

Write Your Novel

Things to consider in approaching your big edit

Big picture – read through and make notes about your story, any threads you need to tie up but don't correct spelling, spend too long rewriting a description, you can do that next.

Dates, chronology – do all your dates tie up? Think about weather eg unlikely to be snow in May. Is it happening chronologically?

Character development – can you see your character changing if this is a transformative journey?

Tension – have you laid down those breadcrumbs etc?

The questions you're asking – ensure all the questions big and small have been made clear and are answered (or not if ambiguity is your aim)

Is each sub-plot managed? – ensure that each sub-plot you've created is resolved or answered

Style and tone – is your style consistent? Is the tone right for each scene as well as the overall tone of the book?

Genre – does the overall story meet the requirements of the genre you're writing?

General formatting of chapters, consistency – ensure you keep each chapter layout consistent. Ensure that each chapter begins at the same point on the page and is laid out in the same way. Below is an example of one of my chapter beginnings. Note the space from the top of the page to 'Chapter 2'. Each chapter in my manuscript must have that identical spacing.

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Joanne Derrick - Darren Dean (Working Title)

Chapter 2

The Plain

Adrenaline courses through his veins like amphetamine. His head is full of noise, the blood pumping, his best's voice, his colleagues' tears, the students' laughter. Darren's driving now, heading south with purpose. In the back of his car his camouflage backpack lies on the seat. Everything he needs for a week or two, however long it takes.

He presses his foot on the accelerator and flicks on the wipers. The day started out bright, in blues, yellows and greens by the college. But now, half an hour later, on the single carriageway across Salisbury Plain, it's brown, grey, and murky. He feels remote for a second, just a second, but lets it go. This is where Darren needs to go. It's where he needs to be more than anything. For his family. For his ancestors. For all those who were wronged. It's where he has to be.

He turns up the car stereo and the aggressive sounds of Public Enemy blast out while outside the rain falls on the fields either side of the road, splashing onto the windscreen of his 2008 Seat. He hasn't got the best levels right but it's loud. The music fills his head and blocks out the other side of him, the side he usually listens to. The one that worries about the bills and rent and keeping his job. He puts the volume up another notch until the window is