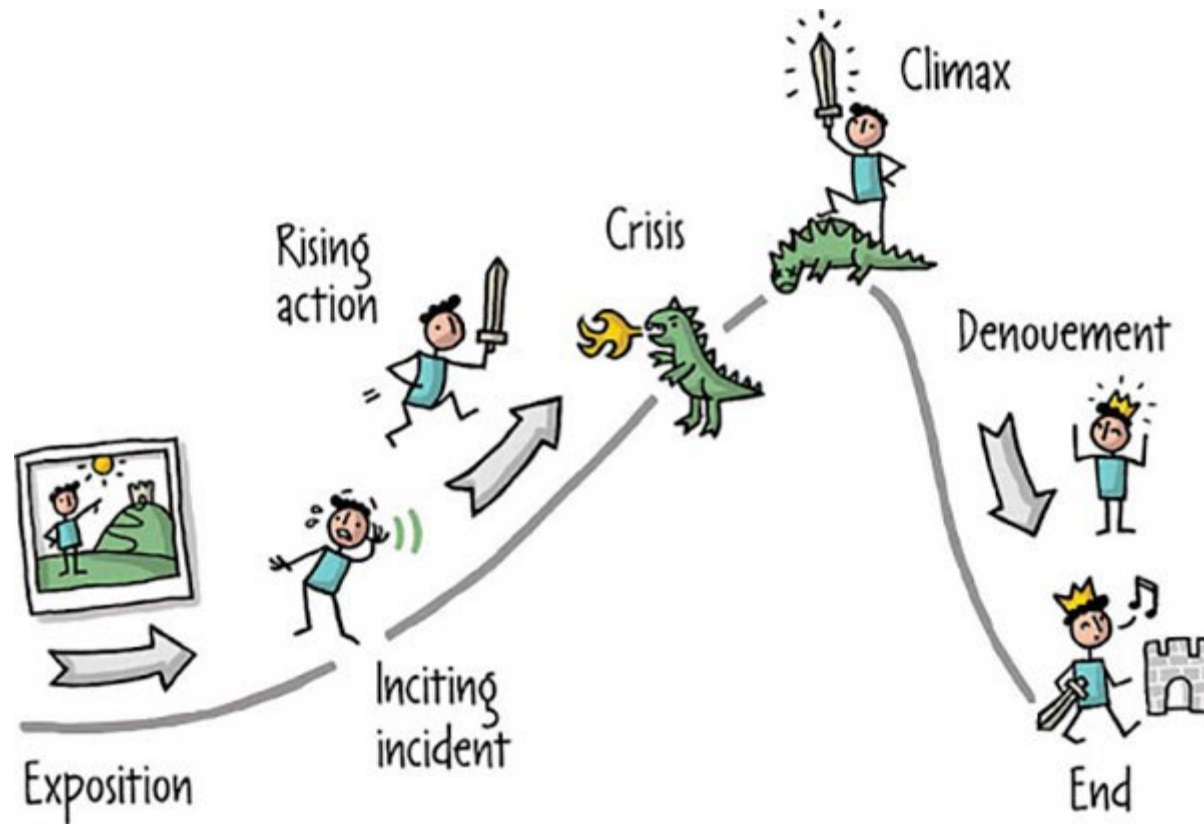
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- ▶ There are about 30 million books in print.
- ▶ In 2017:
- ▶ Five more years of publishing has added to those numbers.

Politics & Social
Sciences (1,701,456)
Reference (2,872,421)
Religion & Spirituality (1,344,243)
Romance (761,165)
Science & Math (1,475,698)
Science Fiction &
Fantasy (448,184)

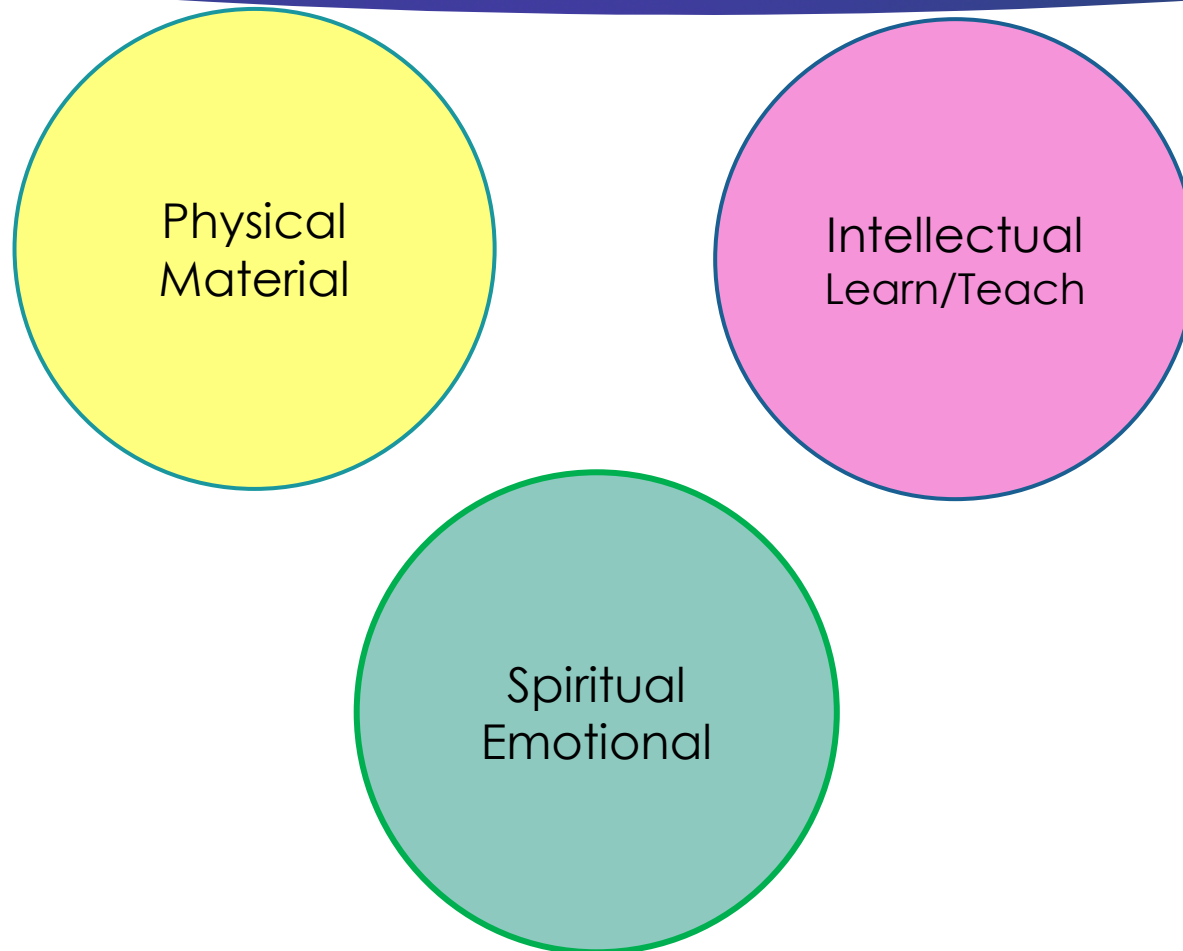
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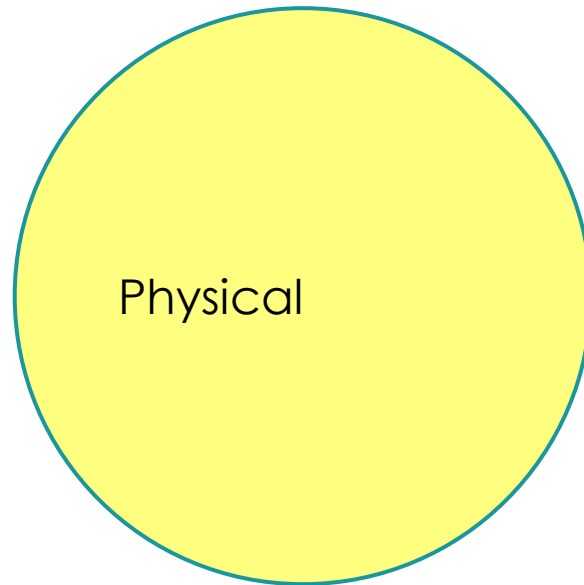
Characterization



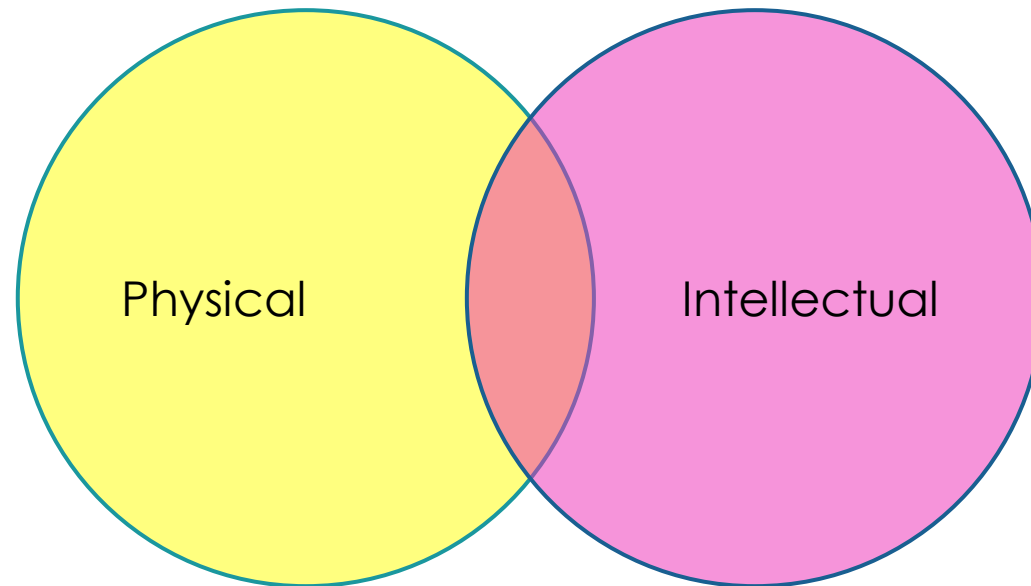
Characterization



Characterization

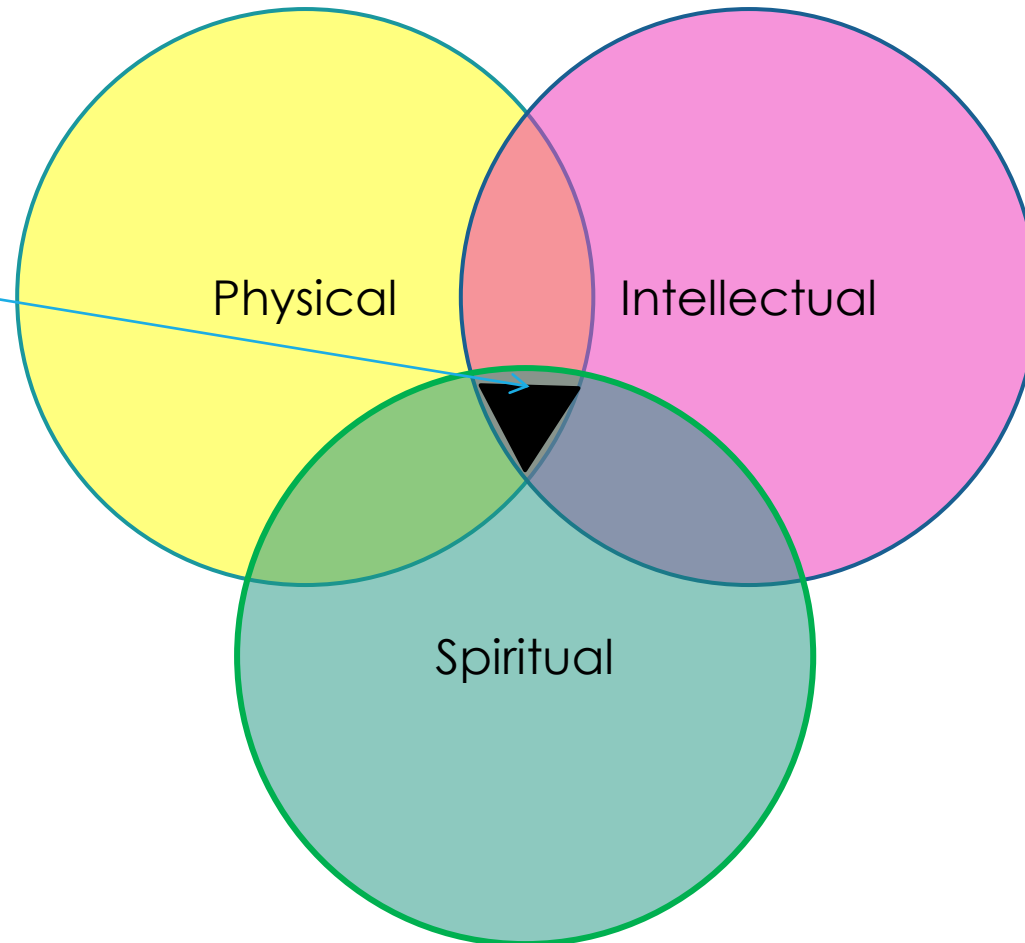


Characterization



Characterization

Characterization
inside a
balanced story



Characterization

“Well written, plenty of action, good story line. This series is looks at the lives of real people, people with broken pasts, not the picture perfect though everything in life works picture perfect in the end which isn't totally realistic.”

“The characters are so true to life.”

Characterization

“Without giving the story away, let's just say that Daisy faces a dilemma and it takes a lot of prayer and patience to get both her and Ken to believe they can have a relationship. At one point in the story, a sob actually came out of me....I was even praying to God for Daisy! (I know, I know...it's a book...but that's how pulled in I was with Daisy and Ken and what was happening with them). I highly recommend this book as well as the others in this series.”

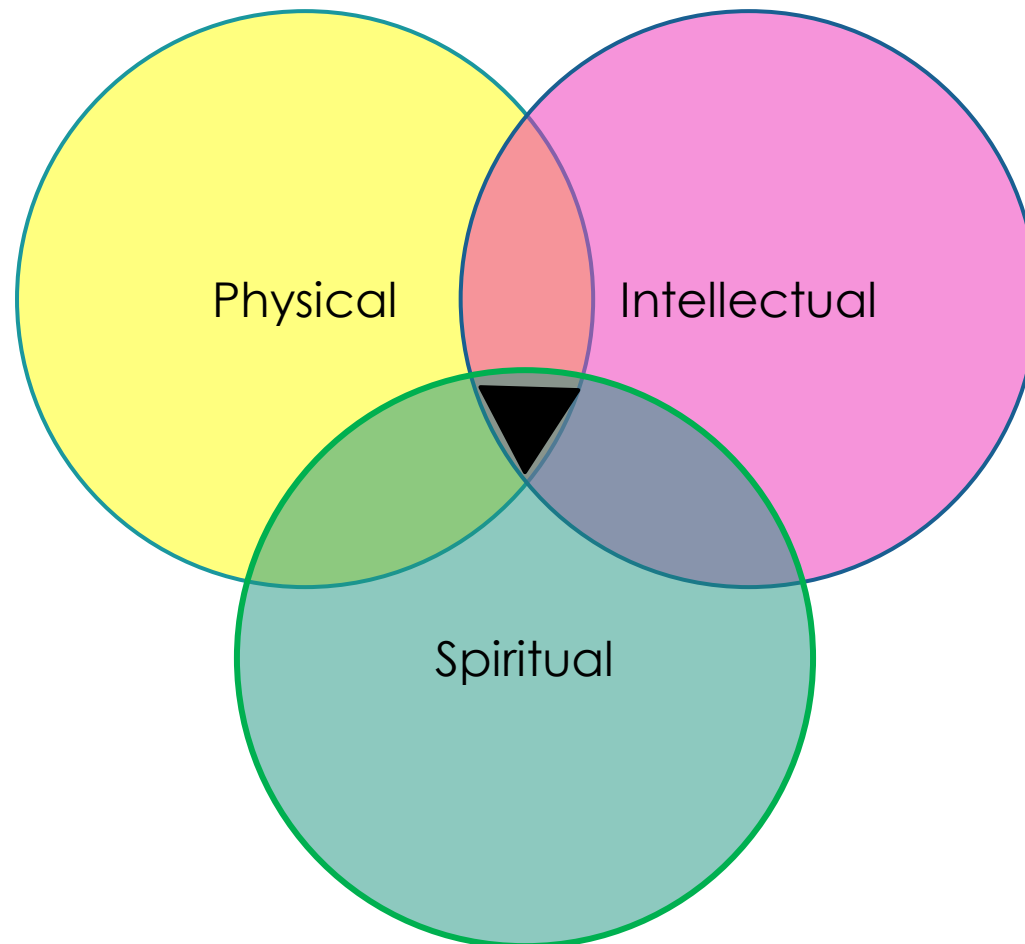
Characterization

“This is the kind of Christian romance I've been looking for.

The characters are flawed. They have realistic responses. Life is not all sweetness and nice simply because they're Christian. Their Christian faith sees them through the trials in their lives, strengthening them in every aspect of their lives.

In every story, I was able to face my own struggles with a new perspective.”

Balanced 3-Dimensional Characters



Characterization



Let's face it, characters are the bedrock of your fiction. Plot is just a series of actions that happen in a sequence, and without someone to either perpetrate or suffer the consequences of those actions, you have no one for your reader to root for, or wish bad things on. – Icy Sedgick, gothic fantasy author



Character Motivations

- ▶ They reveal characterization.
- ▶ They distinguish characters.
- ▶ They drive action.
- ▶ They create drama.
- ▶ They spawn character growth.



Character Motivations

Motivation Questions to Ask

- ▶ What is the motivation?
 - ▶ Basic: survival, failure, peer-pressure, curiosity, guilt, desire, etc.
 - ▶ Noble: love, loyalty, honor, obedience, vengeance, inequality, unfulfillment, etc.
 - ▶ Evil: hatred, dishonor, pride, greed, jealousy, revenge, lust, etc.
 - ▶ Fear: death, humiliation, pain, rejection, loss, regret, shame, etc.



Character Motivations

Motivation Questions to Ask

- ▶ Where did their motivation come from?
 - ▶ Internal
 - ▶ External



Character Motivations

Motivation Questions to Ask

- ▶ What does the motivation say about your character?
- ▶ How does the motivation and its resulting action affect others?
- ▶ What does the supporting cast think of your character's motivations?

Good, 3-Dimensional Characters

Hallee I just finished reading Topaz again and I can't tell you how much I needed the message of Gods timing in Derricks and Sarah's life. I know it is a fiction story but the truth of the gospel touched me. Going through a test of faith with full time job needs but I believe He has a plan. Thanks for your stories

The Book is Great! Now Re-Write It!



Passive Voice

I must not use passive verbs
I must not use passive verbs
I must not use passive verbs
I must not use passive verbs
I must not use passive verbs



Passive Voice

- ▶ Make Sure Most Passive Verbs are Gone
 - ▶ Active verbs are, well, more active to read.
 - ▶ Which means they're more interesting to read.
 - ▶ It's hard to automatically realize we write passively because we naturally speak passively
 - ▶ Passive verbs are forms of "to be": is, are, was, were, be, being, been

Passive Voice

The subject of an active voice sentence performs the action of the **verb**: “I throw the ball.”

The subject of a **passive** voice sentence is still the main character of the sentence, but something else performs the action: “The ball is thrown by me.”

Passive Voice



Active Voice

You stole the cookie from the cookie jar.

Passive Voice

The cookie was stolen from the cookie jar.

Passive Voice

However, in a state of being, you don't need to get rid of ALL the "to be" verbs.

Her eyes were blue. = Her eyes were blue.

She was only sixteen. = She was only sixteen.

FANBOYS

FOR
AND
NOR
BUT
OR
YET
SO



Show vs. Tell

“Show don’t tell” means bring the reader in and let the reader feel the emotions and understand the nuances without saying what they’re supposed to read or understand.

Show vs. Tell

Allison was sad to see Frank walk away.

Hot tears slid down Allison's face as Frank walked away.

Show vs. Tell

Shaking her head, knowing she still suffered from a reaction to tonight's events, she quickly looked through the peephole, surprised and relieved to see Rick.

Shaking her head, knowing she still suffered from a reaction to tonight's events, she quickly looked through the peephole, her eyes widening when she saw Rick.

Show vs. Tell

Praise like that always made him uncomfortable

**Praise like that always made him feel the need
to fidget and dismiss it.**



Show vs. Tell

- ▶ Look for words like;
 - ▶ Clearly/Obviously:
Janet grinned, obviously finding the joke funny.
Janet flashed a wide grin at Ben.
 - ▶ Felt:
Keith felt a wave of despair wash over him as he watched the key disappear into the water.
A pained whimper escaped Keith's lips as the key disappeared below the murky water.
 - ▶ Was:
Lincoln was afraid of the dark.
When his mother switched off the light, Lincoln tensed. He huddled under the covers, gripped the sheets, and held his breath as the wind beat against the window.

Revise Weak Descriptors

- ▶ Any passage using a form of “seem” must be used properly
- ▶ ___ing words, particularly as the first word of a sentence: Walking; Dashing; Speaking; Thinking; etc.
- ▶ ___ly words, particularly:
 - ▶ Any that form adverbs from adjectives that tell instead of show: gladly; gradually; angrily; etc.
 - ▶ Adjectives that tell instead of show: saintly; cowardly; heroically; etc.
- ▶ Use metaphor, simile, or analogy instead



Senses

- ▶ Sight
- ▶ Sound
- ▶ Smell
- ▶ Touch (feel)
- ▶ Taste
- ▶ Vestibular
- ▶ Proprioceptive

Body Language

- ▶ Do the male characters do more than grin?
- ▶ Do the female characters do more than smile/laugh?
- ▶ Amp up emotive conflict
- ▶ Tension/undertone

Scenes

- ▶ Analyze each scene
 - ▶ Why is the scene necessary?
 - ▶ What do you hope to accomplish?
 - ▶ When is the scene (time/season/day). Is it different from the last scene?
 - ▶ Where is the scene set?
 - ▶ Whose point of view?
 - ▶ Who else is there? Why?
 - ▶ How does the scene –either- advance the plot –or- character development?



Some Basics

- ▶ Opening of scenes/paragraphs
- ▶ White space: dialogue vs. narrative
- ▶ Sentence structure
- ▶ Point of view
- ▶ Sticky sentences

Spelling and Grammar

- ▶ Run spell and grammar checks
- ▶ Utilize tools like Grammarly and Pro Writing Aid



Using Different Parts of Your Brain

- ▶ Transfer to something other than word processor screen
 - ▶ Printed copy
 - ▶ Ebook
 - ▶ PDF
- ▶ Read it out loud
 - ▶ See it, speak it, hear it

For Self Publishing

- ▶ You need an editor.

For Self Publishing

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- ▶ You need an editor.

For Self Publishing

- ▶ You need an editor.
- ▶ You need an editor.
- ▶ I surveyed bestselling, monthly 6-figure making indie authors for the one piece of advice they would give new indie authors.
 - ▶ **Hire an editor was by far the most recommended piece of advice.**

Editing: Line Editor

Focuses on the way you use language to communicate your story to the reader

- ▶ Words or sentences that are extraneous or overused
- ▶ Run-on sentences
- ▶ Redundancies from repeating the same information in different ways
- ▶ Dialogue or paragraphs that can be tightened

Editing: Line Editor

- ▶ Scenes where the action is confusing or the author's meaning is unclear due to bad transitions
- ▶ Tonal shifts and unnatural phrasing
- ▶ Passages that don't read well due to bland language use
- ▶ Confusing narrative digressions
- ▶ Changes that can be made to improve the pacing of a passage
- ▶ Words or phrases that may clarify or enhance your meaning.

Editing: Copy Editor

Copy editing involves correcting the language of the text.

- ▶ Checking a copy for spelling, capitalization, punctuation, verb tenses and other grammatical errors.
- ▶ Checking for continuity, sentence structure, paragraph lengths, word choices, missed words, and the like.

Editing: Content Editor

Evaluates the content in detail.

- ▶ Checks the content for factual errors, contradictions, and inconsistencies.
- ▶ Checks for discrepancies in the plot, character, or dialogue.
- ▶ Checks whether the theme has been developed properly, or whether the sub-plots have been well integrated into the story line.

Editors

- ▶ The most expensive part of the indie publishing process
 - ▶ Hourly, by word, by page
 - ▶ I'd expect to pay \$800-\$1000 for 100,000 word book
- ▶ It is possible to release a book without editing – that is the glory of self publishing
- ▶ It's better to have your book professionally edited.
 - ▶ Can trade favors with other authors
 - ▶ Can utilize beta readers for content editing



Editors – Finding One

- ▶ Ask about work experience
- ▶ Request testimonials/references
- ▶ Request a list of books they worked on
- ▶ Ask for a sample edit
- ▶ Find out if the editor is a member of any professional associations
- ▶ Pay close attention to their terms, including due dates, kill fees, payment method, payouts, and a clear definition of the work to be delivered

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- ▶ Make sure it is thoroughly edited.
- ▶ When you get to the point of publishing consider your work an offering to God.

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And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. Colossians 3:23



Be the 10%

<https://successfulchristianselfpublishing.com/ultimate-self-editing-checklist/>
<https://successfulchristianselfpublishing.com/be-the-ten-percent>