



Lecture Notes

- 1) **Don't be afraid to fail. There are no mistakes, only lessons, and lessons are repeated until they are learned. Basically there are no rules or short cuts to writing a novel. It's work.**
- 2) **Don't rewrite the first chapter until you've completed the last chapter.**
- 3) **When you're writing a novel, you must write every day or risk losing your continuity.**
- 4) **Show, don't tell.**
- 5) **A narrative outline of each chapter is helpful. Cast of characters.**
- 6) **Story is everything. If it's not a good story, it probably won't sell. Know your market.**
- 7) **Write with white-hot speed. Don't worry about punctuation, grammar or spelling . . . for now.**
- 8) **Learn how to write good dialogue. No "pass the salt" stuff. Has to advance the plot or your character.**
- 9) **If you describe a gun, you'd better use it. Every word counts in a novel.**

**10) Know the difference between plot and story.
Everyone has to want something.**

Alfred Hitchcock called the plot a “MacGuffin.” A **MacGuffin** (sometimes **McGuffin**) is a [plot device](#) that motivates the characters or advances the story, but the details of which are of little or no importance otherwise.

The element that distinguishes a MacGuffin from other types of plot devices is that it is not important what the object *specifically is*. Anything that serves as a motivation will do. The MacGuffin might even be ambiguous. Its importance is accepted by the story's characters, but it does not actually have any effect on the story. It can be generic or left open to interpretation.

The MacGuffin is common in [films](#), especially [thrillers](#). Commonly, though not always, the MacGuffin is the central focus of the film in the first [act](#), and later declines in importance as the struggles and motivations of characters play out. Sometimes the MacGuffin is all but forgotten by the end of the film.

George Lucas believed the "MacGuffin should be powerful and that the audience should care about it almost as much as the dueling heroes and villains on-screen. (Excerpted from Wikipedia.)

Old Man and the Sea the MacGuffin was the fish.

Wizard of Oz search for the Wizard to find a way home.

Word of Honor is the search for Millawanda.

Star Wars is R2-D2 (the plans for the Death Star)

11) Define the problem in the story in one sentence. Keeps you focused. (A couple of surfers must find an ancient spaceship before the planet is destroyed.)

- 12) **Must be statement, conflict, and resolution.**
- 13) **Bad guys must be as powerful as the good guys.**
- 14) **KISS. Don't get bogged down on the definitions of plot, story, protagonist, character arch, etc.**

Just write!

- 15) **Finally, before you turn your work into a publisher, make sure your words are spelled correctly, your grammar is right, and your manuscript is in the proper format. If it's not, no one will read it no matter how good your story is.**

Good Books to have in your Writer's library:

- ✓ *Techniques of the Selling Writer*, by Dwight V. Swain
- ✓ *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White
- ✓ A Good Dictionary
- ✓ A Good Thesaurus
- ✓ Even better: *The Synonym Finder* and *The Word Finder*, by J.I. Rodale
- ✓ *What's What*, edited by Bragonier and Fisher or
- ✓ *The Ultimate Visual Dictionary* by DK Publishing
- ✓ Dedicated Dictionary on your computer easily accessible (Encarta Dictionary)
- ✓ Know how to take advantage of Google search, Google maps, Google Earth and Wikipedia.

Never forget *The Four Agreements*:

1. Be impeccable with your word
2. Don't take anything personally
3. Don't make assumptions
4. Always do your best

Remember:

"Sacrifice is not what you give up, but what you ultimately gain . . ."