

# Fiction Writing Rubric for Novels

Since novels are far more involved than shorter fiction, it's reasonable that you evaluate them more deeply than shorter fiction.

Use the chart below to score your novel (or better yet to have a reader score it for you) to see how well you've addressed all the main areas of a novel's construction. Once you've done that, you know where to go back and make changes or polish what you've started.

You may want to take one chapter at a time to evaluate things like characters and plot portions. Then work through the entire novel that way.

Each part is scored on a 5-point basis, with 5 being well covered, 1 being barely mentioned. Be objective, and be honest. It will only make your writing better to be critical of what you've done so far.

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Score each question using these guidelines:

- 1 point = Not present or addressed at all
- 2 points = Mentioned, but not really covered
- 3 points = Addressed, but needs more detail or clarity
- 4 points = Pretty well done, but could use some polishing
- 5 points = Very well done; vividly written

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## Plot:

Does the overall plot flow smoothly and inevitably from beginning to middle to end? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you create sub-plots that add to and don't detract from the main plot? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the conflict appropriate to the genre and dire enough to engage readers throughout the novel? \_\_\_\_\_

*Beginning:* does your hook drag the reader straight into the action? \_\_\_\_\_

*Middle:* does your rising action complicate the conflict and build inexorably to a crisis? \_\_\_\_\_

*End:* Is the climax believable, big enough and does it fit the genre? \_\_\_\_\_

Are all the plots and sub-plots resolved completely without being too short or dragged out? \_\_\_\_\_

*Bonus:* can you identify an underlying theme about human nature in the novel? \_\_\_\_\_

## Setting:

Have you set your novel in a place that suits the genre and characters, and adds to the plot? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your timeframe appropriate and clear at all times throughout the novel? \_\_\_\_\_

Does your novel move logically and chronologically through the story, or if it doesn't, does your novel still make sense to the reader? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Description:**

Are your descriptions vivid “show don’t tell” images, full of the five senses when appropriate? \_\_\_\_\_

Are these descriptions delivered in short bursts, not running on for paragraphs at a time? \_\_\_\_\_

If you use any figures of speech, do they suit the story? \_\_\_\_\_

Do these figures of speech add or distract from the novel? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Characters: Main**

*Protagonist:* Have you clearly established who your novel is about? \_\_\_\_\_

*Antagonist:* Have you clearly established who your antagonist is? \_\_\_\_\_

Do your two or three main characters (good and bad) behave consistently throughout the novel? \_\_\_\_\_

Do we clearly know what your two or three main characters (good and bad) look like? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you showed us your two or three main characters (good and bad) personality and traits through actions and dialogue more than through descriptive prose? \_\_\_\_\_

Do all of your main characters have a unique manner of speaking? \_\_\_\_\_

Is it clear whose point of view the novel is written from? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the point of view perspective (first person, third person close or third person omniscient) consistent throughout the novel, and does it tell the story in the best way possible? \_\_\_\_\_

Do your two or three main characters (good and bad) take up the bulk of your scenes? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Characters: Minor:**

Is it clear you created a few minor but important characters to support your main ones? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the behavior of your minor characters consistent with their more minor role? \_\_\_\_\_

Do we know what these minor characters look like, at least in brief? \_\_\_\_\_

Do these minor characters have a distinct way of speaking to separate them from your main cast? \_\_\_\_\_

Do any of these characters steal any scenes or take over at any time during the novel? (They shouldn’t) \_\_\_\_\_

## **Structure:**

Do all three main parts of your novel (plot, characters and setting) play off each other, support each other and intertwine well with each other? \_\_\_\_\_

