

Revision: Micro- and Macro-Managing Your Manuscript for Minor Revisions and Major Surgery

Presented by Robin L. Perini

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“Good novels aren’t written. They’re rewritten and revised.” — Jack M. Bickham

I. REVISION

- a. Macro Management - The Big Stuff
- b. Micro Management - The Little Stuff

II. MACRO MANAGEMENT

- a. Identify the Story Question – the anchor to keep you grounded as you revise
 - i. Identify Protagonist/Antagonist
 - ii. What's your protagonist/antagonist's goals (Long Range and Short Range)?
 - iii. Why do they want it and how badly do they want it?
 - iv. What's the conflict with the antagonist?
 - v. Sample Story Question

_____ **must** _____ **by** _____
Your Critical Plot Goal Conflict with the
Protagonist Antagonist

Only to Realize _____
What the Character Learns about life that helps him/her change his goal during the journey of the book.

EXAMPLE: Jacob Marshall **must** avenge his father's honor **by** implicating Serena Jones' father, **only to realize** revenge often hurts the innocent.

b. Know and Use Your Theme

- i. Anchors Your Book
- ii. The Quick and Dirty Way to Figure Out Your Theme: The epiphany of your protagonist is the theme of your book. (Know your Protagonist and Antagonist)
 1. Protagonist: the person who grows and changes the most.
 2. Antagonist: who or what drives that change.
- iii. Test the emotional emphasis of your story by testing your character's main drive
 1. Identify the protagonist's character flaw/internal conflict (based on emotion)
 2. _____ (protagonist) will [now or eventually] have to face and get past that he/she NEEDS/BELIEVES/FEARS _____.

iv. Test Your Theme

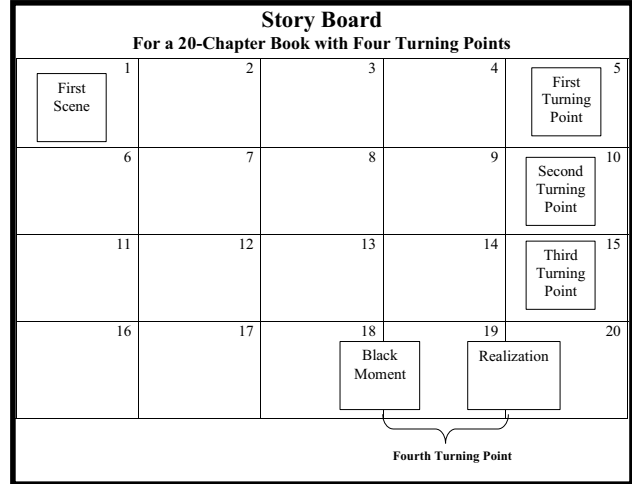
1. List of five: Title, first line, last line, sentence or passage with the most unusual or significant detail, most important line. (Thanks Bruce Ballenger & Barry Lane, "Discovering the Writer Within")

c. Character and Plot Arcs

i. Book Arcs, Turning Point Arcs, Chapter Arcs

ii. Scene Arcs

1. Purposes of Scenes: Exposition, Character, Conflict, Plot
2. Scene & Sequel
3. Point of View



d. Character – The Key to a Great Story

i. “*Story is Character.*

Character is Story.” — Robert McKee

ii. Character vs. Characterization

1. Characterization - Sum total of observable traits and qualities.
2. Character - Deep true nature of your character, revealed by making choices under pressure.
3. *It always comes back to the same necessity: go deep enough and there is bedrock of truth, however hard.* — May Sarton

iii. Character Elements and Growth (Character Grid – Discovering Story Magic)

1. Inciting Incident - on the road to change
2. Long Range Goal - self concept meets innermost dreams
3. Short Range Goal - beginning goal of character's first scene
4. Character Flaw - barrier of making him/her best they can be
5. Relationship Barrier - barrier to relationships with others
6. Black Moment - the worst that can happen to the character
7. Realization - what the character learns

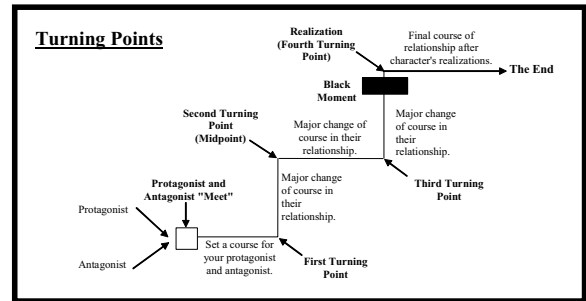
iv. Secondary Characters and Villains

1. The villain is the personification of your protagonist's flaw and takes advantage of the protagonist's flaw. (i.e. the real danger to your protagonist is their flaw)
2. Take advantage of secondary characters to layer theme

e. Plot – Braid with Character for Maximum Impact

- i. Escalating Turning Points
- ii. Escalating Scenes
- iii. The Beginning Delivers the End

Chapter	Story Day/Time	Plot	Conflict
1			
2			



iv. Plot/Conflict Chart

1. Visual tool for gauging emphasis of plot and conflict
2. Forces logical progression of plot to conflict to plot
3. Use to analyze books for a sense of the ratio.

III. Micro Management

"In simplicity lies power."—Sandra Canfield

- General Rules
 - Keep it Concise and Specific
 - Keep it Logical
- Four Steps
 - Emotions, Details and Deep Point of View
 - Words
 - Overall Rhythm and Flow
 - Is it compelling?
- Step 1 – Emotions and Details
 - Actions don't drive the story. Actions drive emotions, emotions drive the story. (Laura Baker)
 - Show, don't tell emotions
 - Choose significant details based on emotion, not research
 - Deep Point of View
 - It's the character who tells the story, not the author.
 - Imagery based in character
 - Watch out for 's/he felt,' 's/he thought,' 's/he saw,' 's/he wondered,' 's/he realized...
- Step 2 - Words
 - Analyze for **Weak Sentences**
 - The big tip off to weak sentences is weak verbs and excessive use of adverbs. Don't say *walked quickly*, say *raced*. Search for any forms of the verb *to be*. Chances are you can rearrange the sentence making it stronger. (*is an example of* becomes *illustrates*)
 - Look for verbs hidden in prepositional or other phrases. (*the level of consumption decreased* becomes *consumption decreased*)
 - Look for strings of prepositional phrases. (*the possession of a new car* becomes *a new car*)
 - Choosing precise verbs and nouns gives the reader a better picture and reads more clearly. (*walked slowly* becomes *shuffled* and

sturdy tree becomes *oak*, *this* and *that* are replaced by specific nouns.)

5. Avoid intensifying adverbs. Very, just, conclusively. These words diminish your verb. If you choose the right verb, you don't need these words.
6. Avoid relative clauses. Again, the key here is to make it concise. (*She fiddled with the pearl necklace that she wore.* becomes *She fiddled with her pearl necklace.*)
7. Avoid redundancy. (*finally finished* becomes *finished*)
8. Modifiers. They can cause problems, and many times they aren't necessary. *Actually, interestingly, only, just, etc.* The best example of misplacement of modifiers I've come across is in a tape from the 1992 National RWA Conference on Deciphering Rejection and Self-Editing.

Original Sentence: I hit him in the eye yesterday.

- **Only** I hit him in the eye yesterday. (Nobody else hit him.)
 - **Only**, I hit him in the eye yesterday. (He was going to give me a million dollars until I went and did that.)
 - I **only** hit him in the eye yesterday. (I didn't do anything else to him, I don't know why he was so perturbed.)
 - I hit **only** him in the eye yesterday. (Nobody else got socked.)
 - I hit him **only** in the eye yesterday. (I refrained from hitting him anywhere else, which was very noble.)
 - I hit him in the **only** eye yesterday. (He has one eye, and I got it.)
 - I hit him in the eye **only** yesterday. (My how time flies when you're having fun.)
 - I hit him in the eye yesterday **only**. (Other days I picked on other body parts.)
- ii. **Use superlatives sparingly.** Best, most, worst, saddest, happiest, exclamation points are strong emotional triggers and using them often tends to detract from key emotional scenes. If your hero is the best, most in chapter one, where do you go from there?
 - iii. **Information Repetition.** Once you say something in dialogue, you don't need to repeat the fact in the narrative.
 - iv. **Word repetition.** Unique phrases of description should be used two to three times in the entire manuscript at the most. The more striking the phrase, the less you should use it.
 - v. **Clichés.** Get rid of them unless you're using them in dialogue for a particular reason. Each character should evoke their own particular imagery.
 - vi. **Dialogue Tags.** Less can be more, unless you combine the tag with movement.
 - vii. Make sure your most important phrase in a paragraph or sentence or chapter is **Last**. However, you also need to avoid explaining too much.
 - viii. **Don't trust your spell checker.** Is it form or from? Enough said.

- ix. *Show don't Tell*; but sometimes *Tell, Don't Show*
- x. *Take breaks*. When you're editing for word usage, it's important to take frequent breaks and to come at the process refreshed.
- xi. *Practice on other people's work*. Whether it's a book you just bought or a critique partner's manuscript, editing other's work gives you a good sense of the attitude you must take to your own manuscript.
- xii. Understand the Elements of *Style* and Develop Your Own *Voice*
 - 1. Writing and finding your own authority helps in developing voice.
 - 2. Great Resource—Laura Baker's "Magic of Style" article in the LERA Writer's Guide. The following four examples come from this article.
 - 3. Parallel Structure
 - a. *Twenty-seven years of propriety were no match for several hundred thousand years of instinct.*
— OUTLANDER, Diana Gabaldon
 - 4. Simile
 - a. *"John's pale lips shifted in a smile that was colder than the stones of the keep."* — UNTAMED, Elizabeth Lowell
 - 5. Metaphor
 - a. *Scots thanes, Saxon nobles, Norman aristocracy, and knights of all kinds mixed together with the wariness of wild animals forced into unaccustomed closeness by a spring flood.*
— UNTAMED, Elizabeth Lowell
 - 6. Allusion
 - a. *Luke remembered his father's description of Justine-Boadicea in her knife-wheeled chariot ready to take on the Romans and anyone else who got in her way.* — FAMILY MAN, Jayne Ann Krentz
- e. Step 3 – Rhythm and Flow
 - i. Read Aloud to yourself or into a tape recorder
 - ii. Vary sentence length and structure to create emphasis
 - 1. Short sentences escalate tension
 - 2. Short paragraphs escalate tension and pace
- f. Step 4 – Compelling (From Susan Elizabeth Phillips)
 - i. Does the story grab the reader and not let them go?
 - ii. Do a read-through JUST for 'Is this story compelling?'

IV. Conclusion

- a. Micro Management and Macro Management work together.
- b. Don't Edit out the Passion
 - i. Let your Voice Shine Through.
 - ii. It's YOUR story.

*"I've rewritten—often several times—every word I have ever published.
My pencils outlast their erasers."*—Vladimir Nabokov

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Published in short, nonfiction and a sought-after speaker across the country, Robin Perini is a five-time finalist of the prestigious Romance Writers of America Golden Heart Award. She was on the committee that produced the first edition of the LERA Writer's Guide, an instructional book for writers that has been recommended by Writer's Digest books. She completed her MBA in Management of Technology in May, 2008 at the University of New Mexico. Robin is a strategic planner and software systems developer specializing in internet architecture. She also uses her skills as a web site designer in her own business, Web Magic & More. Her online workshop with Laura Baker (Discovering Story Magic) has been praised nationwide and worldwide for the unique and personalized brainstorming the class offers. She writes contemporary romance, romantic suspense and paranormal romance.

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BACKLIST

The LERA Writer's Guide • ISBN 0-9660063-0-5