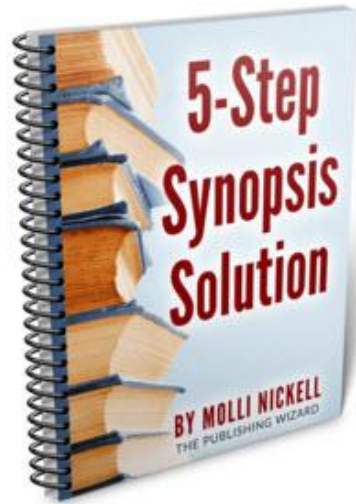


~tutorial from Molli Nickell, The Publishing Wizard~



What's Inside:

- 1.** Synopsis what and why
- 2.** Mindset readjustment
- 3.** Five-step synopsis examples
 - The Wizard of Oz
 - Cinderella
 - Chasing the Dragon
 - Jack and the Beanstalk
- 4.** Paragraph by paragraph
- 5.** Synopsis template
- 6.** Practice makes perfect

What is the Synopsis?

The second most-terrifying word to most writers is “synopsis.” (Just in case you’re wondering, “query” is the first).

The dictionary defines the synopsis as a summary. That’s easy to understand. Not so easy is knowing how the heck to write it.

Knowing is one thing. Doing is something totally different. It’s like comparing apples to orangutans.



Many writers consider the synopsis to be “mission impossible.” They question, “are you kiddin’ me? I’m supposed to condense my 70,000+ word novel into five paragraphs and 350 words? Is that possible?”

Of course it is. Once you understand the true purpose of the synopsis, you’ll feel more confident in writing yours.

The Synopsis is all about selling~

First of all, it’s important to understand that every aspect of the submission process, from email SUBJECT line to QUERY to SYNOPSIS to SAMPLE PAGES, has one purpose. That is to sell/convince an industry professional (agent) that you are the real deal. You possess writing skills and have created a salable story.

When an agent begins to read your synopsis, this proves you successfully have written a subject line that motivated the agent to open your email, read your query letter and wonder, “So, what happens?”

Your synopsis is a litmus test. If it grabs and holds agent interest, this is a major clue your story will do the same for publishers and book shoppers at Barnes and Noble or Amazon.com.

Your synopsis (like the query letter), is a deal maker or a deal breaker. Write it well to increase the potential that an agent will read the pages you've submitted. Write it poorly, and they'll move on to the next submission or take a latte break.

Think about it like this: the process of crafting submission materials is like jumping from stone to stone in the submission swamp: subject line to query to synopsis to sample pages.

NOTE:

Millions of authors with books listed on Amazon.com have survived the publication gauntlet.

They worked their way through the submission process until they reached the moment when it became time to order



You can do the same.

BTW:

I use the word “agent” to identify the person who reads your subject line, then opens your email, and scans the first lines of your query letter. This person could be an acquisitions editor (like I used to be), assistant, intern, or possibly the agent. It depends on the agency size and how many query submissions are jammed in their inbox.

BTW.2 Agency submission text boxes:

Name *

Email *

Phone *

Send Email to *

Submit Query Letter Information (max: 5000 characters) *

* I agree to Terms & Conditions.

Additional Comments

How Did You Find Us?

* All required fields.

SUBMIT NOW

Some agents utilize a specific page for unsolicited submissions.

The writer is instructed to use “text” boxes to answer basic questions about their manuscript and themselves.

No problem. If you’ve prepared your query and synopsis, you have the information you need, and can cut and paste it into the appropriate places.

In this example, you would be able to submit your query first and second paragraphs in the first large text box, the most vital points of your synopsis in the second box.

You could use the bottom box to give your title and word count, and also indicate where/how you found the agency.

Be as creative in filling in text boxes as you have been in writing your story. While it’s important to respond to what the agent/agency wants to know, it’s *vital* to use every inch of available space to make your case that you have a salable project for them to represent.

The submission process:

The synopsis is step three (3) in the five-step submission process which requires you to:

- 1:** Write a dynamic, fascinating, funny, clever, enticing SUBJECT line.
- 2:** Craft a query that raises the question, “And so, what happens?”
- 3:** Write a synopsis that answer the “what happens” as it reveals the story resolution.
- 4:** Purge your synopsis and sample pages for “red-flag” words and writing mechanic errors that can identify you as a “rookie,” a label you want to *avoid* at all costs.
- 5:** Research agents interested in your genre, then email them your device-and-agent-friendly submission materials (formatted as per current standards.)

Mindset readjustment

The process of crafting a synopsis isn't all that difficult if you approach it in a step-by-step (paragraph-by-paragraph) manner . . . just like everything you've learned in life, including, walking, talking, singing, dancing, typing, and texting.

Reducing your 70,000+ word novel to 350 words is doable.

While it is true that the synopsis is a *summary* of your novel, this does not mean you have to summarize . . .

EVERY single character

EVERY single chapter

EVERY single *EVERY THING* in your story.

Instead, focus on the main character, your protagonist. Whew! Isn't that good news?

You've already done the heavy lifting~

Give up your "I-can't-do-this" mindset. Remind yourself that writing a 350-word synopsis is not nearly as involved/challenging/difficult as writing an entire manuscript.

Here's the bottom line, if you want to become a traditionally published author, partnered with an agent to guide you and watch your back throughout the process, you *gotta' learn* to write a synopsis. You can do it.

Congratulate yourself for what you've already accomplished. You've written (or are writing) an entire novel, or a short story, or a memoir or . . .

Many people blather on and on about the great stories that occupy real estate in their heads. Someday, they're *gonna* sit down and write these stories which are positively, absolutely destined to become best-selling novels. This never happens (except in Neverland).



On the other hand, you have expended the necessary hours, weeks, days, months, years and studied how-to-write books, attended writers' conferences, enrolled in classes, joined a critique group, and crafted your novel, page by page, beginning to end, draft after draft.

Woohoo for you!

Celebrate your remarkable accomplishment!

The heavy lifting is behind you.

Writing a synopsis is critical to the get-published process. It proves who and what you are: a capable writer with a saleable story.

However . . .

If your quest is to self-publish, and tackle everything this solo-venture entails, you'll *never* need a synopsis. However, it's beneficial to learn how to write one to help you define your story core and the goal, obstacle, and resolution of your protagonist: important elements of your marketing materials. A word of caution: don't allow the task of learning to write a synopsis influence you to become a pseudo-publisher. This will send you off into a direction where you'll spend more time selling your current book than writing your next one.

Alike and unlike~

The synopsis—*like* the query letter—focuses on the core of your story as revealed through the emotions and actions of your protagonist (main character).

The synopsis—*unlike* the query letter—reveals the *resolution* to the challenge/problem confronting your protagonist.

Once you have written your query, you have the basis for what you need in your synopsis.

- You know what your protagonist wants.
- You know what blocks them from getting what they want.
- You know what actions they've taken to accomplish their goal.
- You know what emotions came into play and why.
- You know the identity of the antagonist. (The bad guy or situation that blocks their path toward success.)
- You know how the story is resolved.
- You know everything you need to write your synopsis. Whew!

But wait . . . there's more, a new wrinkle~

In the really old days, like before 2014, your query letter would have been snail mailed. The envelope would have contained an SASE (Self Addressed Stamped Envelope) for the agent to respond. Which, in the old days, they often did.

When agents discovered the efficiency of digital submissions, they shifted from snail mail to email. Wowzer! Great for them. Not so great for you. As you might expect, the shift launched an unintended consequence. It opened the flood gates for typing-enabled people to submit their poorly-written manuscripts. Since emailed submission is low-or-no-cost, rookie-writers began to “shotgun” their work to dozens of agents at one time.

(Hundreds and thousands of people with computers believe, “I can type. I have the tools of a writer. Therefore I *am* a writer.” Really? Because

someone can hammer a nail into wood, does this mean they have the skill to construct a porch?)

The formerly closed door to the publishing world, now wide open, allows everyone/anyone to send their work to any agent with an email address. This creates a tsunami of emailed submissions that agents must wade through. They hope, hope, hope that somewhere in that mailbox filled to capacity with hopes and dreams and unsolicited projects, they'll discover the next Clancy, Hemmingway, or Rowlings.

The massive increase of submissions also has created another major shift in the process. Most often, query, synopsis, and first pages are submitted simultaneously, packed into one, very loooooong email.

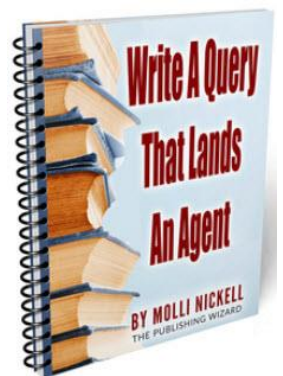
This means your query will be read moments before the agent moves on to your synopsis.

Therefore, don't repeat the information you've written in your query. Take advantage of this *golden opportunity* to go deeper, to show more of your protagonist's inner world, their emotional wants, needs, and beliefs that propel them into actions to help them get what they want.

Who's on third?

When the agent scans their inbox, they quickly glance at subject lines. If yours is clever and thought provoking, "CLICK," your email is opened.

Your query letter is read. Hopefully you've written a "tease" to end your first and second query paragraphs. This keeps the agent reading. (*Why, when, and how* to write a tease are included in my [Query Tutorial](#)).



Next, the agent moves on to your synopsis. You reveal the story resolution: what happens to your protagonist? Are they successful or not? The synopsis

demonstrates your ability to write a full-circle story—no matter how complicated—from beginning to end—in a manner that makes sense.

Agents want to learn the following when they read your synopsis:

- Does your story “hook” readers from the first page?
- Is your protagonist engaging?
- Does your plot make sense?
- Have you applied basic writing mechanics throughout?
- Is there a market(s) for your work?

If the answer to *any* of the above is “no,” the agent will move on to the next submission without reading your sample pages. One computer key “CLICK,” and off your manuscript flies to delete-ville. It’s not personal (even though you may feel it is). Time-pressured agents reason that if your synopsis is missing vital elements, the same will be true of your manuscript. It won’t be worth the effort or cost to make it worthy of publication.

You’ll receive the standard rejection letter of “thanks, but not quite right for our list.” Or, no response at all.

NOTE:

Agent submission policies vary. Until you begin your research to identify agents interested in your genre, you won’t know exactly who wants what and how they want it delivered. Most agents request query, synopsis, and sample pages at the same time, all tucked inside the query letter email. Others prefer the “drip” method: query first, then, if they’re sufficiently interested, they’ll request synopsis and sample chapters.

Regardless, *be prepared* with all three submission documents: query, synopsis, and sample chapters, edited and polished until they glow in the dark.

The five (5)-step synopsis

The synopsis reveals the following:

- Who wants what and why? **GOAL.**
- Why can't they have it? **OBSTACLE.**
- Does the protagonist succeed or fail? **RESOLUTION.**

One: First paragraph describes who wants what (goal), why they want it, and what stands in their way (obstacle).

Two: Second paragraph expands the situation. Introduces the antagonist (person or situation that blocks the protagonist). Shows the thoughts and emotions of the protagonist as they struggle against the antagonist.

Three: Third paragraph moves the protagonist closer to goal achievement. Hints at the possibility of failure.

Four: Fourth paragraph heads toward the goal post. A “red herring” might suggest that failure (not success) is eminent and irreversible.

Five: Fifth paragraph reveals the story *resolution* as the protagonist succeeds or fails.

NOTE: Throughout this tutorial, these five words—story core, goal, obstacle, and resolution are repeated, over and over. Why? Because it's vital for you to understand what agents need to know about your story.

If you neglect to reveal goal, obstacle, and resolution in your synopsis, your submission won't be read. No agent will take the time to figure out the core of your story. You have to show and tell them.

Example #1

The Wizard of Oz

Dorothy, a pre-teen, runs away from home with her dog who is tagged for euthanasia. But, when she spots a tornado heading her way, Dorothy changes her mind and heads for home.

She races inside, only moments before the building becomes air borne. Dorothy, dog, and house fly into another dimension and crash land on a nasty witch. Confused about her location, Dorothy's unsure where home is or how to get there. She meets a good witch who directs her to seek counsel from the Wizard in far-away Emerald City. Dorothy's warned to avoid capture by the vengeful sister of the squashed witch.

Dorothy heads out, following a yellow brick road. She befriends three needy strangers. One longs to have a brain, another wants a heart, the third yearns for courage. The foursome manage to avoid capture by the evil witch, reach Emerald City, and meet the Wizard who agrees to help them get what they want. But first—a little task—steal the witch's broom. Dorothy and friends set out on this hopeless quest and (surprise! surprise!) are captured. Dorothy accidentally splashes water on the witch who screeches and melts.

A triumphant Dorothy, broom in hand, returns to the Wizard who turns out to be a scam artist (but one with some understanding of human nature). He coaches Dorothy's companions to understand how they always have possessed the attributes they wanted. He agrees to fly Dorothy home. But, whoopsie, the Wizard departs without her.

Heartbroken, Dorothy believes she'll never be able to return home. But, when the good witch reappears, she teaches Dorothy a simple truth. Like her traveling companions, she'd always been empowered to achieve the goals of her heart. Dorothy clicks her heels together, taps into the power of intention and proves “there's no place like home.” 300 words.

Structure specifics~

One: First paragraph describes who wants what (goal) and why can't they have it (obstacle).

Introduces the protagonist: Dorothy.
Describes her *goal* which is to save her dog's life.
Also introduces a major *obstacle*: the tornado.

Two: Second paragraph expands the situation. Introduces the antagonist (person or situation that blocks the protagonist). Shows thoughts and emotions of the protagonist as they struggle against the antagonist.

Dorothy's situation worsens. Threatened by the nasty witch, Dorothy is confused about how to return home.

Three: Third paragraph moves the protagonist closer to achievement of their goal. Can introduce a hint of potential failure.

Dorothy anticipates receiving the help she needs when she arrives on the Wizard's doorstep. Instead, she is assigned a suicide mission which can prevent her from returning home (or surviving).

Four: Fourth paragraph heads toward the goal post. A "red herring" might suggest that failure (not success) is eminent.

Success is in sight. When Dorothy hands over the witch's broom, she expects the Wizard to live up to his agreement and reward her with a one-way ticket home. But, when she's accidentally left behind, it appears that all is lost.

Five: Fifth paragraph reveals the story *resolution* as the protagonist succeeds or fails.

Dorothy taps into her self-empowered inner world and returns home.

Nutshell analysis~

This synopsis:

- 1) is written in present tense
- 2) focuses on the *goal(s)* and *obstacle(s)* of the protagonist (Dorothy).
- 3) only mentions secondary characters.
- 4) introduces the potential of failure in paragraph four.
- 5) is *resolved* in paragraph five.

NOTE:

Focus, focus, focus on the protagonist and their path. If you introduce multiple secondary characters in depth, this dilutes the power of your story. Keep in mind that you have 350 words to carry your reader through the arc of the story, beginning to end. Use these words wisely as you expand the heart and goal(s) of your protagonist so the agent will care about their quest and wonder, “Hmmm, more details please.”

Wanting to know about your story will motivate the agent to keep scrolling to read your first pages. That’s been your goal all along.

EXAMPLE #2

Cinderella

A privileged teenager's widowed father marries a scheming widow with two big-footed *and* ugly daughters. He dies a few months after the wedding. His widow, now wealthy beyond measure, enslaves her stepdaughter as a household servant and personal assistant to her stepsisters. She's treated like an indentured servant and nicknamed Cinderella—"she who sweeps up and sleeps amongst the cinders."

When the family receives an invitation to attend a gala thrown by the prince, Cinderella begs to attend, even though she "technically" is a household servant. Forced to render spa services to her stepsisters and stepmother, Cinderella has no time to sew a party dress or create a snazzy hairdo for herself. Broken hearted, she watches them depart for the party without her.

Then voila! Faster than you can say "bippity, boppity, boop," a fairy godmother appears and gifts Cinderella with a complete makeover, haute couture gown, and glass slippers. A second swipe of the magic wand transforms a pumpkin and assorted household vermin into a coach, horses, and footmen. As Cinderella departs for the palace, the fairy godmother advises her to return home before midnight, at which time the magic will poof (vanish).

Cinderella's spotted by the prince who fills her dance card. Swept away by his gorgeous self, dashing personality, and remarkable dance moves, she forgets about the curfew. When the clock chimes twelve, Cinderella flees the castle, leaving behind a glass slipper.

Smitten by the mysterious beauty who left the party without so much as an "adios or see you later dude," the prince launches a house-to-house search, glass slipper in hand. Eventually he arrives at Cinderella's door. Her stepsisters struggle to cram their clodhopper feet into the delicate slipper. No go. When Cinderella dons the slipper, it fits. The prince proposes on the

spot, freeing Priscilla Ezmerelda Dorothea (Cinderella's real name) from a life of toil amongst the cinders. They live happily ever after.

318 words.

Structure specifics~

One: First paragraph describes who wants what (goal), why can't they have it (obstacle).

Introduces the protagonist: Cinderella

Her *goal* is freedom from her life of servitude.

She has no adult protector, *obstacle*, and is victimized by the antagonist: her stepmother.

Two: Second paragraph expands the situation. Introduces the antagonist (person or situation that blocks the protagonist). Shows thoughts and emotions of the protagonist as they struggle against the antagonist.

Desirous of an evening of freedom at the palace gala, Cinderella is heartbroken to be left behind.

Three: Third paragraph moves the protagonist closer to achievement of their goal. Can introduce a hint of possible failure.

Cinderella's fairy Godmother appears and magically creates party attire and coachmen etc. Cinderella is warned about the "or else" curfew, which hints at the potential of failure.

Four: Fourth paragraph heads toward the goal post. A "red herring" might suggest that failure (not success) is eminent.

Lost in her momentary freedom from servitude, Cinderella loses track of the time and becomes panic stricken when the clock strikes midnight. "Poof," she transforms to her grungy self before she can

reveal her identity to the prince. However, when she leaves her glass slipper behind, this creates the potential of a positive resolution.

Five: Fifth paragraph reveals the story *resolution* as the protagonist succeeds or fails.

The story is *resolved* when the glass-slipper search leads the prince to Cinderella. The story ends with her *goal* achievement of freedom and the potential for happily ever after.

Nutshell analysis~

This synopsis:

- 1) is written in present tense.
- 2) focuses on the *goal* and *obstacle(s)* of the protagonist (Cinderella).
- 3) introduces the antagonist in the first paragraph.
- 4) only mentions secondary characters.
- 5) introduces the potential of failure in paragraph four.
- 6) *resolves* the story in paragraph five.

Note:

Synopsis structure is not written in cement. The antagonist (stepmother) can be introduced in the first paragraph if the story warrants it.

Despite a host of secondary characters (the step family, fairy godmother, assorted vermin, and prince), the focus remains on Cinderella and her *goal* of freedom.

The fourth paragraph hints at the potential of freedom (and love) lost.

The story comes full circle to a logical (or magical) *resolution* in paragraph five.

EXAMPLE #3

Chasing the Dragon

Presidential candidate, Senator Deacon Hamilton, fears an investigative reporter will pluck his estranged, drug-addicted daughter, Finley, from the shadows. He's unaware of her secret plans to give daddy what he wants (her permanent silence) via suicide on her 24th birthday. However, news of his ascent toward ultimate power gives Finley Hamilton a reason to live, become sober, and enact revenge against her abusive father.

At a remote mountain Recovery Center, Finley purges the chemicals coursing through her body while she plots the demise of her father's political career. A wise counselor suggests that Finley allow Joe Walsh, the resident wilderness guide, to lead her on hiking excursions to facilitate her healing process. But, as weeks turn into months, thoughts of destroying her father's career diminish as Finley and Joe fall in love.

She reveals the horror story about being beaten and raped by her father . . . and how, five months later, she'd delivered his baby, alone, in a pool of blood on her apartment floor. Empowered by the unconditional acceptance and encouragement she receives from Joe and supportive friends at the Center, Finley begins to experience hope for a future not dominated by pain and desolation

As Finley's future blooms, Deacon's darkens. Drinking heavily, he becomes obsessed with the need to find and silence Finley . . . permanently. His hired assassin locates Finley and helps Deacon avoid Secret Service surveillance as they travel to the Recovery Center. Deacon sets in motion his plan to silence Finley and everyone who might shed information about his unsavory past. Finley and Joe fight back. In their struggle for the assassin's gun, Joe is shot and collapses, bleeding, on the floor. Finley and Deacon scramble for the gun. She reaches it just as Deacon grabs her by the throat. Aware that she alone can protect the people she loves, Finley shoots and kills Deacon.

Two months later, residents of the center gather at a hillside ceremony that unites Finley and Joe. She has created a true family, and for the first time in her life, faces a future filled with friends, love, and purpose.

356 words.

Structure specifics~

One: First paragraph describes who wants what (goal), why can't they have it (obstacle). Also can be used to introduce the antagonist (person or situation that blocks the protagonist from getting what they want).

Introduces the protagonist: Finley.

Her *goal* is revenge. Her greatest *obstacle* is gaining sobriety.

Introduces the antagonist, Deacon, and his initial *goal* of avoiding career-ruining revelations about his daughter.

Two: Second paragraph expands the situation. Shows thoughts and emotions of the protagonist as they struggle against the antagonist.

Finley struggles through recovery. She steps outside of her cocoon of pain to experience fragments of inner peace felt while hiking in the forest. She learns to trust, then love Joe.

Three: Third paragraph moves the protagonist closer to achievement of their goal. Can introduce a hint of possible failure.

Finley reveals the horror of her past as the quest for revenge is replaced with acceptance and love from her new family at the Recovery Center. Happily ever after looms.

Four: Fourth paragraph heads toward the goal post. A “red herring” might suggest that failure (not success) is eminent.

The story takes a dramatic turn when Deacon locates Finley and attempts to silence her and everyone at the Recovery Center. Although she fights back to protect those she loves, she's powerless to save Joe's life.

Five: Fifth paragraph reveals the story *resolution* as the protagonist succeeds or fails.

The story is *resolved* as Finley gains that which she never thought possible—a future filled with friends, love, and promise.

Nutshell analysis~

This synopsis:

- 1) is written in present tense.
- 2) focuses on the *goal* and *obstacles* facing the protagonist (Finley).
- 3) names a few secondary characters and expands the role of the antagonist.
- 4) introduces the potential of failure in paragraph four.
- 5) is *resolved* in paragraph five.

Note:

The antagonist (Deacon) is introduced in the first sentence. This helps set a tense tone as the protagonist (Finley) makes a life-or-death decision.

Despite a host of secondary characters at the Recovery Center, focus remains on Finley in paragraphs three and four as she fights her way out of the grips of addiction with the support of new-found friends and her love interest.

All appears to be heading for a happily ever after until a murderous Deacon appears in the fourth paragraph.

The fifth paragraph brings the story full circle to a logical *resolution* when a transformed Finley marries Joe.

One paragraph at a time

Now, write a synopsis for Jack and the Beanstalk~

Before beginning, define the three major elements of Jack's story in order to absolutely know the story core.

Who wants what and why? GOAL.

12-year Jack's *goal* is to prevent starvation for himself and mom.

Why prevents him from achieving his goal? OBSTACLE.

He faces the initial *obstacle* of not knowing how to barter as he swaps Bossy, their only source of income (or meat), for a handful of "magic" beans.

How does Jack ultimately succeed or fail? RESOLUTION.

The situation reverses when the beans produce a pathway for Jack to discover items he can steal and sell to keep food on the table. His obstacle shifts as the antagonist (the giant) enters the story. Jack's goal ultimately leads to a *resolution* much different than he would have thought possible.

In a nutshell:

Jack's *goal*, to prevent starvation, runs into a major *obstacle* of his own doing, a barter swap for magic beans. As the story progresses, the giant becomes a "giant" obstacle. The story *resolution* evolves in a logical manner.

Once you're clear about the *goal*, *obstacle*, and *resolution* of the protagonist, it's time to write the synopsis, paragraph by paragraph.

One: Who wants what and why not?

12-year old Jack must save himself and mom from starvation when their crops fail and Bossy (the cow) goes dry. Inexperienced at bartering, Jack swaps Bossy for a handful of "magic" beans which mom, in a fit of anger, throws out the window.

Two: Expand the situation and introduce the antagonist. Show thoughts and emotions of the protagonist as they struggle toward resolution of whatever prevents them from getting what they want.

The next morning, Jack discovers the beans have sprouted into a stalk reaching into the clouds. He climbs up and into another dimension. Jack sneaks into a humungous castle and cowers under furniture as he hides from a nasty-tempered giant (the antagonist) who kneads human bones into his bread dough. Jack finds and steals a gold coin and scoots down the beanstalk to safety.

Three: The protagonist moves closer to goal achievement. A hint introduces the possibility of failure.

While mom heads for the market, Jack climbs back up the beanstalk to nab a goose that lays golden eggs, thereby ensuring residual income. The giant sniffs and senses Jack's presence, but doesn't see him. Jack escapes by the hair of his chinny-chin-chin. Elated by his prior successes, he climbs the beanstalk one more time to nab a special gift for mom.

Four: The goalpost is in sight. But, the potential for failure looms large on the horizon.

Jack sneaks back into the castle. So far so good. He grabs the singing harp and heads for the beanstalk. The harp rats him out and calls for help. The giant (murder and lunch in mind) pursues Jack down the beanstalk.

Five: Reveals the story *resolution* as the protagonist succeeds or fails.

Once he reaches home, Jack chops the beanstalk. It collapses and the giant smashes into the earth, creating a gaping hole. This fills with water from a nearby spring, and provides a swimming hole for the goose. Jack stocks the pond with omega-rich fish, thereby ensuring survival of the village should any drought or food shortage occur in the future. They all lived happily ever after.

~5-Paragraph Synopsis Template~

12-year old Jack must save himself and mom from starvation when their country suffers a drought, causing crops to fail. Bossy (the cow) goes dry. Inexperienced at bartering, Jack swaps Bossy for a handful of “magic” beans which mom, in a fit of anger, throws out the window.

The next morning, Jack discovers the beans have sprouted into a mile-high stalk. He climbs up and into another dimension. Timidly, Jack sneaks into a humungous castle. He cowers under furniture to hide from a nasty-tempered giant (the antagonist) who adds fiber to his bread by kneading human bones into his dough. Terrified that he might be captured, Jack grabs a gold coin and scoots down the beanstalk to safety.

When mom heads for the market, Jack hurries back up the beanstalk to nab a goose that lays golden eggs (thereby ensuring residual income). The giant smells Jack, but can't find him. Jack escapes by the hair of his chinny-chin-chin. Elated by his newly-discovered thievery skills, Jack decides to climb the beanstalk one more time to nab a *special* gift for mom.

Jack sneaks back into the castle. So far so good. He grabs a singing harp and heads for the beanstalk. The harp rats him out and screams for help. The giant (murder and lunch in mind) pursues Jack down the beanstalk.

The moment Jack reaches home, he chops down the beanstalk. It collapses and the giant smashes into the earth and disappears forever. They lived happily ever after.

ONE: *Reveals who wants what and why.*

TWO: *Expands the situation, introduces the antagonist. Protagonist takes action to overcome the obstacle(s).*

THREE: *The protagonist moves closer to goal achievement. The possibility of failure is introduced.*

FOUR: *The goal post is in sight. But, the potential for failure looms on the horizon.*

FIVE: *Reveals the story resolution as the protagonist succeeds or fails.*

Easie-peasie synopsis practice

Three of the stories evaluated in this tutorial were published BC (Before Computers). You may wonder about the value of studying synopses for stories that have been published in a zillion languages around the world.

It's all about helping you learn a new skill. When you have no emotional investment in the outcome, you can relax and enjoy the process.

Honing synopsis-writing skills on stories you've known most of your life, makes the process less stressful and more like an exciting adventure with a trusted friend.



Group Practice~

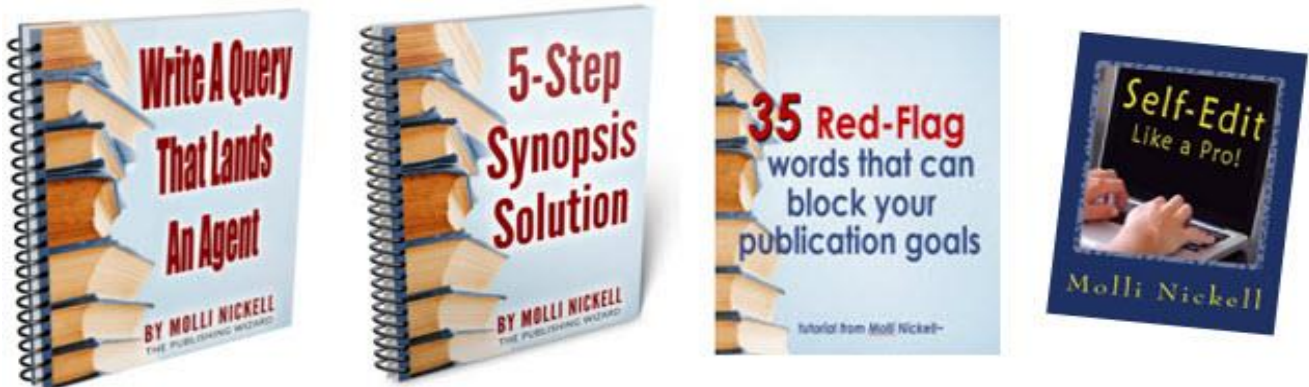
Enlist your writing pals, or critique group members, to participate in a synopsis writing exercise. During a meeting, select a well-known fairy tale and determine the story core (goal, obstacle, resolution). Write a rough draft and compare versions. Then, before your next meeting, write the first draft of your own, five-paragraph synopsis.

At the next meeting, critique each other's efforts. Even if you're not quite ready to submit your work, save your synopsis as a guide to help you refine your next draft when submission time arrives.

Dear Writer,

Be gentle with yourself. Acknowledge that you're going through a learning curve as you shift from *telling* your story to *selling* your story. Is this stressful? Yes it is! Can you do it! Of course you can! You can learn to create a submission packet (query, synopsis, and sample pages) that will motivate an agent to contact you with an offer of representation.

Your next success step? Go shopping at MolliMart!



When I was a Time-Life and acquisitions editor, I read and rejected hundreds of submissions from author wannabees who didn't understand how to craft the documents they needed in order to land agents. You don't have to make the same mistakes they did. I'll help you figure it out.

During 30+ years in the biz, I've been associated with the big players including .

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