Novel Writing Suggestions by Debra Spearman

Are you interested in writing a novel? Here are some basic suggestions.

1. Writing is a process. Some writers plan their entire story before they begin writing. Some writers have a general idea of the story and figure out the individual scenes as they write. Determine the process that works for you.

2. The one thing that is absolutely necessary is a large central problem (conflict) that must be resolved. A good beginning is just a beginning without an entire story. The story must be moving toward the climax and the resolution of the conflict. Smaller problems along the way add to the conflict. If a scene doesn't help to develop that central conflict, then it doesn't belong in the novel.

3. The novel is written in scenes. Each scene leads toward another, building the tension.

4. Be careful with description. Add enough description so that the reader can "picture" the scene and "see" the action that is happening. Too much description will bog down the pace of the story.

5. You, the writer, will know more about the characters and the back story than your readers need to know. Decide what your reader needs to know in order to tell the story that you want to tell without slowing down the pace. Also realize that this back story does not all need to be told in the beginning of the novel. Work the background material in as needed. Some of it can be told through dialogue between characters.

6. Use believable dialogue. Have your characters speak the way actual people talk. We don't always use complete sentences. We interrupt each other. Listen to how people talk and imitate that with the dialogue of your characters.

7. Now Write! Begin anywhere in your story. You can put the action in order later. Or if you prefer, start at the beginning. Find the process that works for you.

8. Revise – more than once! And get someone to edit for you.

Remember the Basics of a Good Story

The Central Problem
Introduce early (Inciting Incident)
Build with scenes involving Characters
Complicate with scenes involving Characters
Resolve all Conflicts at the End

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