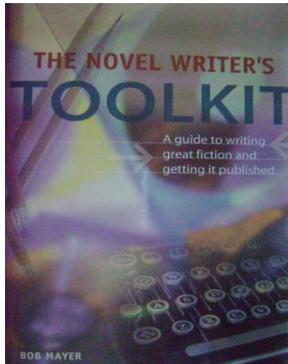


The Novel Writer's Toolkit

By Bob Mayer



There are several books about writing fiction, *The Novel Writer's Toolkit* among them. What sets this book apart is the way Mr. Mayer presents the information. Every chapter is a “tool” that is necessary for the writer’s toolkit.

As expected, the book starts with the basics—set a goal, write what you feel, outline or don’t outline, get past the blocks. All good reminders for even the seasoned author. In chapter two, Mr. Mayer delves in deeper. He suggests that writers should write down descriptions of characters, key facts, locations, history, and any other important items so they can be consistent and remember what they wrote so these items don’t change later. Also, summarize all research and put page numbers in the summary so the information is easy to find when it’s needed.

One of the best takeaways I got is this: You should be able to describe your book in one sentence, and you should repeat that one sentence to yourself every time you sit down to write. The intent of your book should be stated in three words (for my novel, *2012: The Rising*, the intent is “save the world”). Mr. Mayer points out that it’s a big move from idea to story because your story must answer the who, what, where, when, and why of your three word intent.

You must also be able to see your story in 360-degree vision. This means that you must consider all possibilities and where they lead. This goes back to the one sentence description and three-word intent, and to what motivates your characters, and what is the climax of your story. If you write down everything you think you know about your book, you’ll find what you don’t know.

I don’t agree with everything Mr. Mayer says in his book, such as reread what you wrote the previous day and clean up as you go. But his other editing tips are good. I especially liked his statement that writers need to be honest. If you’ve written something that isn’t quite right, it’s wrong and needs to be fixed. Don’t leave it in and hope it doesn’t matter.

Mr. Mayer also discusses submissions, contracts, marketing, conferences, movie deals, and the different methods of publishing available to writers. These are all important tools that writers must use once the novel is written.

The reason I believe this book is different from other how-to books is this: Mr. Mayer spends a lot of time asking questions, and those questions lead to deeper meaning in your writing. He also sets up the problems writers face and provides solutions. I’m glad I read this book as it boosted what is in my toolkit.