Section 8, Master Class for Genre Novelists: Complete and Ready to Compete?

Write-by-the-Lake Writer’s Workshop & Retreat
June 16-20, 2014
9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. each day
Pyle Center, 702 Langdon St., Madison

UW-Madison Continuing Studies & UW-Madison Dept. of English

Instructor: Lori Devoti

Finishing your first novel is a huge accomplishment. But how do you know if that novel, complete though it might be, is ready to compete with other works for editors’, agents’, and readers’ attention?

Complete and Ready to Compete is for any writer who has finished (or is very close to finishing) a draft of a genre manuscript.

This workshop looks at your book—where it sings and where it may hit a sour note. We'll discuss key scenes, making sure your book has them all and you have done everything you can to get the most out of each of them. We'll look at dialogue and character, goal and conflict, big picture and small.

We'll discuss everything a book needs to be great and make sure if your book isn’t quite there yet, that you know what to do to push it to that next level.

In addition, in-class critiques of each person’s work give you feedback from a diverse group.

At the end of the week you’ll have the assurance of knowing whether your book is ready to be sent out into the world, and if it isn’t you’ll know what you need to do to get it submission ready.

You’ll also learn the many changes going on in the publishing world and what the best options might be for you, your book and your writing career.

And, if participants are interested, we’ll do a group lunch for a casual discussion of all things publishing—houses, ebooks, agents, self-publishing, whatever appeals or frightens you. (Tentative day: Thursday.)

Lori will read your entire manuscript prior to class. Other students are encouraged to do this as well and to provide supportive, but honest feedback throughout the week. This feedback will comprise a large portion of our sessions.
While a syllabus is provided, this will not be a one-fits-all workshop—daily lessons will be tweaked as needed and targeted to the needs of the group.

Writers may also be asked to revise their work throughout the week. Please bring a printed copy of your entire manuscript to this workshop.

Section 8 Syllabus:
Master Class with Lori Devoti
Genre novelists: Complete and Ready to Compete?

Day one:
First Five Pages
The most important pages in your novel when trying to get the attention of an editor, agent or reader are the first five pages. Do they grab the reader? Do you introduce the protagonist and his/her main story problem? How about setting and mood? Do these pages tell the reader what kind of story he or she is reading?

And what about goals? Do your characters have goals both for the story and every scene? In addition to looking at the first five pages, we will talk goal, motivation and conflict and how to use them to make your characters come to life and get your plot to zing.

Assignment: Group critique of first five pages.

Day two:
Key Scenes
What are they and do you have the ones you need? We will review all the key scenes every story should have, and take an in-depth look at one key scene in particular—the inciting incident.

Did you cop out or give the reader the full experience they are expecting? How do you know if a scene doesn't belong in your book? When is it just filler that should be crumpled up and left on your office floor—no matter how dynamic the writing? Looking back at goal—does your scene have one? How about conflict? And how does it end? Is everything tied up neatly with a bow, or did you give your readers a reason to keep turning pages?

Assignment: Be prepared to identify the inciting incident of your work. Today's critique can be either a key scene of your choice or a scene you are questioning in general.
Day three:
Dialogue.
Nothing pulls you out of a story faster than clunky dialogue. Let's look at yours. Does it read real, but not too real? Does it convey character and move the plot? Is it as exciting to read as it can be? What are some tricks you can use to add punch and flair to your characters and story through dialogue?

Assignment: Pick a scene that is dialogue driven. How does it read? Where can it be tightened or conflict added?

Day four:
Mid-Section
Does your book have mid-point sag? How do you keep your readers interested mid-book where so many stories lose steam? Is your character avoiding conflict? How can we turn up the heat and keep readers involved?

Assignment: Identify your story’s mid-point. What happens? How do things change for your character? At this point in the story what choices does the character have? What choices are taken away from him? Can he go back to who he was at the inciting incident? We will read and critique these scenes to make sure they are sag-free.

Today is also the tentative day for a group lunch, location to be decided, to discuss publishing options for your work. Lori unplugged, ask away.

Day five:
The End
Your reader is almost finished with your book--don't let him down now! Let's look at how you end your book including dark moment, climax, and dénouement. Does your character dip to the depths and pull himself back out? Does your reader join in the rollercoaster ride of failure and success with him? Or do you flip to the happy ending with no real on the page suffering from your protagonist?

Assignment: Pinpoint dark moment, climax and dénouement in your story. Pick one for group critique.

Lori Devoti is the multi-published, multi-genre author of urban fantasy, cozy mystery, young adult, paranormal romance and romantic comedy novels. She is a member of Novelist Inc., a group exclusive to professional writers and is owner of the How to Write Shop, an online source of articles on the craft and business of writing. Lori has had over a dozen works published by major publishers, and is also pursuing the new avenues open to authors in today’s digital world. Lori is the recipient of the Romantic Times Reviewers’ Choice Award for The Witch Thief, the Best Harlequin Nocturne of 2012.
She has a degree in journalism from the University of Missouri: Columbia and worked in the newspaper industry for many years before becoming a novelist.

For more information on all of Lori’s works and links to her articles at the How to Write Shop, visit her web site at www.LoriDevoti.com

Fee and what it includes

$750. Instructor will read your full manuscript prior to class; full manuscripts will be shared with the entire class via email attachment. Instructor will provide feedback on your entire novel throughout the week. Classroom discussion will address your entire manuscript’s strengths and weaknesses, and provide specific direction for revisions with publication in mind.

How to apply

Please contact the instructor about possible openings before sending material. Apply by April 1 if possible, but applications will be accepted after that for spaces that remain. To apply, please email a one-page summary of your entire plot, plus the first 20 pages of your manuscript to lori@loridevoti.com. Manuscript pages must be double-spaced using 12-point Times New Roman and one-inch margins. If you are accepted, the instructor will ask you to forward your completed manuscript for sharing with the class. Manuscripts may not exceed 300 pages/90,000 words.

Credit Option: Participants earn 1 credit by attending class and completing the assigned work for the week: daily reading, writing at least five pages of original work, and critiquing of own and others’ work. To earn 2 credits, participants submit an additional five pages of their work. Participants earning 3 credits complete all of the above requirements supplemented by another five to 10 pages of creative work or a short paper synthesizing how the material covered during the week applies to their own creative projects and/or teaching. The work must be handed in within two weeks of final class date.