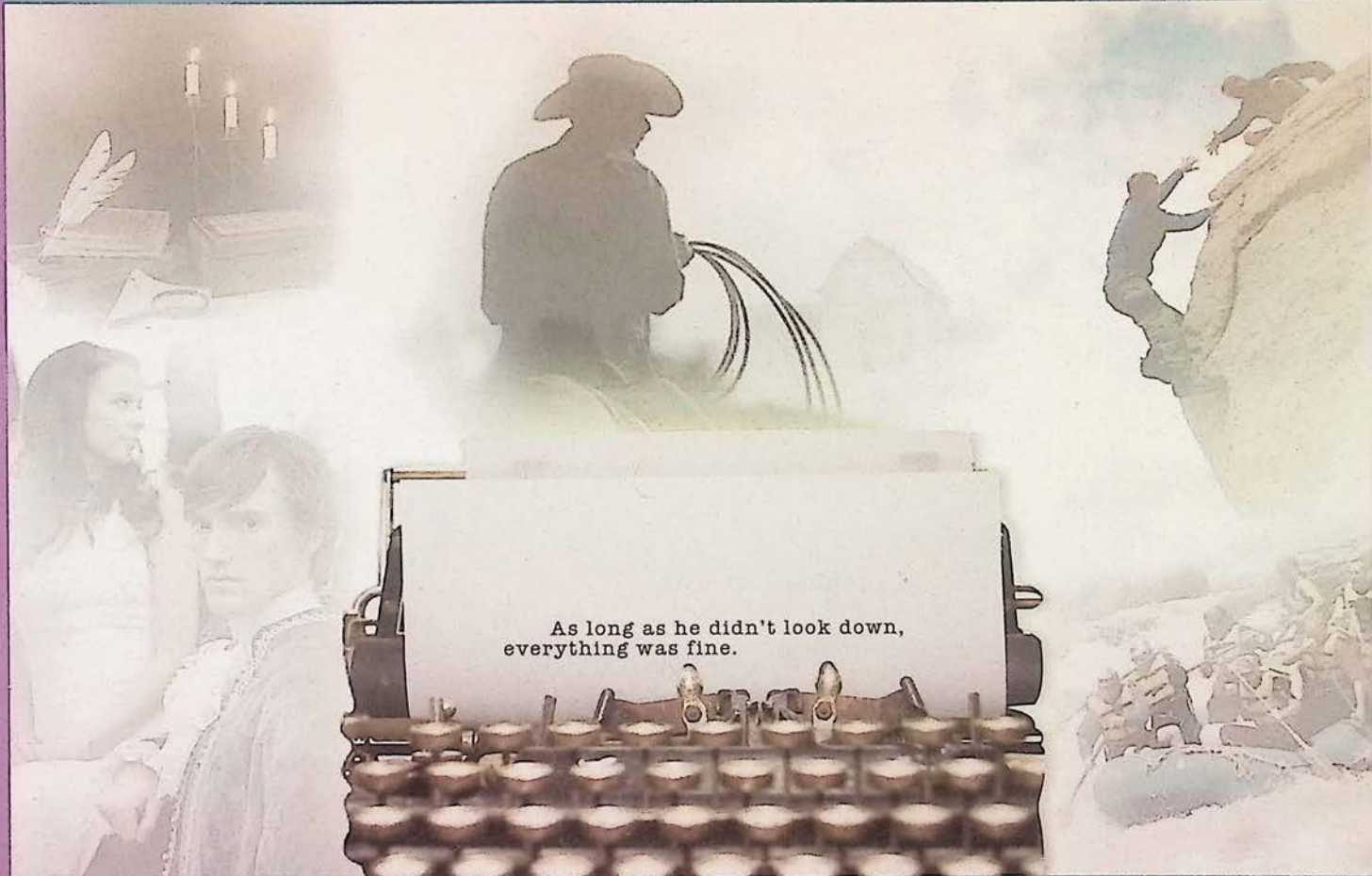


A Guide to Writing Your Novel



Lee Roddy

Author of *Grizzly Adams*



Institute for
Excellence in
Writing

Learn. Speak. Read. Write. Thrive!

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction-----	Page-----	1
Chapter 2: Overview-----		5
Chapter 3: Characters-----		11
Chapter 4: Writing Suspense Novels -----		19
Chapter 5: Writing Category Romances -----		27
Chapter 6: Plotting Your Novel Part 1 -----		37
Chapter 7: Plotting Your Novel Part 2 -----		45
Chapter 8: Plotting Your Novel Part 3 -----		51
Chapter 9: Scenes & Sequels -----		61
Chapter 10: Mystery Writing -----		73
Chapter 11: Writing a Mystery Outline-----		85
Chapter 12: Young Readers' Novels Part 1-----		97
Chapter 13: Young Readers' Novels Part 2-----		107
Chapter 14: Researching & Interviewing -----		119
Chapter 15: Marketing-----		127
Chapter 16: Which Way Tomorrow? -----		135
Chapter 17: Wrap Up & Challenge -----		139

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The author Somerset Maugham once said, *“There are three rules for writing a novel. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.”*

That seems to be true. There are countless books available on how to write a novel, but not all are practical. This one is unique because what it teaches has a long history of proving the material really works. Teenagers and older writers can benefit from this material.

I am a results-oriented person who developed this material after years of trial and error. Then I proved and refined it by teaching fiction writing for 30 years to countless previously unpublished students of whom hundreds went on to sell their novels.

Here’s what some have said about my work or my teaching:

Bud Gardner wrote, *“Lee Roddy is a highly successful published novelist and master teacher. In my 36 years of teaching at American River College in Sacramento, the last 22 as head of the Writing for Publication program, I have never met an English instructor, no matter what degree he or she held, Masters or Doctorate, who had as much information or who was Lee Roddy’s equal as a novel instructor. I wish we could clone him.”*

Best-selling novelist Tricia Goyer wrote: *“Fifteen years ago, I attended my first writers’ conference. I wanted to be a writer, but it seemed liked a distant dream. Then I attended a series of workshops by a brilliant and witty writer named Lee Roddy. I hadn’t heard of him before, but since then, I won’t forget. Currently I’ve published over 450 magazine articles, nine non-fiction books and fourteen novels. I also have two more books coming out this year and six others in the works!”*

Years before I taught Tricia and others, I wrote 10 complete novels that did not sell. But after I learned what’s now in this book, I rewrote and sold all 10 of those novels—plus 43 more, along with several nonfiction books.

TESTED AND PROVEN MATERIAL

I used the same material that worked for me when I taught all over the country for about three decades. My novels won so many awards I quit counting. I ghost wrote one which became a prime time television series. Some were made into movies. Almost all of my books offered online by Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc., have four and five star consumer ratings.

But none if it would have happened without the writing knowledge that I acquired after initial failures. Neither I nor my former students who went on to successful publishing careers would have succeeded without some writing ability,

INTRODUCTION

desire and perseverance. My experience has been that the latter is the hardest. You must persevere to succeed as a novelist.

The relevance for you is that you can avoid years of frustrating trial and error by learning the lessons in this book about how to write and sell your first novel. It will work for you if you have the desire, the drive and perseverance.

SLANT

I intend to handle the subject in the same way I did in countless seminars at schools, colleges, writers' conferences and various other venues. That is, I make it simple but easy to understand and practice; to create salable novels. Even those writers who only write for fun will enjoy their work more with the guidance in this book.

FOCUS

I'll start out with the most elementary instruction because experience teaches me that beginners often have incorrect assumptions and start at the wrong place. I say this based on reading myriads of manuscripts by novice writers who honestly think they're doing it right, but they aren't. From the fundamentals I'll take you step-by-step through what you need to know to succeed in a tough, competitive market.

QUALIFICATIONS

Largely self-taught, I'm undertaking this project because I learned the hard way, writing for 30 years before selling my first novel. So I know about rejection, and the rewards that came later from learning my craft and persevering to sell books that sold millions of copies.

There is an unending need for proper writing instruction as I see in my mail and in my seminars. Back in the dark days of repeated rejection, I told Cicely, my wife, "If I ever make it, I'll teach others how to do it."

Her unforgettable reply was, "*WHEN* you make it."

So there are many ways to write novels, but my teaching is unique because I don't just tell you how; I show you.

At an annual summer writers' conference, an attendee observed to the director that each year there were different presenters, but I was there annually. The questioner wondered why I was invited back each year. The director's answer was: "Because Lee Roddy's students sell."

You may be one of the rare writers who doesn't seek to be a published author, but most people want to learn to do something well. This book is designed to help you write well, even if not for publication.

INTRODUCTION

THE STARTING POINT

Where do we start? According to ancient wisdom, the longest journey begins with the first step. That step is right in front of you, that is, to begin with the basics. What are they? The answers start in the next chapter. Have a good trip.

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW

It's been my experience that most novice writers start at the wrong place, or have incorrect assumptions that handicap their work. Many sit right down and begin writing a story without knowing what very specific requirements are expected in different category novels, or which publishers buy that kind of story. Such a writer never really properly develops the novel, so it doesn't sell.

I see many novice writers entering the story at an improper place. The best advice I've heard on the right place was from movie mogul Sam Goldwyn. He reportedly told his writers, "*Start with an earthquake and build from there.*"

Most "newbies" don't realize the harsh reality that if the first page or two doesn't catch the editor's interest, the manuscript is already headed for the reject pile. Novice writers must learn to "hook" readers in the first page, preferably in the first line or paragraph. Established authors can enter their story almost any place they want because their name pre-sells the book.

New writers often believe that authors can do what they want to start a story, but aspiring writers have no such privilege.

FACTS AND FALLACIES

Aspiring authors would like to get a literary agent who'll sell their novels. But if you don't have a proven track record, an agent isn't likely to take you on. He works on commission and is usually reluctant to represent unproven authors.

You need to generate a track record by first selling your own work. That normally begins by submitting your novel manuscript in whatever form the agent or publisher's guidelines require.

Editors are usually overworked with stacks of submitted manuscripts piled on their desks. This helps them become creative, trying to find a suitable story in the so-called "slush pile." One veteran editor told me that if he is interested by the manuscript's first page, he'll read to the top of the second one; he may flip to the ending. If he likes that, he'll put the manuscript aside to read through later. But if he isn't intrigued by this brief "read," a rejection slip is sent on its way to the writer.

CATEGORY NOVELS

Paperback category or genre novels are consistently the most popular. You see them in racks at grocery and drugstore checkout stands, plus airports, truck stops and other places where the paperbacks are readily available. These category novels are what this teaching book will help you write because they offer markets for almost any genre which interests you. Romance, mystery and suspense are good prospects, but

OVERVIEW

other choices include horror, science fiction, westerns, action adventure, spiritual, comedy, young adult and many others.

Each genre has very specific elements that must fit in that particular category story. They are plot driven rather than character driven. Genre is by far the most popular type of fiction today. Aspiring novelists have a better chance of having their book on a public library shelf or checkout stand if it fits in a specific category.

MAINSTREAM NOVELS

Mainstream novels are character driven and tend to be more literary. They are not confined to containing specific elements or formulas as genre novels are. Writers can walk around a library and see how carefully books are shelved according to their type.

Serious aspiring writers need time to learn that various publishers require certain word count in manuscripts. Editors also require manuscripts to be submitted in a certain format and with some mechanical considerations.

There's a sports story that is germane here. It seems there was a coach with a football team that could not win a game. One day the coach called the players together, held up the pigskin and announced, "This is a football."

You may feel that you are beyond such simple basics, but unless you know all that I wrote about above, you can benefit from this book.

NOVEL DEFINED

What is a novel, really, and why does it exist? I define a novel as emotional, narrative entertainment about characters in conflict requiring suspense elements within a structured form of beginning, middle and ending. Certain key components must be included under each of those parts.

The purpose of a novel is to entertain, which simply means "to hold the mind." This is done by choosing words that emotionally stir readers so they care what happens to your fictitious story people, especially the main character.

Novels for young readers often focus on the emotion of excitement, of getting caught up in the action much as would happen in watching a suspenseful ball game. Novelists must aim to write novels that touch the heart.

Robert Frost declared, "*No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader.*" When you create words and situations that stir your emotions, your readers will feel it, too.

Of course it's possible to write a salable novel simply by using the right components and structure. However, royalties earn money from novelists who get inside their story people and pluck at readers' heartstrings. So try writing so that readers will need a box of tissues at hand.

IDEAS: MOTHER OF SUCCESS

Entertainment, emotion, and suspense are intrinsic story elements to which the writer must add one more intangible: ideas. All success flows from ideas. A writer needs a strong story concept that stirs him so much that he can live with it for the months or year it takes to complete a novel. Fortunately, getting a solid grip on an idea is much easier to achieve than entertainment, emotion and suspense.

The actual writing has to begin with an idea that appeals to the novelist. Even non-writers are always intrigued with them. When I'm introduced to someone—adult or youngster—the most often asked question is, “Where do you get your ideas for all those books?”

I get them from everywhere and nowhere. So can you. The “trick” is to recognize the possibilities in a concept and then know what to do with it. The first thing is to jot it down before you forget it. Then write a simple declarative sentence that summarizes the story hidden in the idea.

Example: *This is the story of a boy who disobeys his father, ends up in a pool filled with sharks and there's no way out for him.*

Next, match the idea to several carefully researched and possible markets. Most writers seem to groan at the necessity of marketing, but it's the flip side of the writing coin. You can't have one without the other. Learn more about that in the marketing chapter.

WRITING THE SYNOPSIS

Busy editors and agents may not want to see the author's manuscript until after reading his synopsis. A synopsis is basically a critical “selling” tool, part of a book proposal. At the publishing house, the synopsis may be passed on to the marketing department for review. If it has sales possibilities, the author may then be asked to submit a book proposal. This includes two or three chapters with an outline that augments the synopsis. Asking to see the complete manuscript is usually dependent upon editorial reaction to the “selling” power of the book proposal.

A decision to reject can come from the publishing house's reaction to the synopsis alone. This may seem unfair to an author, but I was helped to understand that when a veteran editor told me, “You don't have to eat the whole egg to know if it's bad.”

A synopsis is short, so necessarily it must be intriguing, well written and very tight. A survey of editors and agents found that two to four double spaced pages is a preferred length. However, there's a hint of a trend toward even shorter synopses, as you'll see later in this book.

OVERVIEW

Some of your best work must be in the synopsis, which can be written single or double spaced, with the latter normally preferred. A synopsis is an engaging summary, written chronologically in the present tense and without dialogue. It is limited to the main points and events with principal characters and their relationships with conflict; it shows how everything is tied together as cause and effect. A couple of brief paragraphs may be added to succinctly describe the appealing main characters, their motives and goals.

Personally, I found that learning to write a synopsis was very helpful. I got mental ideas but never could develop them in my head. The stories never came to me in a clear unit but arrived over time, like parts of a jigsaw puzzle arriving without the box cover showing what the finished product would look like. Being ready to catch and hold any idea is a good reason for a writer to always have paper and pen handy. Later, this can be expanded as a synopsis or outline.

I sold several novels by submitting a story's main points on a half sheet of paper. Later, I learned how to write a synopsis and eventually an outline. I learned to develop those more thoroughly to meet editorial needs. I got hooked on doing that first as a sales tool, and now do both instead of doing it all mentally. I believe a new writer should learn to write a synopsis and outline for himself and the editor, but each writer should use whatever method works best for him, as long as it meets the editor's needs.

There are many ways to develop a story. I know of authors who can do it all in their heads. But most of us need to expand our one-line summary sentence into a paragraph, followed by a synopsis and eventually an extended outline. The synopsis should be a priority on your journey to successful genre novelist. Perhaps the most critical part of story development hinges on the synopsis, which some beginners confuse with an outline.

MECHANICS OF A SYNOPSIS

An outline is an expanded sketch of the entire novel with certain required elements. A synopsis is a short summary that covers the book's main events and shows the relation of the events (because of this, that happened) and the focal character's involvement.

A survey of editors and agents found that two to four pages is a preferred length for a synopsis. Best-selling and award-winning novelist Debra Raney gave me permission to use two of her synopses for her novel, *Remember to Forget*, published by Howard/Simon & Schuster. I'll use one of those synopses here and the other in the marketing chapter. Debra's website showed that she was working on her 19th novel at the time of this writing. Her synopsis has only 102 words.

OVERVIEW

What if you could start all over again? What if you had a chance to walk away from past mistakes and reinvent yourself? That's exactly what graphic designer Maggie Anderson is offered when a terrifying carjacking leaves her alive and well, but stranded a hundred miles away from her New York apartment—and her abusive boyfriend. When a kind stranger offers Maggie a ride, she impulsively directs him west, away from her life in New York. After a grueling three-week journey, confused, heartbroken, and without a penny, she winds up in tiny Clayton, Kansas—and the beginning of a brand new life.

Apprentice novelists might want to analyze the selling aspects of this paragraph and then practice reducing their own category novel to a similar length synopsis.

This overview chapter has given you a brief look into the complexities that go into writing and selling a genre novel. But before turning to the next lesson (on characters, the single most important element in a novel), I'd like you to emulate a pilot making a check on his aircraft.

No matter how many times he's done it before, a careful pilot runs through his checklist before a flight. If experienced pilots do that, aspiring novelists should never send off a manuscript without one last look at their checklist. Is everything listed there that's germane to the chapter? Is each item clear? If there is any doubt, give the questionable item one final look. Clarify the text item if necessary. Finally, submit the polished piece and start on the next book while waiting for an editorial decision on the one you've written.

CHECKLIST

Space limitations prevented detailed instruction on some questions listed below, but those can be learned through research which a novelist must do. The purpose of all these questions is to help you focus more sharply on what you need to know to become a published novelist.

1. Who is your target audience? Don't say "everyone." That tends to annoy editors because most novels are read by certain classes or groups.
2. What genre or category is your story? If you don't know, find out.
3. Is your story character driven or plot driven?
4. Why will readers have empathy with your main character?
5. Does your story snag readers' attention on the first page?
6. Does the story have rising suspense to cause an emotional response in the reader?
7. How is this book unique from others on the same topic?
8. What 10 or so publishers have your research shown that release stories like this?

OVERVIEW

9. In those 10 houses, what are editors' preferred word count for your genre's stories, and does your manuscript's word count compare?

10. What is your platform for helping promote your book? Do you speak to groups, make radio and television appearances, or seek newspaper and other print coverage?

This overview chapter hopefully will make you eager to learn more. That starts in the next chapter with a study of the all-important subject of story characters.

CHAPTER 3: CHARACTERS

"Make them laugh. Make them cry. Make them wait." --Charles Dickens

In those few words, Dickens has hinted at the way novelists should write a memorable story: by creating emotions in the readers and carefully building suspense about what happened or is going to happen to the main character and others in a story.

Fictitious characters are the lifeblood of a story. They have names, but unlike those in a phone book, story people must really come alive under the writer's hand. Characters are absolutely vital to a successful narrative, even more so than plot. Unless the author creates believable, three-dimensional characters for whom readers care, the plot (or anything else) will be of little consequence.

The reason characters exist is to create an emotional response in the reader through conflicts in the story. The novel's opening must make us care about the main character or protagonist so that we root for him to succeed in whatever it is he wants, his story goal.

There must be one central character, usually the viewpoint one. At the end, this character must change by either growing or deteriorating from what he was at the beginning. Readers identify with the main character, who must be likeable with high stakes involved. This character needs two goals: the tangible story objective and a personal or internal one, as a character flaw to be dealt with near the end of the narrative.

Most of all, the readers must get an emotional response from the story. That can be laughter, fear, anger, or almost anything that touches the readers' emotions.

Emotion sells novels. Feelings are aroused in readers because of the story characters. They are the most important components in a salable novel, especially the main character. Unless readers care about this focal character, the plot or anything else will be weak. The novelist can stir readers' emotions and quickly pull them into the story by creating conflict between the focal character and a strong adversary.

CHARACTERS IN CONFLICT

A strong opposing character creates ever-increasing suspense for the reader when there is a likeable main character in constant conflict with an adversary. The rule is: The stronger the opponent, the better the story. The adversary can be used to personify evil which the main character eventually overcomes, also vicariously helping the reader overcome evil. A general story-writing rule is that the bad guy wins most of the battles but the good guy wins the war. Very early on (usually at the beginning of a story) the focal character should be introduced with action and a hint of emotion.

CHARACTERS

I had the good fortune to meet and learn from Louis L'Amour, the top-selling author of western novels. At one time he controlled 90% of the shelf space where his books were sold. I liked what he said about how to begin a story.

“Begin every story in the middle. The reader doesn't care how it begins; he wants to get on with it.” To do that, in the first paragraph or as soon as possible there, introduce the main character in action. He added, *“It's good if a dangerous situation is pending.”*

As I suspect you have, I had a few experiences with dangerous situations. Living most of my life in California, I have been in earthquakes, so I know they are instantly capable of arousing a feeling of fear. Once I was in a large university auditorium teaching a writing class when the temblor struck, making the massive overhead chandeliers swing ominously over the audience. Another time, I was instructing a group of writing teachers when a sharp jolt interrupted. Fear instantly caused one woman to spin in her chair and poise to run.

The immediate fear for all of us was not just because the earth moved violently, but because our lives were in danger. We cared what was going to happen to us, and that's what the novelist must do in starting his story. Make the readers care, especially about the main character and the situation which has suddenly changed, posing a problem.

Create a favorable impression of that focal character as quickly as is logically possible. If we like him, readers will want to know more about him, so the author must motivate him, give him a goal, opposition, high stakes and risks or danger. If he's real enough to readers, they'll care and keep reading. You'll need to love the main one, and have other degrees of feelings about all the other story people.

TEARS IN THE READER

Frost wrote about tears in the writer and reader, but emotional responses can be as minor as raising goose bumps on the readers' arms. However, the greater their response, the more enjoyable a story seems. Touching the readers' hearts is primarily done by the author creating story people so real that the readers care deeply about what happens to them. It doesn't always have to be the focal character who causes a strong emotional reaction.

A schoolteacher who read my books aloud to her class told me that she had cried real tears because she thought a secondary character named Alfred had drowned.

I reminded her that, “Alfred isn't real. He's a figment of my imagination.” The teacher logically knew that, but she cared so much about this little boy who existed only in my head that she wept at his imaginary disaster.

CHARACTERS

A good applicable principle is: “Characters—you’ve got to love them.” Of course, there are exceptions. Readers may understand the adversary in a story, but that doesn’t mean he is loved.

Since a novel is essentially about characters in conflict, the two people most likely to clash are the focal character (hero) and the adversary (bad guy). In writing your novel, it helps to quickly hook your reader by introducing these two characters and setting up a situation where they demonstrate their roles in conflict.

This ranges from minor annoyance to furious reactions over what happens to the main or another sympathetic character. The writer’s job is to create at least one appealing character with whom readers have empathy. That person is usually the main character, but not always.

How the writer feels about a character will affect the writing and influence readers to feel the same. If they don’t care what happens to him, not even a gripping plot will compensate for the lack of emotion.

Whether animal or human, at least two characters in an adversarial relationship are needed in a good story. Hemingway wrote a powerful drama about an old fisherman in a boat and a great fish he had caught on a line. This was so skillfully written that neither man nor fish could be said to be bad. Each was doing what he had to do to live. The struggle between two such unusual adversaries made an epic story that could be considered a classic.

REVEALING CHARACTER IN A FEW WORDS

Most stories have more sharply-drawn differences between the main character and the adversary. For example, in an old Western cow town, a skinny dog dashes into the street and barks at a grungy-looking rider astride a bay gelding. The man reaches down with his short whip and viciously strikes the dog. He tucks his tail between his legs and slinks away. Moments later, a tall stranger on a buckskin rides into town. The dog regains his courage and again rushes out, barking at the newcomer. He dismounts and pats the dog on his head.

By these simple acts, readers form an adverse opinion about the first rider, and a favorable impression of the stranger. They want to know him better, and especially if there’s a hint that the first rider may turn out to be the bad guy and the kindly man the story’s hero. The two men are likely to clash, and readers want to see the struggle.

While the main character is going to get the most cheers, emotions can be aroused by a secondary character for whom readers care. Stories may also have an adversary who really isn’t bad, but just well-meaning, yet messes things up for the focal character.

CHARACTERS

The writer can create a really unsavory story person without any redeeming qualities. It depends on the degree of emotional response you want readers to have about individual characters. Your feelings about a character can be written to arouse readers' emotions.

An opponent does not have to be a bad person. It can be someone who is well-meaning, as a pioneer mother who doesn't want her son to go west in search of California gold. She'll try several ways to keep him at home, so she's not a villain. However, her resistance adds to the son's mental distress because he is strongly motivated to find enough gold to pay off the farm which they are about to lose. This determination may be a character flaw in the son, so he could have both a physical goal (gold to save the farm) and a mental fault which he will change near the story's end.

Suppose an unsavory character's flaw is selfishness. This can be revealed to readers in a brief scene.

Example: A waitress at a small town coffee shop told me about a regular customer who came in for a late breakfast of ham and eggs. A burly stranger entered, sat down at the counter next to the regular patron and told the waitress, "I'll have what he's having."

She replied, "I'm sorry, sir, but he got the last ham and eggs we have."

The stranger pulled the regular's plate to himself, saying, "Then I'll have his."

I used that in a book to quickly establish what kind of an adversary the stranger was going to be in my story.

It's good if the reader cares about any of the characters in a book, but the author's goal should be to make readers care so deeply about the main character that they keep reading to find out what's going to happen to him. It is helpful to reduce some literary truths to a few principles, as:

BACKGROUND SHAPES CHARACTER

Each person is the sum total of all that has ever happened to him/her, and how he/she reacted. You must especially know what shaped all characters' attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, etc., to cause them to act the way they do. Know who and what impacted the characters before the story starts.

CHARACTER ALWAYS GROWS OUT OF BELIEF

Know how your characters think, and their actions will automatically follow for any given situation. In literature, character determines action.

CHARACTERS

Dr. Maxwell Maltz declared, “Both behavior and feeling spring from belief,” and “A human being always acts and feels and performs in accordance with what he believes to be true.”

In literature, it is well known that character determines action. Psychologists tell us that:

- Action follows belief.
- Action reveals character.
- We prove our beliefs to ourselves.
- A character can't act contrary to self-concept.
- A character always acts in accordance with what he or she believes to be true about self or environment.
- Self-esteem equals action.

To create well-rounded and believable story people in your novel, you must get inside your characters' heads. Know how your characters think, and their actions will automatically follow.

SELF-CONCEPT DETERMINES DESTINY

Characters behave the way they see themselves. This self-image will determine dress, action, talk, walk, etc., of each person. Each acts according to self-concept.

REACTION TO ENVIRONMENT

To know the present and future response which your characters will give in the situation where you have placed them, reconstruct their various past environments. Then determine how each character reacted to those environments. Remember, two people in exactly the same environment may think and act differently for any given situation.

In my seminars, I taught aspiring writers how to create strong story characters with three key words:

1. **Believe.** Everyone believes something, which is not necessarily true, but the mental and emotional belief system is so powerful that it helps make us what we are inside.

2. **Behave.** People's actions reflect those beliefs, even at a very young age. This was known thousands of years ago when the writer of Proverbs declared that “*even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.*” (P. 893 NIV Proverbs 10:11) Most of us have seen children misbehaving in public places, and usually we can assume from the parents' response what allowed the child to become obnoxious. Action follows belief. That's what psychologists tell us. In fact, they add that a person can't act contrary to self-concept.

3. **Become.** Whatever we believe and the way we behave is what we'll eventually become.

Consider the old adage, "Birds of a feather flock together." What we have become attracts others of the same mind-set. We have become one of them and are comfortable with that.

Keep these thoughts in mind in creating your story people. Before starting to write your novels, get to know who your characters are inside their hearts and heads. The easiest way to do that is by making three-dimensional profiles of your major players and some of the secondary ones. That includes their physical appearance, their personalities and the psychological or mental-emotional makeup.

After this is completed, create a profile by backgrounding each person. Figure out what shaped each one's thinking. That will show you a three-dimensional character (personality, physical and psychological) and how he logically fits into your story.

By now, I hope you are convinced that the way to arouse emotion in a novel is to create at least a main character for whom readers care. Conversely, we have all known people whom we disliked, perhaps even hated. Think back on two or three real life people and try to recall why you had such a negative reaction to them. Were they unfair to you? Did they do you wrong? If so, how? Was there a particular precipitating event that made it impossible for you two to be—or remain—friends?

ACTION REVEALS PERSONALITIES

I recall a bigger boy in grammar school who wanted the baseball mitt I was using at a recess game. I wouldn't give it to him. He thumped me some, but I never gave up the glove. Neither did I ever forget his name or what he did.

That incident also tells you something about both of our personalities. Writing about this boy of so long ago doesn't bother me, but if it was important to dredge up those old emotions, I could at least recall enough of my feelings that I could write a better emotional scene in a story.

For practice, think of a couple or so good friends you had over the years. What traits attracted you to be friends? If you're observant and fair, you'll know they had some flaws, as we all do. Put those in your story, too, and you'll have a better character.

However, never use a whole real life character in your novel. Use parts of him, mixed well with other components from other real people. I've had people tell me they recognized themselves in some of my characters, but they're mistaken. I have not—and would not—do that. I use my imagination to mix and match, taking the personality from one person, the physical appearance of another, and some

CHARACTERS

psychological traits from a third person. Then I create a whole new character, piece-by-piece, from my mind, so no real person is replicated in my stories.

OTHER STORY PEOPLE

Although the appealing main character and his unsavory adversary are usually the dominant characters in a story, there will always be other people whom the novelist must create and fit into the narrative. Those include sidekicks or lieutenants who support the principal character or the opponent, but these story people serve other purposes as well.

Sherlock Holmes had his Dr. Watson, who told the story of the remarkable super sleuth. Robinson Crusoe had his man, Friday. The Lone Ranger had his Indian friend, Tonto. Almost all classic stories had similar associates.

These confidantes in various books provided someone trustworthy with whom to talk about their problems and situations. These conversations also advanced the story and helped reveal something about the principals. Close companions ran various errands for the principals and revealed something about the characters. In the stories' crises, these sidekicks often helped bring about the resolutions. So in writing your novel, consider what kind of person would be logical to support both the main character and his adversary.

Before I we move on to the next lesson, for your own benefit, take a few minutes to answer the checklist and test how well you grasped the information in this chapter.

CHECKLIST ON CHARACTERS

1. How do your focal person's beliefs shape his character in this story?
2. Have you written a profile of your main characters?
3. Is this focal character appealing so readers will care what happens to him?
4. What in your main character's environment helped shape him?
5. What is the protagonist's self-concept?
6. How did you show his self-concept in the story?
7. Have you briefly shown the main character in three dimensions?
8. What is the protagonist's chief character trait?
9. What motivates this character to keep trying in spite of setbacks?
10. What's the primary purpose of characters in your novel?

With this overview of story characters, the next chapter will teach you how to raise reader tension by plotting a suspense novel. Meanwhile, here's a short workshop assignment:

CHARACTERS

CHARACTER WORKSHOP

Write a profile of your main character describing his personality, his physical characteristics and his psychological traits. Utilize what you have learned in this chapter that helps create the way a person thinks and behaves.

CHAPTER 4: WRITING SUSPENSE NOVELS

Having studied the fundamentals of writing genre stories, you're now able to build on those by learning how to write a specific category novel: *suspense*. Open with something happening so there is action. Keep it short, but try to hint at danger ahead. Get on with the story by presenting the focal character, locale, situation, and problem. Make readers anticipate that something exciting is happening or about to happen, and they should care because of the flawed but likeable main character.

But first, readers should know why male pronouns rather than feminine were used in this book. I'm a former journeyman newspaper reporter where our stylebook recommended that we use *he* instead of the *she* alternative. No slight was intended toward the fair sex. I'm simply trying to write a book to help all readers who want to learn how to write a novel.

This chapter on writing suspense novels will help aspiring writers give their readers a good emotional scare without risk to their own safety.

The suspense category has been well defined as threat of violent physical action and danger. Certainly there is ongoing violence in real life against innocent victims. In a suspense novel, danger is a powerful word to use when the focal character repeatedly experiences it. Danger helps arouse reader emotion.

However, I didn't use violent physical violence in my suspense novels although there was action and many threats of danger. All of my feminine characters in this genre were subject to danger and sudden terror. Anticipation of violence to the main character will help give your readers the emotional response they seek in suspense novels.

Suspense novels are consistently on best seller lists along with the other two most popular genres, romances and mysteries. The latter is the hardest for a novice to write since they are puzzles requiring more specific story pieces than either of the other two.

Romance novels are sort of courtship fantasies with happy endings. Some writers who previously had never sold a book broke into the publishing field with their romance novels. They are deceptively harder to write than they appear. I want your first experience in writing a genre novel to be enjoyable. I also want to encourage you with your progress. I believe the suspense category is a good place to start.

It is a classic example of an old literary saying about how to write a story: "Place your main character in a pressure cooker and turn the heat up to *high*." The right word for the main character in a suspense novel is danger. Perhaps that was mostly succinctly put years ago by the so-called "king of the pulps," H. Bedford

Jones. He urged writers, to “*get your hero in danger and keep him in danger.*” For those who are not familiar with the term, “pulp,” it referred to the inexpensive paper on which magazines were printed in an earlier generation.

Getting your main character in danger was good advice then, and it’s still good today. With that in mind, let’s list some other requirements for a suspense novel for our protagonist to wrestle with in a story. Begin with the basics of a general category novel and extend them.

Since this is a teaching book, there will be some repetition throughout because that’s how we learn. New story elements will now be added to keep your interest up and to help you learn by doing. If you have a story idea in mind, what’s in this chapter can assist you in developing your concept. Adding to it requires:

1. **A situation or circumstances** which include background of time and place
2. **A problem** which grows out of the situation which has changed or is about to change
3. **A motivated main character who** is affected by this and takes action to resolve the problem
4. **A tangible objective** or story goal which the main character seeks to reach. Everything in the story should move toward that goal.

Reaching that objective is difficult, but the main character will not quit. If he did, there would be no story. The same is true of real life novelists. A recent on-line survey showed that most people who start writing a novel never finish it. From reading endless students’ works, I see that most also fail to complete their work. Why? A book of a few years ago had a title which is pertinent here: “*If you don’t know where you’re going, you will end up someplace else.*”

Now it becomes a juggling act with character, problem and goal, plus three more story elements must be kept in mind:

1. **Entertain.** The author must hold the reader’s mind so he enjoys the story.
2. **Create emotion.** The writer of suspense novels must try to make readers feel very afraid because of the growing danger which threatens the sympathetic focal character.
3. **Generate suspense.** The reader’s tension should be almost unbearable by the time there is a crisis for the main character. The final resolution for this character releases reader tension and leaves him satisfied.

Before we start learning the specific requirements of a suspense novel, you may want to refresh your memory about a simple way to structure a story using key words that are fundamental to generic stories. You only need a few of these words to build your story. They are:

WRITING SUSPENSE NOVELS

1. Situation
2. Problem
3. Character
4. Obstacles
5. Goal

Let's put that information into a more defining way, and then teach ourselves to make sure our story includes these key words: A story involves a *situation* causing a *problem* for the main *character* who struggles against increasingly difficult *obstacles* to reach the *goal* of resolving the problem.

The plot would show that after each failure, he tries something else, but circumstances become worse. This pattern is repeated until an unexpected switch (plot point) and crisis makes it seem that his goal is totally unreachable. Then he learns something, makes one final effort and reaches his objective. A plot point is a surprise twist that fools readers and spins the story off in another direction.

To write a complete suspense novel with beginning, middle and ending, the author must mix in other diversified elements. Years ago, I wanted to know more about those. I began analyzing those elements which various successful writers used to create their best selling novels. The authors were together on the basics, but did not all agree on every element. My research helped me in writing nearly a dozen adult suspense novels. I had unknowingly used some of those elements in my earlier juvenile stories.

Here are some of those elements I think will help you write in this genre, keeping three items of the definition in mind:

1. Threat
2. Physical action
3. Danger

LOCALE

None of the above elements can happen in a vacuum. Neither can your story.

For your suspense story, pick a location that is out of the ordinary. My stories set in Hawaii are more popular than those in Alaska and California. I suspect the reason is that more readers would like to imagine themselves with the main character on a warm tropical island than in Alaska's beautiful scenery but with less inviting weather. California is harder to use as a unique location, but there are areas which qualify as unusual. I'm sure the same is true of where you live, and you'd know the locale better. So find a place that is somehow different and put your character there.

SITUATION

In the beginning, quickly give the readers an idea of the circumstances which have already changed or are about to change. Example: A private twin engine

propeller-driven airplane is flying over the ocean near a tropical island when the plane develops engine trouble and is forced to land in the water.

CHARACTER

The focal character should promptly be introduced and briefly described. This character is of most interest to suspense readers. They favor a strong, appealing but flawed person who likely will triumph over the flaw at the end. He must be strongly motivated to keep going in spite of all the conflicts, complications and confrontations he will encounter in the story. Try to make this person colorful in some way. That's not always easy to imagine, but you're a writer; think of any unusual person you've met or seen, and use that as a jumping off place for your imagination. You might want to start a collection of such characters for future stories. Be sure to record how that person was different, and why.

Keep in mind that this character is first going to be in conflict with nature. He will also be engaged in conflict with an adversary or his henchmen all through the story. There will be physical and ever-present danger to the good guy or those he cares for or loves. It is through the encounters in the story which will ultimately lead the main character to have an epiphany where he sees himself in a new way (usually over his character flaw) and overcomes it about the time of the story's climax.

PROBLEM

The reader wants to know about the problem as quickly as possible, especially as it affects the focal character. If there's an adversary, he may be known as such from the beginning of a suspense story. The exception is in writing mysteries where the adversary's identity must remain a secret until the good guy unmasks him after solving the mystery at the ending.

In suspense, especially if there are multiple viewpoints, readers can observe the nefarious one as he plans and executes his schemes to harm the focal character. Some novice writers are not prepared to handle more than a single viewpoint because the person behind each viewpoint thinks and acts differently. If the beginner can write from the viewpoints only of the main character and the opponent, that's a good start. The adversary's Point Of View (POV) will include his motives, with greed and revenge being among the most common motivations.

STAKES

Louis L'Amour declared, "*Life and death are the best stakes.*" Certainly those are the most prominent possibilities in a suspense novel. The possibilities for action and reaction are endless as the author has the bad guy constantly posing a threat of violent physical action and death for the main character.

OTHER KEY ELEMENTS IN SUSPENSE NOVELS

Your goal as a writer of creating suspense novels should be to constantly keep the action and danger going and worsening for the focal character. You will need to include intrinsic but powerful elements such as fear, hope and time. Keep pressure on readers by fear for the main character's safety by threatening violence and death closing in on him. Give him some hope, and then snatch it away. All the while, show the clock running out to resolve the original problem before a life is lost.

I used the race against time in many of my adult and juvenile novels because it always works to increase reader tension. Working with words all these years has caused me to create my own kind of shorthand so I don't have to write out every word, but abbreviate as many as possible. I like acrostics, so I created one for this story element: RAT, for Race Against Time. This proved very popular with students who sometimes sat through one of my six-hour seminars, so I shared the RAT term with them. It also saved students a few words in note taking.

The RAT is to avoid serious consequences or tragedy against a deadline. To add to the suspense, I created another acrostic ACE, for Anticipated Catastrophic Event. This naturally precedes the RAT, and helped my students remember to keep planting events or foreshadowing the worst case scenario that is inexorably looming up before the embattled protagonist.

EXCITEMENT OF THE CHASE

"Cut to the chase" has become such a common expression that it is often heard on television presentations. It originally was an early movie term used in westerns. When the story seemed too slow, the director could always cut away so the cameras showed various kinds of chases. Suspense writers now use "chases" as required scenes. These have variations, as bad guy chasing the good one; then the tables are reversed and the good guy chases the bad. Along the chase trail, writers find ways to increase danger to the focal character, or discover something that helps raise readers' hopes, as a piece of a missing woman's clothing caught on a bush.

When you read suspense novels, notice how the author used the chase to enhance the danger and raise readers' tension. The suspense novelist should always try to learn what others have done that can be adapted to creating a better story.

Before ending this session with a writing exercise for you, first answer the checklist questions. They are designed to see how well you've retained what was taught in this chapter so you may apply them to your own writing.

CHECKLIST ON WRITING SUSPENSE NOVELS

1. How have suspense novels been defined?
2. What are the top three best-selling genre novels?

3. What traits do suspense readers prefer their main character have?
4. What single word is a powerful one to keep in mind when moving your protagonist through experiences in a suspense novel?
5. What is the importance of choosing a different background for your story?
6. What is one major reason that many aspiring writers never finish their novel?
7. What did Louis L 'Amour say were the best stakes?
8. What are two of the most common motives for the adversary in a suspense story?
9. What two primary viewpoints should an aspiring novelist limit himself to use?
10. What two acronyms will help suspense writers create more tension in readers?

SUSPENSE WORKSHOP

If you aspiring novelists have a suspense idea of your own, use the information in this chapter to help develop your concept into a whole story. If you don't have an idea in mind, I've started a suspense concept that could become a romantic suspense, or just a straight suspense novel. You may freely use the following as a jumping off point. There are no strings attached; it's a part of your lesson. The assignment is voluntary, but I think you'll find it helpful in getting a concept off the ground.

Character: Since women buy most books, chances of selling a genre novel are higher by using a woman protagonist with whom more readers can identify. I find characters begin to take on more life if I name them. Just any names will do to avoid general nouns and pronouns. With your computer's search key, you can later change any names in an instant.

Situation: A young woman, print reporter (Mary Smith), returns late at night from an overseas assignment. Her luggage had been lost on a layover in Scotland, so she has only a shoulder bag with her. Her purse is inside so she only has one item to carry.

Problem: Upon arrival at Los Angeles International Airport, she casually watches as customs searches her bag. She notices a Bible there, but doesn't own one and hasn't even opened one in years. Tired and in a hurry to get home, Mary assumes her overseas roommate, (Sylvia), left the book for her. The customs people only give the Bible a casual exam, and then replace it. Mary says nothing but grabs her bag and hurries to the curb where the shuttle bus has just stopped to take on passengers for the long-term parking lot. Mary had left her car there a week before.

Action: As she starts to enter the bus, a short, stocky man runs up and tries to snatch her bag. She struggles to retain it, but is barely hanging on with two fingers when a young man steps out of the curbside passengers and shoves the mugger back so hard, he falls down. The woman retains control of her bag as the driver impatiently urges her to board. When the shuttle pulls away, she glances back to see her attacker

had vanished into the night. Her benefactor was rapidly walking toward the parking lot. She regrets having barely thanked him. She would like to see him again. But she puts the incident out of her mind, starts her car and returns to her first floor apartment where she lives alone.

She yields to jet lag, quickly prepares for bed and promptly falls asleep. She is awakened by a slight sound. In the reflected light from the outside parking lot lights she sees that someone is in her room. She instinctively reaches for the bedside phone, but the intruder whirls and tries to grab it. She hits him in the face with it, staggering him, but he shoves her back on the bed. He whirls around and escapes through an open window, but not before she recognized him as the same man who had tried to snatch her bag at the airport.

Somewhat puzzled because of the two unusual episodes, Mary examines her bag. Nothing seems to be missing. Frowning, she goes to close the window and sees the Bible on the carpet where the intruder had dropped it in his hasty exit. She examines it more carefully, but sees nothing unusual. It's a new one without a name, address or underlining or writing inside. She reasons that Sylvia was a Bible reader, so might have placed this one where Mary would find it when got home. But doubts nibbled at Mary's mind. She impulsively called her friend's London number.

Sylvia denies knowing anything about the Bible and urges Mary to call the police, saying her life might be in danger. She doesn't believe that, and goes back to bed. However, she can't sleep. The airport snatch attempt by itself was barely worth any more thought. However, the same man entering her room the same night hinted that there was something special about that Bible, but what? Who had smuggled it into her bag, overseas, and why? How did an accomplice know when her non-stop flight would arrive in Los Angeles so he could be waiting for her? Why had he publicly risked the snatch effort instead of waiting until she was alone in the parking lot where she had left her ageing car? What was so important that a second attempt was made to grab the Bible in her own residence? Sylvia had posed Mary's most troubling question: Could her life now be in danger?



After reading the above, you aspiring authors may want to develop it into a suspense novel freely using your imagination. There are no strings attached. I simply offer it to encourage you to begin writing a suspense novel.

When you're ready to read on in this book, the next chapter will teach you about writing for the most popular of all category paperbacks: romances.

CHAPTER 5: WRITING CATEGORY ROMANCES

This chapter teaches how to write and sell to the hungriest novel market of all: category or genre romances. This is a companion to the chapter on writing suspense novels.

You need to know your markets. Yes, you might sell in this category romance field without reading a romance novel or not knowing anything of what you're about to learn, as I did under a pen name. But I highly urge you to carefully study this chapter and save yourself some missteps.

Before beginning to write your novel for this wide-open field, use your internet browser to briefly research the subject. You will be swamped with helpful information. This ranges from specific publishers' requirements to variations such as *writing a romance novel*, *romance publishers' guidelines*, and literally dozens of other categories. This is only a sample of possibilities; the lists seemingly are endless.

On the positive side, one publisher produces 115 romance novels a month. If you add up all the romance publishing houses with their many imprints, you'll see that your chances of selling a novel to this market are much greater than any other. I know several authors who regularly sell to this market. Among those is at least one of my former seminar students.

Still on the positive side, there is no age limit for authors. One publisher noted that a sixteen-year-old girl wrote her first novel while attending algebra classes. This is not a recommended practice, but it does illustrate that if you can write a story that meets a publisher's needs, your age doesn't matter. Neither does your race or sex. Publishers want stories that will appeal to a wide range of readers. That's why the same house produces a wide variety of category novels for their readers' highly diversified literary tastes.

Browsing any romance website will show that there are novels for almost any kind of readers. Stories range from so-called "dark" novels through vampires, horror, fantasy, space travel and mystery, from Regency, westerns, African-American, adventure, contemporary society and comedy. There is a ready market as long as the story has an eligible man and woman meeting and falling in love in a developing relationship.

Some houses accept totally different kinds of romances from steamy sexual narratives to sweet romances. Others (especially in the inspirational or Christian line) strictly limit the degree of intimacy which is acceptable in their stories. That's another reason to know your target market.

Obviously, there are two simple ways to find out where your romance novel should be slanted:

1. Write what you read. If you don't enjoy reading a certain kind of romance novel, it's not practical to write in that genre.
2. Knowing what you like to read, contact publishers specializing in those categories and ask for their authors' guidelines. These will give you a solid idea of what that house wants, not only in style and content, but in word length and other requirements.

There is another requirement that I have never known to be clearly defined. It's called "voice," and is so noticeable that any astute writer will notice it immediately upon reading a portion of a published romance novel. Make sure your manuscript has this particular voice.

Generally, romance novels run from an average of about 60,000 up to 100,000 words. The number of chapters varies, with 12 to 15 being common. Some successful romance novelists prefer about three scenes per chapter and a big scene about every fifth chapter. However, I like stories to move quickly, so I prefer 20 or so short chapters with more scenes which tend to accelerate the narrative. All publishers' guidelines will indicate which lengths they prefer for specific romance categories.

A wise starting move is to pick out several publishers that produce what you like to read, and write to meet those requirements. For practical reasons, an author should make multiple submissions to several publishers at once instead of sending the manuscript to one house at a time. However, there are publishers who won't consider anything that is submitted to anyone else at the same time. This gives that house leverage over the author, but the volume of romances produced by "no multiple submissions" may be worth the risk of submitting your works there.

If you really want to sell to a certain "no multiple submissions" house, you still need a backup plan in case that house rejects your work. Knowing your story fits several publishers' guidelines means that if one house rejects your manuscript, you have backup publishers on your preferred list.

Romance writing is a moving target. While the basics remain largely unchanged, what specifics are preferred today may have changed by the time your novel is ready. To hit your target, you may need to be like a hunter who "leads" his quarry so that his shot or arrow arrives at where the game will be, not where it is at the moment of firing. Keeping up with publishers' current needs is as much a part of writing as learning what is required by any publisher and sitting down at the computer to create your story.

THE COMMONALITY OF ROMANCE BASICS

Fortunately, the commonality of romance basics remains much the same as what has been taught in other chapters of this book, so this one starts with those

WRITING CATEGORY ROMANCES

generalities and moves on to augment what your desired publishers require in their individual guidelines. To refresh your memory, here are seven story elements that fit romances and most other category novels:

1. Background (time, place and brief profile or bio of the main character)
2. Character
3. Situation
4. Problem
5. Conflict
6. Obstacles
7. Goal

Exotic or unusual backgrounds are always popular because they let the reader vicariously enjoy learning about something or some place they might like to go. It also can lead to more romantic settings for the novel. Your background may be worth exploring for suitability in your story.

I am fortunate to have lived and worked in Hawaii, traveling to all the major islands on business. At least a dozen of my published novels have a Hawaiian background. Three more novels came from a visit to Alaska. I have traveled across our nation, taken cruises, and visited foreign countries. My writing paid for all of them, and, God willing, when I finish this book, I'm off to background more novels.

I tell you this to encourage and challenge you. Let your imagination soar. Where would you like to go to research the background for your second romance novel? It's as close as believing you can, learning your craft and marketing—plus producing the stories that touch readers' emotions.

This genre may be described as a fantasy courtship with a developing relationship between an appealing man and an attractive woman. They need to meet and immediately have some kind of chemical attraction. It is not a love at first sight situation, but a spark of something passes between them that will become the basis for a relationship. It needs time to develop, so the story must throw them together over a suitable period of time, which includes love scenes and breakup scenes.

Before dividing your romance novel into three parts (beginning, middle and ending) to help better "get a handle" on the story, write a synopsis. Then we'll examine the common elements in starting your romance novel that will be merged with the specific requirements of your target publisher.

In another chapter, I gave you a truncated version of a synopsis which resulted in a sale to Howard/Simon & Schuster. Here's a second, longer synopsis (just under 400 words) of the same story by Deborah Raney entitled, *Remember to Forget*.

Who hasn't dreamed of getting a chance to start life all over again? What if you could walk away from past mistakes, reinvent yourself and begin a brand new life? That's exactly what graphic designer Maggie Anderson is offered when a terrifying carjacking leaves her alive and well, but stranded a hundred miles away from her New York apartment—and her boyfriend, whose verbal abuse has turned physical. When a kind stranger offers Maggie a ride, she impulsively directs him west, away from her life in New York. Confused and heartbroken, and after a grueling three-week journey, she finally winds up in tiny Clayton, Kansas.

Reinventing herself as Meg Anders, she is welcomed with open arms by the citizens of Clayton. Unable to use her bank account without giving away her hiding place, Meg is forced to depend on her new friends' generosity. After staying for a week at the local bed and breakfast, she is offered a permanent room in exchange for cooking breakfast for the inn's rather infrequent guests. She soon finds an afternoon job in the town's small print shop.

There she works with a man who is the antithesis of Kevin. Born and raised in Clayton, Trevor Fox has always been the town's favored son. But after his wife and son were killed in a car crash, Trevor went through a crisis of faith. He returned to the fold, but his once exuberant personality has been replaced by a cynicism that deeply concerns his large extended family.

It takes a while for Meg to learn to trust Trevor. But once she realizes he is for real, she falls hard for the man. But Trevor has trust issues of his own. If Meg reveals the truth about herself and her past, will she destroy everything she's worked so hard to build?

Meanwhile, Kevin Bryson isn't crazy about the fact that his girlfriend has disappeared, leaving him without access to the small inheritance from her parents—one he's become accustomed to dipping into. Unknown to Meg, he is conducting an all-out search for her, becoming more angry, irrational, broke, and desperate with each false lead and each mile that brings him closer to her safe haven.

Everything comes to a head when Kevin unearths a clue to Maggie's whereabouts. Now her life may depend on revealing the truth to Trevor.



WRITING CATEGORY ROMANCES

Since synopses were earlier covered in detail, I'll not dwell on that now, but do strongly urge aspiring novelists to begin their romance novel with an intriguing synopsis. Let's press ahead by studying what common elements are needed in most romance novels.

BEGINNING ELEMENTS

Both the synopsis and first chapter should set the location, time period, and some profile information. The tone or mood must be established, along with the viewpoint. In a romance novel, that's from the woman's perspective. Everything is told through her. The more her emotions are involved in your story, the greater your achievements will be as a favorite author.

Romance publishers' guidelines say there is no formula, but there is a format. Stick to that, and then write with your heart.

The format requires that the woman always be introduced first, and then the man. It's advisable to make sparks fly in their first encounter. Readers are predominantly female, so the man in the story should be one with whom readers can also fall in love—at least, a little bit. Appearances and attire are important to romance readers, so try to find another way of saying he was “tall, dark and handsome.” Make him larger than life, yet believable. Of course, the story woman is so appealing that readers might secretly wish to emulate her.

Characters can't exist in a vacuum, so briefly profile the two principals' families, and profile both the woman and the man. This backdrop may include different cultural or religious elements. Mix this with opposing motivations of what each wants; their careers or goals in life. These may not be a serious drawback in marriage, but could be an obstacle because the convictions lead to conflict. Whatever the background problems are, they have to be surmountable in the ending.

The couple's past and new diverse goals must contribute to creating tension and conflict, without which there is no story. Readers want the couple to eventually commit to each other, but the author must keep them apart as long as possible by throwing roadblocks into their relationship.

The couple's situation naturally raises fears of what will happen negatively. Readers expect and enjoy this, but the uncertainty ranges from hope to fear that fades in and out and back again. The darker the picture appears to the lovers, the more vicarious pleasure readers get in knowing that in a romance novel, these two people really belong together and eventually will come to their senses and realize what the readers knew all along.

But the question is: How will this happen? To find the answer to this problem, readers keep turning pages in the expectation that the couple will eventually work out their problems and pledge themselves to each other. Authors skillfully thwart this by

A Guide to Writing Your Novel

by Lee Roddy

This unique book not only explains but also shows aspiring writers what they need to know to write their first novel.

- Designed especially for teenagers and older hopeful writers, instruction is based on 30 years of proven, practical methods of developing an idea into a complete story.
- This guide covers the common elements of all category novels as well as the special requirements of the key genres: suspense, mystery, romance, juvenile and others.
- Checklists and helpful workshop suggestions can be found periodically throughout the book providing a distinctive and valuable feature.
- This is the answer book to questions beginning writers have on all aspects of novel writing.



Lee Roddy, best-selling novelist and writing instructor, has authored more than 50 novels for adults and readers ages 8–16. Most of his novels have earned four and five star ratings. He has taught writing across the nation for three decades. He and his wife, Cicely, live in California.



**Institute for
Excellence in
Writing**

Listen. Speak. Read. Write. Think!

IEW.com • 800.856.5815

GWN

\$29.00

ISBN 978-0-9845496-0-3



5 2 5 0 0



9 780984 549603