

Two Buckets of Self-Editing

Presented by Sheila Athens, Author and Book Coach – SheilaAthens.com

Marco Island Writers Group – January, 2020

Bucket #1: Big Picture Elements

- What's the **Point (Lesson)** o the story?
- How does the protagonist **Change** throughout the story?

“A story is how the **things that happen** affect **someone** in pursuit of a **difficult goal**, and how they **change internally** as a result” – Lisa Cron’s definition of story from Story Genius.

- What is the book’s narrative **drive?** (what is the question the reader wants to know?)
- Does the protagonist have **agency?** (makes the decisions that create change)
- Does the reader stay deep inside the POV character’s **mind and heart** throughout the manuscript?
- Does the story **logic** make sense throughout the manuscript?

Bucket #2: Line-level Self Editing:

- Grounding the reader at the beginning of each scene and chapter
 - Where are we?
 - Who is here?
 - How much time has passed since previous scene?
- Ending each scene and chapter with a story **question.** (Build anticipation)
 - Note: This does not mean it has to have a literal question, but the scene must want the reader to think- “And so....?”
- Avoid distancing words (some samples below)
 - She **felt** She **heard** She **realized**
 - He **saw** He **watched** He **remembered**
- Hey Bob: Don’t have characters say things out loud **that everyone present in the scene already knows.** Example: room is full of siblings. “Hey Bob, my brother, what do you think of that?” Bob already knows he is your brother so you can’t say that.
- Physical details in place of **thoughts** or **emotions**
- In Dialogue: **One paragraph** per chapter.
- **One POV per scene** (Even better to keep one POVC per chapter.) No head hopping. Unless writing in **Omniscient POV**
- Telling vs. Showing (Another way to think of telling is **reporting.**)

Book Coaching vs. Developmental Editing

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A developmental editor generally works with a manuscript that **has already been completed**.

A book coach usually works with a **manuscript in progress**. A book coach serves as a **guide**, a **cheerleader**, a **project manager**, and an **accountability Partner** and **editor**.

A book coach can also work – and often **does** work – in a developmental editor capacity.

The different types of services a book coach can offer:

- Weekly or every-other-week feedback on 10 to 20 pages
 - Upfront feedback before the manuscript is written
 - Fiction: An outline or synopsis
 - Non-fiction: A proposal
 - Specialized help with query letters, synopses, Twitter pitches
 - Help brainstorm the story.
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- Manuscript evaluation on a completed manuscript
 - Manuscript evaluation + edit on a completed manuscript.

Other types of editors: Copy editors, proofreaders

My experiences with book coaches and developmental editors

How to tell if the person you are considering for hire as is qualified and/or will offer the help you need.

Where should your money go? Book Coach vs. Writing Conferences

Closing Q & A + Drawing

Drawing is for a complimentary edit of the first twenty-five pages of a work of fiction (excluding gore, horro or anything involving cruelty to humans or animals)