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Hello and welcome back to my channel. If you don't know who I am, I'm Britt Poe. I am an author and a writing a business coach for creative writers and authors alike. Today I'm gonna be talking about how to outline your novel using my absolute favorite method, the snowflake method.

So before I get into the how-to, I wanted to share a little bit of background. In the writing world there are two sort of sides when it comes to planning a novel. There are plotters, the ones who plan everything and set them out before they start writing, and then there are Pantsers, those who sort of just take their idea and go with it with really no structured plan on where they're going.

In my writing practice, I've literally been all over the board with my writing and my planning techniques. I've tried so hard just to find something that really clicked with my creative process and ended up really uninspired with a lot of different methods to outlining, which then left my manuscript suffering because I was just uninspired and an uninspired writer is probably not the best kind of writer.

So when I heard about the snowflake method, I decided to give it a go and I am just loving the amazingness of the snowflake method. It works so well with my finger in my creative process and it really helps me get an outline down and completed, so that I can actually start writing that first draft.

So what is the snowflake method? The snowflake method is an approach to writing developed by a guy named Randy Inger Mason. I will link to his website below where he really goes into tons of detail about the snowflake method himself but in all this method is composed of ten steps.

The goal is to have an extensive outline filled with everything that you need for your plot and for your characters in order to write your novel. Something about the way that this method is structured just really jives with me and my process. So now I'm gonna tell you how you guys can do it yourself.

Step one of the ten steps of the snowflake method is to write a one sentence summary of your novel. This is the hardest part for me because something about having to fit all of the ideas in my head about the novel into one little sentence. It's kind of tedious and excruciating for me, but yeah, I did it.

So you're gonna challenge yourself to write one sentence to explain the plot of your book. The idea is to make this about 15 to 20 words. To avoid any running on, or rambling, and you really want to just get straight to the point. So I'm gonna share a couple tips with you guys to make this a little easier.

Tip number one is don't use your characters names. It's much better to say something like 'a young wizard' versus saying 'Harry Potter'. Tip number two is that you're going to want to tie in the big picture, idea or goal of your novel with the personal goal of your protagonist or main character.

The thing to think about is which of my characters has the most to lose and why is it that they want to win? The third tip is something that really really helped me when I was doing my one sentence summary and that is to go and read the one-liners on the New York Times bestseller list.

It'll give you a feel on how other people do this and how you can also use that strategy and use that structure to write your own one sentence summary.

Step number two is to expand that sentence into a full paragraph. This is where you will start planting the seeds for your plot. This paragraph will summarize the entire book, including the ending. There is a general structure that you're going to want to follow for this paragraph.

Sentence one needs to be the backdrop to your story, where is it taking place and who is your character.

Sentence 2 is going to be a summary of the first quarter of your book, which leads up to the first disaster.

Sentence 3 will be a summary of the second quarter of your book leading up to the second disaster.

Sentence 4 will be a summary of the third quarter of your book leading up to the third disaster and ...

then sentence 5 will be a summary of the fourth quarter of your book leading up to the conclusion.

Step number three is to write a one page summary of each character in your book. Here you're going to want to know their name. You're going to want to have a one sentence summary of the character's storyline, know their motivation and their goals.

You're going to want to know what conflicts that they're facing and if the character has an epiphany, or basically what they will learn, or how they will change throughout your book. And then you're going to want to write a one paragraph summary of the character's storyline.

Step number four is to expand each sentence in your one paragraph summary to one page. This step is where they start to take a little bit longer than the previous steps, because here you will be expanding each of your plot points in the previous step.

To do this you're going to take each sentence in your paragraph and expand that into its own paragraph. I have an example on how to do this on the blog post version of this video if you need a more visual instruction on how to do this. I will link the blog post in the description of this so you can go check that out when you are done watching.

Step number five is to write the synopsis from the POV of your characters. You're gonna be focusing more on only the main characters of your novel here, but this is a really important step for me because it allows me to get into the head of my characters and find their voice. You'll also be able to discover really useful things like what this character is doing, when it's not actually present in a chapter of your novel.

Step number six is to expand each paragraph from your one page summary to a page. This is where you'll start to get a grip on the high level logic of your main plot points. So just like we expanded each sentence into its own paragraph, now you're going to expand each paragraph into its own page. Feel free to add as many details as you want here just make sure that it doesn't go over a page, so that this part of the outline doesn't get too out of hand.

Step number seven is to create character charts of each of your characters. If you're interested on getting your hands on the same character chart that I use in my writing, I have a free template available on my website. I will link that below as well and you are free to download it and use it for your own writing. The basic things that you want to focus on your charts are:

birth date

physical appearance

family history

personal traits

quirks

their goals

motivations

Step number eight is to make a spreadsheet outline of each scene based on your four page summary that you did above. So this step is very time-consuming I'm going to admit, but it is very, very important and so helpful for me at least, when I start the actual writing process.

So what you're going to want to do is take each paragraph from the summary and brainstorm all of the scenes that are necessary to tell that part of the story. Then you're going to want to get your favorite spreadsheet system out and then get one line for each sentence detailing the chapter number.

The POV, the setting, the date or timeline, as well as which characters are involved and a little description of what happens in that chapter. On my website attached to the blog version of this post I am offering up a free template of my snowflake outline Trello board, which is where I personally create all of my outlines and go through the snowflake outlining process.

It's my centralized hub for all of my book information and so if you download the Trello board you'll also get a copy of my same spreadsheet completely for free. It's attached on the troll board itself. Also something to remember here is that even though everything has already been planned out, by the time that you write, you can diverge from your outline if your characters or your stories start pulling you in a different direction as you write.

If you're like me, that tends to happen quite frequently, but just know that it's super easy to go back to the spreadsheet and edit what you need to edit or add a line wherever you need to add it.

Step number nine is to write a narrative summary of each scene. I'm gonna admit that I do not write a full narrative summary for every single scene. Instead, what I like to do is on my scene card inside of Trello, I just like to go in there, and if I have snippets of dialogue, or setting ideas, or just all of the things floating inside of my head about that scene, then I'll just type it up really quick in the Trello card.

When I do write that scene, I can just open it up and remember 'oh yeah, this is where, you know, I

wanted them to be here, or this is where I wanted them to have this conversation.' Add things like that.

The final step step number ten is just to write your book. By this point you should know what's happening in each scene and where each character is development wise. It's a great time to get that first draft down on paper.

This is where I print out all of my character descriptions and my spreadsheets and I slop them into my handy-dandy binder for easy reference. Now you might have noticed that this outline process is kind of labor-intensive and it can take a long time if you allow it to.

I was able to get steps one through nine of the snowflake method completed for my WIP and ten hours spread over the course of a couple weeks, but once you get all this detail right now and available to you it just becomes so much easier to crank out that first draft.

So if you would like a copy of my snowflake outlining Trello board it's hop on over to the blog version of this video. I will link it in the description below. You'll also be able to get my free spreadsheet complete there as well as my character charts.

Let me know if this method sounds like something that you're interested in trying or if you have tried it before and what your thoughts about it are. If you like this video please give it a thumbs up and subscribe to my channel, because every single week I'm releasing more videos just like this about writing and the business side of being an author. I look forward to you guys next time - bye.

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