

PublishMe

How to plan your fiction book

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Introduction

Let's start by dispelling a major myth – that you have to be a talented writer to write a book. It just isn't so.

You don't need any major writing skill to write a book. If you can write an interesting letter in which you tell someone about an event, then you can write a fiction book, and the more you practise your writing, the better you will get at it.

The clear techniques and processes in this book will allow you to go through the stages that can make writing a book a lot easier than you might think.

It is difficult for us to describe the stages of writing a book that perfectly represents everyone's experience of writing a fiction book. There are many types of fictional work, so at times the sequence that follows will be more or less relevant to the area in which you have decided to work. The numbered items in each section represent a new idea for you to think about and incorporate into your planning if it will be useful to you in the type of fiction you are writing. At the end of each numbered section is a tick box. If you can't find immediate use for a section at the time it is presented, leave it on hold for the moment and come back later. Gradually you may find that you tick each section and the planning of your book will smoothly form the shape of the completed work.

As we are now ready to start the planning process, these **Six Ps** of fiction writing form a handy reminder as to the set of stages worth passing through.

The Six Ps stand for:

Prepare

PLAN

Plot

People

Places

Premises

So let's begin.

Prepare

The first stage of writing a book is to thoroughly prepare. It can save you a lot of work later, to have clearly thought through the whole book before you start the actual writing of the text.

So let's highlight some sensible stages you may wish to engage in as you pass through the preparation process.

1. Decide:

The first major step is just making The Decision to write a book. If you'd like to, YOU CAN, and you can guarantee to have it published now – so why not? Just make the decision!

Completed

2. Time to write:

Next, you need to make sure you can find time to write. Think about when you are at your best mentally (are you a morning person or a night owl?), and when you are least likely to get interruptions. You only need an hour or so a day, as long as it is a good clear hour of time when you can concentrate. Writing can be quite tiring as it exercises your brain, and after a good writing session you may well feel like you've just done an exercise workout, so an hour or so isn't a bad amount of time to start with. If you can build it up later, that's good, but start with a manageable workload.

Completed

3. Tell everyone:

The next stage might sound a bit odd, but it is to tell everyone. There's nothing better than telling everyone you know that you are writing a book, to keep you on task. People will ask how the book's going, and that will act as a gentle spur when you may find excuses not to write, to help keep you at your task. Writing is stimulating, but it can also be hard work, so you can use all the motivation you can get.

Completed

4. Plan rewards:

Think of some rewards you could give yourself (like having a nice café lunch out with friends, or buying yourself a facial or a short holiday) as you complete certain milestones along the way. Write these down and pin them up where you are going to work. Cross them off as you reach each milestone, and give yourself the reward. Take the time to savour it, and give yourself a hearty pat on the back. Be your own cheerleader while you are writing – after the release others will join in supporting you and your book.

Completed

5. Comfort zone:

Assuming you haven't already got a plot burning away in your head, we need to go through some stages to create one.

Especially in the early stages of becoming a writer, think about staying within your comfort zone to a large extent, especially if this is your first book. Take time now to write a list of all the things that you are really interested in, things that you have experienced that others may benefit from knowing about, or that you would really like to learn about as you write. These are things within your comfort zone.

Completed

6. Read:

Make sure you leave time also to read – a lot – and especially in the genre that you are interested in writing in. As we work through the various aspects of fiction writing that follow, make a mental note to explore each in the book or books you are currently reading, to analyse more closely how well that writer has handled these aspects of their writing.

Completed

Plan

Now we begin a series of five sections that all relate to the more detailed planning of your work, hence the word PLAN is capitalised. Under this first section, we begin with the more general scoping that will assist us to better confine the specific planning in the four sections that follow.

Let's begin;

1. Audience:

Really start to think about who your audience will be. Who exactly will want to read this book? Who (assuming you'd like to sell it) will pay for it? What age are they? What are their interests? Where are they found? How can they be contacted? What are their general tastes? What other titles and authors do you know of that this same audience will almost certainly read and enjoy? Do you know people in this target group? Think of them as you write. Imagine that you will write the book as if you were writing directly for them and seeking to keep them interested and excited by what you write.

Think about what style, content, scenes or settings, activities, anecdotes and people such a person would find interesting to read about. Please don't say the book is for everyone. If it is, it is almost certain to be too broad. If you are seeking to sell your book, it will almost certainly sell better the more focussed you make it on the specific interests of a specific audience.

Completed



2. Extent:

Though not every author does this, it is wise to also think at this stage about the extent of the book – the approximate number of pages you expect the final product to fill. The reasons for doing this are:

- a. Once you know how many pages, you can estimate how many words and reward yourself with milestones along these lines.
- b. You can set a completion date and divide up the task more easily.
- c. If you're writing in a genre like children's picture book stories, the number of pages becomes quite critical to the costings and thereby to the chance of making money – for some binding options you will need to write in multiples of four pages. Allow for the necessary introductory pages such as the title page and contents page in your count.
- d. You won't have to edit out a lot of extraneous content later on if you produce a reader-friendly book of a sensible length. We have been offered books of *War and Peace* length but without the enduring themes that made such a huge book viable. A good novel is usually in the range of 40-80,000 words.

Completed

3. Depth:

Knowing the size of the book you are writing helps to define the audience – a shorter fiction book is usually for a quick-read audience; commuters, magazine readers, or less enthusiastic readers who read more for the topic (eg: cowboy, erotic, romance, war stories). Long books tend to be for the more serious reader and therefore often suit explorations of deeper topics. Middle-length books suit crime, murder mystery, action, sci fi and so forth – genres that attract readers of a range of abilities, so it's not necessary to spend a lot of time on development of depth. There are of course, all the shades in between and plenty of exceptions to these guidelines. For example *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull* was very short, and *Watership Down* very long, when each, superficially at least, was an animal story. In fact, both contained considerable depth, but the former was able to share its message with a much wider audience due to its accessibility – both in terms of easiness to read and price, but they highlight to you the need to think. You may sell a lot more of a shorter book as the market is wider, but the price will be lower. You may sell a lot fewer of a longer book, but you may command an excellent price as those who seek the last word on a topic are usually prepared to pay for it.

Completed

4. Style:

Arising from this, think through exactly what type of book you will write. Is it going to be:

- a. Written in the first person or in the third person?
- b. Futuristic, historical or current?
- c. Worldly or imaginary?
- d. Illustrated? If so, how?
- e. Popular (light) or targeted (and deeper)?
- f. Fact-rich or research-independent in this regard?
- g. Primarily intended to be entertaining or enlightening?
- h. Free-flowing or academic in style?
- i. A tragedy, satire, comedy etc?

Completed

5. Format:

Think also of the format of the book you will print. Will the pages A4 size or A5? Or a different size altogether? Will the book be all black and white inside or contain some colour? Will it contain any pictures, diagrams, maps, photographs, codes, letters, emails etc that will need some additional consideration in the layup and design?

Completed



Plot

The next stage of the planning cycle involves developing the plot for the story. The plot is the core foundation upon which the entire work rests. By building this plot foundation carefully and well, the framework of the book will stand on a strong base and the book will frame up much more easily, just like framing up a house on a good foundation, as opposed to a poor one. A plot for a fictional work is the main storyline that runs through the work, and acts like the pencil sketch most artists do before they apply the paint – it is well buried by the time the work is completed, but has nonetheless acted as the strong underpinning guide upon which the picture is constructed.

Now that you have decided what sort of work you will write, it is time to work on your plot and on any additional narrative lines that will run through it to create interest for the reader. In a traditional episodic plot, the story progresses in chronological order from a beginning point from which the author begins to explain the story, through a middle and of course to a conclusion. Though a lot of modern literature varies significantly from such a straight linear flow of events – we shall explain some ways to make this happen shortly – nonetheless this is a good place and means with which to start.

There are no rules as to how long a time period should be described. A fictional work may cover many generations, or just a few hours and might conceivably even cover just a few minutes, especially in a children's story.

To develop a plot, you need first to realise that there is very little fiction that doesn't include a character or characters in difficulties of some form. There is no market for a story about nice contented people having a nice contented time. So first you need to think about a conflict or problem/s that your character/s might face.

Let's work on:

1. Brainstorm:

A fun and usually successful means of highlighting possible problems and related action for a book plot is to take the time to brainstorm for ideas. There are many ways to brainstorm. One way is to get a group of friends around and give each of them a pen and a pile of small slips of paper.

Tell them some background to the type of book you are looking to write, drawing on some of the thinking about style and audience you have already done. Then start with a topic such as 'problems a character fitting this genre might experience' and get them to write down anything they think of that relates to that topic, each on a separate slip of paper and call them out as they go. Ask them to throw each slip of paper with a single idea on it into the middle of the table and as they do, call out what they wrote.

Without spoiling the fun that this exercise can cause, make sure no-one makes judgement on anything that is called out. This is not the time for narrowing your focus – that comes later – but the time for letting minds have free rein.

As words are called out, others should be able to name associated ideas by mentally hitchhiking on the words being called out, so that by the time everyone runs dry of ideas, there is a good pile in the middle.

These can then be sorted and grouped in the process of searching for the key problem or problems that will form the core of your plot. You can of course use this same process on your own. It's just more fun and can take you across broader territory when done by a group.

Completed

2. Sort:

Repeat this brainstorming process as often as you like to develop lists for things like 'stunning openings that would grab a reader's attention from the start', 'novel solutions to a named problem', 'key events that might have led up to the main problem', 'interesting ways the story might end' and so on. This can be done at a single session or over several sessions with a sorting out (described below) between each.

Once you have a pile of ideas from a single brainstorming session, sort them into groups of like ideas. For example, if you were seeking a main 'problem' for your primary plot, you may find several descriptors that add to and augment the nature of the problem. These would be a string of smaller problems that, if they happened in close succession, could lead to a large problem. You may invite your group of friends to still be involved in the process as the discussion and divergence of thought that comes with this process will help you to clarify your thinking too. Once you have found the core problems and events that will form the main plot of your story you can move on.

Completed



3. Draw a plot plan/map:

Now is the time to start drawing up a plot map or plan. There are a range of ways of developing your plan, and these depend on the relative complexity of the piece of writing you expect to produce.

For a simpler piece of writing, use a large piece of paper or ideally a whiteboard, as you almost certainly will need to make changes as you go along. Alternatively cut up some pieces of card. Now, lay out your plot in a linear, chronological form in such a way and with such a degree of detail as to allow you to clearly see the beginning, middle and end of the main story. If you are using the cards approach, just write each main element of the flow of the story on a separate card and lay them out in a line. Don't worry too much about the how, who and where, at this stage, we'll come to that. Just get down the what.

Remember that you want the beginning to be a strong enough idea to make the story come alive right from the start. You want the suspense or tension (which need not be simply dramatic action – it may be interpersonal tension, sexual tension, or a general building sense of an impending problem coming to a head) to build throughout the story and the highest point of the story – the climax – to be near the end. It's up to you whether you finish with some further resolution beyond that point, or just leave it hanging for the reader to imagine. Once you have written the main events on the cards, you can fill in other cards to explain any gaps – how does the hero get from the top of the Empire State Building to the top of the Eiffel Tower?

Some writers, especially in a genre like murder mystery, prefer to start at the climax and work backwards to the beginning. The cards approach suits this way of working very well. Writers who choose this backwards approach find that it allows them to weave complexity (that mystery readers seek) and deceptive smokescreens into the plot that make guessing the outcome much more difficult for the reader. If this approach suits your genre better, then use it, or any other approach you feel works for you, so long as by the end you have achieved a map of the main activity running through the book.

Not all fiction can follow a distinct linear structure. In the case that you are attempting something more complex, such as a stream of consciousness work, you are advised to find a way of alternatively representing the general flow of the book so that what results is reasonably contained: otherwise you can create yourself a nightmare at the editing stage as you try to shape something formless into something attractive to readers.

Completed

4. Sub-plots:

Often in fiction, there are sub-plots that follow along beside the main plot or weave through it in some way, adding colour and interest. These may take many different forms; side stories, red herrings, love interest side-plots, stories within the story – twists and turns of all sorts. Think about what sub-plots you could attach to your main plot, and draw them in or add them in as cards – maybe use different colour cards so that you can remember how they relate to the main story, weaving them through the plan in such a way that they indicate at what point in the storyline they should be introduced and at what point they will terminate.

Completed

5. Folding your plot:

I like to think of the word 'folding' in this context as a bit like the term 'folding' used in cooking – a very gentle form of mixing aimed at retaining the essential qualities of each of the parts. Once you have your plot map and sub-plots worked out and in linear chronological order, you can consider adding texture to your work by the way you present it to the reader, bearing in mind that reading allows the reader to see only one view at a time. There are many ways of folding the story. Imagine cutting your linear map into pieces that cut across the storyline and then reassembling it in a different order. That is one way some writers present their work – some even start the first chapter with a glimpse of the climax and then fold back to tell the rest of the story that brings the reader back to this moment.

Some writers fold back and forth between the main storyline and the sub-plots or side stories, so that the reader reads a number of linear stories running side by side, occasionally cutting across one another, being entertained with a number of stories at once.

Yet others use a mix of these, or a range of other devices to create interest such as telling the same story but through a range of different eyes – we'll come back to that idea under People.



Some start a number of characters at different places and engaged in different activities which, as the story weaves onwards, gradually converge for the build-up to the climax. There are nearly as many ways you might fold your story as there are stories, so don't be afraid to experiment with several means. Take the time to get your planning right at this stage and it will make all the later stages a good deal easier and should greatly improve your final output.

If you are stuck, you can leave this stage at this point, and move on to the next parts of this planning process so that you know more about your characters, settings and themes before you come back to folding your plot.

Completed

6. Title Development:

If you haven't already done so, this is a good stage to start working more seriously on developing a working title for your book. This can be aided by using the friends brainstorming approach too. Tell them your target audience, style and your storyline so far, and have them brainstorm possibilities for a title. Using a computer thesaurus such as at www.thesaurus.com can also be useful at throwing up words you may wish to consider. Work away until you find a title you feel you like (remember that a publisher may want to change this to suit the market they know – if they are to spend their money, they usually want a say in this), then grab it with both hands. Feel excited about it. Hold tight to it. It is going to be with you for quite a while and you are going to grow quite attached to it. Now write a single sentence that you could use to tell a person what your book is about. Do that now and refine it until you have it in as few words as possible – ideally no more than twenty. Print the title and this guide sentence out large and put them on the wall above your writing area. They should help you to stay focussed through the following stages.

Completed

People

Now it is time to deal in more depth with the characters who will populate the pages of your book and perform the actions that, make the story come alive. The characters in a fiction work are very important as they are the central performers on the stage you have created with your plot. Can you think of any fiction work without characters? Perhaps the odd children's book where the actions of something inanimate, such as the wind, is described, but even then you will find that the wind becomes a character in the way the book is written. Without characters nothing would happen, and as a reader you would look at an empty stage – not very enticing.

The quality and depth of your characters and the way you convey them to your reader, are central to good fiction writing.

So let's consider your characters and how to build them:

1. Characters as real people:

For your characters to come alive for the reader it is important that they are a contiguous whole in the mind of the writer. Without that, there will usually be a lack of integrity in the things they do, the way they are described and the feelings they have, such that the audience will not find they can relate to them and the whole story becomes a failure. Whether a character is a protagonist or antagonist (and most good stories require at least one of each) or just a supporting player, the more alive they are to you, the more alive they will become as you write. People live and act the way they do for reasons, and unless you as a writer understand these about your characters, they will remain shallow and weaken your writing.

One very effective way to create strong characters is to develop their personal profile in depth. Following is a list of details to fill out about each main character, such that you really will know them as a person, and will be able to construct their dialogue, actions, settings, thoughts and choices in such a way as to portray the whole person. Fill this out now for each of the main characters in your story.

Completed



MAIN CHARACTER FORM

Full Name	
Reason why parents chose it	
Parents' names	
Brothers/sisters' names	
Nickname or shortening	
Where and when born	
Ethnicity	
Address	
Health and fitness	
Weight and height	
Personal features - describe	
Occupation	
Employing organisation if any	
Level	
Salary	
Skills	
Qualities	
Approach to life	
General way of being/mood/demeanour	
Tastes	
Education	
Likes	
Dislikes	
Morals and values	
Best experiences ever	
Worst experiences ever	
Hopes, dreams, fears	
Friends and partner/s (exs)	
Duration of relationship/where from/names/their view of your character	



2. Building character distinction through mannerism:

Once you have defined your characters, think about any mannerisms they are likely to have that may assist in distinguishing them, either through their dialogue or through their small actions (smoking, scratching, absent mindedness) as they operate. Choose any of these now, though don't overdo it.

Completed

3. Building characters through viewpoint:

At this point you should be ready to decide, if you haven't already done so, how the story is to be told; whose viewpoint the reader will see the action through. Because a book is not visual, the reader, has to learn that 'Sally slowly climbed the stairs to her room', or that the scene has changed. As writers, we need to supply the reader with a narrator, and often writers decide that this should be one or more of the characters in their story, though it is also quite valid to use a totally external observer – effectively the author – who observes either entirely dispassionately or in some cases with greater subjectivity, but who is not, as such, a character in the story. It is important to consider what is the best way to narrate your story for the genre of story it is.

If one or more of the characters are to narrate the story, then every word they utter and thought they have must be consistent with the character you have created. This sort of approach is well suited to stories about the emotional interactions between people and, well handled, can make for compelling reading as it shows up the way the same set of events can have a very different impact or motivation for different characters. If you are going to choose this way of narrating your story, however, you really need to do so from early on in the story and keep it consistent throughout.

You can create a character who is loosely related to the events, but observes them from a slight distance or from a distance in time – perhaps recounting a story at a later point in time. This is a powerful way of telling a story that progresses through a long period of time. Telling a story this way allows you to have your narrator make subjective comments about the other characters and events, which can assist in the deeper development of the characters and story.

Narrating in the third person is probably the most common manner of telling a story however, and leaves the readers to make their own judgements about the characters. It also allows the author to easily jump from one scene of activity to another without further explanation – the 'eye of god' approach, seeing all.

If you are intending to tell the story through the viewpoint of any one or more of your characters, decide now, and revisit your plot story board, looking for potential problems – eg: are there any scenes where the storytelling character can't see the action? If so, work out how you can fix that and amend your plot now.

Completed

4. Capture everything:

As a writer it is always wise to carry a notebook as a tool for your ongoing research. This is especially useful when defining your characters. Characters will come to life much more when the little things about their being are subtly revealed through good writing. Observe others as you go through your days and jot down any snatches of dialogue, actions, looks, clothing, accessories, responses that might be useable by any of your characters. Build a database of these for later reference as you write.

Completed

Places

Next you need to consider, in close detail, the scenes in which you will set your story. These, like the stages of a play, can have a great deal of influence on the richness of the read, and a well-set scene is a great aid to readers and to their enjoyment of your writing.

Let's consider the main issues:

1. How many scenes?

Now that the characters and plot of your work are established, you should be able to go to the plot and work out how many scenes you will have in your story.



A simple approach is to use coloured sticky dots (white dots with coloured felt pen on them works fine) to mark each scene change and, when a scene is revisited, use the same colour again. For each colour, note down the scene that will need describing.

Completed

2. Building characters and impact through places:

Before finalising the nature of any of the scenes, take a moment to consider the capacity of a scene to assist in the building of character and impact. Part of the huge success of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* was surely the fact that there were so many fascinating scenes described in the book and of course the lead characters' knowledge about each scene was part of the development of their characters as experts in their field.

Take a second moment now to look at the list of scenes you have created and asterisk any that have the potential to either help define a character (eg: a character's living room) or help enhance the action (eg: a fight scene on the top of a mountain is always going to be more interesting to a reader than the same fight scene in a field, and of course, one also has to consider the potential film rights). Mark these scenes in particular.

Completed

3. Scene scope:

Now take each scene and apply the following list to it to assist in your description. You may not use all of the prompts and you may in fact add more of your own, but in the act of passing your scene through the correct list, you should create the detail that will make your later writing more powerful and certain. It will also limit editorial problems that can easily occur when you write without planning, particularly on longer projects. Some scenes may appear several times in the book and even change over time (eg: a bomb goes off in a room, or a character brings something in or takes something away in an earlier scene) and knowing what was there to start with will enable better management of description of the scene as it changes.

Completed



INDOOR SCENE

Scene Number	
Location	
Address	
Is this scene widely known?	
Describe building	
Street	
Activity	
Describe general layout of room	
Draw plan	
Describe entry door/handle	
Furniture as viewed from door	
What's on each item of furniture?	
Drawers and cupboards – describe location and what's in them	
What else is in the room? (Living? Inanimate larger than an apple. Inanimate smaller than an apple)	
Floor covering	
Describe windows	
Window coverings	
Ambient light	
State of cleanliness	
State of tidiness	
Signs of regular habitation/use	
Smell	
Aeration	
General feel (damp, warm, happy)	
Significance of any special items (eg: bed, jewellery box, postcard)	
Other notes	



OUTDOOR SCENE

Scene Number	
Location	
Address	
Is this scene widely known?	
Looking in what direction?	
Position of sun / time of day	
Weather (sun, rain, wind, temperature, other)	
Describe view	
Signs of activity (domestic, commercial, other)	
Buildings (age, construction, arrangement, significance, use)	
Describe the ease of passage (trees and gardens, scrub and undergrowth, fences and ditches, roads, paths and tracks, waterways and accessways or crossings, substrate and texture, eg: mud)	
Topography	
Draw plan	
What else is living in the scene?	
What other inanimate features (eg: rocks, hills, sea, streams) are in the scene?	
What is hidden from where you stand?	
Is there history here?	
Describe what the place is/has been in the past	
How is this still evident today?	
Light level	
State of cleanliness	
State of tidiness	
Signs of regular habitation/use	
Smell	
General feel (bustling, lonely, isolated)	
Other notes:	



4. Scene research:

If there is any scene which is likely to be widely known, then there are easy ways to be able to describe the scene without actually having to go there and some simple research will fill in most of the details you need.

Libraries often have travelogues such as the *LonelyPlanet* guides that give good descriptions, as well as picture books that show many places of the world. Many of these are also accessible on the Internet, often by just entering an address in a city. Some of the large encyclopaedia sites like www.wikipedia.com also carry a good amount of information about many places of interest including pictures, and of course you can do a flyover with maps and satellite photos through www.googleearth.com on almost anywhere on earth, but the most popular places also carry a large amount of additional information too – well worth looking at.

There are also many webcams you can reach and view live action around the world, and tourist centres that have many pictures. Film and television files are often available for access and viewing on the web and these can carry a great deal of useful information that will save you having to travel to every scene you describe.

Last, but far from least, there are the people who live there who you can access through the Internet. Search by the locality and use the 'contact us' link on any website that seems to harbour a business or resident of the area. Explain the scene that you are trying to describe and ask for their assistance. It is amazing how helpful people will be to a writer seeking information.

Completed

Premises

Last in the planning phase comes the task of ensuring the weaving into your plot of any symbols, themes or underpinning premises that you wish to convey through the work. Sometimes these are overt symbols and sometimes more subtle but by thinking them through with some care before you start writing you can often sharpen thematic significance and keep yourself awake to possibility once the words pour forth in the writing phase.

1. Building character through symbols:

You have designed your characters, and this is the time to think in terms of the things that symbolize the sort of person each is and the sort of life quest they are on. What is each character searching for – it could be retaining or returning to the perfect world where everyone behaves themselves and justice is pure, safety and security for a character and their child, recognition for the quality of the work they do even though they are unconventional in the way they do it, acceptance in a world that has thus far proven to be unaccepting of their way of being . . . you've probably read books with each of these underpinning premises.

Once you have decided what these motivations are for each of your characters, you can go back to your plot and character descriptions and add anything that may be worthwhile to help carry that through. For example, if the lead character is questing for a better world, then a repeated setting in the story may move from being a winter scene in the grim early stages of your unfolding drama, to spring or even summer as the resolution is achieved. In this instance, these seasons carry symbolic value and symbolize your character's changing personal state – from oppression to freedom. While seasons are an obvious device, there are probably thousands of other symbols you could use in addition or instead to symbolize this same idea – poor clothing to well dressed, inability to speak to finding a voice, a lost relationship is restored; even a parallel symbol might be used, such as a cat that remains sick throughout the turmoil becomes better as the turmoil ends... you name it, it can be used.

Add your character-building symbols now, but be careful not to overwork them.

Completed

2. Enduring themes and premises:

Now repeat this process with any enduring themes that you wish to weave into the book. These may be such things as 'care of environment brings rewards', 'you have to take the rough with the smooth', 'crime never pays', 'love conquers all' or whatever your heart desires. Again look at your plot for opportunities to add symbols (these could even be scene changes or character additions or alterations) that assist you to convey this message in subtle ways throughout the story, or at least by its completion.



This sort of symbol is again open to a great variety of possibilities but below is a short list of ideas that you can draw from or expand on if you are struggling for ideas;

Rough sea becomes smooth/sun comes out	- troubles end
Storm arrives/night descends/fog creeps in	- troubles begin
Young girl vs old woman	- innocence and knowledge
Buds to blossoms	- passing of innocence
Country overrun by city	- degradation of nature
A river changes colour	- degradation of nature
Tree grows through a crack in the pavement	- nature fights back
A bird arrives and sings in empty tree	- nature returns
Fire sweeps away a building	- cleansing
Animals	- lion/pride/menace – rat/stealth/dirt
A bridge fallen	- an opportunity/lost or cut off

Completed

3. Signposting:

Signposting is the art of making enough direction within the text (without telling) so that the reader is comfortable about where you take them in your word journey and why. A story is killed if there is a big situation built up and then a new and totally unexpected character emerges from nowhere, for example, and solves the whole thing. Readers hate it and it shouldn't happen. You must have the reader happily accompany you, understanding at each point how a new place relates to the story, why it is necessary to go there and how it relates to what's to come. They must soon know who is involved in the story, why they are important and what role they are expected to play (even if they later surprise us by being other than they first appeared to be).

You must always remember that it's easy for you to know what you're thinking about but the art of good writing is not to leave your reader stranded, wondering how they got to where they are, who a new character is, why they've suddenly appeared or what they are doing there.

You should set up signposts before any major happening occurs, whether it is the arrival of a new character, an event, the movement of the story to a new place or the use of some significant item in the story. You don't need to be exceptionally overt about this, but just ensure that you leave your reader comfortable throughout.

At this point, return to your plot and add any detail that is necessary to ensure that all characters, events, places and key items that appear later on in the story are signposted in some way before they appear.

Completed

4. Chapterise:

Finally, draw a line through your plot map to define the content of each chapter and then write a brief (2-4 sentence) chapter outline for the content of each chapter. Use chapter titles if you wish, though it is less common to do so these days.

Completed

Conclusion

At this stage you are ready to begin writing and your planning is well advanced. The plot and character documents you have developed should nonetheless still be regarded as living things, inclined and able to grow and develop as you write.

Remember, when you are a writer, it is a constant help to read other works – not necessarily on the same topic, but of the same style at least. As you do so your ever more experienced eye will pick up on more and more detail which will help to hone your skills.

Now, get writing!

