

I. W.R.I.T.E.: How to Write a Novel

Assignments

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I. W.R.I.T.E.: How to Write a Novel

One-Year Schedule

Module 1: Story Elements & Knowing Your Reader

Week and Lesson

- 1 I: Introduction 1
- 2 I: Introduction 2
- 3 *Writing and catch up week*
- 4 I: Ideas
- 5 *Writing and catch up week*
- 6 W: World 1
- 7 W: World 2
- 8 *Writing and catch up week*
- 9 R: Readers 1
- 10 *Writing and catch up week*
- 11 I: "I" (Characters & POV) 1
- 12 I: "I" (Characters & POV) 2
- 13 *Writing and catch up week*
- 14 I: "I" (Characters & POV) 3
- 15 I: "I" (Characters & POV) 4
- 16 *Writing and catch up week*
- 17 T: Trouble (Conflict & Goals)
- 18 *Writing and catch up week*
- 19 E: Events (Plot) 1
- 20 E: Events (Plot) 2
- 21 *Writing and catch up week*
- 22 E: Evaluating Feedback and Developmental Editing
- 23 *Writing and catch up week*
- Module 2: Book Proposals**
- 24 Book Proposals 1
- 25 Book Proposals 2; "Keep calm and write on"
- 26 *Writing and catch up week*
- 27 **Book proposal due**
- 28 **Rest week**

Module 3: Going Deeper into Story & Words

Week and Lesson

- 29 I: Introduction to Great Writing (Description, Style & Voice) 1
- 30 I: Introduction 2 2
- 31 *Writing and catch up week*
- 32 W: Words or Not (Show/Don't Tell) 1
- 33 W: Words or Not 2
- 34 *Writing and catch up week*
- 35 R: Rhythm (Rhythm, Pacing, Repetition, & Describing Action) 1
- 36 R: Rhythm 2
- 37 *Writing and catch up week*
- 38 R: Rhythm 3
- 39 *Writing and catch up week*
- 40 I: Interest (Capture reader interest – beginning/middle/end)
- 41 *Writing and catch up week*
- 42 T: Talk (Dialogue and action beats) 1
- 43 T: Talk 2
- 44 *Writing and catch up week*
- 45 E: Editing 1
- 46 *Writing and catch up week*
- 47 E: Editing 2
- 48 *Writing and catch up week*
- Module 4: The End**
- 49 Overview of Publishing
- 50 *Writing and catch up week*
- 51 Final tips
- 52 **Final Manuscript Due**



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Course rules

Be polite and respectful. You can disagree with others, but you must still be polite. If we critique one another's works, two positive, concrete comments must be given for every criticism given. Constructive criticism must be concrete (such as, the character doesn't have a strong goal) and cannot be a vague (for example, "It's a horrible story").

If a student is disrespectful to me or others in the class once, the student will be given a warning. On the third offense, I will contact the parents (for a teen) or give the adult another warning. On the fourth (or earlier, depending on the severity of the offense), I may choose to remove the student from the interactive portion of the class, and no refund will be given. Videos and assignments will still be available, however.

Take feedback well. In this class, I and, possibly, your classmates will give you feedback to help you grow as a writer. Learning to take feedback well—without anger, without striking back, and objectively deciding if the feedback should be applied—is essential in all areas of life, but especially in writing.

Comments and writing must be either rated G or PG. PG-13 is only allowed if the higher rating is solely due to violence (like a Lord of the Rings movie movie). Due to my own personal preferences and the age of the other students in the class, all writings (discussion board included) must be clean.

No foul language is allowed.

No steamy or spicy content is allowed. So no sexual content.

If the offense is severe enough, I may immediately pull the student from the interactive portion of the course, no refund given.

Copyright. Videos and assignments are copyrighted by the author and are not to be distributed or be used by students not enrolled in the course. This respects my time and effort in preparing them and right to earn wages from my labor.

Students' work shared in the discussion board should not be shared without permission either. I will not share or use students' work without permission.

Privacy. Students should not share private information in the group (such as contact information or other personal information) or things about themselves they don't want repeated. Students should feel free to talk about the group discussions with their family and friends.

Project Guidelines—Story

I. W.R.I.T.E. has two, related, projects: a short story retelling of “Beauty and the Beast” (“La Belle et la Bete”) and a book proposal for it.

Due dates: The book proposal is due at the middle of the course. The finished and edited short story is due at the end of the course. Various assignments throughout the course will require bits and pieces of the short story: scenes, character sketches, outline, blurb, etc., and will be due with the rest of the assignment for that week (typically within a week).

I don’t have a chapter-by-chapter due date system for the short story as everyone’s process for writing is different. Some writers write fast, very rough drafts and re-write multiple times while others write slow and cautiously and re-write less. Structure is important, however, and some writers work better with deadlines, so I do have some expectations and time-point checks.

I expect that the bulk of the writing and editing to be done during the second half of the course, as the first will be dedicated to learning how to craft a sound plot, engaging characters and story world. I do want the first 25% or so to be ready for the proposal at the midpoint, so say 5,000 words by then. Here’s a rough guide for the story. We talk about the book proposal later in the course.

Story Progress Schedule

Week 1: Start considering story ideas.

Week 8: Decide on genre and story world.

Week 10: Evaluate story premise and write a blurb.

Week 13: Work on story outline.

Week 16: Have one chapter written.

Week 16: Have one chapter written.

Week 27: Complete book proposal (includes outline, blurb, marketing information, and introductory chapters)

Week 28: Focus on writing the story. Try writing a scene a week.

Week 35: Manuscript should be at around the midpoint for a “one” draft writer and at around the third draft for a multi-edit writer.

Week 42: Finish the manuscript.

Week 43: Start final edit.

Week 52: Complete final manuscript.

Length: The length of short story will vary, but 20,000 is a good target (though 30,000 words for a novella is fine as well). The book proposal will be a few pages for the introduction and marketing material, then include a few chapters, so its length will vary.

ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1

I: Introduction 1

Part 1: Read the course rules and look over the schedule.

Part 2: Briefly introduce yourself in the discussion board (optional). Tell us what state or country you are from, what you like to read, a few of your favorite books and movies, and one fun fact about yourself.

Part 3: Just for fun: Write an introduction in first person from a character you wrote or a character you love. Imagine you are all sitting around a campfire and your character is there and must give an introduction. You can also post this in the discussion board, if you want.

Part 4: Reading:

The main class projects are a book proposal for a "Beauty and the Beast" and a short story retelling (around 20,000 words in length). Retellings give a certain amount of structure, so the students aren't starting from a blank slate. It can be a loose retelling, so even students who don't like the story can create a work they are excited about. To get started, however, let's read one of the most famous of the many, many "Beauty and the Beast" type fairytales. We'll talk more about the project along.

For now, read the Beaumont version of "Beauty and the Beast." It's short and can be found through Project Gutenberg here:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7074/pg7074-images.html>

Week 2

I: Introduction 2

Part 1: Briefly answer these questions for two fiction books that you've read, for one that you like and for one that you didn't like. Use complete sentences for questions 5-8.

1. Title
2. Genre
3. Intended audience (age range)
4. What is the setting of the story?
5. Briefly describe the main character or the two main characters.
6. What does the main character(s) want? If there is a villain, what does the villain want?
7. In one to three sentences, what is the plot?
8. What did you like about the book?
9. What did you not like about the book?
- 10a. How would you change the book you didn't like to make it something you would like?
- 10b. For the book you did like, what changes might ruin it for you?

Part 2: Take a few books that you like and look at the copyright page. Who holds the copyright? Who is the publisher? Would you want this publisher to publish your books or not? What stands out to you on the copyright page?

Part 3: Take a few books that you like and flip through the chapters. Take time to notice how they begin and how they end. Are there any common themes to how the chapters begin and end? What kinds of chapter endings do you like? What kind bothers you?

Part 4: Choose any scene from a book you've read or a scene that you've written and spend a few minutes "seeing" the scene. Briefly answer the questions.

- Who is there?
- What is there?
- What do you hear?
- What happens?
- What do you feel? (As the character)
- What do you feel? (As a reader)
- Do you get a feel of beginning, middle, and end?
- How would you summarize the scene?
- How does the scene tie into the larger story?

Part 5: Read: Read Introduction and Chapter 1 to *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O'Conner

Week 3

Writing, Reading, and Catching Up

Establishing a good routine is an essential part of becoming a writer. Burnout from trying to do too much, or simply not managing your time and focus and not actually getting any writing done, are real struggles we all face as writers. So throughout the course, consider how you are spending your time and whether you are spending appropriate time in the four R's of the writing life—rest, reading, recreation, and rendering wonder where it is due. Everyone needs rest and recreation, and as authors, we need to be consuming stories not only because we enjoy them (rest and recreation), but because we need to be filling our creative wells so we have something to draw from for our own writing. Also, having a sense of wonder (and the gratitude and curiosity that go with it) is a healthy way to live, and you never know when wonder and curiosity will spark a story idea.

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Week 4

I: Ideas 1

A story premise is a short (one or two sentence) big picture summary of a story with few details. A story summary has a little more detail and is easier to find (such as on IMDB).

Example premise: *Jurassic Park* (movie): Dinosaurs are recreated and escape a theme park to terrorize an island.

Example summary: *Jurassic Park* (movie): “A pragmatic paleontologist touring an almost complete theme park on an island in Central America is tasked with protecting a couple of kids after a power failure causes the park’s cloned dinosaurs to run loose.” (IMDB)

Part 1: Look at five stories not mentioned in the video. What is the main story idea of each? You can write either a story premise or summary.

Part 2: For one of those, list some of the “everything else” ideas for the story, for bigger story elements and for a couple of scenes (goals, conflicts, character inspiration, props, etc.). Where might they have come from? (For example: chase scenes, prophecy of betrayal, a creature from Greek mythology, etc.)

Part 3: Generate a list of ten story premise ideas, each a sentence or two. Make five of those be for the final class project. Provide the target age and genre as well.

Part 4: For three of Part 3’s story premise ideas, brainstorm possible change 1 and change 2 points (Pillar 1 and Pillar 2, between Act 1 and Act 2 and Act 2 and Act 3).

Part 5: Read: Read Chapter 2 to *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe’s Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O’Conner

Week 5

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Weeks 6 and 7

W: WORLD 1 & 2

This assignment covers both World 1 and World 2 and is not due until the night before the R: Readers lesson.

Part 1: Describe a story world. Choose two books. One should be from the genre you will most likely write in. Answer part 1 and part 2 for each book.

- 1) Write a brief paragraph summarizing the story world of your chosen book.
- 2) Write a story world concept for each of the book.
- 3) How is each world similar to times or places or cultures in the real world? What makes this world unique? What makes it familiar?

Part 2: Describe a story world. Choose ten sentences from each book that help convey what the world is like (broader world and/or immediate setting). Does the author use exposition and tell you? Is the description built into the action, the dialogue, or internal thoughts?

Part 3: Create a story world. Write a few paragraphs describing the world for your own story, include what readers would find familiar and what makes it unique. This is for your notes and is not a part of the story.

Part 4: Create a story world. Write a short scene with a character or two interacting with the world you are creating.

Part 5: Read: Read Chapter 3 and 4 of *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O'Conner

Week 8

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Week 9

R: Readers

Part 1: Find ten thriller or mystery novels (choose one) and read the blurbs. What, broadly speaking, do they have in common? What is different?

Part 2: Find ten fantasy novels and read the blurbs. What, broadly speaking, do they have in common? What is different?

Part 3: Choose another genre or a distinct subgenre (like urban fantasy or historical romance) and read ten blurbs. What do they have in common? What is different? Provide genre and target age.

Part 4: For the blurbs you read, were there any noticeable differences in style, emphasis, or content between genres?

Part 5: Choose two of your story premises (one of these should be for your class project). Write three blurbs for each one. You can vary the focus of the blurb, the character, the tone, etc., to work on getting an appealing blurb. Provide genre and target age and reader. Remember this is for marketing (and cementing the story in your mind) and not for telling the story. Reviewing the blurb is also a great way to encourage yourself and find focus when you're struggling.

Part 6: Turn one of these blurbs into a one-paragraph summary and include the ending (this written for you, not for marketing).

Part 7: Read: Read Chapter 5 to *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O'Conner

Week 10

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Week 11

I: “I” Characters (Conflict and Villains)

Consider conflict and villains as you answer these questions.

1. Which of the seven types of conflict do you most like?
2. Do you dislike any of them?
3. Choose two books or movies and note the types in them.
4. Can you think of any instances where the villain throughout or at a pivotal moment was weak and failed to capture/kill/defeat the protagonist? What did you think of that?
5. What kinds of conflict will you use in your class project? To use philosophy terms, how can you “steel man” your conflict/antagonist/villain rather than “straw man” him (use a weak one to make it easier for protagonists to win)?

Week 12

I: “I” Characters 2 (Characters and Point-of-View)

Part 1: For one book, list the main characters, secondary characters, and memorable minor characters. Give an example of a couple of scenery characters. For the main characters, give a brief description of each.

Part 2: Choose ten story characters (main or secondary). Give a very brief description of each character by personality type. This is to help you recognize personality types.

Part 3: For three characters from part 2, what do you think about them? Give your opinion as if you were speaking to a friend who asked. Include whether or not you like them.

Part 4: For your class project, spend some time daydreaming about or considering your main characters and a couple of secondary characters. If they were real people, how would you describe them to a friend?

Part 5: For your short story’s two main characters (Beauty and Beast), provide:

1. A brief personality type description
2. Brief physical description with strengths and limitations, if important
3. Brief history
4. Main relationships (family, work, friends, neighbors)
5. Character flaws and fears and how those influence the story, if they do
6. Character goals and motivations driving the story
7. What do you want your readers to think and feel about your two main characters?

Part 6: Repeat step 5 for your most important secondary character.

Part 7: Read: Read Chapter 7 to *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe’s Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O’Conner

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Week 14

I: “I” Characters 3 (Characters and Point-of-View)

There is no separate assignment for this week, but I recommend you get started on part of next week's assignment:

Write a brief scene or partial scene (roughly 1 page) involving the main characters of your story—perhaps where Beast and Belle meet or another scene important to the story's overall plot. Include dialogue. Don't worry too much about the things we haven't talked about. Do build the world and the characters and give the characters some goal for the scene.

Next week you'll work on finding the right POV for your story, and the answer might surprise you! But first you need to know your characters and write a great scene where they'll shine.

Week 15

I: “I” Characters 4 (Characters and Point-of-View)

Part 1: Name and compare the point of view of the stories listed below. Why do you think the author choose that POV style? You can find the stories at the library, or possibly more conveniently, using the “read sample” feature on Amazon. You need only read a page or so of each.

The Prisoner of Zenda by Anthony Hope

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell by Susanna Clark

The Watcher in the Woods by Robert Liparulo

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Part 2: What POV are you using in your story and why?

Part 3: Who is or are your POV characters? Why?

Part 4: Write a brief scene or partial scene (roughly 1 page) involving the main characters of your story—perhaps where Beast and Belle meet or another scene important to the story’s overall plot. Include dialogue. Don’t worry too much about the things we haven’t talked about. Do build the world and the characters and give the characters some goal for the scene.

Part 5: Rewrite the scene in a different POV twice. Write the scene in first person (past or present), third person, and omniscient.

Part 6: What do you think of the other POVs for your story?

Part 7: Read: Read Chapter 8 to *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe’s Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O’Conner

Week 16

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Week 17

T: Trouble

Part 1: What types of trouble will you use for your story? Do they fit the genre, tone, and stakes of your book? What is the desired emotional intensity of your story? Does the trouble fit that?

Part 2: Choose one novel. What are the types of tension used throughout the story? Discuss how the small and larger tensions are developed throughout the story and resolved. Were they satisfying? Would resolving them later or earlier have helped or harmed the story?

Part 3: What are some ticking clocks you've seen in books and movies?

Part 4: Consider the trouble, tension, and ticking clock for your story. How can you use these to create a sense of progression, of moving toward the climax?

Part 5: Spend some time working on your class project.

Part 6: Read: Read Chapter 9 to *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O'Conner

Week 18

Writing, Reading, and Catching Up

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Week 19

E: Events 1 (Plot)

For this assignment, choose a short, simple novel that you like and answer all the parts about it. Choose a story you haven't used before.

Part 1: Write a one-sentence story premise.

Part 2: Write a short summary to get the big picture feel of the story.

Part 3: Diagram the main character(s) and their growth arc.

Part 4: Diagram the main plot points/three-act structure using the simple plot diagram.

Part 5: Write a one-sentence summary of each scene of the book.

Part 6: For each scene, write a likely explanation for why the scene was included. How does it follow logically from the previous scene? How does it set up the later events or climax? How does it figure into the character introduction or growth arc or building the story world? What else could the author have done?

Part 7: Read: Read the next chapter in in *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O'Conner

Keep thinking about your story. You will be doing this exercise on your story next week.

Week 20

E: Events 2 (Plot)

Complete this exercise for your story. It's fine if you change things for your final story. Some of this you have already worked on for earlier assignments.

Part 1: Write a one-sentence story premise.

Part 2: Write a short summary to get the big picture feel of the story.

Part 3: Diagram the main character(s) and their growth arc.

Part 4: Diagram the main plot points/three-act structure using the simple plot diagram.

Part 5: Write a one-sentence summary of each scene of the book.

Part 6: For each scene, write a likely explanation for why the scene was included. How does it follow logically from the previous scene? How does it set up the later events or climax? How does it figure into the character introduction or growth arc or building the story world?

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Optional bonus exercises:

1. Chose five stories. Consider the subplot(s). How did they tie into the main story? Which of the four types mentioned were they?
2. Chose five different series. Which types are they? How do the books connect?
3. If you were to write a series, which type would you write? How would you connect the series?

Week 21

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Week 22

E: Evaluating Feedback and Developmental Editing)

Part 1: Which type of editing do you think you will need the most help with? What are your strengths and weaknesses as a writer?

Part 2: Are you likely to be angry and offended at feedback? To automatically assume you're right and others wrong? To be hurt any errors were found and feel like you've done wrong and messed up? Do you automatically want to make all the changes to please the editor or because you feel humility demands assuming you're in the wrong? Or do you take time to think through each suggestion, search out principles or rules to justify your reaction (make or not make the suggested change, or make another change), and go with your gut on some things? How can this understanding help you?

Part 3: Keep working on your story! We are winding down the first half of the course and getting ready to write the book proposal!

Part 5: Read: Read the next chapter in in *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O'Conner

Week 23

Writing, Reading, and Catching Up

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Week 24 & 25

Midpoint 1&2 Book Proposals

Part 1: Write a complete proposal for your short story. Address it to a specific literary agent. Include a query letter/cover letter, synopsis, three sample chapters, and other pertinent information.

This is to be completed by Week 27.

Part 2: Read: Finish reading *Woe is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English* by Patricia T. O'Conner

Week 26

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Week 27

Writing, Reading, and Catching Up

Complete the book proposal.

Week 28

I: Introduction to Great Writing 1 (Description, Style, and Voice)

Part 1: How would you define “great writing”?

Part 2: Consider the voice and style of some of your favorite authors. What sets them apart from other authors? What makes them recognizable? What do you like about their style/voice?

Part 3: For the stories you’ve written, do you feel like you’re writing in your true voice or does it not feel right to you, like it is forced? Have you been trying to imitate another author?

Part 4: Keep working on your short story! If ever you’ve stopped work for a while, read through it again. Recognize what you like about it and make notes about things you might want to change. Don’t nitpick it though. Skim it and consider what should come next, then write a bit, even if it is only notes. Remember you can work in layers rather than expect yourself to craft a flawless scene in one sitting.

Week 29

I: Introduction to Great Writing 2 (Description, Style, and Voice)

Part 1: Look at several books in your genre. Note how and when they describe the setting at the beginning of chapters and during scenes. What surprised you? What words or phrases were commonly used, if any? What was unique to the character voice?

Part 2: Take a novel and look at use of sensory details. How did they aid to or distract from the story? How were they seen through the character's POV, letting you experience the book?

Part 3: Look at a scene in your short story. How are you working in description and information?

Part 4: How are you using sensory details in your short story? Are your words vague or concrete? Is your use of figurative language helpful or distracting? Do you slip into purple prose?

Part 5: What are you doing well? What can you improve and how can you improve it?

Week 30

Writing, Reading, and Catching Up

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Week 31

W: Words or not? 1 (Show/don't tell)

Part 1: Look at a favorite books in your genre. Note how and when the author “shows” and “tells.” Look at a couple of large and small examples. Why do you think the author made that choice for each?

Part 2: Examine a couple of scenes and ask if they are doing double duty. What plot movement or character development is conveyed?

Part 3: Choose a couple of books and note a few things that show who the character is. How do these actions or aspects reveal the character?

Part 4: Repeat part 3 for your story. How are you showing who your characters are?

Part 5: Play with a couple of scenes from your story. Is there “small scale” telling you can convert to showing? Try showing and see how it affects the scene. Choose a scene or two you would like feedback on to play with the show/tell technique.

Part 6: For consideration, are there any larger scale aspects of your story that might benefit from a swap of showing to telling or telling to showing? If so, you can let me know your thoughts, if you want feedback on it.

Week 32

W: Words or not? 2 (Show/don't tell)

Part 1: What clichés do you see used a lot that bother you? Which do you enjoy reading? Why?

Part 2: What clichés do you use in your writing? Are there any you think should cut? Use less? Keep?

Part 3: Check your work for “floating body parts.” How can you improve those sentences?

Part 4: Read a well-written book and note how they use character body parts—and how they don't. (This is not necessarily for this assignment, due to time constraints, but as you can, pay attention to this).

Part 5: Keep writing your story!

Week 33

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Week 34

R: Rhythm 1: Rhythm, Pacing, Repetition, & Describing

Character Action

Part 1: Think about books you've read that felt slow or that moved too fast. What do you think caused that sense of unsatisfying pacing?

Part 2: Think about books that had a great pacing. Can you pinpoint what kept the feeling of movement or enjoying strong?

Part 3: a) Look at your own story. Do you have a rhythm of beginning, middle, and end to each scene? Do you have scene and sequel? Is there a forward movement toward the climax?

b) How is the level of description, backstory, character introspection, etc., helping or hindering the scene movement?

Part 4: If you sense the pacing is off (which it might not be), what do you think could make it better? Or what do you think you need to be careful of in the future? (I am tempted to throw in tension scenes unconnected to the rest of the story because I fear the story needs a tension boost.)

Part 5: Look at a few scenes and see what unneeded words you could cut or how you could use stronger words. Start a list of words or phrases to be on the lookout (or "to watch for") for when you self-edit.

Week 35

R: Rhythm 2 Rhythm, Pacing, Repetition,

& Describing Character Action

Part 1: How have you seen repetition used to develop story elements? What are some different ways the same idea is being repeated?

Part 2: Are you using repetition for story elements in your story? If so, for what? Why?

Part 3: Look over a page or two of your manuscript. Are you using repetition in the words, phrases, and sounds? What do you like in this? What would you change?

Part 4: Look through a few stories and see how character movement is described or implied rather than shown. What do you notice about them?

Part 5: Look at character movement in your story. How can you apply what you've learned to it? What were you already doing? How can you strengthen the descriptions through more evocative words or descriptions?

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Week 37

R: Rhythm 3 Rhythm, Pacing, Repetition,

& Describing Character Action

Part 1: Have you ever noticed or considered paragraph length in stories before? Do you think it really does influence reader experience? Are you more prone to one length of paragraph, or do you vary them?

Part 2: Look at your sentences. Do you vary them or tend toward one particular type or length? If so, what do you tend toward?

Part 3: Examine a tense scene and note how the paragraphs, sentences, and descriptions add to or take away from the tension. You can summarize what you find here.

Part 4: Examine a “savor the moment” scene. What builds the enjoyment of the cake, the scenery, the weapons, the tender moment, and so forth?

Part 5: Write or choose a short, tense scene from your story.

- a) Change the paragraph lengths and see how it impacts the look and feel.
- b) Play with the sentences and see how they influence it.
- c) Overdo the description and see what it takes to break the flow of the scene.
- d) Tighten the description so get only a bare description of what is going on
- e) Polish the scene using what you've learned

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Week 39

I: Interest 1 Capture reader interest

Part 1: What makes you pick up a book? What have you heard others say?
What makes you put it down? What have you heard others say?
How does this support or change the focus on first lines?

Part 2: What are some of your favorite beginnings? Lines, opening scenes, or general first act? How does this insight help you with your story?

Part 3: How does your story beginning work with your strengths as a writer or the focus on the story?

Part 4: What kind of endings do you like? Dislike? Do you think more of the climax, resolution, last paragraph or last line?

Part 5: What makes you pause about writing the beginning or ending? How can you refocus to make it easier to write?

Week 40

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Week 41

T: Talk 1 (Dialogue and Action Beats)

Part 1: Look at the dialogue in a few of your favorite novels. What speaker tags do they use? Can you use any of these in your novel? Start a list of good tags.

Part 2: Look at the dialogue in a few novels. What kind of variety do they use? Do any of their dialogue tags or beats bother you? Do you particularly like anything they do with regard to their dialogue? (You can just look at the more mechanical aspects here or you can also include anything else about the dialogue that strikes you.)

Part 3: Examine the dialogue in your short story. Is the punctuation correct?

Part 4: Examine the dialogue in your short story. What kind of variety do you use in your tags and beats? How can you improve it?

Part 5: How have you seen written notes or text messages formatted?

Week 42

Writing, Reading, and Catching Up

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Week 43

T: Talk 2

Part 1: Look at the dialogue in a few of your favorite novels. Copy a few short sections and “break” the dialogue by adding unneeded beats, on the nose dialogue, bland conversation, etc. Then consider if this has revealed anything you can cut or change in your own dialogue.

Part 2: Look at the dialogue in a few of your favorite novels. Remove all the tags and see if the dialogue is strong enough to still convey the gist of the scene and the emotions.

Part 3: Repeat Part 2 for a section or two of dialogue for your short story.

Part 4: Does dialogue come naturally to you? Or do you have to work on it, or at least work on certain types of dialogue, such as emotional dialogue or banter? How can you improve in those areas or use your strengths to advantage?

Part 5: Have you ever had a character suddenly “speak” on their own and surprise you? What was that experience like? How can you better let your characters speak and act on their own without author intrusion?

Part 6: Spend some time listening to others’ dialogue.

Week 44

Writing, Reading, and Catching Up

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Also, consider keeping a log of what you are reading and what you are writing. Note that you don't have to write so many words a day or a chapter a day. Just write what you did, even if that was just "dialogue for the scene where . . ." or "worked on the goal for scene x."

Enjoy your reading and writing! And start working on your routine one step at a time.

Week 45

E: Editing 1 Self-editing and the different types of editing

Part 1: What do you struggle with perspective-wise in editing? How can you prepare yourself mentally and emotionally to approach editing humbly and confidently and not get discouraged?

Part 2: Design and write down your own editing approach. You don't have to stick with it perfectly. But consider how many passes you will make, what you will focus on in each, breaks between passes to clear your brain, and what chunks you will focus on for each editing session.

Part 3: Read lists of common errors and of commonly misused or mistyped words and phrases and write your own. Writing them down and spending time thinking about how to use them properly will help you spot them and use them correctly in the future.

Part 4: Look at your manuscript. What words, phrases, or beats have you overused? Make a list to work on as you edit.

Part 5: Work on a style sheet for your manuscript. You can spread this out over a couple of weeks.

Part 6: Write a poem about the editing experience, remembering to begin and end with something positive about your work—something you enjoy about your story, your gladness in having the gift of writing, getting closer to having a polished book, for instance—but feel free to express the pain and fear and struggles of the process in the rest of it. (This is a modified approach to what many writers of psalms from the Bible did—Praise God! Everyone is trying to kill me! Only the evil succeed! Why did you let this happen, God? Save me! I will trust in God for he is good and his love is steadfast.)

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Week 47

E: Editing 2

Part 1: Edit a paragraph or two of your story. Include the before and after below and explain your changes.

Part 2: Continue work on a style sheet for your manuscript.

Part 3: Edit the following samples from *To Catch a Magic Thief* by E.J. Kitchens, ch. 3. The published version is in the IWRITE Editing Key handout; there is flexibility in some changes. The POV character is Marcel Ellsworth, Baron of Carrington. There are three samples.

Editing sample 1 – Edit for proper punctuation.

My manservant was doing something or other in his typical busy manner as I burst into my room!

“Have a pleasant walk?” Henry asked before he looked up. When he did, he raised his eyebrows a frown twisting his mouth as he scanned my appearance.

“I survived it,” I flopped on the edge of the bed. He fetched a towel, as I tugged off my soaked boots.

“Snowbanks and mud puddles,” He muttered, “and bloody handkerchiefs. We haven’t been here seventy-two hours, and already I’ve had to clean a bloodstained “*woman’s*” handkerchief and now soaked boots. If I have to prepare your body for a funeral before the month is up, I’ll quit.

Editing sample 2 – Look for excess and misused words and other sloppiness. You can simplify sentences if you wish, if the changes fit the voice.

“I wouldn’t blame you.”

“Your not going to get us arrested again, are you?”

“Not if I can help it,” I put my jacket aside. “Layout another suite and pair of boots. And make it snappy. I can’t be tardy to the first lesson of the day on the first day I am able to attend, especially not after getting here too days tardy.”

Squatting, Henry rocked back on his heels, holding the boots out like they were contagious. “Are you sure we should stay? The Floraisons are enchanter. I had thought I had heard as much but was hoping I was not correct in that. Remember what the inspector said.”

“Devil take the inspector. He said a lot of things he had no authority to say. This Sonser, not Ceur. I will not be bullied buy him hear. And I fully intend keep out of any magic business.” I laid the wand carefully on the bed.

Henry rises slowly, eyeing the wand. “Do you?”

Editing sample 3 – Full edit, for on the nose dialogue, same sentence structure, purple prose, out-of-character vocabulary, and any other changes. plus other errors, style changes, POV changes, commonly misused words, misspelled word, double space, missing article, repeated word

“Yes. I found it. I’m returning it to the duke. This morning. End of adventure,” I said.

“I promised your aunt to keep you out of trouble,” Henry said.

“You work for me, not my aunt,” said I.

“Yes,” Henry frowned, but my mother works for your aunt.” My aunt worries for me allot, and Henry’s mother would want him to look after him so it wouldn’t worry my aunt.

My manservant was worried for me two. I appreciated it because Henry is my friend, but right now, I just did not want to be later. I did not feel like arguing. “Just get me the suit.”

He didn’t move, “What of Lord Mauldin?”

I said, “What about him?” Thank heavens the relationship was by marriage. I could hate to share blood with than man. “He’s after your estate,” Henry said. “One misstep out of line and he’ll have you declared incompetent and take it. The terms of the will allow it, if you are declared crazy or not fit to run it.”

“Believe me, Henry, I know. I know what a rogue in a powdered wig that charlatan and devil is! Heap curses and burning coals upon his heads!!! That’s why I’ve got to stay. I need the Duke of Henly’s approval in case of emergency as much as I need him wisdom on estate managment.”

Henry’s eyes narrowed, and the green orbs flashing. “We’ll stay,” he said decidedly with a firm nod to show his consent.

“I’m relieved your agree. My suit?”

After exchanging my mudied articles for clean ones, Henry collected my boots and skipped to the door. “Anything else, sir, before I erase the evidence of you’re morning’s escapade?”

Glancing at the clock on the mantel, I fumbled with my cravat. I could still make it, but I wouldn't have time to talk with the duke about the wand beforehand. A clean pair of boots stood at my feet. My eyes peered into the empty shaft of each. "Give me a lift, will you?"

"Are you going somewhere, sir?"

"No, no. A lift." My long, thin fingers raised my right boot.

"Ah. Your third foot."

"Don't call it that. It's a *lift*, an insert."

"A lift is something that moves something, like a dumbwaiter."

"And a third foot is a third foot, complete with ankle and toes," I ground out. "Just get another *thing-that-goes-in-my-shoe-and-makes-my-legs-even-so-I-can-walk-without-limping*." I didn't need to give the Floraisons another reason to scorn me.

He's weak, Lady Ellsworth had proclaimed more than once to my great-aunt and great-uncle. "It's been a year, and he still limps, still stutters, still cries himself to sleep. How did he survive the crash when my son did not? My son, whom neither illness nor harm ever touched until he married that woman? The boy will always be weak," I remembered to myself.

"I'm not sure we have another," Henry said—rescuing me from memories of the two years I spent with my paternal grandmother after my parents died in a carriage crash.

"Don't tell me that . . . You always pack spares of everything . . . I carry around more luggage than a duchess on holiday . . ."

Henry sniffed as if offended. "I'll see what I can find, though it may take awhile to find the object you're hankering after in your overabundance of luggage."

I. W.R.I.T.E.: EDITING KEY

My manservant was doing something or other in his typical busy manner as I burst into my room¹.

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“I wouldn’t blame you.”

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Week 48

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Week 49

Overview of publishing, the writing life,
and references for future study

Part 1: Consider your publishing plans and explain your reasoning for them.

Part 2: Keep writing!

Week 50

Writing, Reading, and Catching Up

Work on catching up on lessons, reading, and finishing your story.

Also, make note of the things you've learned about your writing routine during the past year. When do you write best? What is your best writing "setting"? For example: location, sound level and type, necessary steps to reduce distractions and excuses, best routine to get into the writing frame of mind, best breaks that allow you to come back ready and refreshed. What kind of story time (reading and watching or listening) most helps you be creative during your writing sessions? Also, do you need external motivation and accountability to write? If so, consider how to establish that once the course ends. Start building your writing team.

What will your future routine be?

Week 51

Final Tips

Work on your class project!

Week 52

The End

Complete your story and celebrate!

Thank you so much for spending your year with me in I. W.R.I.T.E.: How to Write a Novel! Best wishes for all your future writing projects.