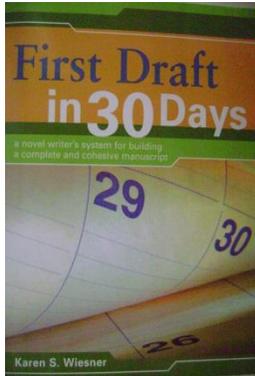


First Draft in 30 Days

By Karen S. Wiesner



Many authors swear by an outline, while many others believe they are constraining and a waste of time. No matter where you fall in the outline vs. no outline debate, *First Draft in 30 Days* is a useful book. My copy is tattered, written in, highlighted, and dog-eared. And, I must admit that I'm not a big fan of the outline.

I decided to use this book in my second year of doing NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month). Even though I got to 50,000 words that first year, I struggled. I decided to try something different the next. I bought this book in September, and read it in a week. I made the worksheets in Word, and spent October filling them out. By the time November came, I was ready. Those 50,000 words literally fell out of me, and I finally finished a novel.

In the next NaNoWriMo, I had an idea of what I wanted to write, but it was just one of those ideas that had been percolating for a while. I wasn't absolutely sure where the story was going, so I picked and chose the worksheets that I wanted to complete. It gave me a good baseline of my characters and setting, and the first third of my book. While I was writing, the book went in a direction that I wasn't expecting, so I was almost glad I didn't complete the detailed plot worksheets.

Ms. Wiesner does have a chapter about revising the outline and re-outlining, but I'm a little lazy. If I had a complicated plot, I might do this. But otherwise, I'll just go with my characters in the story they want to tell without thinking through it too much.

With each new idea that won't leave me alone, I use several of the worksheets to get the basics out. Sometimes I use all the worksheets, if I'm positive how I want the story to progress and end. Other times, I use the ones that seem appropriate for the situation.

The worksheets can be very time consuming, especially if you follow Ms. Wiesner's directions and don't take shortcuts. However, as I found out the first time I used them, they are also very beneficial.

For those who are fans of outlining, you can't go wrong with this book. For those who have never outlined or don't believe in it, give it a try. You might end up modifying the system to fit your needs the way I have, but I think you'll still find something helpful.