

Critique Checklist

T.C. Weber, 2013

1. General reader response to story: How did you feel when you finished the story—entertained, enlightened, educated, satisfied, time well spent, some benefit in having read the story, mood? (Basically, your gut response, an emotional temperature-taking, even if you keep it to yourself; you can deconstruct it during your analysis.)
2. What's the strength of the story? Why do you keep reading?
3. Very important: If you would put the story down and stop reading, please say where and why.
4. Characters (please think about each major character and any minor characters that stick out)
 - a. Who are your favorite characters?
 - b. Is every character needed, or can some be dropped?
 - c. Are characters given appropriate weight?
 - d. Too much time and attention given to insignificant characters?
 - e. Is there an important non-sentient character, e.g., a place?
 - f. Are the characters well portrayed?
 - g. Believable?
 - h. Complex?
 - i. Do you care about any of them, or find them intriguing enough to keep reading?
 - j. Any stereotyping?
 - k. Do they have discernible motivations and obstacles?
 - l. Do they grow or change?
 - m. Are they better revealed by the story's end?
5. Plot: Does enough happen in the story? Does it start and end at the right time?
6. Is the story plausible enough to suspend disbelief? If not, why?
7. Is the pace right throughout the story? Where does it drag? Can key events/turning points be identified?
8. Is the story well structured, with appropriate weight given to different components?
9. Any scenes too long? Too short?
10. Are flashbacks or back story details essential and well placed? Any of them unnecessary? Anything missing?
11. Does the writer primarily show what's going on rather than tell? Are the right scenes dramatized and the right scenes summarized?

12. Any issues with chronology?
13. Does the end feel like the natural culmination of all that's gone before?
14. Theme: What is this story really *about*?
15. Is the best POV used in the story? Is it consistent?
16. Is setting used to good effect?
17. How does the piece engage the senses? Use of light and darkness, or colors? Smells? Touch? Taste? Sound?
18. How do you feel about the language? Crisp and clear, occasionally beautiful? Does the language draw attention to itself? Style quirks? Kinks in the syntax?
19. Is the dialogue well done? Seamless? Feel natural? Do we always know who's talking? Is it believable? Does it either (a) advance the story or (b) develop a character? If not, what is its purpose? Right length? Interrupted here and there so that we can see the characters move about and respond?
20. Any clichés?
21. Unnecessary explanations? Omitted explanations that are needed?
22. Facts straight? Placement of people and objects, movement through space, time of day or season, and the weather, all internally consistent?
23. Does anything seem unrealistic? Errors in the way things are depicted? Any important details missing?