



Structuring Your Novel: Essential Keys for Writing an Outstanding Story

K.M. Weiland

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Is Structure the Hidden Foundation of All Successful Stories?

Why do some stories work and others don't? The answer is structure. In this new guide from the author of the bestselling *Outlining Your Novel*, you will discover the universal underpinnings that guarantee powerful plot and character arcs. An understanding of proper story and scene structure will help you to not only perfectly time your story's major events, but will also provide you with an unerring standard to use in evaluating your novel's pacing and progression.

Structuring Your Novel will show you:

- How to determine the best methods for unleashing your unique and personal vision for your story.
- How to identify common structural weaknesses and flip them around into stunning strengths.
- How to eliminate saggy middles by discovering your "centerpiece."
- Why you should NEVER include conflict on every page.
- How to discover the questions you don't want readers asking about your plot—and then how to get them to ask the right questions.

Story structure has empowered countless bestselling and classic authors. Now it's your turn!

Structuring Your Novel: Essential Keys for Writing an Outstanding Story Details

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From Reader Review Structuring Your Novel: Essential Keys for Writing an Outstanding Story for online ebook

E.D. Martin says

Author K.M. Weiland does a bit of everything - writing fantasy and speculative fiction, mentoring new writers, and blogging helpful tips about the writing process. Her new book, *Structuring Your Novel: Essential Keys for Writing an Outstanding Story*, is a must-read for anyone writing a novel, no matter what stage she's at in the process.

The book is a companion to her *Outlining Your Novel: Map Your Way to Success*. Part one walks writers through the basic structure of a 3-act story, from writing a strong opening hook, setting the tone and defining the setting, to writing an ending that readers will love.

Part two focuses on scene development. She delves into Randy Ingermanson's scene/sequel (action/reaction) idea, expanding on it with ideas for scene disasters, conflicts, dilemmas, and decisions, as well as variations that still work in the context of a structured scene.

Part three is about structuring your sentence - about what makes prose good. This for me was the most helpful section and what I'd be most likely to refer to other writers. She covers participles and parallelism (a huge thing for me), run-ons and fragments, as well as how to get rid of stuff you don't need, like modifiers and filter words.

Throughout the book, Weiland gives detailed examples from movies and books, as well as coming back to the same four in every chapter: *Pride and Prejudice*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Ender's Game*, and *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*. It's her examples that really make this book useful; it's one thing to tell us about a concept, but much better to show us through real-life examples.

Overall, this is probably one of the most helpful writing books I've read, and one I definitely want on my shelf.

Jenny Baker says

I own a lot of writing advice books. Many of them have been sitting on my shelf unread because I thought they were going to be the equivalent of a dry, boring textbook. Most of them have been both educational and entertaining, inspiring me to keep reading more of them.

I just didn't love this book as much as most people. I'd put this in the "dry, boring textbook" category. Two-thirds of the content I've read in other advice books, so there really wasn't much new for me to learn, especially the section on story structure. Although I was already familiar with scene structure, I did get some useful information and it was a nice refresher. The geeky side of me liked the section on sentence structure.

I enjoyed some of her references, both fiction and nonfiction. Her fiction references include *Pride & Prejudice* and *Ender's Game*, among others. Her nonfiction references are some of my favorite books, *Reading Like a Writer* and *The Anatomy of Story*.

I don't think I was the right audience for this book because it seems to be more suitable for people who have never read a writing advice book before. If you're one of those types of readers, then this is the book that

you'd want to read.

Kellyn Roth says

Originally posted on Reveries Reviews

4.5 stars

This book changed the way I look at story structure. It's changed the way I look at the dramatic arc. At the books I read and the movies I watch. At the way I outline and write and revise.

Structuring Your Novel is a nonfiction book about writing ... more specifically about story structure. It starts with a detailed look at the structure of a novel. It shows you the entire story arc in a new way, giving tips for writing each tiny little detail of the dramatic arc. This was very useful, even as someone who knows the dramatic arc fairly well.

Next, it moves on to scene structure. I'd never really thought much about scene structure, so this was an eye-opener for me. I read this section through more than once! It was very informative.

The only thing I didn't find useful was the chapter on sentence structure. It didn't really help me, mostly because I learned most of that in grade school and the rest from noveling blogs, other writing books, and practical experience. Still, it may be useful to other people.

K.M. Weiland writes in an entertaining style, but she also grinds the facts into your head in a way that really makes them stick with you. Her examples from popular fiction (old and new) were very useful in helping me grasp the concepts she introduces. But don't worry if you don't read a lot (shame on you; why are you trying to write?!). Even if I hadn't read the books/watched the movies (which I didn't with two of them), I would have understood, which was nice.

I'd recommend this book to any writer who wishes to improve their craft. It's definitely worth your time!

~Kellyn Roth, Reveries Reviews

Rich Weatherly says

K.M. Weiland has delivered a carefully thought out and organized text on how to structure a novel. It is an excellent complement to her best selling writing resource, *Outlining Your Novel: Map Your Way to Success*. The text takes the reader step-by-step through a process which, if followed, should ensure writing that meets readers' expectations. You will find answers on how to avoid common pitfalls. The conversational tone delivers its message in a simple and effective manner.

I'm confident this book will improve my writing. I learned a lot from reading it the first time and intend to return to the book as an important resource.

My review is based on an advance released copy.

Miloš says

Opened my eyes in so many ways...

Rae Sengele says

While I found this book interesting enough, it was way too prescriptive for my liking. I've been finding more and more that KM Weiland likes to tell you that her way of writing is the only way of writing, and this book especially is bad about that. This isn't a book about structure, it's a book on how KM Weiland approaches structure. Turns out she's extremely fond of the "Hollywood" standard of writing, which clings WAY too steadfastly to its precious three acts, and she's very quick to tell you that if you deviate from those three acts your book will fail, which is by no means the case. I would have liked this book much more if she had explored the many variations on structure that exist rather than only presenting the three acts and leaving it at that. I guess I'm just tired of hearing people hand out rigid advice that encourages writers not to experiment with writing. Too many writers are more concerned with marketability than they are with telling a story and it's sad to see so many people accept their word as fact.

Harley Christensen says

Finally...Story, Scene and Sentence Structure Simplified

In *Structuring Your Novel: Essential Keys for Writing an Outstanding Story*, K.M. Weiland demystifies the concept of structure that is, as she aptly coins it, "...the single most overlooked, misunderstood - and yet important - part of storytelling."

From our story's initial hook to the closing line, Weiland details the importance of structure and how to effectively incorporate it, while avoiding those pesky pitfalls that plague authors at any level.

Along the way she provides us with informative discussions on prologue, dream sequence, backstory, subplot, character arc and epilogue, along with tips for improving the presentation of scenes and chapters as our stories progress.

I personally found her discussion on plot vs. scene goals extremely helpful, as well as the examples she provided at the end of every chapter. There's even a takeaway checklist that follows up on key points.

From start to finish, it's clear this book was written by someone who truly understands (and loves) the craft of writing, as well as the needs of writers and authors on all levels. It's a must-have in the library of anyone writing (or thinking about writing) a novel.

On a side note, if you aren't already following her blog - [Helping Writers Become Authors](#) - I highly encourage you to check it out!

Kayci Morgan says

Sometimes I feel like K.M. Weiland is the person that taught me how to write. From the day I was first linked to her website, I combed through it, absorbing everything I could about story structure. Her insights changed the way I look at a story and while I used to be able to fumble through and write something engaging 80 or 90% of the time, now that I know the things that make a story engaging, I can avoid, long, plotless, character sketches masquerading as stories.

This book has all the things I've learned from her site and more, all packaged in a clear, easy-to-read format. It was a joy to read (I don't think I've ever sat down and read an instructional text from beginning to end as if it were a novel before now) and I feel like I've learned even more about writing. I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in improving their craft. It's a game changer.

Steve says

If you only buy one writing craft book this year, buy this one.

K.M. Weiland has, for years, provided sound advice on writing in her very popular blog, Wordplay <http://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthor....> She has the rare ability to de-mystify topics that baffle so many writers. She takes concepts that seem thoroughly confusing, wrestles them down to the ground and makes them give up their secrets. She uses explanations and examples that are like turning a light on in a dark room. Her writing style is comfortable and easy to follow. It's like having her over for coffee and having that long, detailed discussion about writing with someone that really knows their stuff. I heartily recommend this book as a must have for all writers that want to become authors. This will take an honored place in your craft library and you will return to it time and again for reference.

Jan Marshall says

I'm currently writing my first novel and have bought lots of books on the craft of writing, and particularly on structure, without finding the "right" book for me. I've never understood the rules completely: what the options are and what's carved in stone, whether I can I move an event to another place in my book, break the rules, etc. But I do believe I can stop searching now, because KM Weiland's book has eventually made it all fall into place. I put this down to three things:

- 1) Ms Weiland doesn't treat structure as a dry old skeleton with no life; she puts flesh on its bones by combining it with the other aspects of writing that impact on and enrich novel structure — things like character, conflict, setting, backstory, sentence construction, and more.
- 2) Complementing the excellent subject matter is a well-organised format with a comprehensive and logical table of contents, and clear headings throughout the text. These aid smooth learning and make the book convenient to dip into, perhaps for a reminder on a particular point.
- 3) KM Weiland's friendly voice and her amazing talent for clear and simple communication make the various concepts easy to read and understand. And, if there were ever any boring bits in this book (which I doubt), they were removed before publishing!

I loved it and I thoroughly recommend it.

Hope Ann says

A must read for any writer!

Rachelle Cobb says

What I Loved

I learned a lot just from the Table of Contents--and that was how I knew I was going to be fascinated by the rest of K.M. Weiland's latest release, *Structuring Your Novel: Essential Keys for Writing an Outstanding Story*.

"Story structure is deeply instinctual. Most readers don't know a thing about structure; but they do know when a story doesn't work because something in its structure is off. Same goes for authors. Many successful authors write without any knowledge of structure, and their stories still work because they're instinctively following the tenets of structure without even being aware of it." -- Chapter 13

I was right. It only took me a few days to read this book, which is saying something when it comes to me and nonfiction. K.M. Weiland offers a thorough breakdown of what story structure means--a daunting task. Plus, she does it without being dry, boring, or overwhelming. I thought the terms and information would send my brain into overload, but Weiland remained witty and clear throughout.

Full of examples of what she means, illustrations of her points, and applicable advice for writers who want to grasp what it means to structure their novel, this book is an excellent resource for plotters and pantsers, those who are familiar with the three-act structure and those who are not (yet).

What I Didn't Like As Much

During the first half of the book, I wished that the examples Weiland chose (which include *Pride and Prejudice* and *It's A Wonderful Life*) were slightly younger. I wanted to see her dissect *The Hunger Games* or one of her own novels, but over the course of the book, I began to appreciate what she was doing--using examples that had half a chance of being familiar to a wide audience.

(And I suppose using *The Hunger Games* would introduce far too many spoilers.)

Why I Recommend This Book

For writers who know exactly what *In Medias Res* means and for those who have never heard of the Hook or the Inciting Event, K.M. Weiland offers a book that will decode story structure in such a way as to keep the writer/reader engaged and reaching for paper to write down ideas. Examples enlighten. Application abounds. I highly recommend *Structuring Your Novel*.

Angell Johnson says

This book is brilliant and practical for writers of all genres. For years on end I had been info dumping the entire backstory in the first chapters of my previous novels. She introduces the p/p/f dimensions of every scene which simplifies the work in scattering backstory and keeping your story interesting and engaging.

I first discovered her from her short and sweet YouTube videos, and I just had to read her work. Her words have pushed me to go harder and read longer after hearing her speak for only two minutes. Five stars hands down, this book is the answer to a struggling writer's prayers. I'm sure I'll love her novels.

Hazel McNellis says

Inhalt

Der Schreibratgeber geht sehr ausführlich auf den Aufbau/die Struktur eines Romans ein. Dabei gliedert er sich in die Kapitel über den Anfang und Aufhänger, der 3-Akt-Struktur sowie der Szenenstruktur (Szene vs. Sequel) und zuletzt der Satzstruktur in einem Roman.

Meinung

Ich mag den Ratgeber echt gerne! Er ist zwar in englischer Sprache verfasst, aber trotzdem sehr gut verständlich und logisch nachvollziehbar. Ich mag, wie detailliert auf die einzelnen Aspekte eingegangen wird. Dabei führt die Autorin auch immer wieder Beispiele an, um ihre Aussagen zu veranschaulichen. Außerdem gibt es ein FAQ-Kapitel zum Aufbau eines Romans, wo nochmal viele hilfreiche Informationen aufgegriffen werden. Mir persönlich gefallen der lockere, ungezwungene Schreibstil ebenso wie die Fülle an Informationen, sodass ich gerne 5 Sterne verteile. :)

Fazit

Ich glaube, wer Englisch versteht und die grundlegenden Fragen zum Aufbau eines Romans in einem einzigen Buch beantwortet haben will, ist mit "Structuring your novel" gut bedient. :) Ich finde es ziemlich hilfreich und werde es in Zukunft bestimmt immer mal wieder zur Hand nehmen. :)

Nathaniel says

In many ways, this book was like a revelation for me, although my revelations may be embarrassingly naive to folks who already know this.

First simple but crucial thing I learned: not all the acts in a 3-act structure are equal in length. In particular, the 2nd act is actually twice as long as the first or third. *Everything makes sense now!* I've tried to apply 3-act structure to movies or books a couple of times, always looking for the scene transitions at the 1/3 mark, and I could never find them. Now I know why.

I also finally figured out why dream sequence and false tension are such terrible ways to start books. The hook--what draws a person--works better than a perceived need for instant-action. I think I've actually fallen for this one several times in my own stories. :-(

So, if these sound like things you already learned, perhaps it's not the book for you, but it made a believer out of me. I can see how several stories / outlines I've been noodling with can be improved by applying her 10-step analysis:

1. Hook
2. Inciting Event
3. Key Point
4. 1st Plot Point
5. 1st Half of Second Act
6. Midpoint (2nd Plot Point)
7. 2nd Half of Second Act
8. 3rd Plot Point
9. Climax
10. Resolution

Going into the details of all of these 10 steps takes up about the 1st half of the book.

The second half is devoted to scene structure instead of plot structure, which has three components:

1. Scene
2. Disaster
3. Sequel

I don't really like the terminology, but the idea is that you have conflict (scene), then a resolution that spawns a new conflict (disaster), and then a quiet period for showing consequences / character progression (sequel).

This was also really helpful. You get told to "show, but don't tell." One of the most important things for me to learn has been that not to try and show everything. Telling is an important part of writing. Same idea here: young writers (like me) think everything has to be all action / conflict all the time. But you actually need the non-action elements (sequels) just as much.

There's also a QA section at the end, although my biggest questions weren't answered to my satisfaction. First, I want to know about multi-book plot structure. The line between book and trilogy is kind of blurry, after all (i.e. Lord of the Rings) and even bigger works like Harry Potter (7 books) have a single, cohesive structure. Is it also 3-act? How do you do plotting for very large-scale works? Not much help here.

Also: how do you handle multiple POV characters? This was quasi-addressed, but there's still uncertainty for me about whether they each have their own parallel 3-act structures or if the story is distinct, and they each just have different perspectives on a single 3-act plot.

Still, it's a great, clear, useful (I hope!) book and the primary examples (Ender's Game, Master & Commander: Far Side of the World, and Pride and Prejudice) do a good job of illustrating the various elements.

Definitely one I'm going to read again, and I'm already eager to rewatch Harry Potter (and reread) and apply the 3-act structure to see what I can learn.
