

The S-Word

Synopsis with Tina Radcliffe

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The S-Word

Just about all novelists hate writing synopses. Just about all editors hate reading them. – Randy Ingermanson

**Alexa,
write my
synopsis.**

The S-Word

The synopsis is a narrative outline of your story used for querying agents, and publishers and for entering contests. The synopsis includes the characters, setting, plot points and your writing style.

It is also used to keep you on track as you complete your novel.



WHY?

Elements of Pitching Your Novel

- **Pitch or Blurb-** Short paragraph that tells the GMC of your story.

Nurse Annie Harris has returned to Tulsa to recover from a mission trip gone wrong—home to Sullivan Ranch, Will Sullivan and housekeeper Maggie O’Shea, the only family Annie has ever known. Rancher Will Sullivan is dealing with the fifty-fifty odds he may have Huntington’s disease. Annie and Will begin a journey of learning to face the future and trusting God’s unconditional love.- *The Rancher’s Reunion*

- **Tagline** -describes the essence of our story. *Don’t go into the water – Jaws*
- **Logline** –one sentence that tell what your book is about. - *A young man and woman from different social classes fall in love aboard an ill-fated voyage at sea.-Titanic*
- **Synopsis**-Plot point outline of your story. (Can be 1 page single spaced or multiple pages)
- **What is a proposal?** Three chapters and a synopsis.

From the Editor's Desk

From Harlequin Editor Emily Rodmell

Love Inspired @LoveInspiredBks 6h6 hours ago

RT @EmilyRodmell: A vague synopsis is the worst kind. Specifics are your friend.
#pubtip

From Freelance Editor Deborah Nemeth

Deborah Nemeth @DebNemeth Jul 6

A synopsis should spell out the motivation & goals & stakes & turning points & plot twists, and relate in detail how obstacles are resolved.

From the Editor's Desk Continued...

Literary agent Jessica Faust says this about the synopsis.

Lately I've received a number of submissions that did not include the synopsis I requested. In some cases, the author sent the entire manuscript claiming the synopsis was too hard to write so it was skipped. In other cases the authors sent sample chapters and simply ignored my request for the synopsis.

I know a synopsis is a pain to write; I do realize that, and many times I don't even read the synopsis. That being said, it's still a very important piece of your submission package. There are times when I'm reading a submission and concerned that the book is heading off in the wrong direction, in a way that doesn't make sense, and checking the synopsis can clarify that for me; it can also clarify whether or not I should continue reading. Maybe I see that the book needs extensive edits, but reading the synopsis can confirm that overall it's going in the right direction.

If I look to a synopsis for clarification and it's not there, often I will decide that if the book needs work it's probably just easier to reject. A synopsis could have changed my mind. A synopsis also could have given me better understanding of the book, so if I am rejecting maybe I'll be able to give feedback that relates more to the entire book instead of just the chapters I read.

Write the synopsis. You're going to need it. If it's not for me, you'll need it for your editor, your copy writers, your cover artists, etc. You will need a synopsis.

Which Came First?

The story or the synopsis?

Plot and write the synopsis before the book.

Or write the synopsis after you complete the book.



The great debate rages on.

Top Ten Tips for Writing a Synopsis

1. Third person, present tense.
2. Stories are shown, synopses are told.
3. Every word counts, so use your best words.
4. Your synopsis should reflect the tone of your story.
5. Only mention the primary characters by name (Hero-Heroine-Villain).
6. The synopsis must reflect the plot progression in sequential order.
7. The synopsis is not a chapter-by-chapter outline.
8. The internal and external plot and romantic arc must be presented.
9. All plot points should be provided, and the ending must be clearly spelled out.
10. Write tight.

The synopsis is the dress rehearsal for your story. Don't let your sucky synopsis do your fabulous story a disservice.

The First Four Tips

1. Third person, present tense even if your book is first person or another tense.

2. Stories are shown, and synopses are told.

(Show, don't tell is a writing technique in which story and characters are related through sensory details and actions rather than exposition.-Reedsy)

3. Every word counts, so use your best words. **VIVID WORDS!**

*4. Your synopsis should reflect the tone of your story, even the genre of your story. (WF, RomCom, Cozy, YA)

5. Only mention the primary characters by name (Hero-Heroine-Villain).

Opening with the Logline Hook



She may look good in black, but Tessa Rosetti is not testing the family curse again. Three generations of widows have confirmed her belief in the Rosetti Curse. Malocchio. The curse of the evil eye. – *The Rosetti Curse* ***Note tone of the story**

A commitment-phobic man goes in search of a bride including his fed up girlfriend, to inherit his grandfather's \$100 million inheritance. He finds out that his recently deceased grandfather's will stipulates that he gets nothing of a multi-million dollar fortune unless he's married by 6:05 pm on his 30th birthday: tomorrow! – *The Bachelor*

When his cattle drivers abandon him for the goldfields, rancher Wil Andersen is forced to take on a collection of young boys as his drivers in order to get his herd to market in time to avoid financial disaster. – *The Cowboys*

*Note tone of the story

Opening with the Blurb

*Introduce the primary protagonist/s in their own paragraph. Using bold or all caps introduce their name, their tags. Then provide their internal and external conflict in the same paragraph.

Computer analyst Jack Stanton has never stopped loving Sophie James, but he has nothing to offer her. **Determined not to be compared to his worthless father**, Jack has the chance to grab the brass ring with his new identification software program Digiprints. But the only way he can prove his innocence in the murder of his partner is to hand over the software and lose ten years of work and millions in potential profit from his program. **He refuses and suddenly finds himself a fugitive.**

Nurse Sophie James is doing her best to get her life back on a neat, orderly path after the defection of her ex. **She longs for a normal life**, free from the neurosis of her failed marriage, the chaos of her Italian mother, her eccentric little sister and her attraction to her next-door neighbor Jack. Sophie is about to take a shot at her wildest dreams by getting pregnant with the help of the local sperm bank. But she can't reach her lofty goals until she **gets fugitive Jack out of her house** before she get implicated in his troubles. *-In Her Wildest Dreams.*

The Cowgirl's Sacrifice

Kate Rainbolt: Cowgirl and former rodeo star. #4 Rainbolt sibling
Jesse McNally: Cowboy, ranch foreman

Why you should
buy my book!

Hooks: Prodigal heroine, cowboy/cowgirl, horses, ranch, reunion romance, wounded heroine, homecoming, second chances, forgiveness.

The Prodigal Cowgirl Returns

Kate Rainbolt has come home to the family ranch to heal after an accident that may have ended her rodeo career. While attempting to mend her injured body and the shattered pieces of her life Kate comes face to face with the painful memories of her past in Rebel, Oklahoma.

No one is more surprised than Rebel Ranch foreman, Jesse McNally when he runs into the woman who broke his heart, Kate Rainbolt. He's blind-sided to discover that he's still drawn to the rodeo queen. The cowboy knows the rodeo itch runs deep and his head is telling him to be wary. But Jesse's heart overrules, and he becomes determined to lasso a second chance at happiness by helping Kate realize that her life isn't over... it's just beginning at Rebel Ranch.



Marketing Dept. Logline & Blurb

The Cowgirl's Sacrifice

**Study these
on Amazon!**

This cowgirl has wandered back home...

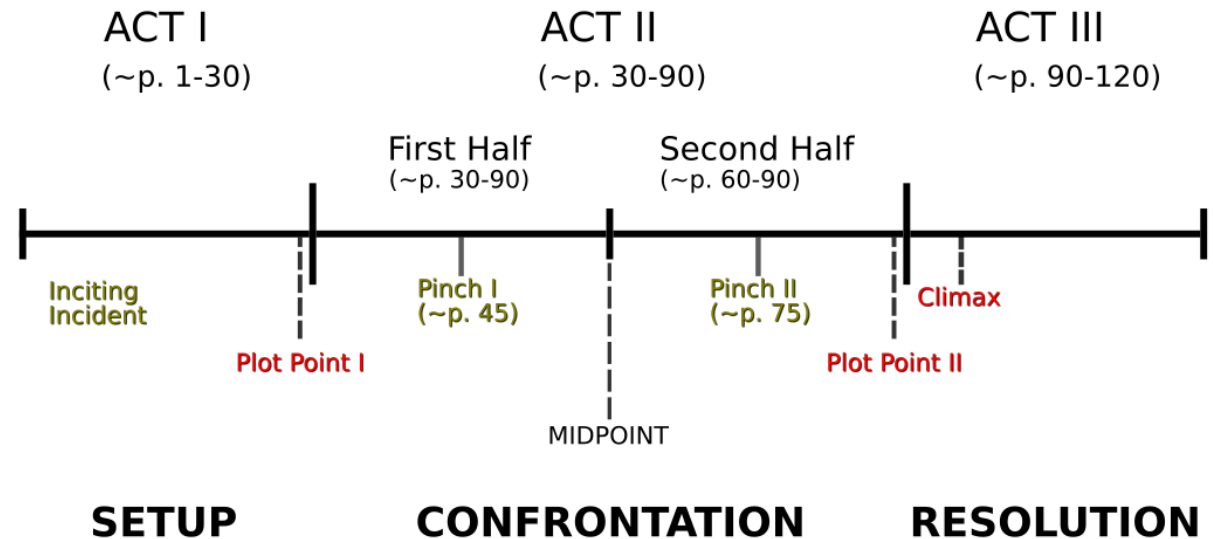
Will she choose her past or her future?

Needing time to heal after a rodeo injury, Kate Rainbolt heads to her family ranch to accept the foreman job her brothers offered her months ago. But the position's already been filled by her ex-boyfriend, Jess McNally, and the only open job reports to him. With Jess as her temporary boss—and turning into something more—might he finally convince Kate to put down roots?

The Most Basic Plotting Structure

- 3 Act Story Structure
(screenplay formula)

The Syd Field Paradigm



Legend:

Inciting Incident: sets the story in motion, usually knocks the character off balance

Pinch: concentrates the story toward the point which comes next

Plot Point: significant event that spins the action around in another direction

Plot Point I: the main character embarks on the journey and the story actually begins

Plot Point II: main crisis where it appears that all hope is lost

Climax: where the main tensions of the story are brought to their most intense point and the dramatic question answered

Midpoint: connects the halves of the Act II, often with a reversal or revelation that changes the direction of the story

The Hero's Journey-Vogler

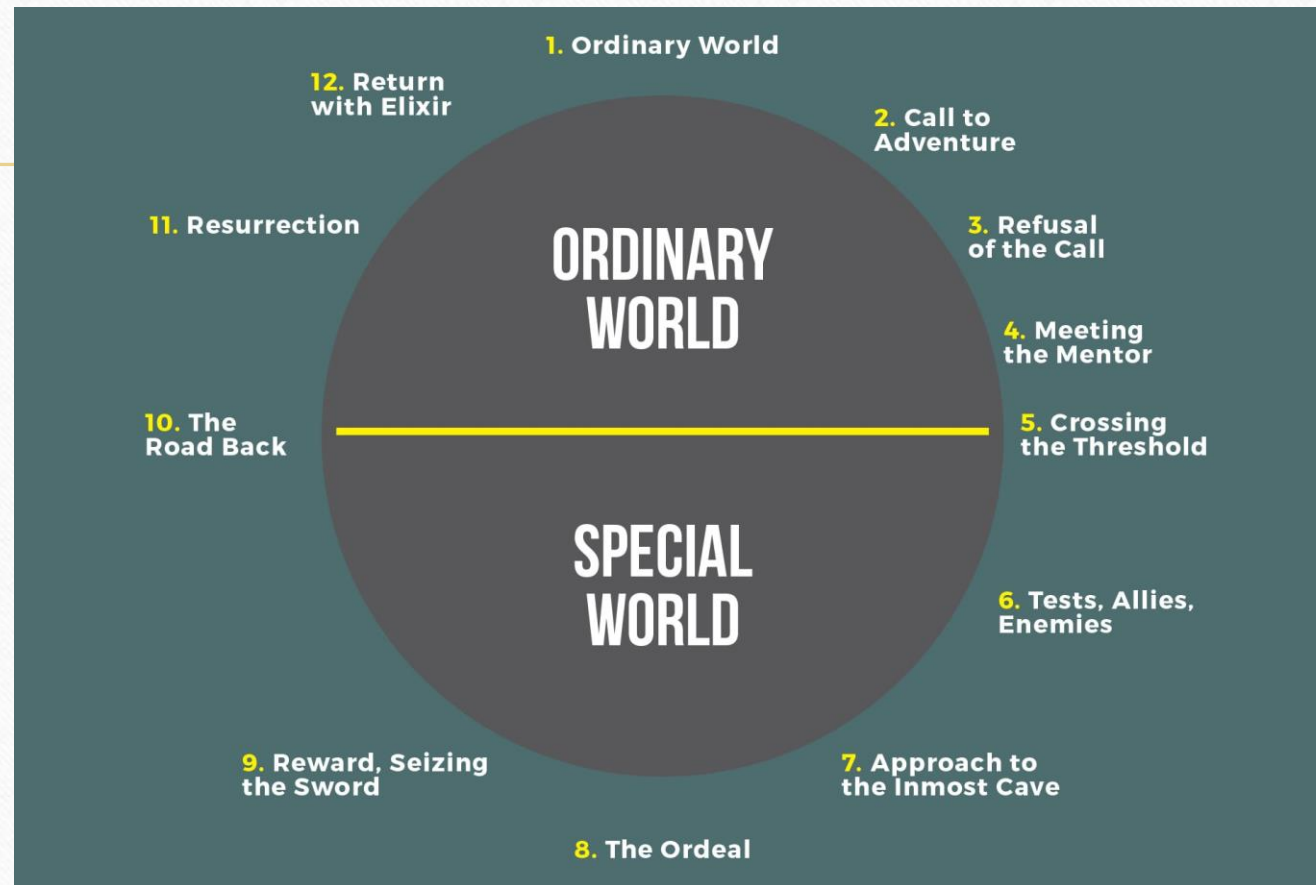
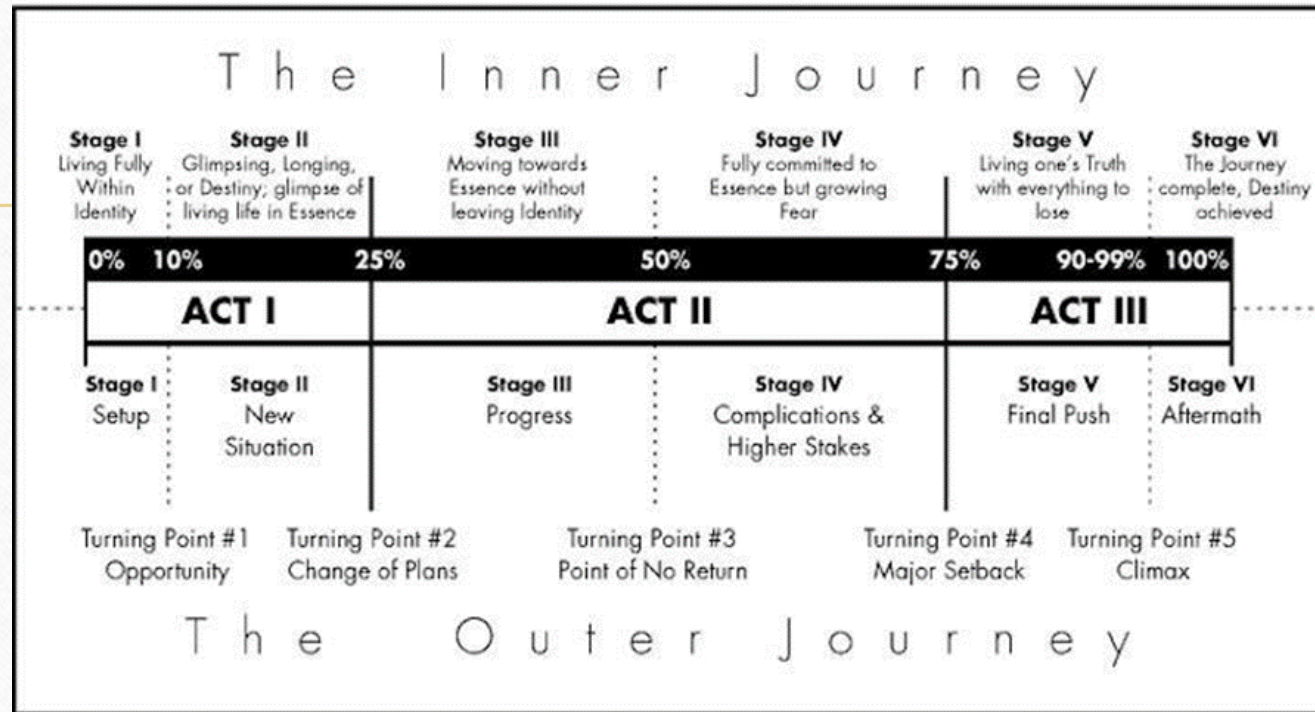


Image from
Skift.com

6 Stage Plot Structure - Hauge

Michael Hauge's "Six Stage Plot Structure"



I take what happens at each plot point and turn it into the verbiage for my synopsis. Next is a preview of the start of the synopsis showing the H/H intro with their internal and external issue.

6 Stage Plot Structure - Hauge

SYNOPSIS

The Cowgirl Returns...

Kate Rainbolt, is the youngest living Rainbolt sibling. The last ten years she been on the rodeo circuit, first as a barrel racer and then as a rodeo clown **hoping to find the father that walked away from her (internal issue)** when she was eight.

Though all five Rainbolt children have inherited their grandfather's ranch, Kate is a partner in the guest ranch in name only, choosing to leave the ranch management to her brothers while she chases her dreams. It's almost exactly ten years later that Kate returns to the family ranch convinced she is a failure. She's lost everything but her horse, including her pride. She is back to heal and accept a position on the ranch after a **devastating accident that has in all likelihood ended her rodeo career (external issue)** While attempting to mend her injured body and the shattered pieces of her life, Kate comes face to face with the painful memories of her past in Rebel, Oklahoma.

6 Stage Plot Structure - Hauge

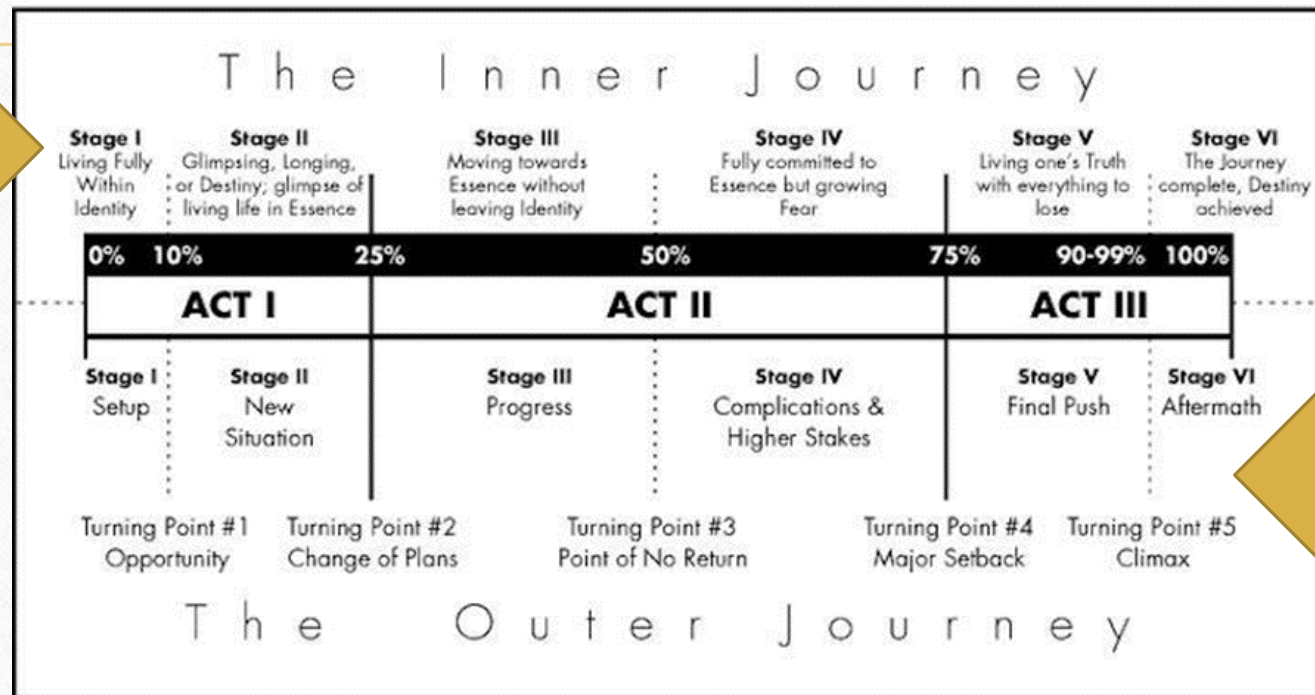
No one is more surprised than **Rebel Ranch foreman, Jess McNally** when he runs into the woman who broke his heart, Kate Rainbolt. He's blind-sided to discover that he's still drawn to the rodeo queen. The cowboy knows the rodeo itch runs deep, and his head is telling him **to be wary. (internal conflict)**

Jess has moved back to Rebel, **due his mother's failing health. (external issue)** The once robust physician's wife is deteriorating and is on a donor list for a kidney transplant. Accepting the position of foreman at Rebel Ranch is an answer to his prayers, as it keeps him close to his family and enables him to offer his mother financial assistance, along with a home-health aide.

Note that often a story changes and detours from the synopsis when you write the book.

6 Stage Plot Structure - Hauge

Michael Hauge's "Six Stage Plot Structure"



Internal Journey

Plot points.

Not chapter-by-chapter.

External Journey

Formatting a Synopsis

For your synopsis, you will duplicate the format of your manuscript proper with the exception that you can start the text beginning at the top instead of halfway down the page as in chapter beginnings. In the header, on the left side, next to your title, put the word synopsis.

Single space for a 1-2 page synopsis. Double space anything longer. At the top of the page put the word synopsis.

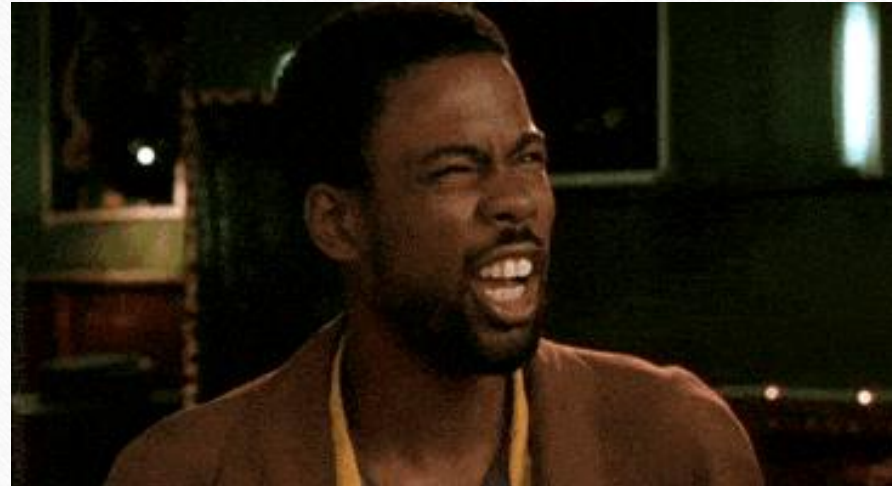
IMHO everything else is personal preference.

Size Matters

- Generally, a short synopsis is 1-2 pages. A long synopsis is 4- ? pages.
- Some editors will cringe if they see a long synopsis, others demand one.
- Some authorities state one synopsis page for every twenty-five pages of manuscript. 😞
- **When in doubt, ask the acquiring editor or agent how long they prefer a synopsis.**

Synopsis Issues

1. Rambling synopsis with no forward movement-indicative of failure to plot or unwritten book.
 2. Episodic synopsis. “And then, and then, and then...”
 3. Too many characters in synopsis.
 4. No external conflict is obvious.
 5. H/H fall in love but the journey is not in the synopsis
- 5. The ending is not provided.



Resources

1. [Why Synopsis Writing is Hard](#) –Randy Ingermanson (article)
2. [How to Write an Incredible Synopsis in 4 Simple Steps](#) – Reedsy (article)
3. [Lisa Gardner: Conquering the Dreaded Synopsis: A series of 10 Lectures](#) (Start w/ lecture 3) (PDF)
4. [How to Write a One Page Synopsis](#) – Pub Crawl (article) The Hero's Journey Method
5. [Marissa Meyer's 6 Steps for Writing a Book Synopsis](#) (article) Synopsis writing after the book is complete
6. [The Dreaded Synopsis](#) by Elizabeth Sinclair
7. [Writing the Fiction Synopsis](#) by Pam McCutcheon

More Resources

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8. Author Becky Wade (Contemporary Inspirational Romance) [shares the synopsis for two of her beloved books here.](#)
 9. [How, When & Why to Write a Synopsis](#) – BookEnds Literary Agency- YouTube