

Write Your Bestseller Book

Master the Secrets of Writing a Bestselling Blockbuster Novel!

When you understand the formula for crafting a bestseller, then you know where to focus your energies in writing one. The trick lies in mastering all four crucial elements.

- grabber opening
- sympathetic protagonist
- compelling plot
- wowser ending

One: a grabber opening sentence, paragraph, page and chapter

Readers want to be transported into a different world. Your first sentence and paragraph must entice them into your universe. Whether you do it with guns blazing or a soft caress doesn't matter. Just make sure your opening beguiles your reader to want to know more.

- In the *Odyssey*, Homer shows us his protagonist, a man “skilled in all ways of contending, a wanderer, harried for years on end” whose recent exploit was having “plundered the stronghold on the proud height of Troy.”
- Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* begins: “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.”
- Raymond Chandler’s *The Big Sleep* starts with a slew of specific details about the day and his main character. The opening paragraph ends with: “I was everything the well-dressed private detective ought to be. I was calling on four million dollars.”

Intriguing? You betcha. Each of these openings offers a glimpse into the world the reader is about to enter. For more wonderful examples of great opening lines, do a Google™ search for “Best Opening Lines Fiction”.

Once you capture your readers’ attention in the opening paragraph, **keep them intrigued through that vital first page and first chapter.**

Two: a sympathetic protagonist

Your readers must like your hero—or they won't read your book. How do you create a sympathetic protagonist? By giving your hero an underlying goal that strikes a chord with the reader. Take Harry Potter. What makes him so appealing? He's an underdog fighting for recognition. David facing Goliath.

Or Indiana Jones. Sure, those stories have spectacular struggles with big goals and formidable opponents. But if Indie were less likable, would the movies have been such a success? As a professor, Indie leads a boring life—so he plunges into exotic adventures in far-off, dangerous lands pursuing strange artifacts and getting entangled with beautiful women. If he were arrogant or ruthless, we wouldn't like him—but he's hampered by being an honorable guy. So, what's the bottom line? Indie is an honorable guy escaping boredom by pursuing adventure.

Your hero must have a goal, something she wants more than life itself. **Dig deep into your protagonist's inner psyche** and find the core value that forms her emotional backbone.

Three: a compelling plot

It's not enough for your hero to have a goal. **Your protagonist must struggle** throughout your story. While specific objectives can evolve over the course of the book, his fundamental goal needs to stay constant—something the reader can express in one sentence.

For example: Hamlet wants to avenge his father's murder.

Each scene of your book must contain a mini struggle to achieve a specific objective your hero thinks will get him closer to reaching his core goal. Otherwise, it has no place in your story.

Four: an emotionally satisfying ending

There are only three kinds of endings: **the hero wins, loses, or quits** her struggle to attain her core goal.

What makes an ending emotionally satisfying? Just as the protagonist's inner character must be attuned with some universal human yearnings, your ending needs to confirm a reader's deeply held value.

The typical Hollywood ending is satisfying because it proclaims that “good guys win”. However, readers often want something more nuanced. So for example, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* ends with a qualified win: Indiana Jones saves the day, but the ark is wheeled off into a vast warehouse, its danger still lurking among all those unmarked, anonymous crates.

Tragedies often have a “yes but you pay a high price” ending. MacBeth wins his quest to become king—at the cost of losing everything he values as well as life itself. Hamlet succeeds in exposing his uncle Claudius’ guilt and in avenging his father’s murder, but everyone winds up dead as a result of his obsessive actions.

Endings where the hero loses are tough to make emotionally satisfying. That’s why they are so rare. Basically, a “hero loses” scenario needs to be paired with an epiphany. In other words, the hero must realize his goal was flawed, and losing that goal transforms into a win on a deeper level.

When the hero quits, it’s usually a classic sacrifice type of ending. In *Casablanca*, Rick wins his goal: Ilsa leaves her husband and comes to him. But Rick decides that their happiness together “doesn’t amount to a hill of beans” in comparison to the world’s larger needs—and her husband Victor cannot succeed in his vital work without her. So Rick puts her on the plane with Victor and walks off into the rain with Captain Renault, his new ally in the fight against the Nazis.

Caveat

Does following these “rules” guarantee that your next book will be a bestseller?

No. It’s impossible for anyone to provide such a guarantee. However, improving your writing in accordance with these principles is your best shot at attracting a wider audience and—sooner or later—becoming a best-selling author.

Why Use a Writing Coach?

Understanding the guidelines for writing a bestseller is easy.

Applying them effectively is more of a challenge. That’s why there are no child prodigies in writing, the way there are in, say, music or chess.

There are four basic methods of learning about writing:

- read some books (and articles, magazines, ezines, blogs...)
- take classes (in person or online)
- get feedback from readers (and fellow writers)
- hire a coach

Each is valuable at different stages of one's career. For beginners, reading books and taking classes are your best and fastest means of developing your craft. Later, getting feedback from people who read—and write—your genre is invaluable. All too often, things you're sure were obvious turn out to be murky to your readers.

The most vital feedback comes from agents, editors and publishers who can get you paid for your writing. But until you have risen above 90% of your peers, replies to submissions are usually a polite, "Does not meet our needs at this time." Be grateful for anything more specific than that; the person wants to encourage you!

What a Coach Can Provide

A writing coach can assess your writing strengths and weaknesses—and show you how to progress. Here's a sample of things you can learn from a coach's assessment:

- Do you create memorable characters?
- Does your dialogue sing?
- Do your characters have unique voices or do they all sound alike?
- Are your scenes fast-paced and exciting = filled with tension?
- Have you put the reader inside your protagonist's skin or are you describing the action at arm's length?
- Are your pages bogged down with exposition?

And of course, when problems show up in these and other areas, a coach can teach you how to improve.

My Mission as a Writing Coach

My passion is to *help you succeed* as a writer—to improve your tradecraft so you will attract fans who read not just your first or next book, but become avid readers of all your books and tell their friends to read them too!

That's why I identified these four core pillars for writing a bestseller. They form the foundation of my coaching practice.

- compelling plot
- sympathetic protagonist
- grabber opening
- wowser ending

Of these four, the conclusion is the most vital. How many times have you enjoyed reading a book, only to be disappointed at the end? Personally, I quit reading Zelazny because his *Amber* series had no endings—only cliffhangers for his next book.

For more information, visit **WriteYourBestsellerBook.com**.