

Developmental Editing (Self) Checklist

Story

- Make a list of what works and what doesn't work.
- Can you sum up the story in a few sentences? If not, why?
- Do the first and last pages hook the reader in thirteen lines or less?
- What is the message of the story? Why are you telling it? What do people learn?
- What is the POV (point of view)? Does it change throughout the book, why or why not?
- Have you included a prologue and/or epilogue? Are they necessary?
- Is the verb tense consistent?
- Does your wider story arc pull the reader through the narrative?

Characters

- As a whole, are the characters likable? Are they realistic?
- Are they acting or reacting?
- Are they unique, or do they all blend together?
- Is their dialogue interesting and informative?
- Are there too many characters? Can some of them be combined?
- Are there any points where the reader may be confused by a character's actions and/or motivations?
- Does the reader know what each character wants? If not, is that intentional?
- Do each of the characters have a clear arc throughout the story? Why or why not?
- Does the protagonist learn something? Do they evolve from beginning to end?
- Does the antagonist have a realistic or relatable backstory, or are they evil for the sake of being evil?

Plot

- Does the story progress in five stages (normal life, catalyst, rising action, climax, resolution)?
- Does each scene have an effect on the overall story?
- Are all events logical? Do any events happen for the sake of the plot moving forward?
- Does the story end in a satisfying way?
- Is the ending a result of character action? Why or why not?
- Does the story make sense?
- Does the plot move chronologically, or does it flip back and forth? Why or why not?
- Why did you start the story at the point that you did?

Worldbuilding

- Is it clear? Are there any parts that would be confusing to the reader?
- Is the story set in the real world, or a made-up world?

Worldbuilding Continued

- If real, are there any aspects that are made-up or fantastical?
- Are the worldly conventions consistent?
- Does the world feel generic?
- Does the writing match the time period? Are there references to real world events? (Light fact-checking)
- At what points should the reader know more about the world? Are there any pieces that are unnecessary to the plot that can be cut?

Pacing

- Is there anywhere that the events feel rushed or like they're dragging on?
- Does each chapter have a purpose?
- Are you giving enough time to each of the characters and/or plot points?
- Are you giving too much time to certain characters and/or plot points?

See Tigerpetal Press's Services page for Editing and Design work

See the blog for more writing tips

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