I.W.R.I.T.E.

How to Write a Novel

Workbook

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I: Introduction to Writing a Novel
Lesson I Notes

What is a novel?

What is fiction?

How would you respond to someone who says that fiction isn't worthwhile? Or that novels are lies?

"Fiction contains a mutually acknowledged contract between storyteller and audience that what is being presented is not intended to be taken as true—in its entirety."
What do you think of the previous statement?

List the four things Elizabeth highlighted that might be truths in fiction.
1.
2.
3.
4.
Do you agree with the list? Would you add anything else?

What things did you learn in fiction (book or movies) that were true?

Give an example of things learned from each of the four categories from novels you've read.

What things have you noticed as being *not true* in novels?

Give an example of things learned from each of the four categories from novels you've read.

What "truths" do you care out in fiction? Realistic settings or scientific or historical facts or true-to-life character interactions or overall worldview?

What do you not care out? For instance, if you read or write space opera, you probably don't care about scientific accuracy in your books, unlike the readers of hard sci-fi.

Do you like to read books whose overall worldview and messages you can trust or do you like books that challenge you and invite thought? Do you not think about the messages of the books you read?

What does this learning preference tell you about your goals as a reader? How should you consider this when you write your own novel?

"Books aren't just entertainment. They all have a message."
Do you agree or disagree? Why? If true, how would this influence your writing and reading?
"Humans are born learners. Fiction is a way of learning."
Do you agree or disagree? Why? How would this influence your writing and reading?

Do you connect strongly with characters in fiction or not? Do you think some readers are more prone to this and that some genres lend themselves to this more than others? Explain.

Story worlds are borne of the author's worldview, and so don't always have the same consequences as in our world. This can create false impressions of consequences and right and wrong and of people and ideas.

Do you agree or disagree with this statement. How would this affect the way you read books or watch movies? Would it cause you to be more conscious of what you're consuming? (The goal being to think through things more, enjoy the good, and reject the bad, not be overly critical.)

Should stories always be serious and have realistic consequences? Can readers/viewers distinguish between "fiction fiction" and "truth in fiction"? How much are we influenced by the books and movies we consume? Answer the question, then consider the examples below.

Consider the cartoons with Wile E. Coyote and the Road Runner. Explosions and falls off cliffs and other events that would likely cause serious injury or death are common, but there are no serious injuries or death for Wile E. Coyote in the cartoon. Is this wrong and dangerously misleading? Just part of the humor and not meant to be taken as realistic and we should give our readers/viewers credit for being sensible people able to distinguish truths and non-truths in fictions?
Or consider action and adventure movies where the bad guys are always terrible shots when it comes to hitting the hero. Is this giving a false impression of invincibility to young people wanting to have adventure and fight bad guys? Or is it a necessary part of the genres where heroes survive and good win?
Or the Casanova-character/James Bond/bad boy who never suffers any consequences of his behavior, despite the CDC's estimate of 26 million new sexually transmitted diseases in the US in 2018, half of which were from youth aged 15-24?
(https://www.cdc.gov/std/statistics/default.htm)
But what about the hysteria caused by Orson Wells's fictional radio broadcast of The War of the Worlds? (If you're not familiar with this historical moment, you can read about it here: https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/infamous-war-worlds-radio-broadcast-was-magnificent-fluke-180955180/)
Or characters (those we like and/or dislike) who smoke, drink, cuss, use fantasy magic, witchcraft, violence, sarcasm, steal, are assassins, etc.?

What's our responsibility as writers and what is the responsibility of the reader (and for younger readers, their parents and teachers) to give balance and perspective to allow for enjoyment and escape while being grounded in both the good and bad of life?

What is worldview?

What is, briefly, your worldview? (Or a few main points of it.) Hint: Worldview can be seen in obvious things—like religion; attitudes toward slavery and abortion (and twins); treatment of the elderly and disabled and of animals; race; government—and in things we think of less—like punctuality (not all cultures value being on time); the importance of reading; hospitality; cleanliness; the value of the arts; and so on.

How do you think your worldview will influence your writing?

Compare and contrast are extremely useful in helping us think through things. Take several popular movies, books, or TV shows, or known worldviews, and write a few sentences discussing how your worldview, particularly as it will be shown in your books, is similar to it.

Now discuss how will it be different in beliefs and their application, like in the view of twins or the possibility of redemption or the reality of good and evil.

Discuss how it might be different from a book with a similar worldview just because of what parts of the worldview you choose to show. For example, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* includes a type for Christ sacrificing himself and rising from the dead. Christian fantasy novel *Wishtress* comes from the same Judeo-Christian worldview and explores choosing right or wrong and receiving unearned love, even after countless mistakes, through the tragedies and triumphs of characters seeking a well said to grant magic gifts to those who drink from it. The water from the well could be likened to Jesus, the Living Water, but there is no church or trinity or cross mentioned. My own novels are from the same worldview but may, or may not depending on the novel, include mentions of characters praying or thinking of a Scripture verse that directly applies to some difficulty they are facing or choice they must make. It's faith-in-action rather than allegory or symbolism.

Much of what I read and write—and much of what my readers reader—tends to be clean fiction, specifically Christian fiction and Christian worldview fiction. Since many of you will likely be writing in these areas, or considering them, let's take a look at them.

Some books are specifically Christian fiction. This means they contain obvious references to the Christian faith through some or all of these: Scripture use, characters praying, use of allegory, and publication by a Christian publishing house. It may retell a Biblical story or include a conversion scene. (Some complain that Christian fiction is mostly Amish romance with an out-of-place-feeling "character gets saved" moment tossed in—this is a very innaccurate view of the depth and breadth of Christian fiction!)

Other books come from a Christian worldview. They may not include any reference to God or Scripture, but the main characters generally act in accordance with Biblical principles and the worldview of the story world matches the traditional Christian worldview. Many self-published authors of clean stories (notably in the fairytale retelling and clean fantasy romance genres I am a part of) are Christians writing Christian worldview books. This provides great entertainment and good examples to Christians and non-Christians alike. Both Christian fiction and Christian worldview fiction are valuable. You simply need to know which you're writing so you can write it well and market it properly to reach the readers who want it.

C.S. Lewis says this about it:

…we needn't all write patently moral or theological work. Indeed, work whose Christianity is latent may do quite as much good and may reach some whom the more obvious religious work would scare away. The first business of a story is to be a good story. When our Lord made a wheel in the carpenter shop, depend upon it, it was first and foremost a good wheel.

(Letter to Cynthia Donnelly, August 14, 1954)

What is the purpose or goal of fiction?

What do you think of entertainment being *the* or *a* goal of fiction?

How would you respond to someone who thinks reading should be only for self-improvement and education?

If it's wrong or a waste to read for the pleasure of it, it is a waste or wrong to eat dessert for the pleasure or it? To watch sunsets and puppies playing for the pleasure of it? To drink coffee or tea for the pleasure of it? Swim or play catch in the backyard for the pleasure of it? Can things be both for pleasure and for learning? At different times or at the same time?

"Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it."

J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories"

You can read "On Fairy-Stories" many places online for free, including https://coolcalvary.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/on-fairy-stories1.pdf, or you can listen to it on YouTube.

Do you like light-hearted books or dark and gritty books? Or both? Why?

How can we as readers and authors be discerning and gracious?

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What's an "only entertainment" book that touched or influenced you?

What's a "message" book that you enjoyed?

What's a message book that you disliked and why? What could have made it better?
What messages (if any) might you want to intentionally include in your stories? How big of a role would they play?

The pen is a powerful tool. We want to wield it well. Let's be thinkers.
What do you think it takes to be a writer? Have you ever felt that you couldn't be a writer?

Why do you want to write?

What's your definition of *talent*? Of *success*?

When things are hard, what purposes can you look to to help you carry on?

What's fun about writing a story?

Who would you dedicate your first story to? Your second and third?

I: Introduction to Writing a Novel, Part 2
Lesson 2 Notes

For lesson 2, we are looking at the practical aspects of writing a novel and at the basic elements of a novel.

A novel is something that tells a fictional story but is not a play, short story, musical, movie, poem, story-driven game, or bedtime story. Why are the distinctions important?

What are some strengths and weaknesses of each of these types of story?

Sometimes we let the reader imagine rather than give all the details.

Fight scenes and chase scenes are two instances where visual media like movies have an advantage over books. But that doesn't mean you can't have those in books. How might fight scenes and other very visual scenes be translated well to the page?

What are the main differences between poetry and prose?

How poetic or lyrical do you like your novels?

A novel is a fictional story that may contain many truths, that is told in prose, that is intended to be read rather than seen or recited, and that is longer than a short story.

Does this definition change anything about how you view novels or how you would write them?

Why is "word count" rather than "page count" used in the publishing world?

What is "trim size"?

What is the "trim size" for the books most like the ones you want to write? (These would be "comp titles" for your books—the "comparable" books your audience are also reading.)

Based on the word count numbers given, how long should your novels be?

Instructor tip: Don't worry too much about length to begin with, and remember that length can change a lot during the editing process as "telling scenes" are changed to "showing scenes" and unnecessary words and even sentences and scenes are trimmed, or new sentences or scenes add. At this point, I mainly want you to have an idea of the length you'll need, and so you won't finish a 5,000 word short story and think it's a novel that will make you rich and famous.

If you're interested in the bookbinding process, check out these videos on YouTube:
"The History of the Modern Book Cover" by *Adam Savage's Tested*
https://youtu.be/vgKZciIEorA

"Making A Medieval Book - Complete Process From Start to Finish - 60 hours in 24 minutes" by *Four Keys Book Arts*
https://youtu.be/lQ50XdqfG00

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Take a look at a traditionally published book—at the front and back cover, spine, copyright page, title page, dedication, epigraph, the body, and the back matter. (Book design/formatting is a career path or side gig if that interests you!)

Notice the chapter headings and scene breaks. Roughly how long are the chapters?

Why might noticing these parts be useful?

What are your thoughts toward copyright and plagiarism? Do you value others' work or want everything for free? Do you want to be paid for your time and work? Do you understand plagiarism enough to avoid it?

Did you know before this lesson that song lyrics are copyrighted? You would need to seek permission to use lyrics (and possibly pay for that permission).

If you use Scripture in your book, don't forget to check your Bible's copyright page to see how many verses you can use before violating their copyright terms!

What constitutes "fair use"? When do things go out of copyright?

If you plan on writing fiction that includes living people or thinly veiled representations of real people, do you understand libel and slander and defamation enough to avoid a lawsuit if someone doesn't like what you have to say? Be sure to keep up to date on these issues if they apply to you.

When does copyright begin? Is there a copyright notice on every page of the books you own?

You can learn more about filing copyright here: https://www.copyright.gov
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What is your opinion on prologues? How are they best used? What is a bad use of a prologue?

Should a prologue be an exciting scene from later in the novel stuck at the front to make up for a dull opening?

What are a few of the purposes of a chapter?

How long should chapters be? As long as they need to be.
Does that answer frustrate you because you like concrete rules or give you a sense of freedom that you can make the tool work for your story into of the story forced to fit the tool?

What is the practical guideline for chapter length?

Are books written chapter by chapter or scene by scene? Why?

A scene is a small story in itself.

What does a scene include?

What kinds of chapter endings do you like? What kinds bother you?

Flip through a book and notice the chapter endings and beginnings. Are there any common ways that chapters end and begin?

What are "scene" and "sequel" as talked about in *Techniques of the Selling Writer* by Dwight V. Swain? (You can find a nice summary of it by Randy Ingermanson on https://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/articles/writing-the-perfect-scene/.)

Pick up any book you've read and skim a couple of scenes. Can you pick out the "set the story" elements? The goal? The action? Disaster? Dilemma and Decision?

What is the end like?

What connects the scene to the overall story?

What are the two types of scenes? Explain the difference between them.

Here's an example from my book *Wrought of Silver and Ravens*. For context, Athdar, a hunted wanderer with secrets, has been forced to join a group of soldiers returning to their castle. Galen, who becomes his mentor/father figure, is an elite guard. Readers know that Galen recently lost a son about Athdar age's. Athdar wants to leave camp for a bit.

Galen brushed past the guard, having missed the tent pitching to confer with the king. "Just be careful, Athdar. We didn't exactly rout the bandits. You've a quarter-hour to rest, eat"—his eyes went questioningly to the crates, making Athdar stiffen—"and whatever else . . . Then come see to the prince." His gaze caught admiringly on Star Bringer, and he eased slowly toward the horse's head as he spoke, hand out as if asking for permission to touch him.
Athdar tweaked the reins to pull Star Bringer's head away before Galen could put some kind of spell on him, something to make them come back at his call or not go at all.
Face pinched, Galen dropped his hand, his broad shoulders not so straight as usual. Athdar almost felt sorry. Almost.

Read the passage above and mark where various showing and telling techniques are being used.

Take a few passages from a novel that you think particularly well written and consider the show and tell there. Do note that older books (classics, in particular) tend to tell more, so look at books like the ones you want to write.

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Summarize the nine elements of a story.

The 9 elements of story
Plot

Character

Setting

Goals and motivation

Conflict and tension

Progression

Promise, tone, and payment

Theme

Genre specifics (Fantastic elements, historical detail, etc.)

I: Ideas
Lesson 3 Notes

How many stories are there?

What kinds of ideas do you need for your story?

In brief, where do you get ideas?

Did any of the "starter material" from the examples given surprise you? If so, why?

What kinds of starter material have come to you?

Do you think you are a world-builder first? Character-centric author? Plot-centric author? Author with a message looking for a story? Inspiration author? You may not have written enough to know, or it may vary by project.

What are the things Elizabeth listed that a novel may start form?

How do you tend to start a story?

What do you think of Elizabeth's proposed methods? Which, if either, do you think would work best for you?

What is a story premise?

What makes a good premise?

What is included in a premise?

Consider a few stories and write a premise for each.

Write a premise for a few of your own story ideas.

What do you think of a limited number of story types? That all stories can be reduced down to a set few?

Story structure
"Get a character up a tree. Throw rocks at him.
Get him down."

Does this image help you? What does it tell you about stories?

Explain the three-act story structure. Briefly discuss what each act accomplishes and what is needed to transition to the next act.

Look at several stories and consider what the incident event/key event or Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 are.

Choose a couple of stories and look at the internal and external story structure. How do the internal and external changes influence one another?

Choose a couple of stories and discuss the internal and external goals. What might the reader or author want for the character? What does the character want?

What are James Scott Bell's three "death stakes." Do you agree with them?

How might thinking about "death stakes" help you form a strong premise?

What makes stories compelling to you?

What are the "everything else" ideas that your story needs?

What kinds of ideas do you need for characters?

What kinds of places do you need for your story?

What kinds of ideas do you need for each ring of places?

What kinds of things or story props might you need?

Goals, conflicts, and resolutions to those are needed for scenes and the story overall.

How might understanding the most basic human desires and common goals that come from them help strengthen and fill out your story?

What are some common story goals (list some that aren't on the slide as well).

What are some common story conflicts (list some that aren't on the slide as well).

Must story resolutions always be positive (as in goal achieved)?

Choose a story and list the main story goal, conflict, and resolution, and the stakes if the goal isn't achieved. Take a few scenes and list the same for those.

"For substantially all ideas are second-hand, consciously and unconsciously drawn from a million outside sources, and daily use by the garnerer with a pride and satisfaction born of the superstition that he originated them."
-Mark Twain, Letter to Anne Macy. Reprinted in *Anne Sullivan Macy, The Story Behind Helen Keller* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran, and Co., 1933), p.162.
http://www.twainquotes.com/Plagiarism.html

What do you think of Twain's quote?

Are you afraid of others copying your idea? Are you afraid of writing a story that's already been written? Have you ever put a work aside because you found another like it?

"They are inclined to say that any two stories that are built round the same folk-lore motive, or are made up of a generally similar combination of such motives, are 'the same stories.' We read that Beowulf 'is only a version of Dat Erdmänneken'; that 'The Black Bull of Norroway is Beauty and the Beast,' or 'is the same story as Eros and Psyche'; that the Norse Mastermaid (or the Gaelic Battle of the Birds and its many congeners and variants) is "the same story as the Greek tale of Jason and Medea. Statements of that kind may express (in undue abbreviation) some element of truth; but they are not true in a fairy-story sense, they are not true in art or literature. It is precisely the colouring, the atmosphere, the unclassifiable individual details of a story, and above all the general purport that informs with life the undissected bones of the plot, that really count. Shakespeare's King Lear is not the same as Layamon's story in his Brut. Or to take the extreme case of Red Riding Hood: it is of merely secondary interest that the retold versions of this story, in which the little girl is saved by wood-cutters, is directly derived from Perrault's story in which she was eaten by the wolf. The really important thing is that the later version has a happy ending (more or less, and if we do not mourn the grandmother overmuch), and that Perrault's version had not. And that is a very profound difference, to which I shall return. J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories"
 https://coolcalvary.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/on-fairy-stories1.pdf

What do you think of Tolkien's opinion on the matter of "same stories" (noting that he is specifically speaking of fairy stories)?

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Look at a few stories that are remakes of the same story. How are they the same? How are they unique? What makes them a good story on their own or not?

Have you considered writing an adaption or retelling or a more loose reimaging? Why or why not?

How might you makes a retelling or adaption your own?

Do you like similar ideas or plot points or character types in stories or not? Why or why not?

Would you agree that there are new stories or not?

How do you get ideas?

What types of questions might you ask?

How would story logic and structure help you come up with ideas?

How do you fill out a story?

Where might you get ideas? What should you do to fill your creativity well?

How do you keep your novel going after you've started it?

How do you keep track of ideas?

Jot down any story ideas (starter or filler here).

W: Story World
Lesson 4 Notes

What is meant by *story world*?

How might this be different than "setting"?

How do you think of setting?

What are the two levels of story world?

What does story world help define for a novel?

How might this affect your work-in-progress (WIP)? Give examples.

What are different ways people have developed story worlds?

Which way or ways have you used?

What is meant by using a "model"?

Is there a setting you like that you might want to set a story in?

Did this overview of story world creation methods help you think about how to choose story worlds?

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Write a few story world concepts for books you want to write or have read.

How do things like technology, necessary people interactions, ability to travel, and career opportunities help limit settings?

What other aspects of life might you consider for your own WIP?

If your story world is like a real world, what are some things listed on the slide (or unlisted) that might need to be considered?

Are you eager to develop your story world beforehand? Or is that daunting to you?

How do genre, tone, local knowledge, and reader expectation affect the necessary level of detail and accuracy for a story?

How does reader interest in the story experience/feeling versus details affect how you write and research?

Which genres need more research than others?

How much research and accuracy will you novel need, based on its comparable novels?

Is your genre more detail-oriented or experience-oriented?

What can you do with the research you have and the world information (besides put it in the book)?

What are some of the research sources available?

What sources might be useful for your novel?

How does language play a part in setting the sense of time, place, and character history? What do you need to aware when considering language in your story?

W: Story World
Lesson 5 Notes

What time periods and places and settings do you like?

What model might you use for a story world? Or do you want to build your own world from scratch?

Does Elizabeth's experiences developing story worlds resonate with you? Did you learn anything of use to your writing or about life as an author?

How do considering other characters, stories, situations, conflicts, goals help you develop your story world?

Why should you treat your story world as real?

What do you think of magic systems? (For more on my views see the last few pages.)

What are the two ends of the scale of magic systems? Where might you use them?

Why are costs, consequences, and limitations so important to magic systems or any strength of the characters?

What "wow" factors might you find in your own story world?

What questions should you ask of your story world as you develop it?

Write down some models for your story world or some of the major points within it. What costs and conflicts and stakes are a part of it? What's the natural state of it versus the "conflict" state? What's a story world concept for it?

W: Story World

Lesson 6 Notes

Who will your readers be?

Why would a stranger read your book? What promises is your packing offering?

What is the "proper shelving" for your WIP or future projects? Not sure. Look up genres and subgenre lists and note the categories in the sales rank section of Amazon books pages

You can find some genre lists and explanations in the websites below. Opinions and lists vary. Remember that books ultimately define lists and not list books. Books came before the lists to separate them, and new categories arise as distinct books emerge (think dystopian and steampunk). If your book doesn't fit perfectly, choose the genre and category that its readers are already reading in.

A couple of genre lists.
Masterclass. What Are the Different Genres of Literature? A Guide to 14 Literary Genres. https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-are-the-different-genres-of-literature-a-guide-to-14-literary-genres

Self-publishingSchool. Book Genres: 79+ Fiction and Nonfiction Genre Guides. https://self-publishingschool.com/book-genres/

What makes for a "high quality" book in your opinion? Explain for a particular category of book.

Why should you seek feedback from readers of the the genre you want to write?

When is reading in other genres particularly helpful?

What do you think of tropes? Do you agree with Jennifer Hilt's definition in *The Trope Theasaurus*?

What are some recognizable elements that you enjoy in your genre?

What are some that you have or might use in your WIP?

What is the tone of your story? What is at least one book or movie with a similar tone?

What is a book's packaging?
What is the difference between back cover copy/blurb/book description and book summary?

Who is each one for and why is that important?

Why is having a blurb ready before you begin your book helpful?

Read a lot of blurbs in your genre and then in another genre. What are the commonalities between them? What separates the genres?

Write several blurbs for your own book.

I: Character Notes

What are the types of characters?

What roles do characters play in a story?

What are the three points of view?

What clues in readers to the type of character a character is?

What are some stories told by narrators that you have read or watched?

What are the benefits and drawbacks of narrated stories?

What are the hallmarks and benefits of a story narrated by an omniscient narrator? Give an example of a story of this type that hasn't already been given.

What are the hallmarks and benefits of a frame story? Give an example of a story of this type that hasn't already been given. How does the frame tie in to the main story?

What are the hallmarks and benefits of a story narrated by a secondary character? Give an example of a story of this type that hasn't already been given.

What are scenery characters?

What are minor characters?

What are secondary characters? How are they different from minor and from main characters?

How do you normally come up with characters?

Elizabeth holds characters loosely without too much examination. She knows them in a more abstract or experiential way than a labeled way. Do you hold your characters loosely or do you need exact details and labels?

In the same way there are many people who look alike, there are many people who act alike as well. They share a personality type. Have you ever noticed this?

Elizabeth creates characters from models. How do you feel about this? Do you think characters should be developed from scratch through a lengthy character interview?

Personality model + story world influence + background + goals = character

How would understanding personality type and beliefs and values help you understand character actions and reactions?

Questions to consider when developing characters:

What kind of character would I enjoy writing?

What kind of character makes sense for the story?

What is Elizabeth's character creation method? Does she know everything upfront?

What do you think about this method? What is your method?

After listening to Elizabet talk about developing Athdar, Breccan, and the enchantress from *The Rose and the Wand*, what did you learn about creating characters?

Is it encouraging to know you can refine characters as you go along?

Some personality traits. Feel free to add.

Proud. Arrogant. Conceited. Humble. Confident. Insecure.
Kind. Waspish. Sweet. Dour. Easy going. Up tight.
Brooding. Thoughtless. Impulsive. Quiet. Talkative.
Energetic. Sunny disposition. Jaded. Melancholy. Happy.
Nurturing. Cold. Distant. Aloof. Friendly. Shy. Calm.
Compassionate. Courageous. Timid. Fearful. Bold.
Patient. Short-tempered. Angry. Bitter. Serious. Teasing.
Honorable. Noble. Trusting. Cynical. Evil. Cruel.
Delicate. Clumsy. Passionate. Repressed. Intentional. Lazy.
Moral. Immoral. Flawless. Flawed. Scarred.
Self-absorbed. Narcissistic. Giving. Generous. Miserly.
Cowardly. Fickle. Dependable. Mature. Immature.
Witty. Slow. Dull. Clever. Smart. Average. Ignorant.
Modest. Proper. Seductive. Lecherous.
Sophisticated. Refined. Country bumpkin.
Mannerly. Polite. Rude. Crude. Uncouth.
Self-conscious. Confident. Capable. Failure.
Realist. Naive. Hopeful. Scientific. Practical. Dreamer.
Religious. Irreligious. Superstitious.

How might you describe the personality traits of your characters?

How would you describe the values and beliefs and moral of your characters? How would those influence their behavior?

To build better characters: Study how people think and react.
Study people, fictional people, historical people. Read biographies. Read books on psychology, personality types, and counseling, leadership.

Myers-Briggs personality types
https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/the-16-mbti-personality-types/

Add any additional resources that come to mind:

What are ways to keep characters consistent?

What are signals that a character is acting out of character?

What are the four fundamentals of a character according to Gilbert Morris?

How is this way of looking at characters helpful and not helpful?

What are Elizabeth's fundamentals of characters?

Character Interview Things to Consider

Personality
Temperament
Beliefs and values
Background/history
Relationships
Desires and interests
Goals and motivation
Fears
Flaws and struggles
Physical description
Physical strengths/limitations
Speech
Intelligence
Habits
Hobbies & Sports
Unique aspects
What books would your character read?
What do characters think of themselves?
What do other characters think of them?
What do the characters are about others' opinions?
What should readers think about them?
Defining moment in their life.

What are some ways to make characters likable?

What are the traits of characters that you like? Don't like? How can you use this in your stories?

Here are some traits of likable characters. Add any more you can think of.

Virtuous but flawed
Friendly
Compassionate
Kind to animals
Kind to children
Intelligent
Sarcastic
Witty
Successful
Self-deprecating
Humorous
Have relatable desires
Relatable struggles
Talented
Tragic backstories
Overcome
Loves someone
Loves a cause
A willingness to sacrifice.
Humility

I: Character Notes

Love your character.
Daydream about them.
Treat them like real person.

What are some character archetypes? Where have you seen these before? Would they be helpful to you?

What character depth do you like in books?

What kinds of books are more likely to have deep characters?

What are things to consider when writing and developing characters with regard to how deeply to reveal them to readers?

Given the genre for your books and the other things considered, should your characters be more introspective or less introspective?

What is a character arc?
Must characters change over the course of a story?

What are the different change patterns Elizabeth mentioned. Given an example of each not already given.

What are some of the levels of character change?

What are some ways in which characters change?

What are the points in Jeff Gerke's (*Plot versus Character*) inner character journey?

Do you find this way of looking at character change and story helpful?

Choose a story or two and diagram the character journey as Elizabeth did for Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudicei.*

What is the midpoint or mirror moment of a story?

What are some examples of mirror moments? Open 3–5 books and note what is happening around the middle of the story. How does this influence the ending?

What might be the midpoint of your story?

Based on this, what would the pre-psychology state and transformation be?

Does this idea help you think about your story?

How do you approach naming characters?

What are good places to get names for characters? Have you ever used an online name generator?

Do you like names with meaning or not?

What are things to consider when naming a character?

For character background, why it is important to live in the tension of not telling reading everything upfront?

What are ways to work in background without information dumping?

What are your thoughts on character description? How detailed do you think characters should be?

What are the usual levels of description in the books comparable to yours?

Describe your character for yourself:

What description do you think your readers want or need?

What does *point of view* refer to?

What are the hallmarks, pros, and cons of first-person past point of view?

What are some first-person POV stories that you have read?

What are the hallmarks, pros, and cons of first-person present point of view?

What are some first-person present POV stories that you have read?

What are the hallmarks, pros, and cons of third-person present point of view?

What are some third-person present stories that you have read?

What are the hallmarks, pros, and cons of omniscient point of view?

What are some omniscient POV stories that you have read?

What should you consider when choosing a POV for your story?

What the pros and cons of more than one POV character?

How many POV characters do you have and why?

How did you choose your POV characters?

What things should you include in a story bible?

Design a story bible for your story and start to populate it.

T: Trouble, Tension, and Ticking Clock

What do you think of a story as characters dealing with a problem?

What are the aspects of a story that you can ask questions of to help you find the trouble for your story?

Why should you consider genre and emotional intensity when choosing trouble?

What kinds of trouble do you like or not like in stories? Why?

What is tension? What is it good for stories?

What are types of tension?

Choose a story and look at the types of tension. When does the tension begin and end for each thread? How are the tension threads that end quickly different from the ones that don't get resolved until the end? Is anything left unresolved?

What is a ticking clock?

How does a ticking clock help a story?

A ticking clock can remind writers that a character must change by a certain point. How does them help them with the story, knowing the end point that must be achieved?

What are examples of ticking clocks?

E: Events (Plot) 1

What is the plot?

What is the purpose(s) of the events that happen in a novel?

What is the most helpful way to think about plot for you?

Copy the list of reasons why certain events occur in novels. Do you have any reasons to add? Any possible examples of these reasons to add?

Copy the basic plot diagram below.

What are the story events according to K.M. Weiland's chart? (Secrets of story structure.
https://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com/secrets-story-structure-complete-series/)

Do you like this layout? Does it help?

*"'This happened—and then this happened—and then this happened.' This is bad plotting!
Instead, think of: 'He did this—and when he did, she was forced to do that—which meant that
they had to do that.'
As well, the story's setting cannot be isolated from its plot and its characters. It is only when all
three work together that a book comes alive."*
Gilbert Morris, *Write Your First Novel*

Plotting and events exercise:
Chose a favorite novel—a short and simple one.

Write a one-sentence story premise.

Write a short blurb to get the big picture feel of the story.

I. W.R.I.T.E.: HOW TO WRITE A NOVEL

Describe the main character(s) and diagram the growth arc.

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

Write a one-sentence summary of each scene.

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?

E: Events (Plot) 2

How do you outline a story? What are the steps?

How do you discovery write a story?

Consider Gilbert Morris's Plot Construction (*Write Your First Novel*) and Randy Ingermanson's Snowflake method. Write down the steps of the one you think would be most helpful to you.

What are K.M. Weiland's tips for brainstorming?

Referencing her quote, why are questions so important?

What is a subplot?

What should be taken into account when considering subplots?

What are the four types of subplots according to the Masterclass post on subplot? (https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-add-subplots-to-your-story)

Consider the subplot(s) of a few novels. How did you they tie into the main story? Which of the four types mentioned were they?

What should you consider when plotting books with multiple POV characters?

How have you seen multiple POV characters done well? Done poorly? What can you take away for your story?

What are the types of book series? Give an example of each.

What connects the books in various types of series?

Consider several different series. Which types are they? How do the books connect?

What draws you to read through series?

If you were to write a series, which type would you write? How would you connect the series?

Once upon a time: What should you consider for starting a novel?

What should you consider when plotting the first act?

What should consider when plotting the second act to the midpoint?

What should consider when plotting the second act midpoint to the third act?

What should consider when plotting the climax?

What should you consider when plotting the denouement to The End?

What type of story endings do you like?

E: Evaluating Feedback and Editing

What are the types of editing? Give a brief description of each.

Why is the order of the edits important?

How do you tend to respond to feedback? How can understanding this help you evaluate feedback better?

What are some things to consider when evaluating and applying feedback? Why it is a good idea to double-check writing rules and principles and to let feedback sit for a day or more?

Midpoint: Writing a Book Proposal

Give a brief overview of the publishing process from completed manuscript to publisher contract.

What are common things agents want from prospective authors?

Why is it a good idea to check agent websites for information before sending a query?

Find one to five literary agents you might want to work with. Why did you choose them?

Write a query letter for your project or another book you have planned.

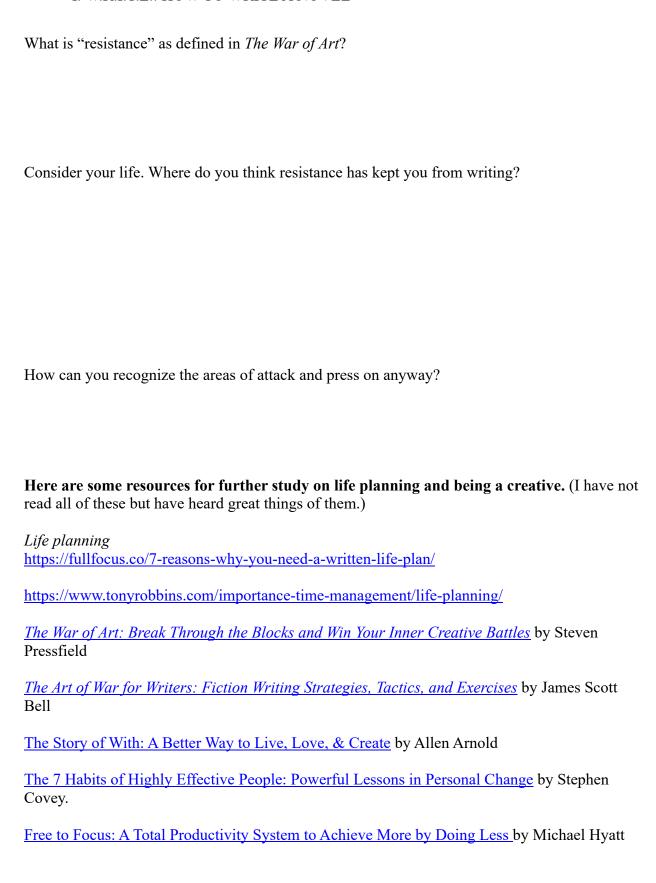Write a full proposal for your project or another book you have planned.

Here are some resources for finding agents and writing a query letter and proposal:

1. *Guide to Literary Agents 30th Edition: The Most Trusted Guide to Getting Published*
2. *Writer's Market 100th Edition: The Most Trusted Guide to Getting Published*
3. Book Proposal Basics blog post round up. https://stevelaube.com/category/book-proposal-basics/page/2/
4. "How to Write a Query Letter." https://rachellegardner.com/how-to-write-a-query-letter/
5. "The Complete Guide to Query Letters." https://janefriedman.com/query-letters/
6. "How to Write a Book Proposal." https://rachellegardner.com/how-to-write-a-book-proposal/
7. Course: "The elements of an effective book proposal." https://learn.christianwritersinstitute.com/p/the-elements-of-an-effective-book-proposal

Midpoint: Synopsis and A Swift Kick of Encouragement

What are the essential elements of a synopsis? What tense is it written in?

Why should a synopsis flow like a story and be written in your style?

What are some details that should be included in a synopsis?

What are some details that should not be included?

More resources on writing a synopsis:
https://kindlepreneur.com/how-to-write-a-synopsis/
https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-novel-synopsis-step-by-step-guide
https://self-publishingschool.com/how-to-write-a-novel-synopsis/

You can view J.K. Rowling's synopsis of The Philosopher's Stone here:
https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/synopsis-of-harry-potter-and-the-philosopher's-stone-by-j-k-rowling/VgG8oeMrAwPwfg

What excuses do you use to not write or create?

What are some hard truths about those excuses? What might a professional say to you?

Why is it important to not get mired in guilt and pity parties?

Do you find encouragement or a "reality check" and kick in the pants helpful?

What is a life plan?

What are the most important things in your life? What do you do to ensure they get the proper attention?

Where does your time go? How might you improve your time usage?

What is "resistance" as defined in *The War of Art*?

Consider your life. Where do you think resistance has kept you from writing?

How can you recognize the areas of attack and press on anyway?

Here are some resources for further study on life planning and being a creative. (I have not read all of these but have heard great things of them.)

Life planning
https://fullfocus.co/7-reasons-why-you-need-a-written-life-plan/

https://www.tonyrobbins.com/importance-time-management/life-planning/

The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles by Steven Pressfield

The Art of War for Writers: Fiction Writing Strategies, Tactics, and Exercises by James Scott Bell

The Story of With: A Better Way to Live, Love, & Create by Allen Arnold

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change by Stephen Covey.

Free to Focus: A Total Productivity System to Achieve More by Doing Less by Michael Hyatt

[Mind Your Mindset: The Science That Shows Success Starts with Your Thinking](#) by Michael Hyatt and Megan Hyatt Miller

Time-saving
"Time-Saving Tools for Authors." Nov 22, 2023. https://www.authormedia.com/time-saving-tools-for-authors/

"A Software Guide to Authors." Aug 10, 2020. https://www.authormedia.com/2020-software-guide-for-authors/

Show up when it's hard. Some songs to encourage you.

"Smile" (When Your Heart is Breaking) with Nat King Cole

"There's No Business Like Show Business"

"Vesti la giubba" ("On with the Costume")
from Ruggero Leoncavallo's 1892 opera *Pagliacci*

> "Act! While in delirium,
> I no longer know what I say,
> or what I do!
> And yet it's necessary. Force yourself!
> Bah! Are you even a man?
> You are a clown!
>
> Put on your costume and powder your face.
> The people are paying, and they want to laugh here.
> And if Harlequin steals away your Columbina,
> laugh, clown, and all will applaud!
> Turn your distress and tears into jokes,
> your pain and sobs into a smirk, Ah!
>
> Laugh, clown,
> at your broken love!
> Laugh at the grief that poisons your heart!"
>
> Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vesti_la_giubba

Resources

How to Be a Victorian by Ruth Goodman
How to Slay a Dragon by Cait Stevenson
The Character Naming Sourcebook by Sherrilyn Kenyon
The Time Traveler's Guide to Medieval England by Ian Mortimer

What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew by Daniel Pool
Wonderbook by Jeff Vandermeer

Fight Write by Carla Hoch

The History of English Podcast

https://archive.org/details/passingenglishof00wareuoft/
https://www.oldmapsonline.org
https://www.fantasynamegenerators.com/

Medieval resources list: https://www.jlrowan.co/resources

Writing Craft Resources
Characters and Viewpoint by Orson Scott Card
K.M. Weiland blog and podcast: Helping Writers Become Authors:
    https://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com
Outlining Your Novel by K.M. Weiland
Structuring Your Novel: Essential Keys for Writing an Outstanding Story by K.M. Weiland
Secrets of story structure, blog post collection.
    https://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com/secrets-story-structure-complete-series/
Plot versus Character by Jeff Gerke
The Trope Thesaurus by Jennifer Hilt
Write Your First Novel by Gilbert Morris and Steve Laube
How to Write a Novel Using the Snowflake Method by Randy Ingermanson
The Emotion Thesaurus and other guides by Becca Puglisi and Angela Ackerman
The 12 Key Pillars of Novel Construction: Your Blueprint for Building a Strong Story by C.S. Lakin
Save the Cat! Writes a Novel: The Last Book On Novel Writing You'll Ever Need by Jessica Brody

Character creation
The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman
American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America by Colin Woodard

Boundaries by Dr. Townsend and Cloud
The Negative Trait Thesaurus: A Writer's Guide to Character Flaws (Writers Helping Writers Series) by Becca Puglisi and Angela Ackerman
The Positive Trait Thesaurus: A Writer's Guide to Character Attributes (Writers Helping Writers Series) by Becca Puglisi and Angela Ackerman
Myers-Briggs personality types. https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/the-16-mbti-personality-types/
https://www.16personalities.com/personality-types

Marketing Resources
Novel Marketing Podcast
Six Figure Authors Podcast
The Creative Penn
Helping Writers Become Authors

Publishing resources (look for the most current edition of these)
Writer's Market *Guide to Literary Agents 30th Edition: The Most Trusted Guide to Getting Published*
Writer's Market 100th Edition: The Most Trusted Guide to Getting Published

Book Proposal Basics blog post round up. https://stevelaube.com/category/book-proposal-basics/page/2/

"How to Write a Query Letter." https://rachellegardner.com/how-to-write-a-query-letter/

"The Complete Guide to Query Letters." https://janefriedman.com/query-letters/

"How to Write a Book Proposal." https://rachellegardner.com/how-to-write-a-book-proposal/

Course: The elements of an effective book proposal. https://learn.christianwritersinstitute.com/p/the-elements-of-an-effective-book-proposal

"Editor Red Flags." https://editwithclaire.com/editor-red-flags-things-to-watch-for-when-hiring-an-editor/

Elizabeth's Take on Magic Systems

Most of my books are fantasy books containing "magic." But unlike the magic/sorcery forbidden in the Bible and practiced by some today, this magic has nothing to do with idolatry or seeking power from supernatural sources, or from finding it within oneself. The Biblical prohibition against sorcery, divination, fortune-telling, etc. was meant to prohibit people from trying to control gods and spirits—it a prohibition was against idolatry. Paganism today is a similar thing and is not promoted in my books.

Fantasy magic systems can contain this idolatrous type of magic, yes, but many, many do not. The magic in my Christian-worldview books is simply a natural talent given by God to be used for good. Like the fairytales of old, adding magic (a curse to be a beast, for instance) can be used to teach, to create new situations rather than the same-old same-old story conflicts, and just be surprising and fun (like a tea party on the ceiling!). These books should in no way encourage anyone to witchcraft. Magic is simply part of the story world in which characters who seek to honor God live.

If magic bothers you, I recommend learning more about other religions, such a through reading [World Religions and Cults](#) by Hodge and Patterson, to better understand how "real" magic and fictional magic are different (except in those cases where they aren't), so you can be discerning rather than throw great books out because of a difference in vocabulary.

For a fuller discussion of this topic, please see these resources.
https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-witchcraft.html
https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-sorcery.html
https://speculativefaith.lorehaven.com/christian-fantasy-and-magic/

Note: Affiliate links are used throughout the workbook. This costs you nothing extra. All products listed are ones that I have read and recommend or list in good faith that they are good, based on what I have heard of them.