



ROMANCING THE
PAGE ACADEMY

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Helping romance authors write stories with heart.

Manuscript Self-Assessment: 5 steps to identifying your story's weaknesses

Use this self-assessment checklist to determine your manuscript's strengths and the areas in which there is still work to be done.

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In my [Story Fundamentals Program](#), I teach new and emerging romance writers a unique and comprehensive process for planning a story with heart. In sixteen steps, presented over three self-paced courses, I teach writers how to:

1. Identify their story's big picture elements.
2. Develop interesting and believable characters.
3. Identify the key elements of the story's main plot.
4. Add depth to the main plot with the finer details.
5. Outline the story's plot and character development.

I'm going to show you how to use those five overarching steps to conduct a self-assessment on your manuscript to determine where its weaknesses lie and what elements you should focus on as you edit your manuscript.

Read each of the statements below and answer YES if you believe it to be true or NO if you are certain or unsure if the statement is true. Any statement you answer NO to is a possible area of weakness in your story.

TAKE THE ASSESSMENT

1. Identify your story's big picture elements.

In my manuscript, I have:	Yes / No
Met reader expectations for my story's genre and subgenre	
Used marketable tropes in fresh and interesting ways	
Explored themes that will resonate with readers	
Delivered a meaningful message that's close to my heart	
Told a story that can be summarised in a single sentence	
Accurately represented the story with a memorable working title	

2. Develop interesting and believable characters.

In my manuscript, I have:	Yes / No
Chosen the right character to be the protagonist	
Centred the conflict around my characters' beliefs and misbeliefs	
Given my characters complementary strengths and flaws	
Ensured those strengths and flaws lead to conflict and connection	
Given my characters strong goals that are valid and relevant	
Ensured the characters' goals drive the plot forward	
Used strong motivations that stem from backstory events	
Created conflict that lasts for the duration of the story	
Ensured my characters grow and develop as people	
Connected the lessons my characters learn to the story's themes	

3. Identify the key elements of the story's main plot.

In my manuscript, I have:	Yes / No
Written an inciting incident that sets the story in motion	
Crafted strong and believable internal and external conflict	
Ensured the obstacles present legitimate challenges	
Developed the romance in an engaging and believable way	
Ensured each plot event enhances the story and adds value	

4. Add depth to the main plot with the finer details.

In my manuscript, I have:	Yes / No
Developed a manageable number of relevant subplots	
Centred the subplots around key support characters	
Ensured those characters have strong goals and motivation	
Used the subplots to create obstacles for the protagonist	
Showed evidence of change in the first and last scenes	
Ensured the first scene inspires reader-character connection	
Ensured the last scene leaves the reader feeling satisfied	

5. Outline your story's plot and character development.

In my manuscript, I have:	Yes / No
Included strong turning points (TPs) that add tension	
Ensured the TPs motivate the protagonist to take action	
Included engaging and relevant plot events between TPs	
Ensured the plot evolves with a cause-and-effect trajectory	
Included events that hinder the protagonist	
Included events that prompt the protagonist's development	

Confidently answered YES to every item on the assessment? Well done! It's likely that only light revisions are required!

Answered NO or are unsure about anything? Learn about how I can support you as you revise your manuscript. [Visit Revision Support.](#)