



Taking the Mystery Out of Mystery



Labeling

What shelf will your book be on?



Labeling

About 30% of all books sold are Thrillers and Mysteries.



Sub Genres

- Amateur Detective
- Child in Peril
- Classic Whodunit
- Comic
- Cozy
- Courtroom drama
- Dark Thriller



More Sub Genres

- Espionage
- Forensic
- Heists and Capers
- Historical
- Locked Room
- Medical



And More Sub Genres

- Police procedural
- Private detective
- Psychological suspense
- Romantic
- Technothriller
- Women in jeopardy
- Young adult



Publishing

- The Big Five
 - Penguin Random House
 - Macmillan
 - Simon & Schuster
 - Hachette
 - HarperCollins



Publishing

- Mid-Sized (very limited list)
 - Poisoned Pen
 - Down and Out
 - Polis
 - Soho
 - Crooked Lane
 - Agora
 - Brash Books



Publishing

- Small Presses and Digital Imprints
- Self Pubbing
- Amazon : Thomas and Mercer



Tips for Mysteries

- Read
- Study story structure
- Create compelling characters
- Have at least 2 suspects, ideally 3-5 or more
- Give every suspect clear motivation
- Create enough clues to keep reader guessing



Tips for Mysteries

- Create red herrings
- Get to the action
- Play fair
- Proactive characters
- Try to surprise reader
- Don't fake the research



Characters

- “The key to reader bonding is falling in love with the lead.”
 - James Scott Bell



Character

– Goal, Motivation, Conflict

- What they want, why they want it, and why can't they get it

Techniques of the Selling Writer by Dwight Swain



Characters

– Bigger than life

- “Fundamentally, why heroes and villains appeal to people is that they behave in extreme ways or behave in ways that an ordinary person would not.”
 - Roger Williams, screenwriter



Characters

– Grit, Wit and “It”

- Inner strength
- Mental acuity
- “Inner something” that makes readers want to know what makes your character tick



Characters

– It must MATTER

- The more it matters to your character, the more it matters to readers
 - Character is revealed in crisis
 - Test to the ultimate of their convictions
-
- “Make your characters want something right away even if it's only a glass of water. Characters paralyzed by the meaninglessness of modern life still have to drink water from time to time.”
– [Kurt Vonnegut Jr.](#)



Character

– Inner/Outer Conflict

- What holds the character back from achieving dreams
- What character needs but doesn't know it
- Outer-Plot



Characters

- Villains
 - “If you know your hero’s greatest weaknesses you can create a villain to play on those and for the first 90% of the book seems certain to win.”
 - CJ Lyons



Structure

- Story Engineering by Larry Brooks
- Save the Cat by Blake Snyder
- Save the Cat Writes a Novel by Jessica Brody
- The Writer's Journey by Christopher Vogler
- Writing the Breakout Novel by Donald Maass
- Discovering Story Magic by Laura Baker



Story Engineering Basics

Four Part Structure

- Part I: Set Up
- Part II: Reaction
- Part III: Attack
- Part IV: Resolution



Four Parts Character Arc

- First Part
 - Setup = Orphan
- Second Part
 - Reaction = Wanderer
- Third Part
 - Attack = Warrior
- Fourth Part
 - Resolution = Martyr/Hero

Point of View



Types of Point of View

❖ First Person

❖ The rich cabernet danced on my tongue.

❖ Second Person

❖ You relished the taste of the red wine.

❖ Third Person single Point of View

❖ Shelly loved the way the wine made her giggle.

❖ Third Person multiple Point of View

❖ Shelly loved the way the wine made her giggle.

❖ Rage climbed up Tiff's throat at Shelly's silliness.

❖ Omniscient

❖ While Shelly enjoyed the wine, Tiff felt only anger. Roger bided his time to make his move on Shelly.



Point of View

Point of view is the character's perspective through which the reader sees the scene. Some authors liken it to the lens of a camera. Whoever is holding the camera is the person whose view we see. Deep point of view is when the writer immerses herself so deeply in the character's skin that any external narrator disappears.

- From *Writing Deep POV* by Barbara Wallace



Deep point of View

- ❖ The difference between telling a reader your character is embarrassed and making them feel the heat on their own cheeks.



Reporting Words

- Thought
- Felt
- Saw
- Wondered
- Realized, Believed, Wanted, Imagined, Remembered, Understood, Knew, etc.

“I saw the doorknob turn. I wondered if I’d die here. I couldn’t breathe.”

Or...

“The doorknob turned. Maybe it was the babysitter and she’d have hot chocolate and we’d go watch ‘The Brady Bunch.’ But maybe it was something else, with claws not hands, saliva dripping from its fangs. If I moved, or even breathed, I was dead.”



Resources for Mystery

- Mystery Writers of America (MWA)
- Sisters In Crime (SinC)
- Thriller Writers of America (TWA)
- Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers (RMFW)
- Pikes Peak Writers (PPW)



Questions?

