



7 Ways to Strengthen Your Story Through Chapter Summaries

1. Page length of Chapters

- Are some of your chapters twelve pages and some three? Chapter length is huge to the pacing of a book. Depending on your genre and category, your page lengths will differ, but a consistency between them will keep the reader turning the pages.

Chapter Endings

- Does the way you end your chapter move the story forward? Are we seeing the character go to bed? Or the character making a decision of action? Do we feel stuck in the middle of the scene, or pushed forward in the narration?

2. Plot Beats

- Website to use: www.beatsheetscalculator.com
- Using this simplified version of a beat sheet, you will be able to see where your plot beats should fall. Since you have the page numbers listed by each chapter, you can specifically go to that part of the story and see if things like your inciting incident and all is lost moment are happening in the right place. I allow a few pages flexibility, but try to stay as close to the calculator spots as possible.
- While you're checking plot beats, you can also keep in mind to see if each chapter is inevitably moving the story forward. Does each scene have a purpose and is it a direct result of the chapter before it?

3. Timeline

- Is your timeline helping or hurting your story? Using your chapter summary, you can make each hour/week/day of your story a different color, depending on the length of your timeline. Are you spending too much time on one day? Or are you emphasizing the importance of a particular day? Would it be helpful to your story to utilize a school year, a season, a deadline? Think about timeline as a tool.

4. Theme

- Using the highlighter tool, go through each chapter and highlight when you feel your theme appears in the story. This will help you visualize if it is clearly threaded



through the manuscript and also if it follows a proper arc and is fully developed until the end.

5. Character Arcs

- Using your main characters, assign each one a color. Go through each chapter and write one sentence in that character's color below that chapter with what they did in that specific scene. When you are done, you will be able to read only that character's sentences and see if they have a proper arc. Are they progressing? Regressing? Standing still? Are they acting realistically to their environment? Are they doing what you hoped they would do in the story, or what they should be doing?

6. External and Internal Conflict

- Are each of the conflicts well-developed and resolved? Are they driving the story forward? Are they meshing well with the character arc and the theme?

7. Main and Mini Goals

- There should be a main goal for the whole story and then multiple mini goals throughout to help the character reach their main goal. Each chapter should show the character setting a goal, overcoming an obstacle to that goal, or meeting the goal. Over and over until we reach final resolution.