

## What to Expect from a Critique

If you have never been critiqued, you may not be completely prepared for the kind of feedback another writer can give you, or for the feelings their suggestions may cause in you. If you have experience being critiqued, receiving feedback from other writers, you are probably familiar with some of the feelings a critique can engender. You feel great when your critique partners tell you what you've done well, and you feel not-so-great when they point out what's not yet working. Hopefully, you haven't received a critique that made you feel hurt, or that made you wonder whether you should be writing.

You should.

You should also, though, be revising. And one of the best ways to do that, if not always the easiest, is to receive strong feedback from a critiquer.

When I critique, I provide you with a thorough, detailed set of feedback. This includes a page or more of overall comments, suggestions about the big elements of writing—things like plot and characterization in fiction, organization and voice in nonfiction. I also make notes throughout the manuscript, pointing out specific places where I think you can do more work, passages that I think illustrate the suggestions I make in my overall critique, and—of course—writing that I love.

If you hire me to critique your manuscript, you're going to see a lot of comments. You'll get a detailed explanation of the kinds of revision I think you'll want to be doing, and you'll see a lot of Word Comments in the margins of your pages. You may very well feel overwhelmed.

Try to remember a few things:

- You are not the only person to have their work marked up this way. It happens to most writers. It happens to me all the time!
- You are allowed to start slowly. Take it a chapter at a time, work with the small changes you can say “yes” or “no” to, and let the other, bigger comments simmer in your brain as you work.
- You don't have to make all the changes at once. I find it most helpful to pick one or two big things to work through in one revision, following the thread of changes through each scene, and watching how my story grows and improves as I work.
- You are the author of this manuscript. I happily give you permission, here and now, to decide *against* putting in any of my suggested changes. (I also ask you, if I make a big point about something multiple times through the pages, to take a second look before making that decision. ☺)
- You can do this. We send our words out with high expectations, and higher hopes. We know, in general terms, that we have more work to do, but—often—we don't know or recognize, how much work that will be. Take your time. Be patient with yourself, and allow yourself to grow your writing along with your project. Every revision you do of your manuscript will bring it that much closer to being the book you want it to be.

Finally, remember that I am not disappearing once I send the critique to you. I am here for questions—don't hesitate to email me if you don't understand something I've written, or if you're feeling confused where to go with the critique. I want to help you bring your book to the next level, because I know that you can do just that.