



Topic: Story Telling

Badge: Novelist

Suggested Supplies: Book (your choice), pen and paper or computer

Helpful websites:

Online book-discussion site:

<https://www.booktalk.org/>

Plot Charts:

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/plot-diagram-30040.html>

Steps:

Step 1: Deconstruct a novel

Select a novel of at least 200 pages in a genre you might like to write in. For ideas, check out what your favorite authors are reading on an online book-discussion site, look at reviews on literature blog, or find the latest exciting novels on publishers' websites. Then choose the activity you think will most help you as a writer.

CHOOSE ONE:

Review the novel. As you read, get a sense of what appeals to you as a reader. Note passages and moments that you love (or really don't). Then write your review and share it.

OR

Chart the plot. Chart your novel's plot to discover how authors balance action and character development. Focus on the rise and fall of the action and how the characters grow and change. You can find examples of plot charts in books about writing or online.

OR

Read like an editor. When assessing a manuscript, editors write a "reader's report". Imagine the novel is a manuscript, and make notes in the margins about scenes, characters, and sentences you like or don't like. Then write your report, including a plot summary, whether you think the book would sell, and whether you would publish it.

Step 2: Create great characters

Characters are the heart of a great novel. If you have a story concept already, keep that in mind during this step. If not, build your characters and see what happens. Many novelists start with characters, and then figure out what should happen to them and a story idea blooms from there.

CHOOSE ONE:

Let real people inspire your characters. Create a character profile (see page 4) for three real people - if you don't know all the answers, make your best guess. Or create a character who is a composite of three different people you know. Try exaggerating some qualities of real people to create more fascinating fictional characters.

OR

Use your favorite novels for inspiration. Fill out profiles for three characters from a favorite novel or series of novels (choose a book besides the one you read in step 1). Use your findings to add to the personalities of your novel's characters.

OR

Use character profiles to create a hero and a villain. Their conflict will drive your plot, so think about how their personalities interact. What drives the hero to be good? What drives the villain to be evil? And how will your story define good and evil?

Step 3: Develop a plot

The plot is a story's sequence of events. The plot draws the reader into the characters' lives and moves the story along. Use one of these activities to help you develop a plot starring your characters.

CHOOSE ONE:

Explore character-driven and action-driven plots. Find three examples of a character-driven plot and three of an action-driven plot. Which do you like better, or do you prefer a balance of both?

OR

Interview a novelist or writing teacher. Ask an expert how to create a great plot. Do they suggest outlining the plot, or just starting with page one and going wherever the characters take them? Do they create a synopsis of their story before writing? Do they always know how it will end?

OR

Read five interviews with novelists who describe creating a plot. You might find these interviews online or in magazines. How different or similar is each writer's process?

Step 4: Write at least 20 pages

Before you delve into writing, look through your writer's notebook for ideas and inspiration. And remember, a first draft is a first draft—a time to write whatever flows from you, without judgment.

CHOOSE ONE:

Write the first 20 pages. Create a great first scene that pulls the reader in. That usually means starting with juicy action or dialogue and saving details like hair color for later. If you get stuck, add your characters to the first scene of a book you love and see what happens.

OR

Write important scenes. You might not know how the story begins, but you're bound to come up with at least one crucial moment—the first time characters meet, a big discovery, or a watershed event. Write 20 pages of one big scene, or five pages of four scenes—whatever makes sense and keeps you inspired.

OR

Write the last 20 pages. Some writers swear you have to know where you'll end up before you can work out how to get there. So write that final homecoming, the end of the quest, the moment of victory—the place where the curtain will fall.

Step 5: Edit your pages

Editing is the most essential step in writing. It gives you the chance to improve and polish your work. Even the most seasoned writers go through several drafts of revising and rewriting, and sometimes two or three more drafts after a publisher has bought their book. Editing can mean the difference between a mediocre novel and a truly great one.

Before you show your pages to anyone, give them a first pass edit. First, put away your work for at least a day—the break will give you a chance to look at it with fresh eyes. When you're ready, print out the pages and grab a pencil. Read your work aloud. Polish your sentences. Examine your word choices. Mark any issues you find. (Would your character really say that? Does the timeline make sense?)

CHOOSE ONE:

Share your pages with two people. Once you've revised, show your work to a friend, a teacher, or anyone else who'll give you constructive feedback. Getting two opinions can reveal what's an issue for every reader versus what's particular to one person.

OR

Use a critique group. Find a writing group, either through school, online, or by starting your own. Share your pages for feedback and edits. An English class is a good place to find peers to critique your pages, or ask a creative writing teacher for their thoughts.

OR

Ask a mentor to write you an editorial letter. Find an editor, novelist, teacher, or knowledgeable friend and ask them to write you an editorial letter (see below).

The Editorial Letter

Editors share ideas and advice about character development, plotlines, tension, action, logic, and more in an "editorial letter" they send to the author. Writers usually get this letter along with a marked-up manuscript where the editor praises or points out concerns about specific sentences. The author then returns a revised draft. Editors and authors can go through this process many times before a novel is published.

***Once completed, this badge can be purchased at the following direct link:**

<https://www.girlscoutshop.com/search?keywords=Novelist%20badge>