

WORKING SMARTER: Understanding What Kind of Feedback You Need and When You Need It

PHASE ONE (Rough or Early Draft)

In this stage, the focus might be on a simple dialogue/ discussion about the work. Suggestions for improvement may come later. This is just about general impressions.

Some questions/topics:

1. What's happening in this scene? (Literally. What's unfolding?)
2. What is my viewpoint character attempting to accomplish in this scene?
3. What is my impression of the protagonist (antagonist) in this scene? How do his/her actions reveal his/her character?
4. How would you characterize the voice/ tone of the scene?
5. How would you characterize the feeling of intimacy/ narrative distance in this scene?
6. What emotions are conjured for you as you read this scene?
7. To what other book might you compare this one?

SECOND PHASE (Middle Drafts)

1. Does the opposition seem clear and significant enough to pose a compelling obstacle in this scene?
2. Do I sympathize/ empathize with the viewpoint character here?
3. Do I want the viewpoint character to get what he or she wants?
4. How am I handling the balance between exposition and concrete, observable action?
5. How am I handling the pacing of this scene? Does it seem just right or does it flow too quickly or take too long to unfold?
6. Do I understand what motivates the protagonist/ antagonist/ viewpoint character in this scene?

7. (For later scenes) Do I have a sense of escalation in this story? Are the goals becoming more critical, the tension higher, the protagonist's involvement more inextricable?

PHASE THREE (Last Drafts)

NOW is a great time for more concrete suggestions from your reader.

1. In your view, is this scene successful?
 2. What elements are still eluding me?
 3. Are there issues of language/voice that need attention? If so, what are they?
 4. Does anything seem lacking in credibility here? How might I improve that?
 5. As a reader, what pleased you here and what left you feeling unsatisfied?
 6. Any last nagging issues of grammar, formatting, etc., that need my attention?
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