

**Jeffrey A. Friedberg**

Published by Jeffrey A. Friedberg

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Jeffrey A. Friedberg: [a1.detective@gmail.com](mailto:a1.detective@gmail.com)

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## CHAPTER 1

\* We're going to start out here slow and easy, with basics presented simply. We will gradually build our basics into the **Secret Pillars of Writing**.

If you're writing a book, it's one thing to be a poet, or have poetry in your writing, but another to write a **book** that isn't a poem.

*Poetry does not equal book.*

There are pitfalls—Rules for your novel, traps to avoid, publishing prejudices. **Plot, Structure, Character Arcs, Plotlines**, and all kinds of fancy stuff. I'll boil it down; I'm condensing and simplifying it for you.

At the outset of your book's plot and structure setup, you should introduce your **Hero** or **Heroine Character**. Introduce them in their every day Real World and set the **tone**. Make the Hero/Heroine of your book real, fully rounded, compelling, flawed, likeable, relatable to—and do it right off the bat.

Get into his/her head and show their desires, fears, and their admirable or hateful or other compelling traits.

They don't have to be "good," as long as they're really good at *something*, even Evil, thievery, conning people, or whatever traits you choose.

But—and this is all-important, so pay attention—you **Must Hook** the reader into the plot *immediately*, via the characters or action, to keep the reader reading.

Start by showing that the Hero/Heroine is trying to have a life (or not), trying to get along, just being himself, or whatever they generally do, when some Great Outside Disturbance occurs, something that changes their life forever.

As a result, s/he must become Desperate to get, find, or do Something that s/he needs to survive the Disturbance.

Pack the scenes with emotion, conflict, and passion—write with abandon, write like you’re announcing the cure for cancer or the Second Coming, but write it (you can clean up the wild and crazy parts later.)

No book ever got published by *not* writing it.

Your book ‘s Hero/Heroine character must have an Objective, a Goal. For that they need a Desire, a Great Want. It must be something that will interest the reader and move the story, plot, and structure forward.

S/he must be Desperate to get to the Great Goal. There must be Tension, Conflict, Doubt, and Suspense about The Great Goal. It must drive the book forward, or there’s just no story worth turning the page for.

There has to be a Great Question: Will s/he get that Great Thing s/he desperately needs to survive?

Will s/he make it through, survive, and deliver the Elixir, or the Great Answer, to all humankind?

A driving force in your book's plot has to be Obstacles to that process of seeking the Great Goal, conflict and Confrontation with Inside (psychological emotional) and Outside Forces (antagonists, opponents, sexy vampires, aliens, rain, dragons, etc.)

Imbued in the structure of your book's plot, there has to be a More Powerful Antagonist-Opponent, who either wants the same Great Thing that the Hero/Heroine wants—or wants to prevent the Hero/Heroine from getting it. The situation has to be Desperate, a battle to the End. The Opponent must be more powerful than the Hero/Heroine, otherwise there's no story. It's just reduced to: Hero/Heroine smacks Opponent, takes away the Great Thing, goes home, watches TV, and slurps a beer.

There's another important furrow to hoe here. The Hero/Heroine and the Antagonist necessarily have to be cemented to each other, forever, by something. There has to be a Great Reason for why they don't just walk away from each other.

I mean, why would they want to go through all that aggravation, right?

Make sense?

Whatever it is that Bonds them together forever has to be something that makes sense, something that neither can avoid. It might be Revenge, Love, Hate, Blood—something like that.

Otherwise, there's nothing that could reasonably prevent the Hero/Heroine from just walking away from the Problem, going home, watching TV, and slurping a beer, right?

See?

And, in addition, you must make it hard to get that Great Thing. Throw problems at the Hero/Heroine, shoot at him, arrest him, pursue him, wreck his life. Make the Antagonist-Opponent be relentless, make his life hard.

These are the things people want to read about. They want to Relate to a Hero/Heroine—feel, be drawn in.

They want to Be Him (or Her), have Emotion, Passion, Adventure, Feelings. And they want an emotional Payoff—they want to Succeed in the end. You know, be deeply moved, or to just feel good.

Now what happens?

All of the above-described Setup triggers a Profound Journey that the Hero/Heroine must embark on against all odds. It can be physical or psychological, but s/he must journey, and change—develop, evolve. This is the famous “character arc.”

\* \* \*

We have been speaking here about plot and storyline, generally. To review:

First came the Ordinary World.

Second, the Great Disturbance that changed that ordinary world forever.

Third, Opponents and Antagonists; and fourth, now, the Hero/Heroine must search for the Great Thing in a Profound Journey—against all odds; and fifth—succeed.

To further clarify:

1.) What you basically must do, therefore, is prepare the hero/heroine Character of your book to be sent onward, on a Great Personality-Changing Journey that arcs across Three Acts (flexible number, not a Rule).

2.) It should constantly look like s/he will lose out to the Opponent, because the Antagonist is way too powerful.

3.) It must look like the Hero/Heroine will not get That Thing.

4.) But then, all of a sudden, in a masterful stroke, the Hero/Heroine scores an unexpected Goal Kick out of nowhere, and wins the game.

5.) Finally, the Aftermath. The ending to the book. The Hero/Heroine shows by Actions how the Journey has Changed her, what all the Great Sacrifices and tribulations have wrought—the denouement, the End. This is what the reader has waited for all this time, the Payoff, the Hero/Heroine becomes a Better Person.

\* \* \*

Each sentence must have a hook and a tease.

There also has to be a Hook and a Tease in each paragraph, each chapter, and each act.

Every sentence you write needs a Beginning, Middle, and an End. The same for each paragraph, chapter, and act.

I'll tell you more about all this for your book, but get this straight first: **write full blast for all you're worth, passion, depth, desperation. Then, you can just come back later and take out the madcap or boring parts.**

**You Must Hook The reader immediately via passion or action.**

And, as I said, all this happens in Three Acts. I'll talk about that, what you need to know.

Also I'll tell you about Mythic Structure. You will need to know this. I'll boil it down. Mythic Structure is something that may cause you to fail completely, unless you know about it in detail. I'll give it to you on the next page. (See? That's the Read-On Prompt. Get it?)

## CHAPTER 2

It's important to have a good cheerleader in your corner. Writing is one of the most solitary things you can ever do—I mean it's just you and you sitting there. And you.

It's difficult and wears on you, leaves you whining. You need applause and encouragement.

You don't necessarily need critique or correction in the early stages, but you will need someone to tell you—"yes, it's worth the effort, yes, you have to do it."

I thought I'd never accomplish writing **LOST RELIC OF THE GODS** (*gestures hypnotically, "Buy My Book...it shows how to write."*)

All writers think they stink. All writers despair. *What the hell am I doing putting all this time and effort into—what—and for what? This really stinks.*

Find that special cheerleader, not to correct you necessarily, just to cheer you on. Later you will need an editor, but in the beginning—alone against a world of obstacles, frustration, and doubt—you just need cheerful, passive backup.

In writing avoid the use of passive words. You want your words to be doing things, the entire work in motion, carrying the story forward. For instance, don't say, "He could see them." It's, "He saw them."

Simple example, simple explanation.



Beware the Killer modifier. Adverbs, adjectives—all those evil little bugs will creep in and multiply, drown your point out:

"The sun roared up over the peaceful but eye-blasting scene like a masterless Samurai with a chariot full of red, red rubies, blazing diamonds, and burnished, hammered, flaming, burning gold!"

Or, maybe:

"The sun rose in a line of fire under the black horizon."

Or, maybe:

"The sun rose in a low bloom."

Or, maybe:

"The sun seemed to hesitate, and then it rose."

OK, you get the picture (no prize there.)

Keep it simple. Do Not over modify—it carries you away with how brilliant you are, and you lose control of the story.

Always give some signpost to show who's talking, but don't write like this, "'Close the door,' he **rasped**."

Or "...he choked, spat, breathed, hissed, gurgled, opined," etc.

It's this, simple and plain:

"He **said**, 'Close the door.'"

See? Just say it. Always get to the point. Don't spin off and bore the reader. Know what you are writing and why. It must serve the forward movement of the story or don't write it. Cut it out. Stick with the story.

Free the story from the stone—throw away the useless rubble.

You want to keep the reader turning the pages. That's the point of the exercise. The reader has to Want something from you. S/he must Want to turn that page and **See What Happens Next**.

You do this through how the characters deal with the situations they are in. You build interest and suspense, and draw the reader in.

Remember—these are just quick and dirty tips. I can't go too much further without I, like, hafta write a book or something. What I leave out is up to you Writer, to fill in by practicing and seeing.

This whole thing about **plot**? Plot outline? Character arc? —Just write the damn story and don't worry about the terminology. You can do all that later if you have to.

Got Plot?

Got no plot but a burning desire to write? Just do it. Write already! Start with a situation and characters. Ask “What if?” And just *See What Happens Next*.

**Do not try and figure the entire book out ahead of time and play around with outlines, charts, cards, and all that crap. Just set your characters into a situation and watch what they do. You can fix it later.**

*Plot line?*

*We ain't got no plot line.*

*We don' need no plot line.*

*We don' ch'ave to show you any steenking plot line.*

\*\*\*

Don't bother describing your characters. The reader doesn't want you to. They want to fill in their own picture, color the book their own way. It's how they participate and become "drawn" to the character.

You can give an age, a main characteristic, but let the reader help out with the details and do the heavy lifting.

For instance, "He was a big man, loud, and pushed the air ahead of him in a mass when he moved. He smiled, he always looked good. People liked him. He never used his size."

See? I made that up—that ^ up there.

It tells you everything you need to know about the character, the unsaid. read it again. It's brilliant.

A writer needs self confidence, braggadocio, vanity, whether s/he's good or not. You **MUST** have ego, you **MUST** toot your own horn, you **MUST** believe you are the greatest thing since Creation.

Listen to *me*: fear nothing. Never take no for an answer. Accept no unhelpful criticism. Never give up. Never surrender the damn ship.

**Believe. And believe in yourself (or nobody else will.)**

No writer ever got published—became an author—by *Not* Writing.

Anyway, like I was saying, don't describe a character this way:

"He was 6 feet seven inches tall, 325 pounds, red hair, blue eyes, freckles, and had a little scar you couldn't really see, wearing a gray suit, blue tie, black tassel loafers, carnelian socks, a PDA and a cell phone. It was raining, 65 degrees, so he wore a wool, North Face, waistline jacket and carried a red umbrella."

As I said, keep it simple. Show them the **unsaid**, the unwritten about the character. The space between words—that's where idea becomes form—where form becomes things.

*In the reader's mind:*

Her eyes got big. She said, "How'd you do that—  
make me see that?"

He didn't answer.

He took off his bandana and tucked it inside his  
rough leather jacket.

She thought he hadn't heard her question, because  
his eyes were distant, and hard as ice.

He zipped the jacket hard against his waist. She  
took in the sight and her heart pounded to escape. She  
trembled before him.

She said, "How did you make me see?"

He looked down at her. He said, "Magic."

## CHAPTER 3

“cli-ché also **cliche** (klĕ-shĕ)n.

*I. A trite or overused expression or idea” The Free Dictionary*

Beware the Cliché—the hackneyed, the trite, the commonplace—cookie-cutter words and images. You will lose your soul to them, and the momentum of your story. They look and sound awful.

You can run your MS through various cliché checkers online. There’s one here:

<http://www.cliche.theinfo.org/>

You can also set MSWord to check, to some degree, via these selections: Word Options>Proofing>Spelling & Grammar >Settings>Style>Cliches.

Constantly ask yourself, "What is this book about; what does the character want; what is this scene for; what do the characters each want in this scene. What is a unique, original approach."

What the hell am I writing about?

This process will go a long way in helping you round the characters out and keep them and your story on track. It will find their qualities for you. Think about it.

If they don't want anything, then *make* them want something. It's a terrific way to motivate them and get them to help you write the tale. It's amazing. Try it.

Just write the story and don't stop for hell or high water. Wait—strike that, it's a cliché.

Write the story and don't stop for anything—volcano nor oil well blowout.

Get it down no matter how bad it looks at first. You can pretty it up later. The important thing is to **Write**.

A definition of the word “write”: "...an Indo-European root \**wreid*—meaning to cut out, scratch, tear, sketch..."

So you see, the original idea was not to spew words, but to select them carefully and sparsely—to cut. Less is better.

Don't do a big back-story on a character. Just give the reader what s/he needs to get started. Then, you artfully *leak* out the rest of it—what's important—into the work as needed. Use dialogue as much as possible. *Show* me via dialogue and action, don't *tell* me about it. As author, make the character Do things or have someone Say things that give the necessary facts. Example:

Bernice peeked outside through the blinds. It was still there—on the lawn.

Her mother never got rid of that old swing set. Bernice and Bunny had put it up one long-ago summer. Before Bunny disappeared.

"They never did find her," Bernice's mother said—somehow suddenly in the room, right behind Bernice, making everything tense.

Bernice turned to look at the woman. She'd aged since Bernice was graduated from Harvard, just a year ago. "What did you say, Mom?"

The older woman seemed distracted—knitted bony fingers together in front of her. "Sheriff said, you were lucky that day, Bernie. Could of been you that day, hon."

"I know Mommy," Bernice said, her shoulders tight under the cloud of red hair. "But you had it wrong, Mom. Bunny and I were never lovers. And we didn't steal your cocaine."

"And happy birthday, Mommy," Bernice said, and pulled the trigger.

See? Kinda original, right? No clichés. No Back-story info dump. I let you fill in some spaces by Dialogue and Action, brought you on board.

The story's the thing. Remember that. It's not about the research or the facts or how clever and poetic you are.



Never get sidetracked into a *performance*, as such, because it could become a freak show. Stick with only what you need to advance the action. And keep the action moving. Keep the ball bouncing down court.

*I'll have these players Play something.  
I'll have grounds More relative than this...  
The play's the thing...*

Hamlet | Act II, Scene 2

## CHAPTER 4

Don't use a lot of punctuation or involved punctuation, it stops the reader's journey if s/he has to figure it all out before going on. Also, beware the deadly exclamation point. Use it only when the character is shouting!!!! And then, only once! There is nothing more revealing of inexperience than a bunch of exclamation points.

You can cancel the need for big, bad, bright, bunches of braggart, brazen adverbs, and adjectives just by using stronger nouns. This will always be an improvement. For instance:

"He ran viciously and vapidly through the room like an *envoy*." [No]

**Or:**

"He ran through the room like a *sprinter*." [Yes]

Always try to come up with stronger and more visual nouns that will give the reader a strong, clear picture of what you want them to see, and that will draw them along with you.

After all, this is a form of *magic*—to put your ideas and visions into somebody else's *head*. Think about that a moment.

Use the perfect word. Pick words that will project that picture. If it's not the right word, don't use it.

It's OK to consult the thesaurus. The one in MS Word is good, but it still pays to have a copy of a big ol' paper one like Webster's New World Thesaurus. Find the exact perfect word, it could be the smile in your Mona Lisa.

The fewer words the better. It telegraphs what you want to show.

If you get too involved with being brilliant and wordy, then you tangle the silver thread you've been silently weaving through the darkness of the enthralled reader's questing mind (see, I overdid it).

Do you want the reader to be impressed with your verbiage or do you want them drawn into your story? Do you want them breathless with suspense, dying to turn the page? Your writing should enhance the work, not hinder it.

Don't go on and on for pages of description alone, or dialogue alone. It's much more interesting to have both blended together.

Some would argue dialogue is preferable, more immediate and involving to the mind of the reader. But stay away from long paragraphs of dialogue, keep it short and punchy, back and forth, like this:

The Dragon Queen said, “These Americans again—with their silly ‘Flying Saucers.’”

The Dragon King lowered his chin an inch. He slowly said, “I find this irritating.”

“Yes,” she said.

“It was easier before.”

“Yes. I can fix it.”

“We don’t want to be impetuous,” the king said, languorous on his settee.

The queen turned to gaze at him. She said, “It’s still a threat.”

“A primitive threat.”

“Yes, but a threat.”

He took a long draw of opium smoke from his water pipe. He exhaled in a brownish sigh, “Our new assassin, the one called ‘the *Martin-Pêcheur*...’”

“The Kingfisher.”

“Yes,” he said, “The Kingfisher—it beats its prey to death and rips it apart. I like that. Use that one.”

Try to end the chapter with something punchy, startling, or a hook into the next chapter.

By using the closing remark from the man above—the Dragon King—I (try to) make you wonder who he is, why he's like this, and why he would want someone beaten and torn apart. What will he do next?

Who's this Kingfisher? What's his part in this? Why and what is the Dragon Queen talking about, "flying saucers"? Who are these people? What is the source of their power?

See? Always—*constantly*—build interest, involvement, suspense, and movement. Use action, and goings-on. Never back off. No long, languorous, tedious scenes like in so many movies these days where they just have to jam in obligatory sex, or saccharine niceness of a character or family, or how loving they are spinning together in slow motion on the beach as they take their own photo, etc—all that boring shit!

We monkeys like to watch fast-moving action.  
Yow!

## Chapter 5

Do you *really need* this scene? We know you're desperately in love with it—you're brilliant in it.

But do you really need it? Does it move the work forward? Does EVERYTHING go in the same direction? Does it round out a character? Further the journey or plot? What, exactly, is its purpose?

If it's none of these things, just kill it. Cut it. Lose it. Save it for another time. There's plenty more where that one came from, right? I mean, you Are brilliant, right?

Is the dialogue an organic part of the journey? It may be artistic, but is it believable? Does it flow naturally out of the character's relationships, needs, and desires, what they want, and how they are?

Or, are you just using it for an information dump. to convey data.

John said, "Mary, you remember back in high school when your father was a doctor but wouldn't let you prepare for medical school because of the dwarf in the closet and the drugs that time? And your mom ran off with the felatio instructress? "

He finished cleaning his trumpet, getting reqdy for the gig at Bellagio with Whoopee Goldberg tonight. He said, "Mary, what I mean is, well, we were in love back then, sure, but not *now*—not again. Right?"

Or, more subtle, deeper, more painterly:

Rocco said, “You love me,” uncertain.

Chiquita turned to look at him. She finished dressing, and absently folded her damp towel. She said, “Love?”

She stared across the room into his sparrow eyes. She said, flat, “I love nothing. I have no love in me. I don’t love. Not a man, or a woman, or a child. Not a dog, or cat. Nothing that blooms or lives. I love nothing.”

She turned away to look out a black window, her eyes matched the night.

He hesitated. Then he said, “Why is that? Why are you like that? Why don’t you love?”

“I don’t know. Why would it matter?”

I told you all about the characters there. I did it with **dialogue**, the spoken and the unspoken. I didn’t use outlines, cards, charts, or any of that crap. I just let the characters say who they were.

Never use massive dumps of dialogue—information—to tell a back-story.

Find other ways of leaking it in gradually. Sometimes you don’t have to say much at all. The less you say the better. The author must be invisible. The author must never preach or feed on (your) expounded ego.

You must give the reader credit. S/he is smart enough to figure what's been left out. You don't need to say much.

You *show* it.

When doing dialogue the characters must interact. You can't have each one just dumping information. The flow of data, spoken and unspoken, can come from the interplay. It can tell the reader what the characters are like, what they think of each other, what they want, what this is all about, and a lot more.

What's really cool is to even let one character tell all about the other(s), including their description. That way, you stay hidden.

And remember, always give the reader credit for being as smart as you are. Don't preach, talk down, lecture, or show off—that's not staying hidden behind the words.

However, there's a place for vanity—your vanity can be good. There's nothing wrong with the right kind of—*vanity*:



## Vanity...

"Most people dislike vanity in others, whatever share they have of it themselves; but I give it fair quarter wherever I meet with it. I'm persuaded that it is often productive of good to the possessor, and to others that are within his sphere of action..."

"...tho' it seems to be talking in my own praise [I only do it so that you] may know the use of that virtue when [you] see its [past, positive] effects in my favor..."

[Do everything] "...in the sincere spirit of inquiry after Truth, without fondness for Dispute or desire of Victory."

~ *Benjamin Franklin, 1771*

## Chapter 6

In dialogue beware of melodrama and going over the top. Histrionic speeches do not work. Use gestures, movement, props, what is said and not said to convey mood, feeling, and emotion. Sometimes no dialogue at all can say it all.

In a dramatic moment, where things are running high, play *down* the dialogue, understate it. Instead, use dramatic action or a lack of action where one would seem appropriate.

The laser beam etched closer to Bond's crotch and bored into the titanium slab.

Bond sneered, "You expect me to talk, Cheng-Li?" Bond gave him the half-smile, "This won't make me talk."

Cheng-Li said nothing.

He turned away and walked out.

See? Cheng-Li never said a word, but he conveyed his meaning and intent, "No, I don't expect you to talk, Mr. Bond, I expect you to *die*." The same thing can be done using a prop. The good thing about writing is, the supply of props is inexhaustible.

Eddie was sweating. He felt the shirt stick to his back. He watched Tony rack the balls and chalk a cue.

Eddie said, "Tony, I didn't rip of no merch' from you—you believe me right?"

Tony glanced over at Big Frank standing behind Eddie. Then he looked at Eddie again, and said, "Sure I believe you Eddie, you ain't got nothing to worry about."

Tony broke the rack with a crack like a pistol shot.

Yow! See? You can kinda see it coming, am I right? Man, this is fun, just making stuff up, don't have to worry about where it's going. Pretty sinister, huh? Tony? Right? Am I right?

Anyway, you should have an idea of what I mean by using props and understatement.

Don't do dialect. It will just slow the reader down and force dismissal of your efforts.

Here's the same scene, New Orleans connection.

Francois said, "Tonay, eet waire not moi, eye deed not reep off yew mairechandeese, hokay? You know mai long time mai brossaire. We go why bok togezzaire, n'est-ce pas? Yew bayleeve mai, oui, may brothaire?"

See? EL sucko. If you must do dialect, hold it down, just enough to let the reader in on it, let the reader fill in the gaps. Watch.

Nigel shouted at Lady Buckingham, "Well, I hate to piss on your chips, dearie! But even with ice cold nipples you still look like you're smuggling peanuts!"

OK. So, it's a little lonely being a writer at 3 AM. Sheesh!

## Chapter 7

*Show* who your characters are, what they are like, but don't *tell* it. Don't expound on their qualities or attributes, *demonstrate* them.

If you just do one of those information dumps, it's a big yawn. If you give the reader Action, then s/he can become a part of it, relate to it, make it their own experience. See, that's what most readers want, to own the action, the character, the emotions, the experience.

Like I told you, it's a magic you do.

Here's my personal "take" (I hate that phrase): the writer brings the reader's mind to a point or set of points congruent with the writer's own mind. It's a form of magic—a Mind Meld.

It's the scene in the movie where the paranormal person touches the protagonist and "shows" them the "actual incident," or whatever—and plays it back "live."

Get it? Don't tell me. Show me.

"Don't think you are, know you are." (That's got no bearing here I just love the line, from *The Matrix*. "Do you think that's air you're breathing now? Hmm?")  
Never mind.

The reader has to enter your world—the world of your characters, just like in *The Matrix*, as I was saying (see, a writer can get himself out of anything with a word-connection.)

People want to escape with their feelings into another world. They want to experience there what they can't here. If you *tell* them about it, you just have a summary—just shadows. If you *show* it to them, it becomes a scene with scenery and special effects, lights, camera...

A scene is on a stage, and the reader can then enter onto that same stage with the characters. Data vs. Deed.

**Show me vs. Tell me.**

## Chapter 8

If you've been playing along with my humble examples to date, you're ready to go up an octave, as follows. But first, I'm gonna repeat some lessons.

If you're writing a book, it's one thing to be a poet, or have poetry in your writing, but another to write that book. Trust me, there are Rules for your novel, Plot, Structure, Character Arcs, Plotlines, Acts, and all kinds of fancy stuff. I'll boil it down; I'm condensing and simplifying it for you.

At the outset of your book 's plot and structure effort, you should introduce your Hero/Heroine Character.

Introduce their every day Real World and set the tone. Make the Hero/Heroine of your book fully rounded, compelling, flawed, likeable, relatable to—right off the bat. Get into his/her head and show desires, fears, and admirable or hateful or other compelling traits.

You Must **Hook** the reader into the plot immediately to keep the reader reading. (Have I *hooked* your interest?)

Show by your book structure that the Hero/Heroine is trying to have a life (or not).

He's trying to get along, just being himself, when some Outside Disturbance occurs, something that changes his life forever. As a result, he must be Desperate to get, find, or do Something that he needs to survive the Disturbance. Pack it with emotion and passion (you can clean up the crazy parts later.)

Your book's Hero/Heroine must have an Objective, a Desire, must Want something that will interest the reader and move the story plot and structure forward. He must be Desperate to get it. There has to be Tension, Conflict, Doubt, and Suspense over it, to drive the book forward, or there's just no story worth turning the page for.

There has to be a question: Will he get That Thing he desperately needs to survive. Will she make it through?

A driving force in your book's plot has to be Obstacles to that process, Conflict, Confrontation with Inside (psychological emotional) and Outside Forces (antagonists, rockslides, rain, dragons, etc.)

Imbued in the structure of your book's plot, there has to be a More Powerful Antagonist who either wants the same That-Thing, or wants to prevent the Hero/Heroine from getting it. The situation has to be Desperate, a battle to the End.

The Hero/Heroine and the Antagonist have to be cemented to each other forever by something that makes sense, something that neither can avoid, Revenge, Love, Hate, like that there.



Otherwise, there's nothing that could reasonably prevent the Hero/Heroine from just walking away from the Problem.

Make it hard to get That Thing. Throw problems at him, shoot at him, arrest him, pursue him, wreck his life, have the Antagonist be relentless, make his life hard. This is what people want to read about. They want to Relate to him, they want to Be Him (or Her), they want to have Emotion, Passion, Adventure, Feelings, and Succeed in the end.

After the Profound Journey you sent the hero/heroine Character of your book on, in Three Acts, it should look like she will lose, because the Antagonist is too powerful. It must look like the Hero/Heroine will not get That-Thing. Then, she scores an unexpected clinching Goal Kick out of nowhere, and wins the game.

Then we next need an Aftermath to the book. The Hero/Heroine shows by Actions how the Journey has Changed her, what the sacrifices and tribulations have wrought, the End, what the reader has waited for all this time, the Payoff, the Better Person.

Each sentence must have a hook and a tease. There also has to be a Hook and a Tease in each paragraph, each chapter, and each act. I'll clarify this later. Every sentence you write needs a Beginning, Middle, and an End. The same for each paragraph, chapter, and act.

I'll tell you more about all this for your book, but get this straight first: write these full blast for all you're worth, passion, depth, desperation. Then, you can just come back later and take out the nutty or boring parts, but you **Must Hook** The reader immediately. As I said, this happens in Three Acts

Also I'll tell you about book Mythic Plot Structure. You will need to know this from my viewpoint, boiled down. Mythic Structure is something that may cause you to fail completely, unless you know about it in detail. I'll give it to you in the next chapter.

(See? Above? That's the Read On Prompt. *Get it?* Will you turn the page? Or not...)

## Chapter 9

### The Three Acts

Traditionally, for thousands of years, dramas have been structured into Three Acts. For our purposes here, ours is not to question it, but to just do it. In a novel of 100,000 words, Act One runs about 20,000 words. Act Two comes in and runs up to about the 75,000 word point, followed by Act Three for the final 25,000 words (120,000 words is too long—cut it down proportionately to under 100,000).

In Act One of your book we meet the Hero/Heroine and her Normal Every Day Life. These are the Beginnings, Who and What she is, and where the reader must connect with her. The Opposition is introduced. There's a Great Disturbance, and the Antagonist, which forces her to pursue The Objective, That Thing, in order to survive or win through, and she is pushed irrevocably through a Doorway Of Action But No Return, into Act Two.

In Act Two of your book the Hero/Heroine pursues That-Thing crucial to his existence but meets Opposition and Great Conflict from the much more powerful Antagonist and other forces (internal and external).

There is great passion, emotion, complexity, subplot, and effort to make the reader Care.

There is forward movement, and action in pursuit of That Thing, and the Hero/Heroine gathers himself for a Final Inevitable Battle for the highest possible stakes. Another shattering event then forces the Hero/Heroine through a second Doorway Of No Return, into Act Three.

In Act Three of your book we have the Main Confrontation with the Antagonist, Great Conflict, Obstacles, and The Final Battle for That-Thing. All looks Lost for the Hero/Heroine.

But, the Hero/Heroine scores a surprise knockout punch, and wins through, vanquishes the Antagonist and gets That-Thing.

There follows the Aftermath, sea-change, tying up loose ends, and resolution.

## **End Of Story**

## ***Or Is It?***

\*\*\*

## **Mythic Structure:**

A slight variation is the Mythic Structure outlined by Joseph Campbell in 1938 (The Hero With A Thousand Faces), and popularized by George Lucas' Star Wars.

In Part One of the mythic structure we meet the Hero and the Hero's Everyday Real World. He's just piddling around in it. But, there is a Great Disturbance and then a Call To Action (The Princess calls for help, and, "You must learn the ways of the Force, Luke.") But the Hero rejects the call (Luke must stay behind and work the farm.)

However something terrible happens that propels the Hero forward into Reluctant Acceptance Of The call (Luke's family is killed by the Empire), and he is forced forward into Action through a Doorway Of No Return. He crosses a threshold into another existence he can never leave (Mos Eisley Spaceport, etc.)

In Part Two of mythic structure, he receives the help of a Mystic Mentor (Obi Wan Kenobi), and a magic talisman (a light saber), and he encounters the Dark Invader Of His Life/Mind, an Antagonist—a Mythic Wizard (Darth).

He also builds up to and encounters a Dark Moment within himself which he must conquer (The Dark Side Temptation). He builds and prepares himself for The Final Battle.

In Part Three of mythic structure he wins the Battle, secures the Magic Elixir/Secret/Knowledge, and Returns to The Real World to spread the Good News and/or benefits.

\* The plot of your book is carried by Characters, Settings, Dialogue, Pace, Originality. If these Elements don't move the Plot Forward, Cut or Edit them.

Next, Let's look more closely at the Beginning, Middle, and End—what makes them Hook the reader.

## Chapter 10

### A Closer Look At The Beginning Of Your Book

As we've said, it's All Important to Hook The reader at the outset of your book. No amount of your opening good intentions or artfulness will matter if the reader won't read on. Your Startup must contain Compelling Drives, Conflict, Passion, Attitude, and Raw Emotion to get the ball rolling. This can consist of dramatic Setting, bang-on Dialogue, or startling Action (external, and/or internal).

As Elmore Leonard (*Get Shorty*) says in his little book on writing, never open with a weather report (unless of course it's a tornado, hurricane, or the Rapture Itself.)

No—you must immediately establish a dramatic and intense bond between the Hero/Heroine of your book and the reader, through Identification, Sympathy, Likeability, Inner Conflict, Motives, Admirable or Desirable Action, and other common sense things. *How* is the Hero/Heroine—like the reader—flawed? What engenders sympathy better than Jeopardy, Hardship, Vulnerability, being the Underdog?

Or, if you can't make the Hero/Heroine a Great Person, make him or her at least Fascinatingly dumb, evil, beautiful, conniving, shifty, Machiavellian, or Other. You get the picture, right?

The Beginning of the book must Compel the reader to read forward into the Middle, through a Doorway Of No Return, where she must Confront the Antagonist and even more complexities, subplots, and all of the above magnified to exquisite agony (ideally). It must keep the reader Engaged and Wondering just "what the hell can possibly happen next—or go wrong?"

Duh?

### **A Closer Look At The Middle Of The Book**

Don't give everything away at once. Leak out the details a little at a time through Dialogue, Innuendo, Action, who the Hero/Heroine is seen with, who is interfering with the Hero/Heroine, and other. Don't Tell about it ("It was in her mind that she was angry,"), SHOW it ("She shot him in the head nine times and laughed.")

I use the Middle of my book LOST RELIC OF THE GODS (*buy it* to see these principles in action!), to stretch Tension and Suspense. Raise the Stakes, what's at risk. The Hero/Heroine confronts Death (physical or psychological, or in business, etc.).

Pack the Middle with emotional and physical tension, and you can take out the insane, silly parts later.

What more can Go Wrong? What's the Worst Thing that can happen? Why are the Hero/Heroine and the Antagonist Stuck Together?



Why doesn't the Hero/Heroine just walk away? What's his motivation to stay on and Do Battle? What's the Glue that Bonds them?

Show Action, Reaction, More Action, and Internal Reflection. Alternate these for effect. Stretch this out, agonizingly.

The Hero/Heroine must solve his Problem, and reach the Objective. Who loses What?

Are there dull parts that can be cut? Are there characters who need to be deleted? Is there another Level of Complication that can be introduced? Would a new character enhance the story's progress forward? Raise the Stakes—always raise the stakes of the game.

Don't forget, the purpose of the Middle of your book is to guide the reader through to the Ending, Act III.

The Hero/Heroine must pass through another Doorway Of No Return, and be compelled to Stay there and deal with the Challenges there.

## Chapter 11

### More About Endings

The purpose of the Ending is to wrap up the main Action by scoring a Touchdown, getting That-Thing (object, goal), and defeating the Antagonist, just when it looks like the Hero/Heroine can't possibly Win.

It should look like the Antagonist is just about to win, with a great sense of Forboding, when the Hero/Heroine comes out of nowhere in total Victory.

As in my book *LOST RELIC OF THE GODS* (E-book and paperback), my Hero/Heroine must make a Sacrifice—like, maybe a certain goal, his personal safety or well-being. It can be a physical, moral, or other sacrifice, made with great courage.

The Result must be the Sacrifice and/or a Great Resolution of the Hero/Heroine's Life or Life Situation. This is called Catharsis.

You might put a surprise twist on your original ending. Try writing five or ten different endings, and really pour on the emotion, passion, originality, and Action. Then, incorporate one of them into your shocking Ending—like a spicy feast.

## Chapter 12

In my book *LOST RELIC OF THE GODS* (OK—the last time), I visualize each scene of the book in my mind, like a movie.

Then, I write them passionately, virulently, with great desperation and flair, intensity, conflict, and clash. You have to do it this way.

**Keep this in mind:** What is the Purpose of the Scene in the book at that point? Concentrate on that. Keep moving the story forward. Scenes consist of Action - Reaction - Wha' Hoppen? And the Deepening of all Elements.

Action must be taken by the Hero/Heroine to overcome physical and psychological Obstacles and Conflict. S/he has to attain his/her Goal. Explore her Reaction, how she Feels Emotionally when something happens to her. What are her Internal Questions? What is her Internal Justification? It is this Action and Reaction that moves the plot along.

What is the Reason in your book for each scene? Does the scene make sense? Does flow organically, or just pop out of nowhere.

To Set The Scene you have to show Who is in it, and How they get into the predicament at hand. They have to be shown in Context to the Scene, the Problem, Argument, Clash, whatever is Happening currently.

Then, ***Deepen*** the Scene. Make whatever's Happening deeper. Intensify the Elements, like adding hot sauce to a recipe. Make each Scene scintillate, glow, burn, illuminate the Plot, Action, Reaction, and Reason. If the Scene does not Move The Story Forward...

**Then Cut it down, because it's *waaaay* too long, bucko!**

And don't forget, you have to Hook the reader in to read your book at the very beginning. Use Dialogue, Action, Mood, and Emotion. Make the reader Feel Something. Stretch it out. Make it look like the Hero/Heroine is about to get killed, die, be caught—or, pay child support and his female wife has a female lawyer and the judge is female, and the cop is female—something totally *nightmarish* like that.

Insert Conflict, and Opposition. Nothing should go smoothly.

Have him/her in Conflict **even with Friends and Allies. They tell him he's wrong, etc.**

Remember to have a Prompt to Read On at the end of the chapter, something to make the reader turn the page. There should be something Foreboding, Mysterious, a Portent, a Mysterious line of Dialogue.

Maybe a Great Decision or Vow made, a serious reversal of Fortune, a Surprise Event, something Shattering, a Question left unanswered or hanging in the air. Get the reader to turn the page. (But don't write long sentences :)

If the Scene is a Low Intensity one, you can just Tell about it (if you can only do it that way.) But if it is a High Intensity Scene, then Show it:

Juanita selected green chili instead of red chili, and glanced bird-eyed at Oliver.

They took it to the cashier and stood in line to buy it.

She liked green, but he really wanted the red. This was the eternal New Mexico conflict, "red or green?" Oliver's face showed the tension.

**Or:**

"I'm not getting the green again," Juanita-Joan said to Oliver, her brow creased, "I just don't think it's as good as the red, and 2012 is coming anyway."

Her eyes dart to Oliver's face, blink, then find their way back to the rack of chili. She braces for the storm she knows is coming, sees his face darkening.

He says to her, low, his lips hardly move, "You damn well know I want the green, Juanita-Joan. This here's New Mexico, not New Jersey. You know that. You've always known that, but you never change, do you. No, you don't."

She's frozen, watches his hands make fists at his sides—open, close, open, close. Open. Close.

Opening.

Closing...

Several shoppers stop there and watch them. "Green is better, lady," says a slow, large man, "You oughta go green. We take our chili real serious-like in these here parts." He spits tofu juice on the floor, looks at her, and says, "Your damn cart's blocking me," eyes slits in his dark face. "Hear me?" His hand drifts close to his cell phone and twitches there, "So git the heyell offa mah aisle, lady."

Oliver whirls on Juanita-Joan, "Now look what you did. I warned you about blocking the aisle, but you do it anyway, don't you—you just don't care, do you. *No*, you don't. Well, this ain't Atlantic City no more, Juanita-Joan," he says, lips twisted in a sneer.

The large man says to Oliver, "What'd *you* just call me," and steps forward at him, eyes bulging, hand going for his cell phone and his lawyer's speed dial number.

Well, OK, so I got a little carried away. Anyway, I think you get the point: Never **Tell** when you can **Show**. Jack it up—boost—the amps. Have you ever heard of **Character Arc** in a book? Me too. I finally know what tha' heyell it is, an' I'll tell you on the nex' damn page.

## Chapter 13

### Character Arc

Character Arc is what the Action does to the Hero/Heroine; how it changes him or her during the course of the story.

At the end of the **Arc**, we have a different person.

At the beginning of the Arc we meet the Hero/Heroine, and get a sense of his interior Life, Attitude, Everyday World and its Context for him.

Next, we have the Disturbance (see prior), the Call to Action, the Doorway Of No Return, which he enters Reluctantly. Incidents of serious Impact follow, and the Disturbance Deepens.

Finally, the Hero/Heroine reaches an Epiphany, a Realization Of Great Import, and there is an Aftermath where she shows by Action how she has Truly Changed.

Remember, this is all a result of what the Impacting Incidents, Action and Events have done to Change the Hero/Heroine's: Core Opinions, Beliefs, Values, Attitudes, Fears, and Desires.

After experiencing Deepening Disturbances, the Hero/Heroine Tries To Change consciously. In the Aftermath, via Epiphany or realization, we see by his Actions that he has Truly Changed.

In a strong book character arc the influences and changes will be powerful, monumental, and memorable. They will carry the reader through to the Ending.

**A book Character Arc might go like this:**

A worthless criminal with a vicious background commits yet another heinous crime and goes to jail, where he's helped by a kindly guard and his opinions begin to change.

At his re-trial he faces his past victims and realizes how he has hurt their lives. This sets up a serious internal dialogue, where he is forced to analyze his past life to find the truth about what happened to make him bad.

Convicted again, and serving a life term, he develops understanding and sympathy for others, learns to play blues harmonica, becomes a model prisoner, and counsels other prisoners to change their nefarious ways.

He becomes an author and celebrity, gets on Larry King Live, Oprah, and The View, wins the Nobel Peace Prize and is pardoned for his crimes.

He goes to Iran and opens up "Moishe's American Kosher Deli," which is frequented by all manner of expatriates and other characters. He's a big success.

But he comes into possession of mysterious Letters Of Transit signed by the Iranian Dictator Ahmadinejad, and, with them, helps a Hungarian freedom fighter and his wife escape on the last hot air balloon out of Tehran before Gay Pride Week.



We close with a major line showing by Action how he's changed, "Louis, this could be the start of a beautiful friendship. What do you know about corned beef and rye bread?"

**~End Of Tale~**

OK?

But I digress—let's talk Next about what we've been talking about, the **First Draft** of your book.

## Chapter 14

### First Draft - Rewrite

The First Draft of the book is your first version, the one full of the crazy and the boring stuff? You remember. Now it's time to Purify by fire, Cut, Kill, Reduce, and—most of all—Ruthlessly *Rewrite*.

Start by writing your own brief Press Release for your book, or the back of the book cover blurb, you know—the one the reader looks at in line at the supermarket and decides whether to buy the damn thing or not.

When you write your book blurb, Distill it down into a few slam-bang paragraphs—exactly what the book is *About*, and what's the Exciting part. Easy, right?

Fine. Once you've got yourself and your mate all excited about how brilliant you are, it's time to toss it out and Re-write the book.

Except this time, you have to hammer out a Plot, the Elements of the Plot, What the book is About, and Where the whole thing is headed, step by passionate step. Remember, each scene must deal with the Hero or Heroine, the Objective, the Conflict, and be setting up the Final Battle or Outcome and the coming Aftermath in Act III.

So. Go ahead and write Chapter One of the book. Then, figure out what you're doing in Chapter Two.

Easy, right? Maybe you need some Ideas?

\*OK. Decide what is the Hero/Heroine's Emotional State at the end of Chapter One. Where can it take him? How will he therefore be reacting to Events in Chapter Two? What is the Next Step, the Next Action he has to take to go after the Objective, deal with the Conflict, and Other?

Does he maybe need some New Events or Disturbances or new Characters? Is there a really Big Scene coming up that has to be prepared for, or set up?

What needs to Happen First, before that scene can play out logically.

You can always Raise the Stakes, Increase the rhythm of the book, give the characters stronger motivation, make something happen, insert a problem or a threat, squeeze the timeline down shorter to increase pressure, make the whole thing as unpredictable as possible.

As you do these things, New Avenues will open, New Ideas and Requirements will appear and Add to the Mix. To jazz up the work, fall back on the Lattice of making the Hero/Heroine more Memorable, show inner strength and a need to reach the Objective.

Make the Opposition (Antagonist) stronger and show what she's thinking, how she justifies in her mind what she's doing.

Examine the Glue that Bonds her and the Hero/Heroine so strongly, why don't they each just walk away from the Conflict, go out on their own? What is each Character's Purpose in Life?

*Drawwww* the scenes out, make them suspenseful, get in there and write passionately for all you're worth.

Make the reader wish s/he was right in the story itself, right down in the middle of all that Action and Turmoil, Pushing Onward to the Goal, the Objective that is so desperately needed for Survival.

Remember: the reader wants to *BE* the Hero/Heroine.

However! If the scene doesn't Advance The Objective of the book, then cut it out, no matter how brilliant and/or poetic, and no matter much it may hurt—You!

That's it. When you're done, put it away. Think About It for a few days or weeks.

Don't write the book, just let it percolate awhile.

Read a different book, walk the dog, clean under the bed. Shoot the Easter bunny—whatever.

Let's next take a look at **what to do Next**, when you come back to the book from all that time off. Something will occur to you.

## Chapter 15

### Second Draft - More Rewriting Your Book

The reader wants to be the Hero/Heroine of the book, that's why s/he continues to read on and turn pages.

Give the reader Reasons to identify with the Heroine/Hero. Flesh the characters out, but let the reader use their imagination to fill in the parts they *want* to identify with.

Refine your work in the Second Draft of the book. Cut, Deepen, Polish, Draw out the Suspense of your book by Delaying the Information and Action that Inform the Work. Make your Characters profound and interesting. Make sure your chapter or scene endings include that important Read On Prompt.

Replace descriptive parts of the book with Action and Dialogue. Cut existing Dialogue and Verbiage. Less may be better. Give Good Lines to your Antagonist to make her interesting and dynamic. Add Conflict and refine it, make it really desperate.

Keep—make the scenes tense. Every scene in the book has a Good Spot where it peaks. Find the Good Spot in each scene and focus on it. If there is no Good Spot, then create one or cut the scene.

Cut anything that does not Serve the Action and the Forward Movement of the story. Let matters hang in uncertainty, don't bring anything to a resolution too soon. Raise questions and Delay giving the Answers.

Try to move from one scene that you leave unresolved, hanging, to another scene that you also leave hanging and unresolved, to build suspense, tension, and more. If it gets a little slow, make something Unexpected happen, a Surprise. Send in the Time-Traveling Lesbian Ninjas or something.

Have a weird or mystical character in the book who hovers on the outskirts of the scene (the distant, pursuer—the French ship in *Master And Commander*, 2003), and never really gets close enough to identify.

Make him almost a wraith who never really appears other than briefly, until the end, when he pounces, like the shark in *Jaws*. It's disturbing and scary, like a stalker.

Refine the Second Draft of your book to show how others treat the Heroine/Hero, what they say about her, how they act behind her back, bring out her Character Traits. You can make her Multidimensional. That means she can be, say, a cat lover, but a dog hater, respectful to her father, but a man-hater.

Having different facets and foibles will make her more interesting and volatile, but you have to be careful to keep her likeable or fascinating to the reader. We need to Care about her, either positively or negatively. Remember, it's the Heroine/Hero's Story you're telling—and what the reader wants to see and experience.

The Heroine/ Hero character of your book should be carefully and fully developed to demonstrate his Profound Journey, his Realizations about himself and others, his new Beliefs and his Actions as a result.

Now is the time to give it all Depth and an Organic Wholeness, make him Rounded and Living.

Sometimes the whole thing is just dumped on him, thrown at him, and all he can do is React, go with it, do the best he can. This can be the scariest way to handle it, totally Out Of Control.

Next, we'll look at **Suspense and how to get it, Conflict and how to Apply it in your book, Context and how to show it**, and what Context can be made to show.

## Chapter 16

### Suspense

Suspense in a book is created by Anticipation. Don't give out all the info at once. Leak it out by agonizing degrees, just show the tip of the iceberg.

Increase the importance of the Objective, the Imperative. How bad does the character Want It? How Important is it to others? Raise the Importance of it. Raise the Stakes.

Inject danger to the scene. It can be physical danger, Sexual, or business danger—financial, psychological, or dangerous to others.

**The Ticking Clock** sets a Time Limit inside the book. There should be a ticking clock presiding over the action in all scenes, all chapters, all acts, and for the whole book overall.

The Ticking Clock drives plot by dictating how little time there is to act.

It puts Pressure on the Hero/Heroine, and on the reader.

Make the Hero/Heroine and the reader aware of the Clock and it's constraints at every level, for every second.

The book's Ticking Clock can be made even more suspenseful by arranging for the Heroine/Hero to be powerless to act, unable to move forward.



They are stuck. Something external or internal, physical or psychological, inhibits her, is preventing her from taking action, while events and the Antagonist close around her like a vise.

Maybe all she can think of is the future, or the past, or she's just stuck in the present. She might be tied up in anticipation—suspense about the future.

What's the Great Secret? Who Dunit? What can't the author let the reader know? The greater the Importance of the Secret, the Greater the Suspense. The closer the reader gets to the Answer, the mores/he wants to know, but can't, which creates frustration and Suspense.

The Character is Desperate, at the end of his rope, must succeed in his Objective, against all the odds, the Antagonist, the Conflict, the Ticking Clock, and all the rest of obstacles inside the book.

Bring this out. Create Suspense in the reader and get her to keep turning the book's pages.

Make Conflict and Suspense inevitable. Make your characters, and your groups of characters so diametrically opposed that there can be nothing but conflict between them, like oil and water, fire and ice, conflicting objectives from the outset. Show the inner Conflict of the Hero/Heroine and the Antagonist, how badly They want the **Objective**, each in their own way for their own desperately overwhelming reasons.

## Chapter 16

### **Nothing To Excess. Save The Poetics for yourself, Nobody cares.**

Keep your book simple. Make it spare and lean. Resist that urge to modify and enhance. Thou shalt not wax poetic. You already know you're brilliant. Don't clown around with it. Let's not make this a three ring circus all about you.

Step away from the thesaurus slowly! Do it Now! I know I told you to use it, but we gotta talk here.

*It's* not about *you*. It's about the **story**. Don't bother or distract the reader with your poetic genius, they're looking for a good time, not ponies and Corvettes, or a library lecture.

Give the reader credit for intelligence. Don't teach. Don't explain every little detail of what's happening in the story, let them figure it out. They want to be a part of the action. Draw them into it by letting them participate.

Take out the boring parts of your book. Eliminate your favorite parts if need be. Leak the details a bit at a time.

Don't do an information dump in one big glom. Don't tell everything about your characters all at once.

Bring it in gradually by events, by how the characters behave, what they say, what they do. Tell and show, but mostly show it.

Build interest and suspense in the book by holding back. It's like a date. A little dinner, some Thunderbird and gin on ice, a little music, and then—*Whammo!* The Reveal.

Wowsers!

Romance your reader. Manipulate the reader. They will become part of the book with you. That's the goal. Involve the reader in the story. Get them in bed.

Keep your book's vision true, present how it would be in reality, not the way you've seen it on TV or in the movies—already been overdone.

The truth of the thing is the Spine of the Structure. The truth will carry the action forward, it will get the next page turned.

Most movie and TV plots and dialogue are moronic, dumbed down, written by Hollywood types who know nothing about your reality. Don't get pulled in to someone else's reality, be original—tell *your* truth.

Every single thing you write in the book must advance the plot. No wasted inclusions. If you take off on a tangent about Corvettes, or martinis, or shoes, it better figure into the plot. Nobody wants to hear what you like, unless it figures seamlessly into the world you're creating.

Everything you put on the paper has to be there for a specific reason beneficial to what you are trying to show. If it doesn't help, take it out. The reader is here for the ride, not for you.

When you're out in the real world, or on the phone, or watching a 911 call, listen to real dialogue.

Focus your investigative attention on what people are really saying, what they worry about, and then reproduce it—keep it real.

For instance, as on the TV every fifteen minutes, Do people really say this:

*"Hey.....are you OK?"*

Or do they say, maybe, "What the hell's wrong with you now?"

Observe real life, gestures, movement, mannerisms.

Be a detective in the sense that you automatically catalog what people look like, do, say—how they behave.

Draw your book's characters from life, like I do in my book *LOST RELIC OF THE GODS* (sorry—*no I'm not*).

Each character should speak and move their own way, have different attitudes and viewpoints, and their own ***Voice***.

It's not hard to do. After a while you'll know the character and what they are like, what they'd say and do, how they'd behave in any situation.

Create the rules of your universe and then just follow them. Everybody knows that the characters soon take over the story and write *themselves*.

Then...they're taking your stuff...the dog, your chocolate. They make those credit card purchases you can't account for...

## The Hook

The book Opening: it's important to capture the reader at the outset. Have a "hook" at the beginning, of the story. Also, at the beginning of each new sequence or chapter, something to make the reader read it. A hook is something interesting. Maybe it builds suspense:

*"He was about to experience something that would change his life."*

Or,

*"She let a strap slide down, tilted her head back a little, and slowly smiled."*

Also, Hook the reader at the at the end of each section:

*"How will he escape from the closet full of rabid badgers, raccoons, and cats?"*

Make every single sentence of the book interesting and plot-organic, or get rid of it. Take it away.

The best thing you can do for a story that's written is cut it. Chop, slash, eliminate. If a scene or sentence or paragraph isn't working—kill it and start over. You will be amazed at how much you can improve your writing product by editing out the boring parts.

Beware the Evil "*ing*" ending. It will really improve your writing enormously if you eliminate the "*ing*" ending as much as possible.

"She is glancing out the window, smoke spiraling from her cigarette, looking out into the night at passing cars in the street."

No—instead, try something like:

"She glanced out the window through smoke that spiraled from her cigarette and watched cars go by."

See? Read it a few times. It's much better sounding without the nasty old "*ing*."

How do you build suspense and momentum in your book? Build the reader's interest? ***Raise the stakes.***

You **constantly Raise The Stakes**, the price that your character will have to pay for failure.

Instead of, "He decides to go find Lil' Bang," say something more in conflict like:

"He glanced at the clock and decided to find Lil' Bang before it was too late."

See? Something bad will happen unless he finds Lil' bang fast. Tension, suspense, action, movement. Raise the stakes. Watch:

"He dressed and shrugged into his shoulder holster, snapped it down tight to his belt."

Or:

He picked up the big .45 and made sure there was a round in the chamber. He shrugged into the shoulder holster, snapped it down tight to his belt, and rolled his shoulders into a good fit. His grin showed teeth.

OK, no Oscar there, I know. But, there has to be conflict, tension. A relentless ticking clock that counts down to zero-time. Put the characters under pressure. What do they want? Raise the stakes. Have the character try to get what s/he wants.

Is s/he after a thing? Maybe a strange, ancient mechanism stolen from a museum? A cup found under the Temple Of Solomon by the Last Knight Templar?

Or is it a goal? Success, love, redemption, resurrection, death, birth, life, infinity? What—*what* does s/he want or need? In the biz it's called **The McGuffin**—the *It*—the thing they seek.

There has to be tension and conflict in your book. There has to be an obstacle or obstacles in the way of the Seeker. there must be someone or something there to constantly thwart the character from getting what s/he wants. This raises the stakes. The character must overcome the blocked path.

But there's Showing and then there's Telling. Don't "tell me" something you want me to know. Wherever possible, "show me." Don't do an essay (information dump) when you can show the reader by actions or dialogue what your point is. Never tell—always show. Like this.

"He was the kind of person who didn't like to be made fun of or belittled. He was very violent. he came from the streets. He was unsure of himself. He was potentially a dangerous man and he had a hair trigger temper."

**Yeah, I know, *brilliant*, thanks, but this is better:**

Henry Hill: You're a pistol, you're really funny. You're really funny.

Tommy DeVito: What do you mean I'm funny?

Henry Hill: It's funny, you know. It's a good story, it's funny, you're a funny guy.

[laughs]

Tommy DeVito: what do you mean, you mean the way I talk? What?

Henry Hill: It's just, you know. You're just funny, it's... funny, the way you tell the story and everything.



Tommy DeVito: [it becomes quiet] Funny how?  
What's funny about it?

(Tommy pulls a gun.)

Anthony Stabile: Tommy no, You got it all wrong.

Tommy DeVito: Oh, oh, Anthony. He's a big boy, he knows what he said. What did ya say? Funny how?

Henry Hill: Jus' ...

Tommy DeVito: What?

Henry Hill: Just... ya know... you're funny.

Tommy DeVito: You mean, let me understand this cause, ya know maybe it's me, I'm a little f\*cked up maybe, but I'm funny how, I mean funny like I'm a clown, I amuse you? I make you laugh, I'm here to f \*ckin amuse you? What do you mean funny, funny how? How am I funny?

Henry Hill: Just... you know, how you tell the story, what?

Tommy DeVito: No, no, I don't know, you said it. How do I know? You said I'm funny. How the f \*ck am I funny, what the f \*ck is so funny about me? Tell me, tell me what's funny!

*(Good Fellas, 1990, Martin Scorsese)*

## Chapter 16

The human mind EXPECTS to see certain Steps in any real story. In all cultures, in all times, in all mythic tales, this seems to have been wired-up into the DNA. Ergo, for a satisfying, interesting story, these steps should be utilized.

I'm not saying you *Have* to do these in some exact order on some exact page—no, but they need to appear in your tale, in some form.

Your bonus is: if you follow the steps, you won't be stuck wondering what happens next, because the plot will write itself, leaving you free to be imaginative and writerly.

For this method, I totally Credit the amazing **John Truby** and his Blockbuster software program and his books.

Truby asserts that every story works through seven (or twenty-two) major dramatic character-steps. These (7) steps are:

**Weakness/need**  
**Desire**  
**Opponent**  
**Plan**  
**Battle**  
**Self-revelation**  
**New equilibrium**

For various reasons, I can't go into detail, but I recommend Truby's software program Blockbuster 5, or his book, *The Anatomy of Story*

I must say—it was John Truby and Micki Grover (mickigrover.com) who helped me totally break out of the well-known Act II Funk Syndrome, and freed my imagination to write, rather than wonder what the hell comes next.

**To see how this method works in action, I recommend my book *LOST RELIC OF THE GODS*, available online as both E-book and paperback at Amazon, Barnes & Nobel, Creatspace, Lulu, Smashwords, and elsewhere!**



For other methods that inspired me herein and on-the-job, I Credit (and you should read) the astonishing Michael Hauge (*Writing Screenplays That Sell*); the towering Christopher Vogler (*The Writer's Journey*); and the *incredible* James Scott Bell (*Plot And Structure*), each of whose books and DVDs are prolific and available on Amazon.com.

Additionally, see my Reading List, next.

## Chapter 17

### Quoted from Amazon.com

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#### **\*Plot & Structure, by James Scott Bell**

**Product Description:** The second book in the Write Great Fiction series, Plot & Structure offers clear and concise information on creating a believable and engaging plot that readers can't resist. Written by award-winning thriller and suspense author James Scott Bell

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#### **\*Elmore Leonard's 10 Rules of Writing, Elmore Leonard**

**Product Description:** "These are the rules I've picked up along the way to help me remain invisible when I'm writing a book, to help me show rather than tell what's taking place in the story."

## \* **On Writing, Stephen King**

**From The Editors:** The subtitle to Stephen King's *On Writing*, his missive on the art and craft that have made him rich and famous, is "A Memoir of the Craft." And that's just what this book is. Beginning with his earliest childhood, when his mother was struggling to raise Stephen and his older brother on her own, King takes readers through his life, culminating with the 1999 tragedy that almost ended it. Interspersed with King's memories are details that highlight his burgeoning career, all of it told in King's uniquely folksy but slightly twisted style.

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## \***Self Editing For Fiction Writers, Browne and King**

**From the Publisher:** In this completely revised and updated second edition, Renni Browne and Dave King teach you, the writer, how to apply the editing techniques they have developed to your own work. Chapters on dialogue, exposition, point of view, interior monologue, and other techniques take you through the same processes an expert editor would go through to perfect your MS.

## **\*Novelist's Essential Guide To Crafting Scenes, Raymond Ostfeld**

**From the Publisher:** Writing page-turning fiction depends on your ability to create rock-solid, believable scenes. Scenes act as dynamic structures that thrust both your characters and readers forward through conflict, baiting them with goals that may -- or may not -- be obtained. Writing good scenes makes the difference between a tale that crackles with energy and momentum and a story that falls flat.



## **\* The First Five Pages, Noah Lukeman**

**From the Publisher:** Whether you are a novice writer or a veteran who has already had your work published, rejection is often a frustrating reality. Literary agents and editors receive and reject hundreds of manuscripts each month. While it's the job of these publishing professionals to be discriminating, it's the job of the writer to produce a manuscript that immediately stands out among the vast competition.

## \* **Elements Of Style, Strunk and White**

**From the Publisher:** Every English-language writer knows Strunk and White's famous little writing manual, *The Elements of Style*. Many people between the ages of seventeen and seventy can recite the book's mantra--make every word tell--and still refer to their tattered grade school copy when in need of a hint on how to make a turn of phrase clearer, or a reminder on how to enliven prose with the active voice.



## \* **Rewrite Right, Jan Venolia**

**Synopsis:** Most writing can be improved by the simple process of review and rewriting, yet it remains something few people try in any serious or systematic way.



## \* **Creating Character Emotion, Ann Hood**

**From the Publisher:** Sweaty palms. Butterflies in the stomach. Pacing back and forth. There is no doubt this character is nervous. But isn't there a more original, more vivid way to express this emotion? Absolutely. In this unique book, Ann Hood will help you find fresh, creative images, words and gestures to evoke feelings in your fiction.



## \* **Every Page Perfect, Mary Lynn**

**From the Publisher:** This completely revised and reformatted third edition is full of examples of the professional way to prepare and submit manuscripts for books, novels, series, short stories, articles, verse, and proposals of all types. Learn how to do query, cover, and business letters, news releases, affidavits, bios, publicity photos, and much more. It is full of tips for writers and gives insider information.

## \* **The Plot Thickens, Noah Lukeman**

**From the Publisher:** As a literary agent, Noah Lukeman hears thousands of book pitches a year. Often the stories sound great in concept, but never live up to their potential on the page. Lukeman shows beginning and advanced writers how to implement the fundamentals of successful plot development, such as character building and heightened suspense and conflict.



## \* **Writer's Journey, Christopher Vogler**

**From the Publisher:** In 1993, “The Writer’s Journey” became one of the most popular books on writing of the last 50 years. Now, the second edition provides new insights and observations from Vogle’s pioneering work in mythic structure for writers. 7 illustrations.

## **\* Myth and the Movies: Discovering the Mythic Structure of 50 Unforgettable Films, Stuart Voytilla**

**From the Publisher:** Voytilla takes the mythic structure developed by Christopher Vogler in "The Writer's Journey" and applies this idea to 50 classic motion pictures. 100 original cards with mythic icons.



## **Writing Screenplays That Sell, Michael Hauge**

**Product Description:** The up-to-date, acclaimed guide to writing and selling screenplays to today's film and TV markets. This is the new screenwriter's bible.

## \* **The Power Of Myth, Joseph Campbell**

**From the Publisher:** Campbell discusses the importance of accepting death as rebirth as in myth of the buffalo and the story of Christ, the rite of passage in primitive societies, the role of mystical Shamans, and the decline of ritual in today's society.

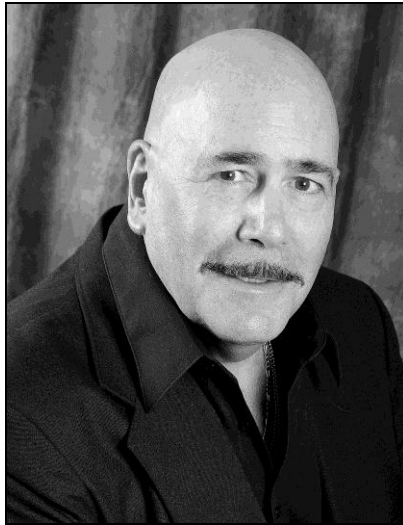
### **The End—*OR IS IT?***

Thanks for coming down this trail, this far, with me. I hope I've helped show you how to set free your imagination and write your way to riches, or at least the fun of creation. There's nothing like it that I know of.

And remember—never quit, never give up the ship, and don't take any crap. If they knew what they were doing, you'd be reading *their* books.

*Chow, baby! —Jeffrey Avalon Friedberg*

**Bio, Jeffrey A. Friedberg**  
**Author, Lost relic Of The Gods:**



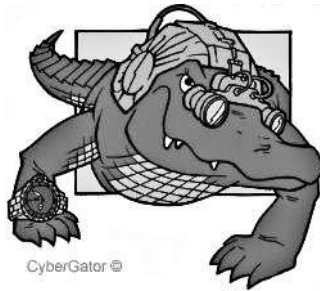
**Jeffrey A. Friedberg** was a Philadelphia Private Eye and ran his own highly acclaimed detective agency, employing up to 125—doing undercover, organized crime, security, homicide, and more.

**Friedberg** has a BA in English and Sociology, with further university studies in counterinsurgency. He is a 32<sup>nd</sup> Degree Mason—second highest degree possible, a “Sublime Prince Of The Royal (Templar) Secret”. He holds qualifications in judo, Shotokan Karate, and firearms. He has also been an internet marketer, web promoter, and an Internet Consultant at America Online.

**Jeffrey Friedberg** is single and writes in the shadow of a dormant volcano in Albuquerque, New Mexico, one mile above sea level.

*Oh...did I mention he's the author of Lost relic Of The Gods?  
He's the author of LOST RELIC OF THE GODS.*

**CONTACT:**



[a1.detective@gmail.com](mailto:a1.detective@gmail.com), [www.lostancientknowledge.com](http://www.lostancientknowledge.com)

Jeffrey A. Friedberg

**Cybergator Productions™**

8201 Golf Course Road, NW, D3-288, ABQ, NM, 87120, USA, Earth