

Manuscript Editorial Evaluation

Title: "X"

Author: Mr. Doe

Date: 2015

Title

- Is the title appropriate for the genre and reflect the content of the book?

I feel "X" is an appropriate title because it directly reflects the content of the book.

Opening

- Does the opening material/chapter grab the reader's attention and set up the basis for the remainder of the story?

No, I did not feel that the opening material did justice to the story—it introduced the reader to the leading characters, but the reader is unsure of what is happening.

I found the opening material confusing because it seemed to ramble, it took a long time to find out what was actually happening and was very jumpy as the author was trying to tell you what's going on, but also introduces the reader to everything else at the same time.

Basic Theme and Tone

- Is the basic theme interesting, believable, and unique?

For someone who has an interest in this genre, yes. It is believable because it is based on actual events, and I felt it was unique because I had not read anything in this genre, but also the storyline and some of the characters were quite unique.

- Is the point of the story conveyed clearly?

No—I was unsure what the focus of the book was: was it the events in the book, or was it the main characters' experience of these events? It took me until I was about halfway through the book before it became obvious that the story was about the main characters' experience, and potentially the connection of a secondary character and the main characters. If I am correct, and the story is about the connection between these characters, I think that the secondary character should make an appearance earlier in the book than they do. Also, the technical information needs to be toned down and condensed—at this point, the situation and the characters are each trying to be the main character, which is confusing to the reader.

- Is the theme and tone consistent and appropriate for the genre?

Yes, I feel the theme and tone are appropriate for the genre; however, as I said above, the theme is getting lost—it feels like the author is trying to tell two stories instead of one.

- If factual information has been used, is it accurate and consistent?

Most of the factual information – dates, times, places, and people seem to be accurate (although I have not cross-referenced anything yet—if there were to be an edit done, all info would be checked for accuracy). The author also stated that some real people used in the book had fictional components in the story. If an edit were to be done, this information would have to be clarified to ensure the editor knew what was supposed to be real (to ensure factual accuracy), and what was to be fictional.

- Is the language level appropriate for the target readership?

Yes, the majority of the language was appropriate for the target readership, although I would advise that some of the slang and era language be clarified or reworded. Also, I found the excessive use of some swear words to be distracting from the story; they didn't fit with the times and in some places were used way too much. If the author insists on excessively using particular swear words, I would highly recommend using certain ones VERY sparingly, and finding a different, more appropriate word or phrase to use to express the emotions trying to be conveyed.

- Is the story appealing and well executed?

I find the author's ability to write believable, intriguing characters and realistic, well-described scenes appealing; I consistently wanted to get back to the book to see what would happen next. However, I did feel that the characters and what I felt was the main storyline got confused and lost amongst the detail the author used to write scenes. I also felt that there were too many named characters that were unimportant, or minor in the story, which made it difficult to keep track of who was who. I think that streamlining the number of named characters and perspectives in the story, as well as condensing the scenes, while increasing and expanding the focus on the most important characters and their experiences would make for a stronger story.

Point of View (POV)

- Is the POV consistent and used appropriately to convey the thoughts or emotions of various characters?
- If there are changes in POV, are they needed? Are they easy to follow?
- Does the POV competently tell the story?

The point of view changes throughout the book. I found that the amount of POVs made the reading confusing at times. Although it was nice to see what was happening from different perspectives, the great number of them, as well as the lack of clarity in separating them, detracted from the story. Also, because the POV was jumping around a lot, I felt the characters whose POVs really mattered were left lacking. I would recommend focusing on the perspectives that matter and adding more “meat” to them. I think that the majority of the secondary POVs should be eliminated—there were way too many and they ended up watering down the story. As you would start to build a connection that character was gone, and you never really got the connection you were looking for from the main characters.

Structure, Plot and Pace

- Does each incident or action move the reader forward in the story, and do they provide needed background information?

I felt that the majority of incidents and actions did move the story forward. It helped that there was a clear timeline of events; however, I felt there could have been more background provided, some moved closer to the beginning of the book. Same with (insert character) —I would have liked some of their past explained during their introduction as well, and I would have liked to have seen them introduced earlier. I feel that a content edit to help eliminate some of the excess bulk and highlight the areas individually that could use more would be really beneficial to the story.

- Do the events in the story enhance the conflict?

I feel that the majority of events enhance the conflict and move the story along, although, again, the amount of excess in some areas watered down the story, as well as the seemingly two stories trying to be told. I think that by clarifying exactly what story is being told, and tightening and eliminating a lot of the background story, will highlight what the conflict actually is and allow the author to build on it to increase the reader’s focus on it.

- Do the incidents or plot developments occur where they are needed in the story?

Some events do occur when needed, although (insert character)'s storyline could be moved closer to the beginning, intertwined, and given more development. All incidents and plot developments, I feel, should be highlighting and supporting the main characters' experience leading up to the climax. Again, the sheer amount of information often detracts from what I think is supposed to be the story.

- Is there definite high point of action that leads to an appropriate conclusion for the genre?

Again, by clarifying exactly which story is being told, the author would be able to strengthen the high point of action for the reader. However, I felt both story lines were concluded. The high point of action, though, is muddled; I felt (insert scene) was the high point, but it didn't do the actual storyline justice.

- Do incidents suggest the conclusion without giving it away too early?

Because the book is based on fact, the reader knows how that component ends. Whether the main characters were going to make it through was assumed because they were the main character, obviously altered, as is expected. It was assumed that (insert character) was connected to (insert character) at their introduction, but the importance of that storyline and what it meant to the main characters was not even put on the radar until almost the end of the book. I think that there needed to be more interconnection throughout the book for this storyline to be given justice.

- Do the plot and structure hold the reader's interest throughout?

As a fan of this genre, I was interested enough to want to know what was going to happen. The structure was messy, though, which made it hard to follow along at times. I found that the amount of information overshadowed the plot, and I found myself inclined to skim over a lot of it to get back to the main character's story. I really enjoyed the setting of the story and found that also drove my desire to keep reading.

Setting

- Is the setting important to the story and the plot, and provide an appropriate sense of place?

Yes, the setting is essential to the story and plot because it gave an appropriate sense of place, although I would review, condense, and eliminate anything not detrimental to the storyline for the readers' clarity.

- Does the setting description slow the pace of the story?

Occasionally, especially setting description. Condensing and eliminating anything/anywhere not detrimental to the story of the main character should be considered.

Characterization

- Are the characters believable and introduced for a clear purpose?

Mostly, yes. I am a huge fan of the author's main characters: they are human, believable, and relevant to the story. I found some of the secondary characters intriguing and relevant; they give the reader perspective on all sides. However, as the book progressed and more and more characters were being introduced, I began to get confused as to who was who, what their place was, and their importance. Eliminating some of these characters would make it easier for the reader to focus on the important characters and follow the story.

- Does the author provide a description of what the characters look like, and give a sense of who they are? (i.e. mannerisms, motivations, and personality traits)

The main characters are very believable, with a decent sense of who they are. I would have liked more depth, though, especially with (insert character). Also, I would have liked further physical description of the characters; the only one I had a really clear picture in my mind of was (insert character).

Also, multiple characters share the same name, which was confusing at times. It is important that the author makes it clear who they are talking about, and ensure that the same name is used consistently. For example, occasionally the author would refer to X as Y, which caused confusion at times. Also, clear section breaks would help provide clarity to the reader.

- Is the behaviour of the characters realistic to their situations?

Yes, I felt that all the characters responded very realistically to the situations they encountered.

- Are the characters inter-relationships believable?

Yes, the characters' inter-relationships are believable.

- Is there an emotional connection to the main characters?

I felt an emotional connection to all the main characters. I would have liked to have had more of an emotional connection with (insert character), and would have enjoyed more background information to deepen my connection with some of the main characters.

Dialogue

- Is the dialogue realistic to the story, and easy to read?

Mostly, although occasionally the characters' voices would all sound the same, or take on different slangs that weren't there before. Also, I felt that the gratuitous use of swear words took away from the story and didn't make it seem believable. The structure of the dialogue needs a lot of work—paragraphing and punctuation, as well as sentence structure, need to be fixed for the dialogue to be easy to read and follow.

- Does the dialogue identify the characters' personalities, keeping each character unique?

Sometimes, but the language and word use needs to be consistent with each individual character, all the time.

- Are the dialogue and action well-balanced?

I felt that there was a lot of internal dialogue by the characters; I would have liked to see more interactive dialogue between the characters.

- Does the dialogue affect the pace of the story?

Not really, other than I didn't feel there was enough of it.

- Are dialects used sparingly and effectively?

Mainly, although consistency is an issue. Decide how you want the characters to talk, and stick to it. It is important for every character to have a distinct, consistent voice.

Basic Punctuation and Grammar

- Is the manuscript free of grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors?

No. Almost every sentence has an issue with one or all of grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. An edit is required.

- Is the manuscript free of stylistic errors that distract the reader? (i.e. fragments, repetition or passive voice)

No, there are a lot of issues with repetition, passive voice, and jumpy fragments. A content edit is required to eliminate these issues and provide order.

- Is the dialect used throughout the manuscript consistent (i.e. Canadian or American English)?

No—because of the errors mentioned above, and the heavy use of spell check, some words are American spelling, some Canadian. Despite the American/Canadian content, it is important for the manuscript's language to be consistent. An edit would be able to review and correct any inconsistencies.

- Are the grammar, punctuation, and writing style of the manuscript satisfactory for publication, or is further editing needed?

No, a full content edit is highly recommended.

General Comments about the Manuscript

Content

- Does the story have narrative drive, emotional power, or original voice?

Although it is present, with some additional information the emotional drive of the story would further deepen. The narrative needs cleaning up with the use of different tenses and POVs but has strong potential; these changes will strengthen the voice.

Execution

- Does the story have sufficient commercial pace and appeal, or literary value?

Yes, with a proper edit, I think the story will appeal to people with an interest in the genre. I feel that any story that highlights this genre and content has literary

value because it is a good way for readers to connect and learn in a way that is easier to digest and relate to than a textbook.

Quality of Writing

- Is the writing on an appropriate level for the target audience?

Overall, I think the writing is on an appropriate level for the target audience once it is free of technical issues (spelling, punctuation, grammar, repetition, etc.), the author condenses some of the information, and provides an explanation or different word use for some of the slang terminology used.

Juvenile Titles Only

- Is the material age-appropriate in content, language, and message?

N/A

General Comments

- Overall impression of the book:

Overall I was pleased with the story; I felt it was an accurate depiction of the struggles, tragedies, and triumphs of the people from this point in time. Although the storylines were concluded—I felt the ending was weak and disappointing; I didn't feel that the main characters' storyline was concluded strongly enough to leave the reader satisfied.

The author does an excellent job of making their characters real—you want to know more about them and how they fair throughout the book. The addition of certain characters and their perspective of transpiring events brings these characters to life in a way that other media and mediums can't do—regardless if some of the experiences or thoughts are fictional (it gives the readers an idea of what these events could have been like through their eyes). I would recommend strengthening all main characters with the addition of more physical description and background, as well as more of their perspectives—the main characters particularly, as they are the core of the story. The author needs to paint a picture so clear for the reader that they feel as if the characters are right in front of them. I would have also liked to see more of (insert character); although the author had verbally described (insert character) during a conversation, I felt it took a very long time for the reader to get that picture of them. I would have liked to see their strength and personality highlighted more throughout the book. (Insert character), I feel, really needs to play more of a part throughout the book as well; they need to be a strong character that the reader takes notice of early on (don't

give away their secrets, but the reader needs to connect with them early on). As is, by the time the reader connects with them, the book is finished—and that's unfortunate because the addition of the character adds a new layer to the story. I think that every section should include the main characters in one way or another, as it is their story.

I did feel that the book was struggling to tell ONE story—was it the story of the characters' *situation*, or was it the story of the characters *experiencing* the situation and all that goes with it? I think the author needs to decide what story is being told, then condense and edit the other story so it compliments, not conflicts, with the main one.

As the author has a keen interest and knowledge of the characters' situation and the book's genre, the amount of detail in the description of scenes, geography, and situations isn't surprising; however, it was overwhelming and detracted from what I felt was the story trying to be told. Realistic detail is important to give the reader an accurate depiction of the characters' situation, but too much detail and it gets boring and messy.

The manuscript as a whole was technically very messy—every sentence had spelling, capitalization, punctuation, spacing, and grammar issues; word tenses (past and present) were inconsistent; there was a lot of passive language (“It” almost always has a more descriptive word that can be used instead); clear paragraph, section, and chapter breaks were non-existent; the chains of thoughts and events were disorganized and confusing; there was a lot of repetition; and abbreviations were used inappropriately.

I would HIGHLY recommend a detailed CONTENT EDIT to correct and organize the manuscript, not only to polish the story for publication, but I also think the author would learn a lot from the corrections and be able to apply what they learn to their other works. Although the EDITORIAL EVALUATION can highlight the issues in a general way, the author is just too close to the story and can't SEE it anymore; I think a detailed edit will help them get these issues back into focus.

All in all, it was a pleasure to read “X”, and I would be thrilled to continue to work with the author to improve this manuscript, and any others in the future. I thoroughly enjoy the author's imagination and storytelling and look forward to working with them in the near future.

Bethany Jamieson

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