

Big Picture Revision (Part one of two) Linda Clare Novel Writing

After the cooling off period, you'll be ready to begin the revision process. Your novel is a labor of love and you've put lots of effort into your draft. But now the real fun begins.

BIG PICTURE REVISION means examining your work for structural, character and other elements that may need improvement.

Can your novel pass the Big Picture test?

- ❖ **Characters** Are they convincing? Fully three-dimensional? Distinct and different from each other?
- ❖ **Plot** Is your story arc logical? Does your story develop naturally, in an organic way or is it contrived or convenient for the author?
- ❖ **Structure** Does your format (age group, length, first-person, third person) enhance the story or does it limit the story?
- ❖ **Freshness** Is your approach to your subject original and engaging?
- ❖ **Theme** Is your theme in-your-face or more subtle? Do your characters, plot and structure contribute to the theme?
- ❖ **Marketability** Who are your readers? Could you make your story's appeal broader or more universal, or if necessary, more specialized?

Answer our "three questions" test and see how much your ideas have changed since the beginning of class.

1. What does your character want more than anything? **Desire**
2. What (whom) stands in your character's way? **Obstacles**
3. What is your character willing to do to get what he/she wants? **Sacrifice**

Big Picture Fixes

Storyboard your scenes. Are there spots where your action sags (too much narration or exposition), or scenes that zip by too quickly for the scene's importance? Plan to add, lengthen, shorten or delete scenes to tighten/slow down the pace.

Plant, set-up or foreshadow events early in the story. Look for places to insert hints, foreshadowings or other "plants" so the reader will see a logical build-up.

Map out Subplots. Your subplots should overlap each other in a natural way. Look for gaps (too long since subplot mentioned) or frequency (subplot threatens to take over) and adjust.

Character assassination. Secondary "supporting" characters sometimes upstage or take over a story. And sometimes they don't pull their weight. Ask yourself if this character needs a smaller part, needs to be the POV main character. In the most extreme cases, ask yourself if a character needs to die.

Round Up the Horses. After your climax, you'll want to tie together all the loose ends of your story, including subplots, what happens to characters, and at least an impression of whether the main character is satisfied, dissatisfied or apathetic about the outcome. If your novel passes these tests, it's a sign the story has "good bones." Now proceed to the Little Picture revisions.