

## 18.5 Ways to Tackle the Dreaded Edits

### *Opening Scene(s)*

- 1) **Hook** - Does your novel have a great beginning hook? How can this be tweaked to make it more gripping, unusual, or compelling?
- 2) **Journey** - Is there a life-changing problem for the protagonist to solve? Is this a journey that your readers will care about and why? If your protagonist doesn't go on his or her "journey," what will happen?
- 3) **Setting** - Have you described the setting in the opening? Will readers understand when (present day, 1800s, future) and where (location) the book takes place?

### *In Each Chapter*

- 4) **Opening** - Does the beginning of **each** chapter grab the reader's attention? No tea-drinking, aimless driving, or showers allowed.
- 5) **Purpose** - What is **each** chapter's purpose? How does the chapter move the book forward? If the chapter doesn't belong, cut it.
- 6) **What's at Stake?** - Is **each** chapter compelling? Does it have tension, emotion, and conflict? Will it keep readers turning pages? \*\*Note: The protagonist should *not* get what he or she is seeking.
- 7) **Description** - Are there sensory descriptions in **each** chapter? What will your character can taste, touch, see, smell, and hear (try to use 2-3 senses per chapter or scene).
- 8) **Ending** - Will **each** chapter ending hook the reader? Will they want to read more? Why?
- 9) **Length** - Is **each** chapter a suitable length? Is it too long or too short?

### *Characters*

- 10) **Likable** - Is your main character likable, will readers relate to him, and is he somewhat heroic? Also, is your antagonist "human" and not a caricature? Does he or she have at least one likable trait? This makes your villain all the more complex.
- 11) **Consistency** - Make sure each character's physical traits are consistent (age, hair color, eye color, etc.) In addition, are each character's personalities and actions consistent? If not, why are they different? Is this explained to the reader?
- 12) **Throw Rocks** - I love this: "*The writer's job is to get the main character up a tree, and then once they are up there, throw rocks at them.*" - Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*. So, are you throwing rocks? Do your character's difficulties mount during the story? Does he or she lose someone important to him or her? Does your character grieve that loss?

**13) Character Arc** - Does your character grow and change meaningfully during the course of the book?

### ***Dialogue***

**14) Appropriate** - Does the dialogue match each character's age, background, education, and personality?

**15) Tags** - Keep dialogue tags simple (use "said"). Leave out adverbs like "angrily," "happily," "gratefully," etc.

### ***Overall***

**16) Show** - Does the story SHOW and not TELL? Are you using action verbs instead of passive verbs ("was" or "is").

**17) Backstory** – Leave out backstory until after the first third of the novel, longer if possible.

**18) Grammar & Spell Check** - Complete a spell check. Comb through all of your grammar and punctuation. Check for repetitive words (ex. like, just, was, something, it, really, etc.) Replace any and all clichés. Come up with fresh phrases.

### ***Ending***

**18.5) Powerful Ending** - Is the ending of the book satisfying (but not perfect)? Are all of the loose ends and subplots wrapped up? Does it leave a lasting impression? When your reader finishes the last line, what do you want your reader to feel or think about?