

Eclecta Perennial Alpha/Beta Reader Feedback for:

Title: [your manuscript name] by [your name]

Word Count: [your wordcount] {this is what the cost is based on}

(Please note, my comments appeared as 'D Nohlmans' on your manuscript) {this is true if you shared via google docs}

Notes on Manuscript Annotations:

Most of my annotations are in the form of comments, though I had 'Track Changes' activated so you are able to easily see where I changed the text and accept/reject as you please. Where there were obvious and easily correctable typos, I corrected them for you. Occasionally I queried word choice, and that will appear as a comment with an alternate word or two with lots of question marks. Please note I come from Australia, so there might be differences in how we use certain words! Or it could be a personal taste thing. Anyway, feel free to ignore! I didn't generally line edit, but where I thought a sentence or paragraph needed attention, I flagged it with a comment. Sometimes I offered alternate wording if I could come up with it very quickly. Use/disregard my suggestions as you will.

Most of the comments are my reader reactions. Where something grabbed my attention for one reason or another, confused me, raised questions in my mind, or had me making guesses, I inserted a comment right at that moment. I hope you find these helpful! So, for example, if you want something to be more or less obvious, you could tweak the trickle of information. Picking up continuity and logic errors is also a strength of mine, so there are a few comments sprinkled in there to do with that too. Don't worry, no judgement! I've made embarrassing errors myself that I overlooked.

{The above is fairly standard for every author. If I have additional notes pertinent to your manuscript in particular, I will also note them here}

Opening Comments:

Opening thought, comments on title, other things that stood out as noteworthy.

{this is where I give my overall impressions and highlight anything that struck me or was done particularly well}

What follows in this feedback report are answers to some common beta reader questions (answered for *[your manuscript]*), my overall impressions of the novel, and what I see as the strengths of the manuscript and the areas to concentrate your revision energy on. Finally, I will compare the beat placement in your novel to those recommended in the *Save the Cat* story structure method and check the genre conventions and obligatory scenes against *The Story Grid* methodology.

I hope you find my analysis illuminating, and are able to springboard off the ideas and feedback to find solutions to any plot and arc problems. Thank you for trusting me with your manuscript. I feel privileged to have been able to be a part of getting your story out into the world.

Critique Questions:

At what point did you think, "Okay, now the story has *started!*"

- {I give my personal reader responses to each of these questions, spending more time on the ones that are most relevant to the manuscript. I often go into a fair bit of detail about potential solutions to any issues I noticed. I never just point out a problem without offering a way forward.}

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At which points did you put down the manuscript?

-

What confused you?

-

What annoyed you?

-

What struck you as troubling/problematic?

-

If you had to choose, which character would get more screen time?

-

If you had to choose, which character would you kill off?

-

Which scene do you remember the most?

-

What was the most suspenseful moment?

-

Which of your predictions came true?

-

When did you find yourself skimming?

-

When did your emotions hurt the most?

-

Why did you keep reading?

-

What was your immediate thought upon finishing?

-

If you had to choose three adjectives to describe this book, what would they be?

-

Which books did this manuscript remind you of and why?

-

Was there a character or situation that reminded you of your life?

-

Overall impressions:

Opening image: {the opening pages set the tone for the book and hook the reader, so here I give my opinion on how well they do that, whether or not the story seems to begin in the right place, alternatives to consider if relevant}

Pacing: {I make an assessment of this as a reader *before* I do the *Save the Cat!* analysis. Then that analysis is often more illuminating, as you can ‘see it in action’ so to speak}

POV: {I talk about how POV was used in the manuscript, whether it seemed to be the right one, worked well etc. The wrong POV can make or break a story.}

Prose (including grammar): {I am quite particular about prose, though I can enjoy many styles, from simple and straightforward to ornate and poetic. If I see any issues, I will let you know here.}

Continuity: {This can include time, place, details like hair or eye colour, motivations, consistent characterisation, name changes. If I notice something, I usually put a note directly in the manuscript, but if there is a bigger, more pervasive issue to talk about, I will elaborate here.}

Emotion: {My thoughts on how emotion was conveyed and whether I was *feeling* it}

Worldbuilding: {My thoughts on whether the world felt solid, and how the worldbuilding information was delivered in the manuscript}

Character development: {My thoughts on the character arc (particularly of the protagonist) and how that was conveyed through the manuscript}

Clarity of goals/motivation/conflict (protag/antag):

{here I see if I can clearly summarise the character of the protagonist and the antagonist from the information delivered *through the manuscript*. I often spend a LOT of time thinking here, and this piece of feedback alone is a massive indicator of whether the story works or not. It is HUGELY illuminating}

Protagonist—[name]: **clear/fuzzy/unclear** {I like colour coding these}

- External G/M/C (drives plot)—. {I condense this to a statement: [Name] wants [goal] so that/because [motivation] but [conflict].}
- Internal G/M/C (theme driven)—.

Antagonist—[name]: **clear/fuzzy/unclear**

- External G/M/C (drives plot)—.
- Internal G/M/C (mirrors theme)—.

{if anything is fuzzy or unclear, or it took me an excessively long time to work out, or I had to refer to supplementary information like the blurb to work it out, then I will talk about that here. I will also try to work out *why* it felt fuzzy or unclear, offer my best guess at what *could* be driving the character, and suggest ways you might clarify these really fundamental story elements.}

Clarity and interweaving of theme: {here I make my best guess of what the theme of the story is. You can check that against your own intention for the story. Readers will always take different things away from the same story, but if I seem way off base here, then that is good info for you to know! I’ll also let you know if the theme jumped straight out at me or whether I had to go digging for it.}

Closing image: {We all want our stories to leave readers satisfied at the end, so I’ll let you know if I experienced catharsis and also look at the opening and closing images in parallel to see if mirroring is present}

Other comments:

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Strengths of the manuscript:

{summarised}

Areas of the manuscript to focus revision on:

{summarised}

Feedback on Structure:

Here I will use elements of *Save the Cat* and *The Story Grid* to give a big picture overview of the structure of your novel so you can see at a glance whether all the beats are clear, and whether all the obligatory scenes for your content genre are included.

External content genre: {genre and sub-genre}

External value at stake: {aligned with genre}

Internal content genre: {genre and sub-genre}

Internal value at stake: {aligned with genre}

Conventions of the [external] Genre:

- {from *The Story Grid*. In this section I will list them out and make an assessment about whether all of them are included in your manuscript yet}

Obligatory Scenes of the [external] Genre:

- {from *The Story Grid*. In this section I will list them out and make an assessment about whether all of them are included in your manuscript yet}

Object(s) of Desire: {this is what the characters want}

Controlling Idea/Theme: {each content genre has a 'generic' controlling idea related to the value at stake for that genre. I write that here and then try to personalise it for your manuscript.}

Major Plot Beat Positioning

Colour code:

green—spot on

orange—slightly out of range, may affect pacing or reader experience

red—either very early or late, likely to be causing pacing problems

{Here I go through your manuscript and find all the *Save the Cat!* beats and where they fall percentage-wise by page count. This is really useful for diagnosing pacing issues, and also for finding missing beats or weak beats. As always, I will make suggestions for strengthening as appropriate.}

Setup (1-10%): Exploration of hero's life before the catalyst. Introduce hero's primary goal. Show hero's reluctance to change and hint at stakes if she doesn't.

Theme Stated (5%): A statement made by a secondary character that hints at the hero's arc.

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Catalyst (10%): An action beat that catapults the hero into a new world. They cannot return to their old life now.

Debate (10-20%): Hero debates what they will do next.

Break into 2 (20%): The moment the hero decides they will try something new or venture into a new world.

B Story (22%): Introduction of a character(s) who will help the hero learn the theme.

Fun and Games (20-50%): The hero is in their new environment, either succeeding or floundering.

Midpoint (50%): Fun and Games culminates in a false victory or a false defeat.

Bad guys close in (50-75%): After a false victory, things appear to get worse. After false defeat, things appear to get better, but bad guys (maybe external but definitely the hero's flaws) are closing in.

All is lost (75%): The lowest point in the novel.

Dark night of the soul (75-80%): Hero takes time to process everything. The darkest hour, just before the hero figures out what they need to do or learns the theme.

Break into 3 (80%): The 'aha' moment where the hero realises what she has to do.

Climax/Finale (80-99%): The hero proves they have learnt the theme and enacts the plan they came up with in the 'Break into 3'. Bad guys are beaten, flaws are conquered etc and the world is made a better place.