

HEART TO HEART

To Plot or Not to Plot?

That **is** the question. To find one writer's answer Bronwen Evans talks to **Karen Wiesner**, author of the book "First Draft in 30 Days".



At the 2010 RWNZ conference, during the published authors' workshop with Stephanie Laurens, I asked her how many books she writes a year.

Stephanie told me she is contracted to write 2.5 books a year but usually finishes 3 x 130,000 word novels. Yes, Stephanie writes full time but that is still quite an achievement (that's 7.8 Category HMB books per year).

I was amazed and asked how she did it and she immediately said by using Karen Wiesner's *First Draft in 30 Days*. Stephanie uses it religiously with the Apple Mac Scrivener programme (take heart, we believe they are about to launch a version for Microsoft PC's in January 2011).

So as the new editorial team's focus for Heart To Heart is "A Book in a Year", we thought the best place to start would be by looking at plotting/outline tools.

I went straight to Karen Wiesner and asked her about her book and why she feels it is important to have a robust road map before starting to write.

Let me introduce Karen to you.

Karen Wiesner is an accomplished author with 78 books published in the past 13 years, which have been nominated for and/or won 108 awards, and 19 more titles under contract.

Her books cover such genres as women's fiction, romance, mystery / police procedural / cozy, suspense, paranormal, futuristic, gothic, inspirational, thriller, horror, chick-lit, and action/adventure.

She also writes children's books, poetry, and reference titles such as her bestsellers, *First Draft in 30 Days* and *From First Draft to Finished Novel (A Writer's Guide to Cohesive Story Building)*.

Karen, why is plotting an important part of the writing process?

To my way of thinking, just-get-it-done methods are like writing a novel backwards. Why write 175 pages—conceivably much more—of a novel that you'll mostly likely have to scrap in part or in full, when you can write a fully useable outline of a novel in a week or two?

Doesn't it make more sense to revise an outline until you've got a solid plot instead of going around and around through dozens of drafts of a book to find a solid plot? And, by utilizing a solid outline you've completed previously and then committing to help you write the first draft based on that outline...wow, it's all good!

Write right from the start and you'll save yourself a ton of blood, sweat and tears to get something wonderful instead of something that will take you ten times as long to fix.

Let's set forth the usual method used by most writers for getting a manuscript

written (especially if they're following a just-get-it-down method without an outline): Little or no pre-writing on a novel is done. The author has an idea—an idea that may or may not be terribly well developed in his head. Generally, there's a lot or a little brainstorming involved in this process. One day the author sits down and writes Chapter 1.

Now, if this author is a crash-and-burn type who doesn't need to eat, sleep or leave the house, he could conceivably finish this novel in a short amount of time—maybe a month, possibly less.

What does this author do now that he has that first draft? Well, now he starts on the hard part of this whole writing process. He got the easy part out of the way and left himself with the torturous work of untangling, sorting out, revising and polishing up these 175 or more pages.

You really do have to agree that working like this is unproductive, don't you? I'd go so far as to say that these kinds of authors do 100% more work than they really need to.

Now, let's look at how the process of writing a novel should be in the ideal.

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When the writer (or the artist in general) says he has worked without giving any thought to the rules of the process, he simply means he was working without realizing he knew the rules.
UMBERTO ECO

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If you have your copy of

HEART TO HEART

sent to you via email then you get all this great information in full colour!

Interested?

Contact Kamy Chetty

kamychetty@yahoo.com

Editors' Desk

Welcome to the first issue of 2011. We hope you all had a safe, productive, and happy holiday season and are ready for a rip-roaring year ahead.

As Bron mentioned in her article with Karen Wiesner, the editorial team has decided to make Heart To Heart's theme for 2011 "A Book In A Year". This means we're going to take a craft topic each month—in more or less the order needed to produce a book—and present articles and help on that subject. It's our hope that, by Christmas, you'll have translated those skills from our pages to your pages and be champing at the bit to enter national and international competitions like RWNZ's Clendon Award and RWAmerica's Golden Heart.

This month we're discussing plotting, outlining, pantsing, sceneing, pointing—the myriad ways we as writers put down on paper those ideas causing twenty vehicle pile-ups in our heads. We all plan differently, and most of us have the horrible feeling we're "doing it" wrong.

But guilt and worry are creativity killers, and worry about your process will not help you write your book.

So, take heart—and some time to recharge your enthusiasm! Grab a cup of coffee and join us for some fantastic teaching and encouragement.

Gracie, Rachel, & Bron

RWAUSTRALIA FLOODED COMMUNITIES BOOK APPEAL

We've all seen the devastation the recent Queensland floods have wrought and have wondered how we can help. We know that for many affected families, books will not be high on their priorities list for some time to come. But we also know how valuable books can be in providing time out when reality gets tough. So, with the aid of some wonderful volunteers, we've put together a Romance Writers of Australia Flooded Communities Book Appeal.

What we need? FICTION BOOKS! Romance books, children's books, young adult books, genre books, whatever—either new or in sparkling condition.

When to send them? Now! And any time over the next few months. The books will be boxed and delivered to the appropriate libraries / schools / neighbourhood centres / community centres in batches as soon as the communities are ready to receive them. We'll be liaising with councils, libraries and schools to ensure this is done appropriately. Feel free to pop a note inside or, if you're an author, sign it.

Questions: If you have a question about donations, email Jess Anastasi: Jess@jessanastasi.com

If you work in a library / council / community centre / school in a flood affected area, email Rachel Bailey: rachel@rachelbailey.com.au

Please send them to:

RWA Flooded Communities Book Appeal
PO Box 1717
Noosaville Post Office
Noosaville BC
Queensland 4566
Australia

From The Pres.

Want to know what's coming up for RWNZ?

President **Abby Gaines** gives us the latest news from the Exec and the 2011 Conference Committee.



Welcome to a New Year of writing, and of sharing the hiccups and hurrahs of the writing life with your fellow RWNZers.

All years have their ups and downs, but the last few months of 2010 (and the first few weeks of this year) seemed to have more downs than most. The Christchurch earthquake, then the Pike River disaster and now the floods in Queensland—all traumatic experiences for people we know and care about. And that's just in our part of world. When you throw in flooding in Pakistan, mudslides in Brazil, and idiots running rampant around Arizona with guns, you can start to feel quite beleaguered, even if you're fortunate enough not to be directly affected by any of these tribulations.

Small wonder that in times of trouble, romance novels bring respite to readers (check out Romance Writers of Australia's appeal for books for Queensland in this newsletter). Not that readers are ignoring the situation around them, or putting their head in the sand, but we all know the joy of being transported by a book to a world where characters face seemingly insurmountable problems, and yet it all works out to a happy ending.

If you're one of the people who ended 2010 on a down, anywhere on the scale from national disaster to personal disappointment, I hope 2011 will be a better year for you.

Keep those Clendon Award entries coming!

The 2011 Clendon Award is well under way, but there's still time to submit your completed romance novel manuscript to the contest, which closes February 25. Sponsored and managed by Barbara and Peter Clendon of specialist romance bookstore Barbara's Books, the Clendon Award is the only romance writing contest (to my knowledge) where your whole book is read by first-round judges. And in this case, those first-round judges are dedicated romance readers, not writers. Judges for each manuscript

are hand-picked by the Clendons, based on their knowledge of their customers' tastes—they really want your book to go to readers who will love it!

Two more great things about the Clendon Award: you'll receive comprehensive scoresheets and comments from a minimum of three readers; and best of all, if you're a finalist, your manuscript will be sent to Mary-Theresa Hussey at Harlequin in New York for final judging. Mary-Theresa reads both category romance (Harlequin Mills & Boon) and single title novels ("bigger books") across all romance genres: historical, suspense, contemporary, paranormal, etc. And the Clendon has an enviable record of leading to first sales or, at the very least, predicting who our newest published authors are going to be!

Shirley Megget is kindly acting as contest coordinator this year. Contact her at shirley.megget@gmail.com with any questions or for an entry form. The form is also available on the RWNZ website. Good luck.

2011 Conference: 19-21 August, 2011

One of the highlights of last year for many of you, judging by the emails I received, was our conference, headlined by Chris Vogler and Stephanie Laurens. Good news, the conference team is hard at work ensuring that this year's conference is every bit as exciting.

Some you will have already seen on the email loop that our Friday workshop presenter will be Bob Mayer, who recently ran his Warrior Writer Workshop online for RWNZ members. Bob will be presenting something quite different at our conference and it's shaping up to be a brilliant Friday session—more details about Bob and other speakers next month.

The conference committee spent much of November-December inspecting potential conference hotels, then poring over proposals, trying to make sure we were comparing apples with apples.

We're pleased to announce that the venue for our 2011 conference will be the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Auckland city.

Some of you will remember the Crowne Plaza from the "Jennifer Crusie conference" a few years ago. The main conference room is enormous and very impressive, and the mix of venues for workshops and other events is great. Crowne Plaza has worked hard to give us a very competitive room rate for delegates staying in the hotel – the rate is \$128 per night, including GST. For a hotel of this calibre, it's quite amazing. I went onto their website and, out of curiosity, tried booking a room for that weekend – I couldn't get anything for less than \$250 a night.

If you're keen to book already, you can book online at <http://bit.ly/fUJPCw> (that'll take you directly to our group booking) or call Crowne Plaza on 0800 801 111 and quote the group name ROMANCE WRITERS. Alternatively, you can email res1@crowneplazauckland.co.nz again quoting the group name.

We'll tell you more about Crowne Plaza, and vital issues such as parking, next month. Huge thanks to Erin Mills, our conference committee hotel liaison, for the masses of time and effort she put into assessing venues.

If you volunteered to help out at conference when you completed last year's conference survey, we'll be getting in touch with you soon to see how we can get you involved. If you haven't yet volunteered but would like to, please email me.

That's it from me! Before I sign off, I'd like say a big welcome to the new Heart to Heart editorial team of Gracie, Bronwen and Rachel. Heart to Heart is the one "perk" that every single RWNZ member gets to enjoy, so it's extremely important to us. We're thrilled and grateful to have you on board. ■

Writers will happen
in the best of families.
RITA MAE BROWN



Woos, Hoos, and News

Celebrating our members' achievements.

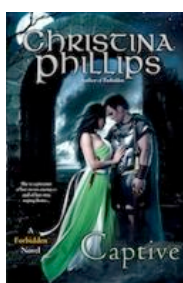
Tyree Connor brings us up-to-the-minute info about our successes here and overseas. Go Ladies!! You're all stars.



Scent Of A Man
Maree Anderson
Red Sage
Feb 1st



Redemption's Kiss
Louise Delamore
TWRP
Jan 19th



Captive
Christine Phillips
Berkley Heat
Feb 1st



The Sentinel Mage
Emily Gee
Solaris
Feb



Shock: One Night Heir
Melanie Milburne
Mills & Boon
January

Strictly Single Contest 2010

Editor's Choice

(Meredith Giordan, Berkley Publishing)

- 1st Tyree Connor (full ms requested)
- 2nd Michelle de Rooy
- 3rd Christine Taylor
- 4th Nicola Davidson
- 5th Karen Browning
- 6th Mary Jones

Agent's Choice

(Emmanuelle Morgen, Judith Ehrlich Literary Management)

- 1st Nicola Davidson
- 2nd Tyree Connor
- 3rd Mary Jones
- 4th Michelle de Rooy
- 5th Christine Taylor
- 6th Karen Browning

Congratulations to all winners and finalists. Big thanks to Sandii Manning for doing a superb coordinators job and Ellie and Viv for supporting her. RWNZ goes from strength to strength.

Sold

Kris Pearson's Chapters Short Story entry **Heavy Delays** was published in the issue of Woman's Day Australia announcing William and Kate's engagement. What a lovely, romantic edition to be included in.

Soraya Nicholas has signed a new two book deal with Harlequin Romance.

Jean Drew has sold **The Fires of Passion**, the companion to *Yesterday's Dreams*, to The Wild Rose Press.

Catherine Robertson has sold **What You Wish For** to Random House New Zealand.

Overseas Competition Results

Karen Browning finalled in Romance Writers of America comp **Get Your Stiletto In The Door**. She placed a successful third in the thrill section.

Jackie Coates won the Romance Writers of Australia **High Five** contest, which resulted in a partial request. Fingers crossed for your partial, Jackie!

Kendra Delugar and **Sue Webb** have finalled in different sections of the **Linda Howard Award of Excellence** run by the Southern Magic Chapter of the Romance Writers of America

Don't forget to email Tyree Connor at rocker.t@xtra.co.nz with your successes to be included with this page

To Plot Or Not To Plot (continued from Page 1)

You've spent a considerable amount of time—maybe, hopefully, even years—brainstorming on a particular idea for a story. You may have also written quite a few notes on this idea. You may have character, setting and plot worksheets all filled out.

Maybe you've written detailed notes about beginning, middle and end scenes in the book. Now, it's time put it all together in formal outline.

You write "Chapter One" at the top of the page, set the scene, and you write a basic draft of what happens in that scene.

You write "Chapter Two" at the top of a new page, set the scene, and you write a draft of what happens in that scene... and so on.

You go as far as you can in the story, working your way chronologically from the beginning of the book to the end.

When you can no longer work chronologically, you put in a few blank pages, and you skip around, working on scenes that will come in at some later point in the book, and so the middle and end of your book begin to gain some structure.

As you're working, all your character, setting and plot worksheets, your notes about beginning, middle and end scenes, are getting expanded on considerably, taking on layers of richness, complexity and depth. You keep working like this until your outline contains every single scene you'll have in your novel.

Then you go back over your outline, and you fill in the holes, you flesh out the scenes with dialogue, introspection, action, descriptions,

appropriate tension in all its wondrous forms.

Most outlines are approximately a quarter of the size of the completed novel. Work out the kinks in your story in the outline stage, and you'll secure for yourself that the writing, revision, and editing and polishing of your novel will be the easy part of the process. With a situation like this, you do all your hard work first.

The clearer a writer's vision of the story before the actual writing, the more fleshed out, cohesive, and solid the story will be once it makes it to paper. And you'll never need to duplicate any part of the process with multiple overhauls.

While it's perfectly acceptable to include a few brief lines of structure per scene in your outline, you can probably guess that the more information you have to start with, the easier it is to write the scene when it comes time because it's all there—just waiting for you, the author, to turn it into something magical and exciting.

The solid outline I prepare months before I write a novel allows me to produce final copy material the first time around. If you prepare an outline before beginning (you can find help with creating your own outline with the worksheets in my book), you're almost guaranteed to come out with a novel that requires only minor revision and editing and polishing instead of another draft (or two!).

Thanks Karen—I think this is great advice, especially for unpublished writers who usually have another job

and limited writing time. Anything that makes it easier to have a completed polished novel in the shortest possible time is a must in my book.

I am using *First Draft in 30 Days* and can thoroughly recommend it. Visit Karen's website to learn more or, better yet, buy the book. It's available through Barbara's Books and www.bookdepository.co.uk ■

Bronwen Evans writes dark, gritty, and senuous Regency historicals for Kensington Brava. She is also an unashamed plotter. Her first book, "Invitation to Ruin" hits the shelves this month.

If you would like to receive Karen's free e-mail newsletter, Karen's Quill, and become eligible to win her monthly book giveaways, send a blank e-mail to KarensQuill-subscribe@yahooogroups.com

For more information about Karen and her work visit her websites at <http://www.karenwiesner.com>

<http://www.firstdraftin30days.com>

<http://www.falconsbend.com>

<http://www.JewelsoftheQuill.com>

NOTE: if you receive the printed copy of H2H visit the RWNZ website for the PDF version which contains the links in this article.

A blank piece of paper
is God's way of telling us
how hard it is to be God.
SIDNEY SHELDON

Character is plot,
plot is character.
F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

RWNZ Needs YOU

**We're looking for a volunteer
to help administer the new**

Judge-Training Scheme.

**If you'd like to give something
back to your organisation and
can spare an hour or two a
month, then please contact:
Iona Jones at
iona.jones@xtra.co.nz**

TRAINING AVAILABLE FOR VOLUNTEER JUDGES

Have you ever thought about volunteering as a judge for one of RWNZ's great contests but been put off because you weren't sure about the judging process? Are you already a judge but would like a bit of a refresher?

Well, we have the answer for you. RWAustralia has had a new Judge Training Scheme under way for six months and, thanks to our friends across the ditch, we are pleased to announce we can now bring that Judge Training Scheme to RWNZ members. By enrolling in the scheme, not only will you receive some great guidelines on how to score, what to score, what to look for and what not to look for, but you will also get a chance to study some pre-judged samples to see how it's done. After that, it will be your turn to have a go at judging a sample piece of writing in a non-competitive environment, and you'll get feedback to let you know how you went.

So, how about it? Ready to give it a go? If so, then email the Judge Training Coordinator at RWNZjudgetraining@gmail.com

Contests and Markets

Don't know where to place your work?

Here are a few suggestions for where you can get feedback on your writing and even make a sale or two.

Overseas Contests

Compiled by Lisa Gardiner

Wisconsin RWAmerica: Fabulous Five Contest

Eligibility: Unpublished and not contracted for novel-length fiction in past five years.

Enter: 1st 2,500 words of unpublished ms

Deadline: Mar 1, 2011

Fee: \$20 US

1st Place winner in each category receives Silver Quill Award.

<http://www.wisrwa.org/contest.html>

Utah RWAmerica: Great Beginnings Contest

Eligibility: Published or unpublished authors submitting unpublished, uncontracted ms. Published authors must not be published in category entered within past 3 yrs.

Enter: 1st 5 pp of ms, 25 lines max per page (projected length min 50,000 wds)

Deadline: March 1, 2011

Fee: \$10 US

The 1st Place winners receive \$10 Barnes and Noble gift card, a bookmark and a certificate.

<http://www.utahrwa.com/gbcontest.html>

Faith, Hope & Love RWAmerica: Inspirational Readers Choice Award

Eligibility: Inspirational romance or inspirational novel with romantic elements, copyrighted or with 1st print date in 2010. Print books only - no POD.

Enter: 4 autographed copies of book.

Deadline: March 1, 2011

Fee: \$25 US

Winner in each category receives engraved box.

<http://www.faithhopelove-rwa.org/irc.html>

River City RWAmerica: Duel on the Delta

Eligibility: not published in book-length fiction in the last 5 years or contracted for book-length fiction within past three years.

Enter: First 20 pp plus optional one-page, single-spaced synopsis

Deadline: March 15, 2011

Fee: \$20

Top prize: Duel on the Delta pin and \$25.

<http://rivercityromancewriters.org/duel.html>

RW Australia: The Valerie Parv Award 2011

Eligibility: Open to RWAustralia members and non-members. for unpublished writers only. Maximum three entries per person

Enter: first 12500 words (max) + an 800 word (max) synopsis of your unpublished romance manuscript by email only.

Deadline: April 8th, 2011 midnight Sydney time

Fee: RWAustralia members outside Australia - \$20 Non-members outside Australia - \$35

1st prize - \$300 plus 1 year mentorship with Valerie Parv

<http://www.romanceaustralia.com/vpa.html>

Potential Markets

Compiled by P. D. R. Lindsay-Salmon

Rose and Crown Books

Christian Romances please. Check out this publisher's website.

Details: www.roseandcrownbooks.com

email: jodie@sunpenny.com

'Pages Of Stories' is a delightful Canadian zine publishing a wide range of short stories. The editor, Darlene Poier, is easy to work with and welcomes new writers.

Details: 'Pages Of Stories', editor, Darlene Poier;

website: www.pagesofstories.com email subs via the website submission system; email for the guidelines to: info@pagesofstories.com

Aurora Regency and Aurora Regency Historicals, an imprint of Aspen Mountain Press

e-publisher, royalty paying.

Looking for Historical fiction, novella to novel length, accuracy is a must. AuroraRegency@gmail.com

submissions guidelines: <http://www.aspenmountainpress.com>

Chicken Soup for the Soul Anthologies

The stories must be non-fiction and told in the 1st person. Seeking submissions for 'Brides and Weddings' and 'Marriage and Married Life'.

Website: <http://www.chickensoup.com> ;

list of anthologies calling for subs at:

http://www.chickensoup.com/form.asp?cid=possible_books

submit at the website:

http://www.chickensoup.com/form.asp?cid=submit_story

guidelines:

<http://www.chickensoup.com/cs.asp?cid=guidelines>

When writing a novel, that's pretty much entirely what life turns into: 'House burned down. Car stolen. Cat exploded. Did 1500 easy words, so all in all it was a pretty good day.'
NEIL GAIMAN

Nothing's a better cure for writer's block than to eat ice cream right out of the carton.
DON ROFF

Plotting Point By Point

Problems weaving plot and romance together?

Lori Devoti from “The How To Write Shop” shares her own critical path—a combination of *The Hero's Journey*, *The Writer's Journey*, and some personal tweaking.



This is the basic format I use both when plotting a book and writing a synopsis. For me they are one and the same. The basic Hero's Journey course is shown in **black numerals**, *the romance in green*.

In most romances you have both (if using a hero's journey type of format—there are others). Like all things, I have tweaked this for my own use so the definitions of each plot point may not exactly match what you have read before—but this works for me.

To use this when plotting your own book or writing a synopsis, replace the bulleted points with scenes that fit under that plot point. Add romance plot points as needed and rearrange plot points as needed. For a synopsis, you would add to this an introduction of your major characters including any pertinent back story, goals and motivations. You might also include definitions of unusual terms or places—to save having to break away mid-story once in the meat of your synopsis.

The twelve basic plot points in this plan are based on points taken from the *The Hero's Journey* by Joseph Campbell and the *The Writer's Journey* by Christopher Vogler. If you want more details, both books are suggested.

1) Ordinary World:

This is how your characters' world is before the real action of the book starts. In modern genre fiction this should be short to non-existent. In my *Nocturnes*, I start with plot point 2—the Inciting Incident. May weave bits of past ordinary world in first few chapters as you go along.

2) Inciting Incident/Opening scene:

If skipping Ordinary World, this would be your opening scene. It kicks off one of the major story lines in the book—sleuth finds dead body, lovers meet, woman discovers husband in her lingerie...

1a) Meet :

If writing a romance, the hero and heroine meeting is a key plot point in that plot line. Frequently comes in first chapter—but may not.

3) External Conflict Rises:

After the inciting incident things change in the character's life. List as many scenes as you can think of that would happen at this point, showing those changes and your character trying to deal with them. Include scenes for all plot lines.

4) Intensify Conflict:

The stakes continue to climb. The protagonist is reacting to the antagonist and even though she/he seems to be making good choices, her/his actions force the antagonist to react too. In other words things just keep getting tougher. Again, include scenes for all plot lines.

2a) First Kiss:

Another important plot line for a romance. This may happen anywhere, but normally in the first quarter of the book. Describe the scene. This should also change something in your hero/heroine's outlook, or make something else harder for them. Describe what that is.

5) Protagonist Engages:

In reaction to the antagonist's increased actions, the protagonist jumps off the cliff and fully engages in the battle. You have to give him/her a motivation to do this. Example: in a mystery, the sleuth is herself accused of the crime. He/she has to fully commit to defend him/herself.

3a) Sex scene:

Not required in a romance, but common plot point and if a sex scene or scenes occur—do include them in the synopsis. Also remember, sex—like the first kiss—should change something. Do the characters see each other differently?

Themselves? Does the physical act push them to do something else? Include these changes in the synopsis.

6) Antagonist fights back:

At this point the antagonist actively begins working against the protagonist. Think of it as a battle. The antagonist can see the protagonist is trying to win—so the antagonist puts his/her all into stopping the protagonist.

3a) Sex scene:

Just a reminder to include all your sex scenes in the synopsis—may have more than one.

7) Reversal:

This is optional. At this point something happens that causes the protagonist to completely flip in their beliefs.

8) Point of no return:

Something happens that keeps your protagonists from backing out—has to commit 110%. Life will never be the same, no matter what he/she does. Returning to the ordinary world is no longer an option.

4a) Realize love each other:

If it's a romance at some point the hero and heroine have to realize they love each other. This may happen at different points for the two characters and they may or may not tell the other at the time they realize this. But do include the realization in the synopsis and anything this changes about the character.

5a) Tell love each other:

May not happen until the very end of the book, or only be implied. Or may happen early and have repercussions.

(continued on Page 8)

Good fiction
creates its own reality.
NORA ROBERTS

9) Crisis:

The low point in your protagonist's journey. Thinks there is no way out. Sees no good solution—which leads to dark moment.

10) Dark Moment: / 6a) Sacrifices All

These two may or may not happen at the same time—but same basic idea for both plot lines, and chance for bigger impact if do happen together. Characters make a rational choice to give up something they have held in great value for a greater good (or what they see as a greater good). The

throwing him/herself on the sword moment. Appears that all is lost.

11) Climax: / 7a) Come Together

Again may happen at same time or not, but it is best to tie up smaller plot lines first and keep major one open until the end. In a romance this means, resolving the romance last, if possible.

The protagonist appeared to have been beaten, but somehow he/she comes back to the fight. Best if there is a direct contact and defeat of the antagonist at this point. The protagonist should show growth and use skills he/she learned throughout the book. The protagonist could not have won this battle if it occurred at the beginning of book.

12) Resolution:

Happy days. Shows all internal conflict has been resolved, shows changes that happened within book—new ordinary world. ■

Lori Devoti is the author of romantic comedy, urban fantasy, paranormal romance and young adult novels.

To learn more about Lori and her books, visit her on the web at

<http://www.loridevoti.com>

For more articles on writing or for information on taking a class from Lori, visit The How to Write Shop at

<http://www.howtowriteshop.com>

(Used with permission)

An Editor's Take... Don't Lose the Plot

Does how you “do it” affect your chances of a sale?



Associate Editor **Leis Pederson** from Berkley Publishing Group shares her outlook with Gracie O'Neil and offers valuable advice.

You're from a Clinical Psychology background. How has this influenced what appeals to you as an editor?

I don't know that I would say this has influenced me too much in terms of what appeals to me when I'm reading but I will say I can get a little extra fun out of stories or characters with a psychological twist to them.

You'll have both plotters and pantsers among your authors. What advice would give our plotters and pantsers to help them minimize their respective weaknesses and maximize their respective strengths?

For the plotters out there I would say, while plotting is helpful for a great many authors don't tie yourself too much to the plot you've laid out at the beginning and let it keep you from making changes that could benefit the book.

For the pantsers I would say don't be afraid to plot some basic things out here and there as you may find it useful to refer to when writing the rest as it comes, if only for consistency.

It's been said that a plot doesn't have to be new, it just has to be new to the reader. You've probably seen just about every plot device imaginable. So what is it about a plot that grabs you as an editor, and frog-marches you into a story?

It can be any number of things honestly. Sometimes it is the voice and the style of the writer that really draws me in. Sometimes it's that the author has taken that familiar plot and given it just the right spin to make it truly shine.

When an author presents a concept for a series, what is it about the plot summaries or synopses that makes the difference between missing the

goal or creating a positive slam dunk experience for the editor?

I think the most important thing to keep in mind when writing plot summaries or synopses is that you want to find the right balance of information. We want to know enough about the book that we can see where it is going, whether it would work and why we care but we don't want to get so bogged down in the details that we can't see the big picture.

Leis Pederson, an Associate Editor with the Berkley Publishing Group, acquires commercial fiction, including romance, erotic romance, urban fantasy, women's fiction, mysteries, thrillers and general fiction.

She began her life at Berkley as an editorial intern and worked her way up. Now, whatever free time she has that isn't consumed by manuscripts is spent watching really bad TV. ■

Each writer is born with a repertory company in his head. GORE VIDAL

Writing Short

Entering the 'Chapter Short Story Competition'?

Multiple finalist and winner, **Kris Pearson** tells us how to make our short story entries sing and dance for the judges.



If you're planning to enter the Chapter Short Story Contest you have only 1500 words to introduce two likeable people, put them in an interesting situation, and reach a satisfactory conclusion. Maybe you'll add a twist in the tail just to keep your readers on their toes or give them a laugh? Piece of cake!

If you can do it well you'll also have something saleable, but you need to research the magazines and tailor your stories exactly to the demographic of their readers. These days some publications want only 1000-word or 800-word stories so that's even more of a challenge. Check their submission guidelines before you send them anything.

Short stories need to be succinct. For a lot of my early working life I wrote advertising. A thirty-second radio commercial has around seventy-five words to hook the customer in and convince them to buy something or go somewhere or whatever. TV ads for the most part don't need to be crammed with words either (unless they're Harvey Norman).

It was good training for me—especially the radio work. Many a time I sat there with a hundred words, convinced I needed every one of them to sell the product. But it's amazing how many you can prune out yet still convey exactly the same message.

Let's write that again.

'Many times I wrote a hundred words and was convinced I needed them all.

But savage pruning communicated exactly the same message.'

That's 22 words versus 37—no loss of clarity.

It'll be the same with your short story. You're aiming for 1500 words. Darn—it's ended up 1934 words. But of course you can make it fit with judicious editing. And it'll be good practice to stop you waffling in your novels, too.

How do you start writing short?

In my opinion you don't need a big story, but you do need a vivid one. A slice of life, but not the whole pie.

"A thirty-second radio commercial has around seventy-five words to hook the customer in and convince them to buy something or go somewhere or whatever."

Sure you can add details that hint at back-story but you really should plunge right in and have your characters living and breathing from the get-go. You'll be taking your readers away from their everyday world and into someone else's life for five minutes. They don't want dragged-out descriptions of scenery or dreary everyday problems or complicated plots. They want a quick happy read.

I'll qualify this by adding that I'm not talking about 'literary' short stories here. You can have plenty of angst and introspection in those. But the Chapter Contest calls for a romance, so of necessity there'll be a degree of happiness in it, and probably some development in the relationship your two main characters are experiencing.

How many characters?

Probably only two. Secondary characters? Be careful with these—a couple of brief mentions maybe, but you don't want them taking attention from your main pair and confusing the plot. My *Paving the Way* story in the 2009 Liaisons had four characters—but one was a briefly-mentioned and never-seen neighbour and one was a teenage son who spoke a single sentence and perspired a lot. All the rest of the action was for my lovers-to-be.

The inspiration came from one of our customers who moaned about the state of her paths. My brain couldn't help but invent a nice man to fix her problem!

My *Heavy Delays* in the 2010 Liaisons has two characters and no hint of any others. Inspiration? A traffic jam on the Hutt Road. Short story ideas are all around you if you look and listen.

So—get straight into your story. Have two characters who are memorable in some way. Write without adding confusing details. And if possible have a little surprise at the end.

It's a lot less slog than a novel and the odds of selling it are much better. You might also win a generous book voucher from our sponsor, Chapter—the book and tea-shop in Mt Eden. ■

Kris Pearson, RWNZ's current Membership Secretary, says she accidentally won the first RWNZ short story contest she entered and has been hooked ever since!

Short Story Markets:

There are some interesting possibilities at these urls.

<http://www.theshortstory.org.uk/magazines/index.php4>

<http://womagwriter.blogspot.com/2009/05/womans-world-us-guidelines.html>

<http://www.goodtoknow.co.uk/family/471247/Woman-s-Weekly-Fiction-Guidelines>

The Five Key Turning Points of All Successful Stories



Need the keys to the heart of your story?

Story and script consultant, author and lecturer **Michael Hauge** shares some of his secrets with us here at Heart To Heart. Michael will be presenting A Story Mastery seminar for RW Australia on 12 and 13 March 2011—visit <http://www.romanceaustralia.com/seminars.html> for full details.

While plot structure can sometimes seem like a mystifying concept, it's really quite simple. Not easy to master, but simple in terms of what it defines about your story.

All successful stories—for movies, for plays, for operas, for fairy tales, for myths and for romance novels—are built on a foundation of three basic components: character, desire and conflict.

Well-told stories always involve a hero or protagonist who faces seemingly insurmountable obstacles as he or she pursues a compelling goal.

Plot structure simply pertains to the sequence of events that lead the hero toward this objective. In other words, what happens and when does it happen?

A properly structured story will always take its hero through six basic stages as they are propelled toward their goal. And these six stages are defined by five key turning points in the plot. So identifying, understanding and employing these critical turning points is essential to the success of your novel.

In movies and screenplays, these turning points always occur at the same point in the story. So what happens at the 25% point of a 90-minute comedy will be identical to what happens at the same percentage of a three-hour epic. Since I work extensively as a Hollywood script consultant, the chart that accompanies this article includes these percentages.

But for romance novelists, the percentages are not so important (though when coaching novelists or lecturing about romance fiction, I frequently find that the positions of the turning points are almost identical to what they would be for a screenplay). So don't worry about the numbers on the chart—just be sure that the turning points and stages are all present in your novel in the order presented.

STAGE I: The Setup

At the beginning of any properly structured story, we must meet the hero living his everyday life, before anything extraordinary occurs to begin the forward movement of the plot. Your reader must see the “before” picture of your hero, so that at the end of the story, we will have experienced the full transformation of this character as they complete their journey.

In other words, the setup is where you say to your reader, “This is who my hero was yesterday. In fact, this is the person my protagonist has been for some time now.” Unfortunately, this principle immediately brings up a major complication in structuring a romance novel: at least in the opening chapters, romance fiction is seldom told in linear fashion. Because of the desire to get things moving quickly, and to get the love interest into the story as soon as possible, romance novels (and many other genres as well) usually begin with the hero already taking some action, or at least immediately in some new situation. In other words, the SETUP, the ordinary world the hero has occupied, is often revealed as the story

moves forward, through thoughts of the character, omniscient narration, or by jumping back in time after the opening pages.

So to understand and employ these stages, you first have to put the events of your story in chronological order. Then, after you work out the six stages, you can rearrange the order of events to maximize the reader's emotional involvement—to grab the reader before revealing the hero's more static everyday life.

TURNING POINT #1: The Opportunity

Fairly soon in your story, your hero must be presented with an opportunity, which will start the character on his journey by taking him into...

STAGE 2: The New Situation

Very often the opportunity will involve a change of geography—your hero is summoned to return home, given a job opportunity in a distant city/town/village/wilderness/estate/farm/orphanage/school, or forced out of their current circumstances by poverty, scandal, or the death of a parent or spouse.

But even if the opportunity doesn't involve changing the locale, it must create some desire in your hero to do something they've never done before. So if you're writing a mystery/thriller romance novel, the opportunity is often where an initial crime is committed, which your hero witnesses, or must investigate (if she's a cop), or must involve herself in (if the victim is a friend

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The Five Key Turning Points (continued from Page 10)

or loved one or associate, of if she's a suspect). Whatever the new situation, it's the period of your story where your hero must get acclimated, figure out what's going on, determine the "rules" of this new environment or circumstance, or narrow down their options.

In most love stories, whether fiction or film, the new situation is where the love interest first enters (or re-enters) the hero's life.

Then, out of this new situation, a second major event will occur to your hero, who will then experience . . .

TURNING POINT #2: The Change of Plans

This is the moment when your hero's desire transforms from simply existing in the new situation to a specific, visible goal with a clearly defined end point. This is the moment where your story concept is defined, and your hero's outer motivation is revealed.

Outer motivation is my term for the visible finish line the reader is rooting for your hero to achieve by the end of the story. If and when your hero has accomplished this goal (or failed to), the journey will be complete, and the book will be finished.

This is arguably the most important structural principle you can master. If your hero's visible goal is defined too early, the story will run out of steam long before the climax. If the outer motivation isn't defined until the halfway point, the reader will lose interest and move on to another novel.

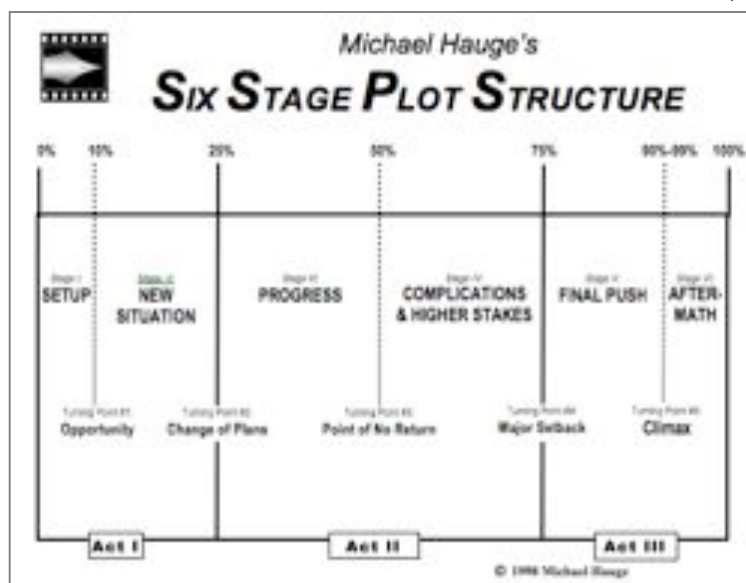
So, if you're writing a novel about a hero who must destroy an evil vampire, she must begin her pursuit of this goal here, not in the opening chapters. Whatever preceded this turning point involved your hero figuring out there was an evil vampire, and deciding to destroy it herself. But her actual pursuit of this goal can only begin here.

And since most of you reading this article are romance writers, it is here—and only here—that your hero begins pursuing (or being pursued by) the love interest. The reader may already realize they're destined to be together, and

there will undoubtedly have been some romantic or sexual spark between them, but the actual pursuit—the first date, first expression of interest, etc—can only begin here.

You've probably noticed how often I've used the word visible in this article. I want to prevent any confusion between the plot of your movie and the inner journey your hero takes.

Structure is a formula for laying out what happens to your hero, and what she does in response. Your character's growth or arc, which will gradually develop through the course of the story, grows out of her pursuit of the visible goal. But that inner journey for your hero neither defines your story concept, nor should it determine the structure.



This is one of those principles that sounds simple, but is sometimes hard to incorporate in your writing, because much of what we as readers respond to emotionally involve the heroes' longings, wounds, fears, courage and growth, and the underlying theme or moral premise of the novel. So we often focus on these elements as we develop our stories. But these invisible components of the story can emerge effectively only if they grow out of a simple, visible desire.

STAGE III: Progress

To begin pursuing her outer motivation, your hero must devise some plan to achieve it. And for the next stage of the story, the plan seems to be working. This is not to say that this stage is without conflict. And your hero's inner fears and flaws will make her vascillate between active pursuit and retreat into the safety of inaction or of some familiar, protective persona. In a love story, this is where the two lovers play the cat and

mouse game of coming together and then splitting apart.

But whatever obstacles your hero faces, she is somehow able to avoid or overcome them as he approaches...

TURNING POINT #3: The Point of No Return (50%)

Somewhere around the midpoint of your screenplay, your hero must stop vacillating and retreating, and fully commit to her goal. Up to this point, she had the option of turning back, giving up on her plan, and returning to the life she was living at the beginning of the film. But now your hero must burn her bridges behind her and put both feet in (never let it be said that I can't work two hackneyed metaphors into the same sentence).

This is a critical turning point for any love story. This is where your hero must make some declaration of feelings and intentions toward their true love. Often this is where the two characters make love for the first time. But it could also be the first time the hero says, "I love you", the first date, or even the first time the hero admits to herself that this is the person she longs for. But whatever form this greater commitment takes, it will always lead to....

STAGE IV: Complications and Higher Stakes

Once your hero declares her feelings, or reveals her intentions to the world in some way, the obstacles become bigger and more frequent, achieving the visible goal becomes far more difficult, and your hero has much more to lose if he fails. The outside world starts closing in, as the universe puts your character to the test to see just how committed they really are.

The conflict continues to build until, just as it seems that success is within your hero's grasp, he suffers...

TURNING POINT #4: The Major Setback

In the last quarter of your novel, something must happen to your hero that makes it seem to the reader that all is lost. Whatever plan they had for achieving their goal fails, and it now

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The Five Key Turning Points (continued from Page 11)

seems impossible that the hero will ever get what she's spent almost the entire novel pursuing. Most important, it is at the Major Setback that the hero and love interest must break up or be separated, with seemingly no hope of getting back together.

STAGE V: The Final Push

Beaten and battered, your hero will now try to retreat back to the life she was living at the beginning. In other words, for however brief a time, she will give up.

But this retreat will only be temporary, because the life they once lived will no longer be satisfying, and because they long too much for their own destiny. So they will now take whatever physical or emotional risk is necessary to achieve their goal, or die trying. And this final push will lead them to the moment the reader has been anticipating from the outset....

TURNING POINT #5: The Climax

Several things must occur at the climax of your story: the hero must face the biggest obstacle of the entire story; she must determine her own fate; and the outer motivation must be resolved once

and for all. And of course, in any romance novel, the hero and love interest must unite once and for all—or if not, it must be because the choice of not committing to the other person must be one the audience can fully embrace.

But the story doesn't end at the climax. Remember that "before and after picture" I mentioned at the beginning? Well, to make the comparison complete, you must now take your hero to...

STAGE VI: The Aftermath

No novel ends precisely with the resolution of the hero's objective. You must reveal the new life the hero is living now that she's completed her journey. And you must allow the reader to experience the emotion you have elicited in the exciting, sad or romantic climax. In a romance novel, we need to get at least a glimpse of the life these now united lovers will share.

One final word of caution: don't let all these stages and turning points block your creativity. Structure is an effective tool for rewriting and strengthening the emotional impact of your story. But you don't want to be imprisoned by it. Come up with characters you love and a story that ignites your passion. Then apply these structural principles to ensure that your novel will reach, and inspire, the widest possible audience. ■

Michael Hauge is a story and script consultant, author and lecturer who works with writers and film-makers on their screenplays, novels, movies and television projects. He has coached writers, producers, stars and directors on projects for Will Smith, Julia Roberts, Jennifer Lopez, Kirsten Dunst, Charlize Theron and Morgan Freeman, as well as for every major studio and network.

Michael is the best-selling author of "Selling Your Story in 60 Seconds: The Guaranteed Way to Get Your Screenplay or Novel Read" and of "Writing Screenplays That Sell", a definitive reference book for the film and television industries, which is now in its 32nd printing for HarperCollins. His seminar with Chris Vogler, The Hero's 2 Journeys, has become one of the top-selling DVDs and CDs on story and screenwriting.

Michael has presented seminars and lectures to more than 40,000 participants throughout the US, Canada and Europe. He is on the Board of Directors of the American Screenwriters Association and the Advisory Board for Scriptwriter Magazine in London.

Visit his website for writing books, and DVDs such as "Mastering the 2 Minute Pitch" and "Writing Romantic Comedies and Love Stories."

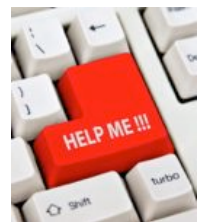
<http://www.screenplaymastery.com/products.htm>

A good book isn't written,
it's re-written.
PHYLLIS A. WHITNEY

Jem's Gems For Computer Conquest

Learn to conquer your computer.

*In this series of articles **Jem Stanners** presents tips to help us create a relationship with our PCs where we are the Masters and not the servants.*



Like most of you, I have a love-hate relationship with computers. They're a necessary evil. A means to an end. The tools we wield to practise our craft and create our masterpieces. I don't want a computer as such, but I do want what one can produce. I want the convenience of being able to write, rearrange, and refine until my words are pure gold.

And so do you—which is where the frustration begins.

In this series I want to bring you some tips and tricks to help terminate your PC troubles.

Let's start with the basics.

Computer conquest begins with the first two letters of the alphabet: "A" and "B".

Always Backup.

There is no other way to maintain sanity around a computer. Murphy tells us that at some point, a computer will fail. When it happens to you, will you be ready?

Between us, Gracie and I have had five PCs fail so that *everything* on the hard drive was irrevocably lost. If we hadn't had backups, those losses would've been unbearable. Entire manuscripts. Years of work.

So, in the same way as you take photocopies of your important documents, you need to keep copies of the files you produce for your manuscripts. Such copies are called backups.

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Hot Off The Press

A little bird told us...

Contest scoring

A decision has been made to move to an averaging system for scoring our contests for 2011 (with the exception of the Clendon). Instead of the lowest of the three scores received being dropped, all three scores will now be averaged to determine an entrant's ranking.

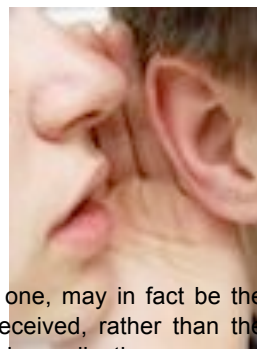
While it is recognised that no system is going to be perfect, it is considered that an averaging system provides a fairer

result both for entrants and judges. By taking the average of the three scores, the input from all three judges for each entry is utilised.

The old system of dropping the lowest score suggested that the lowest scoring judge's input was of no value and this is most definitely not the case. In addition, the argument that dropping the lowest score ensures an entrant's final ranking is not affected by an "unusual" or "out-of-kilter" score has no real basis. In many cases the "unusual" score, if

indeed there is one, may in fact be the highest score received, rather than the lowest. Averaging all three scores ensures that the entrants that final will be those with consistently high scores across all three judges.

The Executive believes that this new approach to scoring our contests, combined with the new initiative for judge training also discussed in this month's H2H, will ensure RWNZ continues to offer its members a worthwhile contest experience. ■



WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:

Faye Robertson in Kerikeri
Joanne Gillespie in Italy
Donna Marie Evans in Lower Hutt
Stephanie Attwood in Kaitaia

FINALIST LOGO AVAILABLE

If you've finalled in one of our RWNZ contests and you'd like an RWNZ contest finalist logo for your website or blog contact Suzanne on

Suzanne.perazzini@orcon.net.nz

ARC FORMATTING

If you're not sure how to format your manuscript to create an ARC for the Clendon Award then here's a down and dirty guide.

1. Make sure you have your manuscript formatted correctly according to Clauses 8d and 8e on the Clendon Award Entry Form. If you don't have a copy you can download it from <http://www.romancewriters.co.nz/pdf/Clendon-Award-Entry-Form-2011.pdf>

2. The very best place I've found for straightforward instructions about how to make an ARC is the RWAustralia site. I suggest you visit <http://www.romanceaustralia.com/emerald.html> and download the instructions **at the bottom of the page**.

Read them carefully, because they're for the Emerald Award, not for the Clendon—that's why you need to have the correct formatting first. The keys are single space, landscape paper orientation, and 2 columns.

HINT: For your sanity's sake always do a "dummy run" with a short file FIRST to ensure you've done it right. Also give yourself plenty of time to make mistakes. Never do this stuff under pressure of a deadline.

Gracie

RWNZ CONTEST SCHEDULE 2011

CHAPTER SHORT STORY CONTEST

Closes Friday, 25 March 2011

Final Judge: Julie Redlich, Fiction Editor, Woman's Day
(Entry information is available on the website.)

HMB GREAT BEGINNINGS CONTEST

Closes Friday, 15 April 2011

Final Judge: (An HMB editor)
(Entry information is available on the website.)

STRICTLY SINGLE CONTEST

Closes Friday, 23 September 2011

(Entry information available on the website soon)

If you have any questions, contact
Viv Constable, Contests Coordinator at
vconstable@xtra.co.nz

Pantsing By Design



Does plotting scare the pants off you?

You're in good company. Not a complete pantser, sometimes a "scener", always a dreamer...Kylie Griffin takes Gracie O'Neil on an inside tour of her writing process.

You tell me you're not a plotter. How would you describe your writing process?

I'm a panster when I begin a book. I don't sit down and plan or write synopsis before putting fingers to the keyboard. I usually know the opening scene and where I want the book to finish but everything else in between is very fuzzy.

That doesn't mean to say I haven't thought about the characters and played a few games of "what if..." to get an idea of what sort of story might develop, I just don't have a clear idea of how the story arcs are going to work until I get into it.

Once I start writing and I get past about 25K I know where it's headed. I've spent a lot of time just thinking about the characters & their GMC, the world, the plot etc. while I've been writing that first 25K - (usually when I'm doing mundane things like housework, yard work, grocery shopping or as I fall asleep at night). Again, not a very detailed plan or even anything that resembles a synopsis, just a hodge-podge of thoughts and ideas that somehow come together when I write.

I tend to be a "scener" after that. I can see scenes, have no idea where they're going to slot in but as I "get to them" I know when or where they fit (if that makes sense).

And that's how I get through the first draft.

Would you say you're a linear writer? Do you have to write beginning to end? Or can you hop around?

I'm pretty linear - I like going from A to B and sticking to that process. No detours, thank you very much. But having said that I did mention I was a bit of a "scener" in the previous question.

While I don't write scenes out of order and then cobble them together as some writers do, if I get a strong impression of a scene I'll jot down pieces of it ie. dialogue and emotions.

It's not a whole scene but the bare bones of it that I can flesh out later once I know where it fits.

When a scene is giving you trouble at what point do you move onto something else and come back?

When I find a character is doing or saying or taking action that doesn't gel with their nature or I'm just writing in circles with the plot and things are going nowhere fast.

Once that happens I stop and try a few things - I leave the scene until the next day and come at it fresh; or I try changing the POV to another character; or I begin questioning the goal of the scene and whether I'm actually achieving it.



With the first solution I'm usually just tired. The second option tends to occur more times than I like but I'm starting to recognize the early warning signs and saving myself time by stopping and rewriting from another POV, and the last is usually the hardest to pinpoint but more often than not it's a case of right goal, wrong place. So, the scene gets filed in my Bits folder and resurrected at another point in the story.

How many drafts do you do?

This is a hard question to answer. Because I'm a bit of a perfectionist I can't turn off my internal editor and just write and keep writing without going back over work and "correcting" it.

I edit as I go. My creative side writes the new scenes but I also allow my editor some time during the day to polish previous chapters and both alter egos are then satisfied.

Once I finish a book I go over it again from first chapter to last, making comments in the margins about the overall flow of the plot etc. I'm also seeing it in "colour" (using Margie Lawson's EDITS system), and making notes based on that, too.

And now that I have a couple of good beta readers, I'm sending it out to them for feedback and polishing it again. So, I guess you could say I work through the book three times before I feel it's ready.

How fast do you work?

I can write a 90K book in 8 weeks but I wouldn't like to do that again as I was cactus afterwards, drained physically and emotionally. A more realistic timeframe (when I'm teaching full-time) is 6-8 months.

Do you keep a story bible, so you keep your characters and world-building straight? What tricks do you use to track everything and make sure you're consistent?

Yes, I construct a story bible. Most of my books are a part of a series, so keeping track of the details is crucial. And who has the time to go searching for some essential detail like eye colour or whether a character met someone at a Place A or Place B? So jotting those sorts of things down is a huge time-

(continued on Page 15)

Pantsing By Design
(continued from Page 14)

saver. I usually get an A4 book and break it into section headings like – main characters, minor characters, places, place names, flora, fauna, dictionary of terms (as I usually have invented words or languages), history (to get out the backstory), cultural practices, interesting facts.

Under all these headings I put in physical descriptions, explanations etc. I also put in a synopsis, any maps I might have drawn up and a back cover blurb. This then sits beside me as I write and goes everywhere my laptop does.

What are your five secrets to pantsing without stress?

Whether you're a panster, scener or plotter or combination of any and all I think you can apply some of these "secrets" to any writing process.

- Enjoy the writing—don't ever lose the love and passion you have for writing a bloody good story. The quickest way to stifle your creativity is to let yourself get stressed.
- If you're writing a series definitely keep a story bible or records of details. Don't rely on your memory. Construct a "Bits" file for all the chunks of writing you edit out or jot down out of sequence. Deleting them or not putting them somewhere and losing them is enough to make you want to curl under your desk and rock and break out in maniacal laughter every so often (ask me how I know!)
- Give yourself plenty of time to think about the characters, plot and book—daydreaming *is* working on your book, the subconscious is a very powerful tool—and this involves keeping those ideas in a file of some

sort because they'll come in handy when you get working on a book (sometimes years later).

- Chocolate (or insert some other vice of choice). There are just times you need a fix, but I tend to use it as a reward for achieving certain goals along the way

What's the best part about writing the way you do?

I love the freedom panstering and "scene"ing gives me. I don't feel stifled or tied down to following a plan.

**Daydreaming
is working on your book.
The subconscious is a
very powerful tool.**

What's the aspect of pantsing that gives you the most trouble?

It's not an aspect as such but part of the process that gives me the most trouble.

Usually the first quarter of the book tends to be the scream-and-kick, wring-words-like-blood-from-a-stone, teeth-puller part for me. It's very slow going.

Once I get past that, the story flows faster as I know what the characters are like and where they're likely to take the story.

Do you have a nagging feeling that you should be a plotter?

Heavens, yes! I can see the benefits of being able to map out details and arcs ahead of writing the story.

It's strange because in other aspects of my life I'm a big picture person and then insist on knowing the nitty-gritty details. I like being prepared and knowing how something is going to work out.

That's plotting in a nutshell. But this learning style hasn't evolved as strongly in the creative realm of writing my stories as I thought it might.

How do you think your recent three book deal with Berkley, and the resulting deadlines, will change your process?

My writing process has evolved over time and I've no doubt it's going to have to continue to evolve, especially now that I've signed with Berkley.

Why? I usually like to write the story before I write the synopsis. That's not really possible now. A part of the process of handing in work to my editor involves submitting an outline or synopsis *before* the story is finished. Not something I've every really forced myself to do until a year or so ago (to enter in a contest). I know I can do it, it's just that I've avoided doing so until pressured. Now it needs to become a part of my process.

I'm also going to have to be thinking about the next book in the series as I'm writing the one before. The luxury of time and setting my own deadlines is gone.

So, the learning curves ahead are steep but not impossible. ■

Kylie Griffin's passion is writing futuristic and fantasy romances, with a touch of paranormal. She can't imagine anything better than creating adventures where men and women struggle against the odds to achieve their goals and find love along the way.

In the real world, Gracie O'Neil writes real solutions for real people. In the world inside her head—which is much more fun—she writes real problems for real people. She's working on her fourth book and waiting for "The Call" from her agent.

**The imagination
needs
moodling...
long,
inefficient,
happy idling,
dawdling
and puttering.**

BRENDA UELAND

RWNZ & RWAUSTRALIA CRITIQUE PARTNER SCHEME

To join RWNZ's critique partner register—run jointly with RWAustralia—go to:

<http://www.romancewriters.co.nz/members/critique-partner-register.php>

Fill out the online application form and send to:

applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com

Alternatively, email:

applycritpartners@romanceaustralia.com

and ask for an application form.



Jem's Gems

(continued from Page 12)

(See, you knew that. I told you this was basic!)

How much of my computer should I back up?

One view is: "As much as possible, as often as possible, for as long as possible, regardless of the cost." And the cost thing is the fly in the ointment right there.

If you have a Mac, you can buy an external hard drive, tell TimeMachine (a program that comes with your Mac) to use it, it backs everything up, and in theory all your troubles are over.

With a PC—which is what most of us have—we have to buy a decent backup program if we want to match the simplicity of the Mac. A good one, such as *Shadow Protect*, currently costs about US\$90, and you'll probably need a tame Geek to help you set it up.

Don't despair.

Normally you're not so worried about backing up "everything". You're mainly concerned with just your precious work; your blood sweat and tears. Keep reading for a simple and affordable way of doing just that.

How do I keep simple and affordable backups of my work?

Currently, the easiest and most reliable way to take a backup copy is by purchasing one or more Flash Drives (a.k.a USB Pen Drives or, USB Memory Sticks). These are readily available, *but buy them from your computer store*, not from your supermarket.

How big do the flash drives need to be?

As a rule of thumb, your manuscripts will average about 10 bytes of storage per word.

This means that a 100,000 word novel will require a file size of about 1 Million bytes, also called 1 Megabyte, written as 1MB or 1 MiB. You can't buy a flash drive as small as that. The smallest available at present is 2,000

Megabytes. 2,000 MB is also known as 2 Gigabytes, written as 2GB or 2 GiB. So this is the size you want. It is well-established reliable technology. You'll pay between \$10 and \$15.

Did your mathematical brain just kick in? If it did, you'll tell me you could store 2,000 completed manuscripts on one flash drive, and so you could. But they're cheap, and more reliable than floppy disks or optical disks such as CD. Only move up to 4 GB units when 2GB ones are no longer available.

How to back up.

I recommend starting with **4 flash drives**. Don't skimp.

With the first drive:

Copy all of your writing work as it is today. All your projects, present and past. All your future plans. In short, all the documents you've typed in and gathered. As long as you don't have a photo album in there as well, they will all fit.

Now label it "all my work to day/month/year". A blank luggage label (cardboard) is excellent for this. Make the label descriptive. You'll never remember as much detail as you do at present, so write it down now.

With the second drive:

Repeat exactly what you did with the first. All of it. Labelled. You only need to do this once to capture two "backup" copies of "everything".

With the third and fourth drives:

Label each of the third and fourth flash drives **with the name of your current project.**

From now on, after you have finished writing for the day, and have saved the "master" document to the C: drive (your hard drive) put one of your project flash drives into the USB socket.

Go into File- Save As, and change the folder to the flash drive. You may need to choose the "My Computer" button in the "Save As" dialogue box that comes up, and then **choose the**

flash drive. What you then have is an identical copy saved onto the flash drive.

Once the copy completes, and the Copy box disappears, **ALWAYS use the "Safely Remove Hardware" icon in the system tray** (bottom right of your screen) to make the flash drive safe before removing it.

Click once on the Safely Remove Hardware icon and **choose the drive letter / name of your flash drive** (normally E:).

Repeat with the fourth flash drive and remove it the same way. You now have two backup copies of your current WIP.

Never edit the files directly from your flash drive, otherwise it becomes the master, and your C: drive copy gets left behind.

Always remove the flash drives so this cannot happen, and do all your edits and file renames on the main C: hard drive. Then at the end of each day make your two backups. Keep one in your handbag so you take it off-site when you step out the door.

When you begin working on the next project, buy two more flash drives just for that project.

The result? Backup Brilliance.
Computer Contentment. Trouble Terminated. ■

Jem Stanners got his first computer at age 14. Trouble was, back in 1964 they hadn't invented computer chips yet, so he built his own computer from discarded parts he found in a dumpster at the local telephone exchange. The result was big and extremely heavy—but it won him first prize in the national secondary school science competition. Since then he's owned twenty PCs. One of his day-job hats is that of IT systems administrator.

In my work in progress what would happen next if:

fear was influencing the next action?

In my work in progress what would happen next if:

the villain was driving the plot?

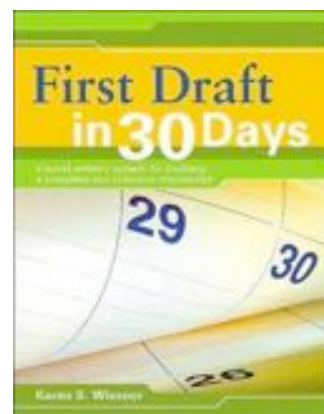
In my work in progress what would happen next if:

someone from my POV character's past came into the room?

In my work in progress what would happen next if:

the characters were under time pressure?

The Holy Grail Of Novel Writing?



Could this be what you've been waiting for?

Maggie Le Page takes a breathless, heart-palpatating look at Karen Wiesner's book on plotting, and shares the experiences of other RWNZ members who are using it.

First Draft In 30 Days. Even saying it was enough to leave me breathless, cause a heart palpitation or two. I mean, *imagine* it. Completing the first draft of my novel in a month. Hell, that'd be faster than I could lose my Christmas kilos! I could lose a month just *thinking* about writing.

I had nothing to lose, and plenty to gain. And if Stephanie Laurens, no less, was singing the praises of Karen Wiesner and her "*First Draft In 30 Days*" strategy at our national conference, the least I should do was give it a go. Who knew? Maybe it would turn out to be the Holy Grail of Novel-Writing.

What is this book about?

Basically, it's a step-by-step guide to creating a first draft of your novel. Not a first draft in the thousands-of-sentences-crafted-into-a-flowing-novel sense, but rather, a detailed novel *outline* made up of a series of worksheets.

RWNZ's Cate Harris (aka Kate Gordon) comments, "The title is a bit misleading, as I thought the book would help me write an actual first draft in 30 days. However, now I've read the book and am working through it, I can see how having the detailed outline/plot completed will make writing a first draft (a) easier and (b) faster."

In her H2H interview (page 1), Karen Wiesner explains the rationale behind her method.

Does it work?

By all accounts, yes. Karen uses it herself, with great success. She warns it may take you longer than thirty days to complete the process the first time

you use it, but the more you use this method the more efficient you become. Karen usually has to write only one full draft once she has completed her outline draft. (My interpretation: she's cut out the shitty first draft! What's not to like about that?!)

Fellow RWNZer Liz Heywood is using *First Draft In 30 Days* to outline her current WIP, and she's enjoying it immensely. "The book goes into a lot of detail as to HOW and WHAT to plot," she says. "It deals with things I would never have thought of and makes my plotting a lot more thorough than it used to be. Also, I find that by writing within a 'frame' I'm coming up with better ideas for the storyline."

Is Wiesner's technique for everyone?

Not necessarily. But you won't know until you give it a go. Did I mention I'm a pantser? At least, I thought I was. Now, having delved into this method, I suspect I'm more a plotter who hadn't quite mastered the art of plotting.

Liz Heywood has had a similar revelation. "Before starting the book I had reckoned myself as a plotter. I now realize I was woefully mistaken and I was more like a pantser with a vague idea of where I was going." She adds, "Using *First Draft In 30 Days* certainly gets my creative juices working."

Says RWNZ's Bronwen Evans, a die-hard plotter, "I'd recommend *First Draft In 30 Days* if you are struggling to finish a book. The only way to help you get over that is to plot out the book and each scene and then write the thing."

Until now, Cate Harris had never really got the hang of plotting. "I assumed I must be a pantser," she says. "But now I'm back to thinking I'm a plotter – this

book really speaks to me!" Cate had been wallowing around in the first couple of chapters, not knowing where the story was going. "Now, with the whole story noted down, I can picture scenes and the harrows I want to put my characters through, the black moments, points of resolution, etcetera. That's a significant breakthrough for me."

Cate's advice: "If you think you're a pantser and struggle with the sagging mid-section, this book could help you picture the whole story which helps keep your writing on-track."

The Wiesner Worksheets

The worksheets offered up in *First Draft In 30 Days* aren't rocket science; they're common sense. I found I already had my own methods developed for some aspects of the process, but there were far more instances where it hadn't even occurred to me to collate the information in a sensible way.

Take the Research List, for example. That's where, as you write, you compile a list of things that need to be researched. Like I say, hardly rocket science. But here's the thing: until I read this book I was trying to keep it all in my head—my nappy-brained, sleep-deprived, scatty-at-the-best-of-times head. *Why???*

As Karen so rightly points out, research takes time. It can expand to fill whatever time you give it, even to the point where your writing may stall. So. Don't give in to temptation. Make a quick note in your Research List, then *move on*. Keep writing. (If you follow the *First Draft In*

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The Holy Grail...

(continued from Page 17)

30 Days format you'll do all your research later, on days earmarked specifically for research—ie it won't interrupt the writing flow.)

One of my favourite worksheet discoveries is the Formatted Outline Capsule. (Admission: while I love the worksheet itself, I'm seriously out of love with the name. It's too distracting. I keep seeing my old typing teacher stuck in a Star Trek movie!)

For anyone who likes developing their scenes out of order, Formatted Outline Capsules are brilliant. And, although I prefer to write from start to finish, this worksheet's great for me, too. It gives me somewhere to jot down notes about upcoming scenes, without ruining the landscape of my current scene.

In the worksheet example (below) the first ten points give a concise overview of the whole scene. Then you brainstorm your scene, in as much or as little detail as you wish. Details can always be embellished later, if your muse isn't being helpful today. Then you save your worksheet, start a new page, and draft the next scene in the same way.

It may all seem too, too obvious to some of you—but but for me it's been revolutionary. I no longer keep scraps of this and that in random places. Every idea, scene, character development, editing note, research requirement has a home. My writing house is far more

ordered than it used to be. And, if *First Draft In 30 Days* lives up to its title, who knows? Maybe I'll be doubling (or tripling) my completed-novel output rate before too long.

Conclusion:

Have I found the Holy Grail of Manuscript-Writing? I don't know yet. But my excitement is definitely building. ■

The litmus test

Average user ratings out of 5 (where 5 is "the most awesome of awesome" and 1 is "appalling"):

Cost:	5* [§]
Value for Money:	5*
Readability:	4.5
Understandability:	4.5
Usability:	4.75

Maggie Le Page is a mum, lecturer, freelance writer and novelist - in other words, an excellent juggler. She holds an Honours degree in Economics so is also extremely well-qualified to tut-tut about the size of her bank overdraft. She lives in Christchurch, New Zealand, with her partner of twelve years and their two children.

* unanimous vote

§ £ 11 through

<http://www.bookdepository.co.uk>

Based on FIRST DRAFT IN 30 DAYS ©Karen S. Wiesner¹

www.karenwiesner.com and used with permission.

Worksheet 16: Formatted Outline Capsule

Title:	Of your novel
Day:	} Scene Setting Details
Chapter and Scene:	
Additional Characters:	
Location:	
Approximate Time:	
Facts Necessary:	
Notes:	Use this to remind you of things to bear in mind as you work out the scene's purpose, placement in the novel, etc
Questions:	Issues that you, as the writer, need to resolve with regard to the scene
Draft of Scene:	In as much or as little detail as you wish. This worksheet is used at the brainstorming stage so if you see a whole scene playing out before you, get writing! And if you just have a vague idea of what will happen, that's fine too.

Contests & Markets **(continued from Page 6)**

THE SHEILA Contest

Sponsor: Valley Forge Romance Writers

Fee: \$25 for all VFRW members/\$30 for all non-VFRW members

Deadline: February 12, 2011, 11:59 p.m., EST

Eligibility: Participation is open to all RWA members, published and unpublished, who have not published a full-length novel (40K words or more) in the category entered at the time of the contest deadline (February 12, 2011) and within the past five years.

Entry: Electronic entries only. 35 pages, inc synopsis (not to exceed 5 pages).

www.vfrw.com or Jeannine Standen, Contest Chair, at contest@vfrw.com

Between the Sheets Contest

Sponsor: Greater Detroit RWA

Fee: \$21–25.00 **Deadline:** February 14, 2011

Eligibility: Any yet-to-be published RWA member in good standing, who is not contracted in full-length fiction by February 14, 2011. The term "published" includes all non-vanity, non-subsidy publishers.

Entry: ten-page love scene (sweet to erotic) and a one-page unjudged set-up. The set-up is a synopsis that explains how the heroine and hero end up "between the sheets."
http://www.gdrwa.org/contest_bts_rules_2010.html

Loafing is the most productive
part of a writer's life.
JAMES NORMAN HALL

13th Annual Fire and Ice Contest

Sponsor: Chicago North RWA Chapter

Fee: \$25 for RWA members, \$30 for non-members

Deadline: February 16, 2011

Eligibility: Authors who have not signed a publishing contract for novel-length romantic fiction within five years of the contest deadline.

Entry: First 25 pages of manuscript.

www.chicagonorthrwa.org

1st Annual Query Contest (NHRWA)

Fee: \$10–15.00

Deadline: March 1, 2011

Entry: 1-pg. query letter plus optional 1-2 pg. unjudged synopsis

Final Judges: agents & editors

www.nhrwa.com

RWNZ News Around the Regions

AUCKLAND

The first meeting of the year will be held on Saturday February 5th. The topic will be planning for 2011, a group session where everyone's opinion will be welcomed and valued. As usual, the meeting will be held at the Three Kings Tennis pavilion on the corner of Mt Eden and Mt Albert Roads at 12.30 p.m. Please bring a small plate for a shared lunch. There will be a gold coin collection and a raffle.

CENTRAL NORTH

While we're flexible about it, the third weekend of each month has been our usual gathering weekend. We're having our first meeting for the year on Saturday February 19th at the home of our new convenor, Gaylene Atkins, 'The Brickhouse', 35 Whenuakura Road, Matiere. Directions and meeting details will be emailed out to everyone closer to the time.

HAWKES BAY

Anyone in Hawkes Bay tired of Christmas cake, leftovers, and broken New Year resolutions? Contact Ginny Suckling to arrange for some writing encouragement and support.

WELLINGTON

Wellington/Kapiti branch managed two Christmas lunches because the arranged harbour cruise was cancelled on the morning due to high winds. However, those intending to cruise took their goodies to Meryl's and a lovely time was had by all. A week later everyone who couldn't manage the prior date (and some who could) met at Giovanna's and did it all again – with the addition of some first kiss/first love-making reads for extra Christmas spice.

First 2011 meeting is 1pm, Saturday February 5th at Meryl's. Email will follow. Giovanna will note all your writing aims for the year, so come prepared.

NELSON

Happy New Year Everyone! The Nelson Romance Writers had a great year last year with quite a few of us being published. We celebrated that with a lovely Xmas lunch at a Mexican café and coffee & cake at Annika's place. We also discussed Tessa Radley's novel 'The Untamed Sheik' that we had all read for the occasion. Very interesting to hear how different our opinions about the book were. One thing we all agreed about though, was that it was very well written, and good-language. Then we renewed our goals for 2011 before taking a well-earned summer holiday.

Our first meeting for 2011 will be Saturday 12 February at 2pm, at Annika's place 63 Golf Rd, Tahuna, as usual. Anyone interested in romance writing is welcome to contact Annika on 03-548-5561 or email: allan-annika@xtra.co.nz

BLLENHEIM

Vineyards? Confectioners? Oh yeah, our Blenheim ladies know how to have a good time. But it's time for an even more intoxicating experience—not to mention one with far less calories. Dive back into your current WIP. Contact Iona Jones for meeting times and places.

CHRISTCHURCH

Shaken, but far from stirred, our incredible romance writers of Christchurch are an inspiration to us all. Your local convener is Jill Scott. Drop her an email to find out when and where your next regional meeting is.

OTAGO

Welcome back to H2H everyone. We hope your summer break has been as satisfying as ours – BBQ fun with family and friends (weather permitting), while still finding time to read, reflect, and write, write, write. We're looking forward to sharing new writing and/or progress in WIPs at our first meeting for this year in February. For details about when and where, please contact Viv Adams.



REGIONAL CONVENORS

AUCKLAND: Frances Housden
email: Fhousden@xtra.co.nz

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email: scotts@snap.net.nz

OTAGO: Viv Adams
email: whitecliffodge@xtra.co.nz

Contests & Markets
(continued from Page 18)

More Than Magic

Sponsor: Romance Writers Ink

Fee: \$25–27.00 **Deadline:** March 1, 2011

Eligibility: Romance novels published, released, and/or printed in 2010.

Entry: Mail 3 copies of print book or send (as attachment) 3 PDF or RTF copies of e-book, including copyright page, electronically.

<http://rwimagiccontests.wordpress.com>

RWAus First Kiss 2011

Closes: Friday 11th February 2011

Entries arriving before or after these dates will not be accepted

Enter: one scene ONLY depicting the first kiss between your hero and heroine. Scene must be 1500 words maximum. A 1/2 page set up should also be included which is judged.

Entry fee: \$22 per entry (incl GST) for entries within Aus -\$20 per entry for overseas entries

firstkiss2011@gmail.com

RWAus Little Gems Contest

This year's gem: GARNET

Enter: Romantic short story to 3000 words max. PG rating

Theme Gem for 2011: Garnet

Closes: Feb 4 2011

Littlegems2011@gmail.com

Writers' Corner

Unanswered questions in your life?

We can't tackle all aspects of your life but Writers Corner is an exciting new section of the magazine where we will find the answers to your writing questions. Any topic you like, we will guarantee to find the answer. No question is too hard, too boring or too silly. Email us at: gracieoneil@xtra.co.nz

The first Question for Writers Corner is from **Kate Gordon** who asks: how come everyone else manages to stick at writing a whole book when I'm always getting distracted from my WIP by other writing deadlines...

Bronwen answers: If you're struggling to finish a book, try to analyse why. Often you'll find it is because you have lost your story's path. I suggested to Kate that she plotted a full book to see if that makes completing the book easier. She gives her feedback in Karen Browning's review of Karen Wiesner's First Draft in 30 Days.

Websites for Bloggers:

**Have you found a really inspiring website lately?
Something that's encouraged you
on your writing journey?
Please share it with us.**

<http://storyfix.com/>

<http://www.therenegadewriter.com>

<http://victoriamixon.com>

<http://www.thecreativepenn.com>

Contact details: Romance Writers of New Zealand, Inc., P O Box 10264, Dominion Road, Auckland

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To subscribe to the RWNZ online loop, which is dedicated to the support of its writers by and for members, send a blank email to NZromance-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or contact Kris Pearson kris.p@paradise.net.nz for more information.

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H2H Coordinator: Rachel Collins collins.rachel1@gmail.com	H2H Content: Bron Evans: bronwene@slingshot.co.nz	H2H Layout: Gracie O'Neil: gracieoneil@xtra.co.nz	Founder: Jean Drew (RWNZ founded in Sept 1990)
Principal Contest Coordinator: Viv Constable vconstable@xtra.co.nz			Judging Enquiries: Kamy Chetty kamychetty@yahoo.com