

PROPOSAL WRITING 102
Lesson 1 -- Go for the Jugular
By Susan M. Warren

Welcome to proposal writing 102, the class where we'll take our rough synopsis, and our three chapter samples and tie them together into a tidy, well-wrapped package.

First of all, I have to say kudos to Mary, who did an excellent job of giving you a proposal package overview. Her thorough class gave you a vision to shoot for and cut the daunting task into bite-size pieces. Bravo, Mary!

Mary went over passion, characters, premise and the components of a good proposal. I want to focus on the three main aspects of a proposal -- the synopsis, the sample chapters, and the query letter.

In Lesson One, I'm going to back you up and focus on the zinger of the package - the synopsis. That 3-5 page summary that will hopefully reach out to your reader, hook them, and suck them in until they can't put the page down. The synopsis is where you'll get their attention, hopefully long enough to move them into the sample chapter section. The synopsis is the editor/agent's first taste of you as a writer. You want to make it tasty, even addictive.

So, how does one create an intoxicating synopsis?

Lesson One: Go for the jugular.

Mary touched on passion in her early lessons - that simmer inside you that propels you to write. It may be an issue, an ache, an event. Whatever it is, it's caused you to put fingers to keyboard and conjure up a character. You care about him/her. You dream about him/her. Now, your job is to make the editor care, also.

How? Make your character **HURT**. Every character has a desire. If you're a GMC fan, then it is their **GOAL**. (I personally am a Getting into Character Fan, by our own Brandilyn Collins, and these concepts come from her book. If you don't have it, get it). What is their greatest desire? This is the question you must ask yourself before you even begin writing the synopsis, because without desire, you have no story. Secondly, **WHY** do they have that desire (Motivation)? Finally, what holds them back from this desire? What are their obstacles to fulfillment (Conflict)? And finally, what could you do to obliterate that desire (Black moment)? I mean, really be nasty. Make it hurt. Because if it is a **CHRISTIAN** book you want God to be there when he/she falls. You want them to see God in their lives through the darkness. You want Him to be the answer.

A good synopsis and story outline the desires, motivations, obstacles and black moments for each main character. And, if it is a Christian story, it will have some degree of redemption based on their deepest needs.

Which brings me to where I begin all my stories: On my knees, and in the Word. Before

you spend another moment at your keyboard, you should be asking God for His story. What is the theme HE has chosen? It might be from the study of the Word. It might be something He's recently done in your life. Mary touched on this when she mentioned that Francine writes stories about questions she wants answered. Before you begin writing your synopsis, you should have a spiritual theme, something to springboard from and keep you focused as you write. I usually pick a verse and paste it at the top of my computer. And then I condense the theme into a short, snappy sentence that I will use in my synopsis, query letter and any promo I do about the book.

For example: My book *Happily Ever After* is about the different sides of forgiveness and discovering the true meaning of delighting in God. And I used Ps 37:4.

How did I find that theme? I looked at my Character's deepest desire. To build a bookstore. I asked **WHY** She had that (her motivation). And digging deep I discovered that she was trying to atone for accidentally killing her father. So, what did she need more than anything? God's forgiveness. But she's a Christian! She's been forgiven, right? Yes. And no. She doesn't **FEEL** forgiven. So, the book is about believing in God's forgiveness as a part of delighting in Him. Hence: Ps 37:4.

You will have to dig deep into your characters desires, to find their deepest need, and then the way God will minister to them. Some writers I know work the **OPPOSITE** way. They start with **THEME** and create a character around it. Either way you want to do this if acceptable but you need to start your synopsis writing process with **THEME**. This is how you're going to get your editor/agent/reader to care. We identify with hurts. And we all long for salvation.

Your homework for Lesson One is:

Find your spiritual theme for your wip. Summarize it into one sentence and include a verse.

Tomorrow we will work on our characters desires. Come wearing your shrink hat!

Blessings,

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