

# OPENING PAGE CHECKLIST

*4-Must-Haves To Hook Your Reader*





# #1

## STRONG SENSE OF PLACE/SETTING

Ground the reader. It's important to state the date (month and year help so we know if it's summer in Las Vegas or Christmas in New York). Setting can be a character in its own right and will inform how the reader interprets the rest of the action.

Think the "*Wizarding World of Harry Potter*" or the gothic thriller "*Crimson Peak*". Both worlds give a sense of wonder, darkness and mystery. The tone and ambiance, old castles and dilapidated mansions, and even clothing, give the reader an immediate sense of what's to come.

# #2

## CHARACTER(S) THAT GRIP

The character is the vehicle with which we perceive the story. Having a strongly written and engaging character is often enough to reel the reader in. If we care about them, we will turn the page to see what happens to them next. This can be achieved by using a very distinct voice, character quirk, flaw, riveting motivation/goal, or having them react to something important. Having the character deal with a big decision for example, creates gripping action and immediately bonds the character and reader.





# #3

## IMMEDIATE PROBLEM/SECRET

The character is faced with a problem or is keeping a juicy secret which automatically creates tension and pacing. It makes the reader worry for the character and therefore invest their interest into the world. If everything in page one is shiny and happy it's a bit harder to turn the page because there's no sense of urgency. We know we can put the book down because everything's okay.

# #2

## BALANCE WHAT YOU REVEAL TO THE READER AND WHAT YOU HOLD BACK

What details do the readers absolutely need to know to properly place them inside your tale and what can be left out (either entirely or for later in the story)? A lot of writers fall into the backstory trap and want to fill a first page with details about the character's past. Even if these things are relevant, it's more engaging to learn about the character in an active scene, while weaving backstory in as you go. The reader will piece all the details together and your story will be stronger for it.

*Reference:*

*Kelly Charron, author of Pretty Wicked and Wicked Fallout*

