**Laura Resau's Top Ten Novel Writing Tips**

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1. **Character & Voice** – Are all characters layered, distinct, changing, active, and lovable in some way (even if you love to hate them)? Is the main character/narrator vulnerable in some way—somehow relatable yet flawed? What misbelief informs their arc? Is it enjoyable and/or interesting to see the world through their eyes? Are there elements of humor (if it fits with your genre)? Are you strategic about which character(s)’ point(s) of view are narrating? Sensuality—do you bring readers inside the bodies of the POV (point-of-view) characters (narrators)?
2. **Structure & Plot**— Is most of the action the result of active character choices? Are there multiple, interrelated plotlines? Does the external plot action relate to the internal character conflicts? Is there a sense of yearning? What do main characters want? Need? What are obstacles? Satisfying climax/reveals? *Save the Cat Writes a Novel* by Jessica Brody.
3. **Pace**— Heighten suspense? Are readers drawn in early? What's at stake? Overarching questions? Smaller questions along the way? Curiosity seeds planted? Reasons for continuing to read/care? Are there twists, reversals, and surprises? Cause and effect?
4. **Setting**—Is setting a multisensory, active, engaging part of the story? Does setting function as metaphor or vehicle to express emotions, etc.?
5. **Show don't tell—**Do you narrate using immediate sensory perception? Raw thoughts/feelings? Is moment-to-moment narration the core? Can readers draw their own conclusions? Is there multi-layered dialogue?
6. **Focus on the unusual**—In narration and dialogue and character/setting details, have you cut out the mundane stuff that readers can fill in themselves? Believable quirkiness/uniqueness in setting, dialogue, and characters?
7. **Backstory/flashbacks** – Is there meaningful and multi-functional backstory woven in at strategic times without breaking the flow? Are you placing bits of backstory strategically to create ongoing tension and questions in your readers? Does the narrator’s interiority help us understand their layers?
8. **Scenes—**Does each onehave a point? Reveal new info/questions? Does each scene end with a page-turning punch? Transition to the next scene? Why will readers want to keep reading? Do most scenes start with action or somehow ground us in sensory details?
9. **Big Picture & Themes**—Why do readers care about the story? Is imagery used to express feelings and themes? Is there a sense of expansiveness, the wider world, universality? What might the reader take away? Do the themes permeate the plot, dialogue, character development, etc.? Are you following basic guidelines for your specific genre?
10. **Process—**Are youwriting *about* the novel as you write it? Continually jotting down ideas? Keeping the big picture in mind? Have you revised several times with your writers’ group or critique partners? Read it aloud? Thought about language, word choice, flow, trimmed whatever's not vital? Done thorough research and connected with sensitivity readers if needed?



**How to Deal with Emotional/Psychological Obstacles**

* Know that it’s possible that only some of what you write in your first draft will make it into the final book. This is natural.
* Don’t be afraid of a very messy first draft that contains gems. Often, your first draft is for exploration.
* Don't expect perfection. Be gentle with yourself, but stay committed.
* Don't expect to enjoy it all the time—that’s just part of the package.
* Remember that nothing is wasted. You learn from everything.
* Attend workshops, readings, and talks. Listen to writing podcasts.
* Set goals with dates and break down steps to your goals.
* Create ritual and routine around writing. Reward yourself.
* Find writing partners to offer feedback and encouragement.
* Give yourself regular pep talks. Lists what you LOVE about your story.

**Embrace the adventure!** 