

Components of a Novel

A checklist for writers who want to be authors

✓ HOOK/FIRST 5 PAGES	You must grab the reader's attention in the first five pages or you won't stand a chance with an editor or agent. A novel usually has a big problem it must solve, introduced near the beginning of the story and spends the rest of the book trying to solve it.
✓ GENRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use our Genre List to define your genre.• Then read books in your genre. Lots of them.
✓ TITLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A great title can make or break your book's success. Write dozens of titles. Would you buy your own book based on the title?
✓ LENGTH/FORMAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 32-page picture book to 500-page novel.
✓ CONCEPT/PREMISE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What if a (flawed protagonist) wanted (a goal) but encountered (a problem) and had to (overcome her own flaw) and (face her biggest fear) to (solve the problem)?
✓ AUTHOR'S VOICE/TONE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First person? Third person? Omniscient? What kind of narrator will be your voice? What kind of tone will she bring to your story?
✓ TARGET MARKET	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who are you aiming at? Who will want to read your book? How old? Where do they live? What else do they like?

<p>✓ 5-SENSES DESCRIPTIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The more of the five senses you can use, the more engaging you'll be. Remember the adage, "Show, don't tell."
<p>PLOTS – Subplots</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plot is what happens to your main character. The subplots are your other characters' stories, intertwined with the plot.
<p>✓ SETTING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The characters work out the problem in surroundings of space and time which must come alive for your readers.
<p>MAIN CHARACTER</p> <p>External goal, internal goal, internal flaw, worst fear</p> <p>Secondary Characters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The characters in a novel usually represent certain types of people. They are judged by what they do and say. The Main Character has the most important role. She must have an external goal, an internal goal, an internal flaw that is not revealed until the second act "epiphany," and a worst fear. Minor characters often support the main character to help solve the problem. The problem-solvers (the protagonists) are the "good guys." The solution-hinderers (the antagonists) are the "bad guys."
<p>✓ INCITING INCIDENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The "trigger event" that propels your main character's life into a totally new direction from her ordinary life.