

HANDOUT

Help a Writer Pull the Weeds: Being a Good Critique Partner

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Definitions

- **Beta reader:** a volunteer (usually) who reads an unpublished but polished manuscript from a reader's perspective and offers notes on such things as:
 - Boring parts
 - Confusing parts
 - Things that bump the reader out of the story
 - Things the story doesn't need to do because it already did them
 - Anything that works especially well
- **Alpha reader:** Reads an early draft, looking for major issues, including plot, character, and thematic problems
- **Critique partner:** self-evident; relationship is reciprocal, may be long-term
- **Critique group:** a lot like a critique partner, only more so

Ten Thoughts about Giving Critique

1. Writers need critique.
2. Only candor is useful.
3. The author is the author.
4. Critique is useful within and across genres.
5. You'll read it only once, unless you read it twice.

First reading: Watch yourself reading.

- a. What hooks you? How soon? How firmly?
- b. What keeps you reading?
- c. What bogs you down or bounces you out of the story?
- d. How eager are you for the next part?
- e. Does the reading experience feel complete at the end?
- f. If the author mentioned specific concerns, be sure to consider them.

Second reading: Put on your developmental editor cap. What's working?
What's not working? Why?

Characters	Pacing
Dialogue	Conflict/potential for conflict
Setting	Stakes
Point of view	Language
Blocking	Plausibility
Fits the genre?	Fits the intended audience?

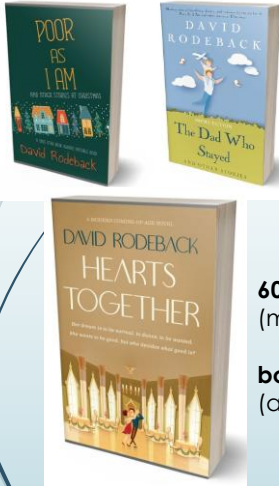
6. Report how you experience the story
7. Be yourself.
8. Ask the author.
9. Be professional.
10. When you can, raise your game.

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A Useful YouTube Video (on types of critiques and edits)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1HZek1p1Is>

“The Feedback Step Almost Nobody Takes” on the Golden Editorial channel