

Checklist for Critiquing a Novel

- Conflict
 - Does your story begin with some sort of conflict—either internal or external?
 - Does the beginning set up the bigger “conflict” of the entire novel, the issue that drives your protagonist toward his/her end goal?
 - Is your protagonist conflicted or is embroiled in some external conflict?
 - Are there too many conflicts going on in the book? Too few?
 - Is there an overarching conflict present in the story that is key to the premise and grows to a climax and resolution?
 - Does your protagonist face one conflict or obstacle after another (each worse than the previous) that force him/her to have to make a tough decision(s)?
 - Does the conflict serve the interest of the story or is it just thrown in the book for excitement?
- Plot
 - Does the overall plot come across clearly in the novel?
 - Is the plot goal for the book laid out from the start and does it resolve at the end of the book satisfactorily?
 - Are there subplots in the book that work with the main plot? Are they also resolved?
 - Are the setting, locale, time of year, date, etc., clearly and consistently developed?
 - Is it easy to follow the passage of time from scene to scene?
 - Are the scenes strung together in a cohesive fashion and drive the plot?
 - Are there scenes in the book that do not serve the plot and don’t seem to have a point?
 - Is the plot interesting and engaging? Are the themes and issues touched on in the plot universal elements that readers will relate to?
- Pacing
 - How does the pacing of the story feel? Does the book drag in spots due to excessive narration or from uninteresting scenes?
 - Is the writing over-wordy or vague, slowing down the pace of the scenes?
 - Are sentences too long and/or repetitive?
 - Are the scenes moving at a good clip to keep interest or do they need trimming?
 - In faster action scenes, does the pace speed up with shorter sentences and paragraphs?
- Tension
 - Is tension created at the outset of the book?
 - Is the protagonist compelling enough to heighten tension by the reader caring about him/her?
 - Are scenes adeptly left hanging in order to create tension?