

The Three-Column Method: Janet Evanovich's Revolutionary Approach to Novel Writing

In the realm of popular fiction, few authors have achieved the level of success and acclaim as Janet Evanovich. Her Stephanie Plum series, featuring a quirky and lovable bounty hunter, has sold over 100 million copies worldwide and has been translated into 30 languages.



The Three Column Method by Janet Evanovich

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One of the key factors contributing to Evanovich's success is her innovative writing technique known as the Three-Column Method. This method, which she developed over decades of writing experience, provides a structured and efficient approach to crafting compelling novels that captivate readers and keep them turning pages.

In this article, we will explore the Three-Column Method in detail, examining its principles, structure, and benefits. We will also provide

practical tips and examples to help aspiring writers apply this method to their own writing.

The Three Columns

The Three-Column Method is a visual representation of the novel's structure. It consists of three vertical columns, each representing a different aspect of the story.

- **Column 1: Plot**
- **Column 2: Characters**
- **Column 3: Setting**

Each column is divided into sections, such as "Beginning," "Rising Action," "Climax," and "Resolution." This allows writers to visualize the flow of the story and track the development of their characters and setting throughout the novel.

Column 1: Plot

The Plot column outlines the major events and turning points of the story. It includes key plot elements such as the inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

By mapping out the plot in this way, writers can ensure that their story has a clear structure and a logical progression of events. They can also identify potential plot holes or inconsistencies and make necessary adjustments.

Column 2: Characters

The Characters column focuses on the development of the story's main characters. It includes sections for each character's backstory, motivations, goals, and conflicts.

Developing well-rounded and relatable characters is crucial for engaging readers. By using the Three-Column Method, writers can delve into the depths of their characters' personalities and create a strong emotional connection with them.

Column 3: Setting

The Setting column describes the time, place, and atmosphere of the story. It includes details such as the geographical location, historical context, and cultural influences.

Setting plays a vital role in creating a believable and immersive experience for readers. By carefully crafting the setting, writers can transport readers to another world and make their stories even more captivating.

Benefits of the Three-Column Method

The Three-Column Method offers numerous benefits for writers, including:

- **Improved Structure and Organization:** It provides a visual framework that helps writers organize their thoughts and ideas, ensuring a logical and cohesive story flow.
- **Enhanced Character Development:** It encourages writers to explore their characters in greater depth, creating well-rounded and relatable individuals that readers can connect with.

- **Strong Setting and Atmosphere:** It enables writers to establish a vivid and believable setting that immerses readers in the story world and enhances the overall reading experience.
- **Increased Productivity:** By streamlining the writing process and providing a structured approach, the Three-Column Method can help writers increase their productivity and efficiency.

Practical Tips for Using the Three-Column Method

To successfully apply the Three-Column Method, follow these practical tips:

- **Start with a Brainstorming Session:** Gather your thoughts and ideas before creating the columns. Write down everything that comes to mind about your plot, characters, and setting.
- **Use Different Colors for Each Column:** This can help you visualize the different aspects of the story and keep them separate in your mind.
- **Collaborate with Beta Readers:** Ask for feedback from trusted readers to help you refine your plot, characters, and setting.
- **Be Flexible:** The Three-Column Method is a guideline, not a set of strict rules. Don't hesitate to make changes and adjustments as needed.

Examples of the Three-Column Method in Action

To illustrate the application of the Three-Column Method, let's examine an example from Janet Evanovich's bestselling novel "One for the Money."

Column	Beginning	Rising Action	Climax
Plot	Stephanie Plum becomes a bounty hunter.	She investigates the murder of a cop.	She confronts the killer and saves the day.
Characters	Stephanie Plum: Quirky, lovable bounty hunter.	Morelli: Police officer, Stephanie's love interest.	Ranger: Mysterious and dangerous bounty hunter.
Setting	Trenton, New Jersey.	Modern day, with a touch of humor.	Gritty urban setting.

As you can see, the Three-Column Method provides a clear and concise overview of the novel's plot, characters, and setting. It allows Evanovich to track the development of these elements throughout the story and ensure a cohesive and engaging narrative.

The Three-Column Method is a powerful tool that can help writers of all levels improve their storytelling skills and craft compelling novels that captivate readers. By providing a structured and visual approach to planning and writing, this method enables writers to develop well-rounded characters, create vivid settings, and construct intricate plots that keep readers on the edge of their seats.

If you are aspiring to write engaging and successful novels, consider adopting the Three-Column Method as part of your writing process. With practice and dedication, this method can unlock your creativity and empower you to write stories that will leave a lasting impression on your readers.



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