

Writing that Stands Out

A Presentation from David Beaumier of Chanticleer Book Reviews



Who am I?

I've worked as an editor since 2013, and spent two years as the assistant publishing director at Village Books. His BA and MA in English both come from Western Washington University.

I tend to write fiction and poetry, specifically urban fantasy and modernized myths. My work has appeared in EWU's *Inroads*, WWU's *Suffix*, *Whatcom Writes*, *Psaltery & Lyre*, and *Hamlit*. I works as the the project manager for the biennial anthology *The Writers' Corner*. I has written reviews for *Chanticleer Book Reviews*, Village Books, and *The Bellingham Review*, even working as a 2019 genre editor for poetry in the *Review*, all on top of running a prolific fiction group.

When not writing, editing, or in some way obsessing with books, I love dancing Argentine tango, which I began in 2005. I see the way you care for another person in dance as intrinsically linked to the compassion and care that writers deserve in sharing their own work.



VILLAGE BOOKS
—AND—
PAPER DREAMS
BUILDING COMMUNITY SINCE 1980

The Great Secret to Effective Writing



Effective Work is Well-Written



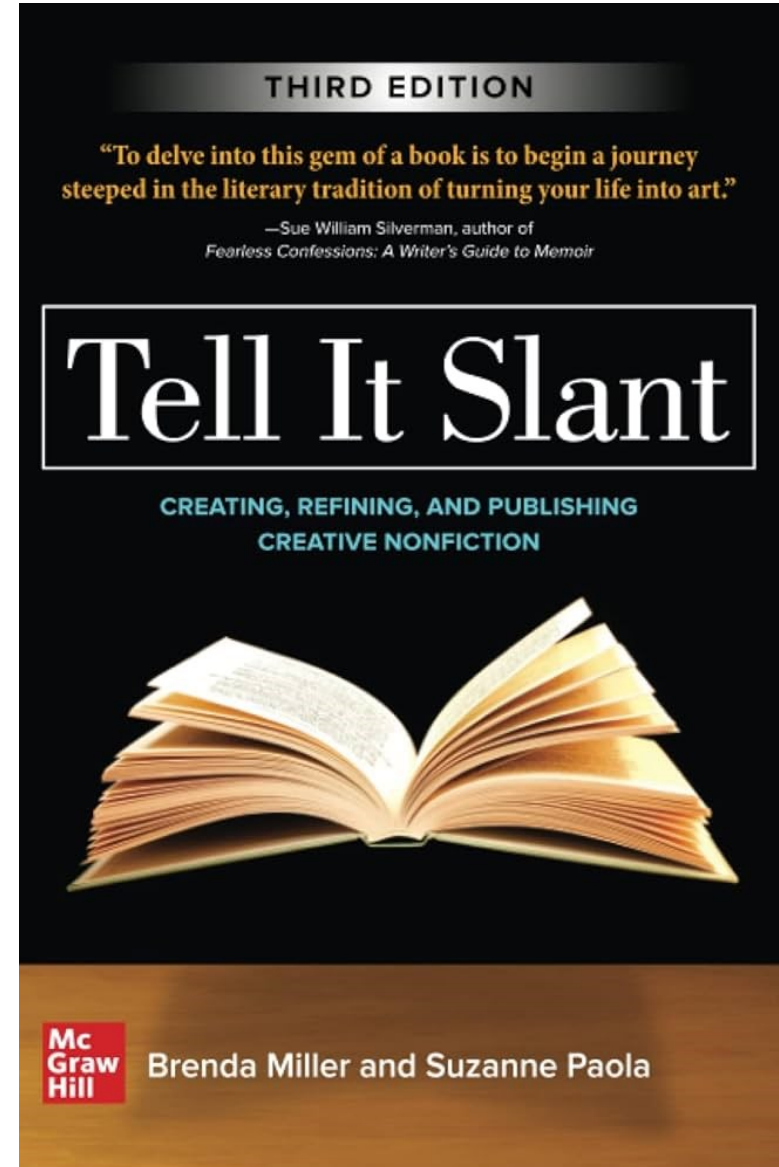


Short Writing

Shorter writing must grab the reader and not let go. Language must be precise, story must be clear, theme must be on point.



Search And
Destroy
(SAD) from
Tell It Slant



To Be Verbs

She *isn't* happy about it, but she had *been* encouraged to join Visitation to help people, not because it *was* personally comfortable for her. So she *is* sent into decontamination, followed by the sound of a seal behind her as the hermetic vacuum in front of her *is* opened. Her hair *is* only a little fluffed up by the experience, and *is* easily coiffed back into place after the blast of ionization that would *be* deadly to any foreign compounds in the air.





To Be Verbs

She doesn't like it, but she joined the Visitation to help people, not for her own personal comfort. So into the decontamination room she goes, followed by the locking of one hermetic seal behind her and a second one in front. Her hair only needs to be patted down a little bit after the blast of ionization that should kill any foreign compounds in the air.



Adverbs and Adjectives

In one YA urban fantasy dredged up from the out of print pile was this unforgettable villainous dialogue spoken to the protagonist: “‘I’ll kill your whole family,’ he hissed maliciously.”

While the intent is clearly to be evil, we can also see that the author didn't trust the reader to understand that the villain wasn't very nice.



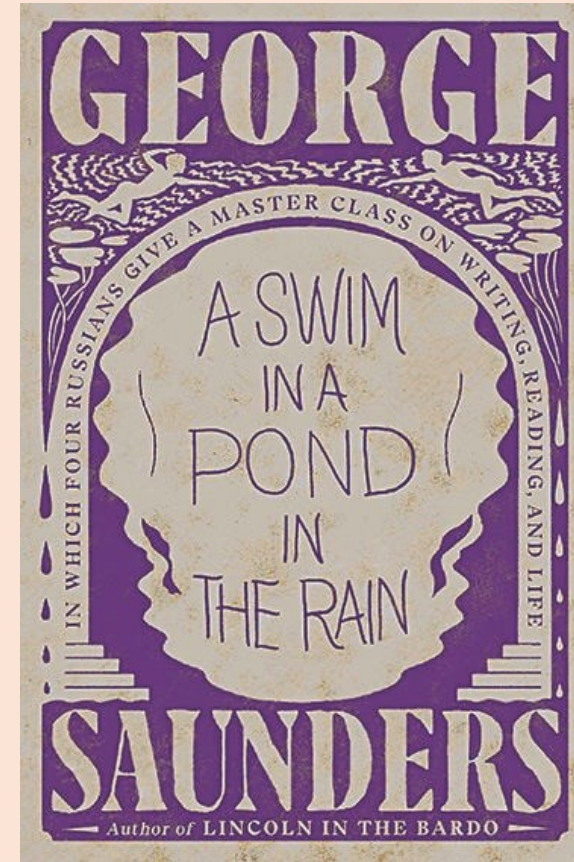
Passive Voice

The **last** suggestion from Miller and Paola is to look for passive voice, often indicated using “have” or “had.” A favorite trick for finding passive voice is to see if you can add "by zombies" to the end of the sentence. Like the previous rules, knowing why we use active and passive voice is important. Active voice tells us who does what to whom. Passive voice tells us what actions are done to whom, but not necessarily who did them.

Mistakes were made: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjLOayFi5-w>



Plot, more than Onomatopoeia



A Swim in a Pond in the Rain

“When we talk about fiction, we tend to use terms like ‘theme,’ ‘plot,’ ‘character development,’ and ‘structure.’ I’ve never, as a writer, found these very useful...These terms are placeholders.”



The Cornfeld Principle

Every
structural
unit needs
to do two
things:

- (1) be entertaining in its own right and
- (2) advance the story in a non-trivial way.



Questions to ask while writing short prose from Saunders



A Swim in a Pond in the Rain

- “(1) What do you know so far? (2) What are you curious about? and (3) Where do you think the story is headed? (What bowling pins are in the air?)”
- “How does each ‘earn its keep’?”
- “What does my character want from life?”



POETRY!





Poetry Tips

- First read: Does the poem make me feel anything?
- What physical sensations do I notice in the poem, what can I interact with in a sensory way?
- Rereading the poem, what does it mean to me? What do I think it might mean to the author?
- Does the title change the way I understand the poem? How or how does it not?
- Rereading again: Does the poem make me feel anything?

Poetry Samples

<https://hamlit.org/water-like-honey/>



Breakdown

We are made to walk Great distances Unbothered by the calluses And the blisters And the peeling lips What worry is thirst Or loneliness Or sweat To stardust? You saw the bogs in my cheeks My sun-bleached bones How I was starving Through a grinning skull When you lifted me Giving me respite From the endless strides, You said you were the West wind When you favored me Placed a dewdrop on my tongue That tasted of honey and turmeric, I remembered I had eyelids Once I adjusted It was so bright I saw the alabaster slabs And the crystal houses For what they were And you, Zephyr, Were gone Now No matter how far I walk Or how hard I smile Through my rotting echo Now Water will only ever taste Like water



Poetry Samples

<https://hamlit.org/until-we-can-look/>



Breakdown

dig your nails into my palms, please, fold with me into the corner of our room behind our bunk bed that is shaking apart. We shake apart too, with every fuck you from downstairs, so maybe we should run away, admit we are afraid, but the stinging half-moons in our skin keep us safe. If we lock hands but look just to the side of each other, we can stay and not have to remember

our cheeks blotched with red or lips curled above bared teeth, or whimpers or the spiderweb sound of splintering glass. If we look just to the side, we can

be like other children, go to school tomorrow, complain about homework and draw the sun with crayons, leave the squealing and shakes and sour sweat in this corner. For just a little longer, grip my hands until it's over, until we're old enough, until we can forgive each other for looking away.



Full Length Narrative Work

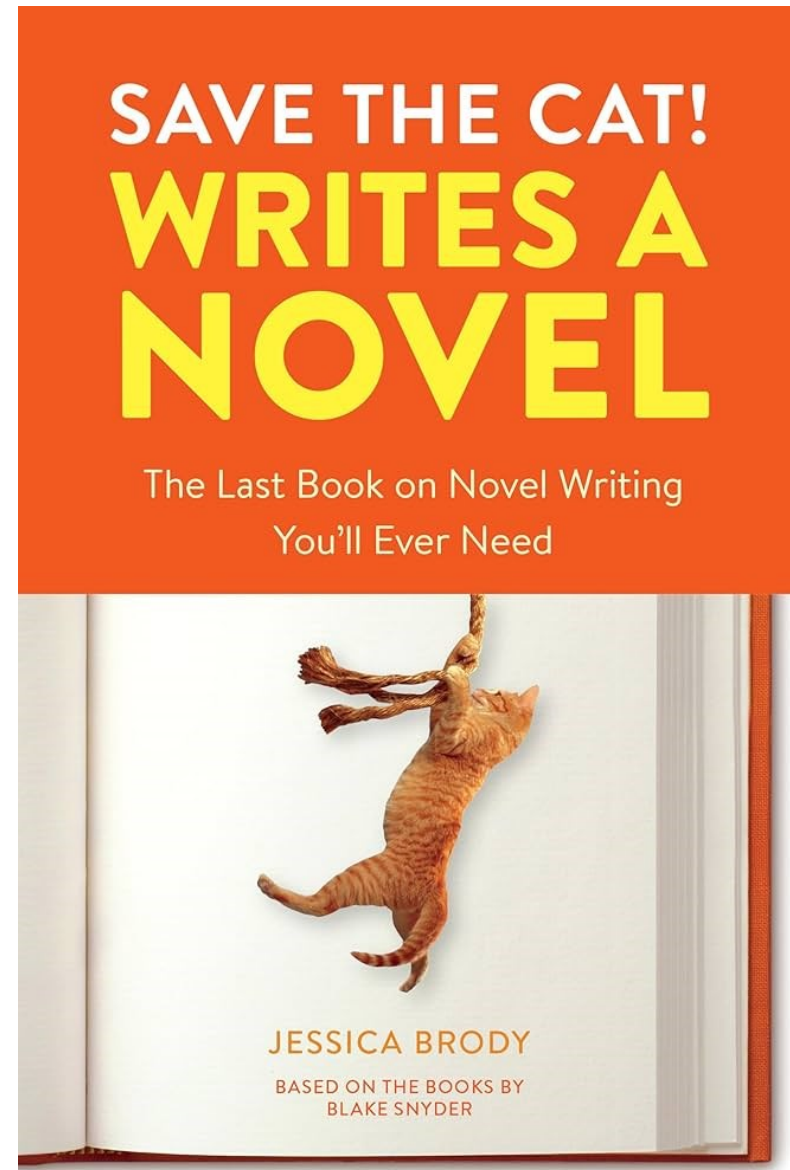
This includes both fiction and nonfiction, so long as it is narrative and not prescriptive.



The Beets!



The Beats!



Beats!



- Beat #1: Opening Image. (0-1)%
- Beat #2: Theme Stated (5%)
- Beat #3: Setup (1% – 10%)
- Beat # 4 – Catalyst (10%)
- Beat #5: Debate (10% to 20%)
- Beat #6: Break Into 2 (20%)
- Beat #7: B Story (22%)
- Beat #8 : Fun and Games (20% to 50%)
- Beat #9: Midpoint (50%)
- Beat #10: Bad Guys Close In (50% to 75%)
- Beat #11: All Is Lost (75%)
- Beat #12: Dark Night of the Soul (75% to 80%)
- Beat #13: The Break Into 3 (80%)
- Beat #14: The Finale (80% to 99%)
- Beat #15: Final Image (99% to 100%)

Act 1 - Beats

- Beat #1: Opening Image. (0-1)%
- Beat #2: Theme Stated (5%)
- Beat #3: Setup (1% – 10%)
- Beat # 4 – Catalyst (10%)
- Beat #5: Debate (10% to 20%)



Act 2 - Beats

- Beat #6: Break Into 2 (20%)
- Beat #7: B Story (22%)
- Beat #8 : Fun and Games (20% to 50%)
- Beat #9: Midpoint (50%)
- Beat #10: Bad Guys Close In (50% to 75%)
- Beat #11: All Is Lost (75%)
- Beat #12: Dark Night of the Soul (75% to 80%)



Act 3 - Beats

- Beat #13: The Break Into 3 (80%)
- Beat #14: The Finale (80% to 99%)
- Beat #15: Final Image (99% to 100%)





Down with the Cookie Cutter!



Critical Beats



Beat # 4 – Catalyst
(10%)



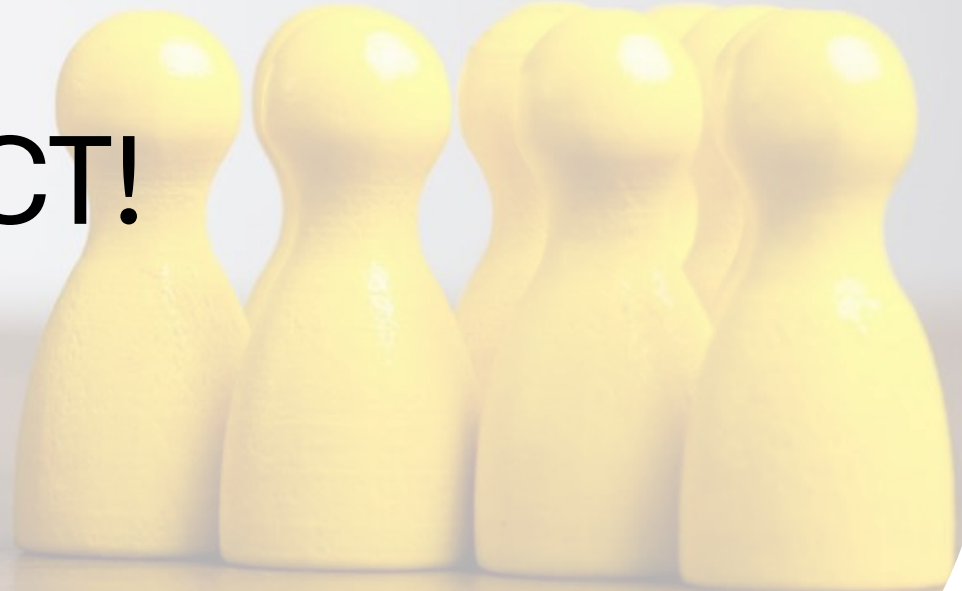
Beat #9: Midpoint
(50%)



Beat #14: The
Finale (80% to
99%)



CONFLICT!



Don't burn bridges, don't be mean, don't put it in writing.

The Best Thing to Remember





Works Cited

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Miller, Brenda, and Suzanne Paola. *Tell It Slant*. 3rd ed. McGraw Hill, 2019.

Saunders, George. *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain*. 1st ed. Random House, n.d.



Questions?

- Contact me at DBeaumier@ChantiReviews.com
- Chanticleer Authors Conference is April 18-21, 2024
- CAC Discount Code for \$50 off: DBCACFIFTYQR
- Tango at the Majestic every Wednesday from 6:30-9:45pm
- www.HamLit.org

