

1. Introduction - Disclaimers
2. Research - Know your market
 - a. Read opening pages from debut authors
 - b. Exercise – Try reading a bulk of random first pages
 - i. Miss Snark’s First Victim blog – Secret Agent contest
3. Page 1
 - a. First line – How important is it?
 - b. Start with action scene? Pros and cons
 - c. To prologue or not to prologue?
 - d. What will make them turn the page:
 - i. Distinctiveness
 1. **Voice** versus voice – Enhance your **Voice**
 - a. Aka “**Fresh writing**” according to Margie Lawson
 2. Language - word choice, beware the thesaurus
 - ii. Pace/Tension -- Sense of urgency, building tension
 1. Foreshadowing
 2. Starting in right place – point of change
 3. By first half page, is there a promise of things to come?
 - iii. Readability/Mechanics
 1. Cadence/Flow -- Vary sentence structure
 2. Read aloud
 3. Newbie mistake – too many modifiers – adjectives/adverbs
 - iv. Hook – intriguing questions in reader’s mind
4. By Page 5
 - a. What will make them turn the page?
 - i. Character
 1. Sympathetic, Put them in jeopardy, Likeable, Funny, or Powerful)
 2. Distinctive – there’s something different about this guy...
 3. Deep POV and Goal, Motivation, Conflict
 4. 2 paragraph rule
 - ii. Handling Backstory
 1. Skillfully woven in to not break pace, tension, cadence, character
 2. Keep it relevant and in unique POV (specific detail)
 3. Drop in 1-2 sentences at a time
 - iii. Conflict
 1. Inciting incident
 2. External (visible) goal
 3. Internal conflict – hint at what they want & fear
 - iv. Worldbuilding – Setting the stage, unique, accessible
 - v. Voice and Distinctiveness

5. Page 50 - End of partial. What's going to make them want to read the full?
 - a. What will make them turn the page? Whatever you do, DO NOT BREAK PACE!!!
 - i. Progression
 1. Avoid repetition
 - a. Dialogue and narrative repetition
 - b. Repeating same conflict or sexual tension details
 2. Scenes differentiated
 - a. Avoid similar tone/conflict/scenarios
 3. Tension & conflict growing and evolving – focus points
 - ii. Anchoring at beginning of chapters & scenes
 - iii. Hooking at end of chapters & scenes
6. Final pass – line edits
 1. Edit for VOICE
 2. Find dead zones, “blah” paragraphs and amp them up
 3. You may need to emphasize emotional focus points by adding more lines, description
 4. End sentences and paragraphs with power words for impact
7. Conclusion
 - a. Page 1 – The Teaser
 - b. Page 5 – The Contract
 - c. Page 50 – Trial period – did you deliver?

Recommendations:

Websites:

- <http://misssnarksfirstvictim.blogspot.com/p/secret-agent.html>

Workshops

- Margie Lawson's Empowering Character Emotions and Deep Edits (<http://www.margielawson.com>)

References:

Debora Dixon

Goal, Motivation and Conflict: The Building Blocks of Good Fiction

Michael Hague

Selling Your Story in 60 Seconds: The Guaranteed Way to Get Your Screenplay or Novel Read

Noah Lukeman

The First Five Pages: A Writer's Guide to Staying Out of the Rejection Pile