

## WRITING THE NOVEL SYNOPSIS (SHORT FORM)

© 2004 Jonathan Maberry

### WHAT IS A SYNOPSIS?

1. A synopsis is a narrative summary of your novel, written with brevity but with style and feeling.
2. A synopsis is always written in present tense.
3. A synopsis is always written in third person.
4. A synopsis is written in the same style as your book, which means if the novel is spooky and moody, then so is the synopsis. If your book is action-packed, fast-paced, filled with dialect, or any other style, your synopsis should be as well.
5. The synopsis introduces all of your main characters and each of their essential conflicts, all woven together in the narrative. (It does not list your characters.)
6. Weaving, by the way, is important. One paragraph should flow logically to the next. If you are switching ideas, you need to make sure you build in a transition to connect your paragraphs.
7. You do not have to include every character or every scene, plot point, or subplot in your synopsis. But your synopsis should give a clear idea as to what your book is about, what characters we will care about (or dislike), what is at stake for your heroes, what they stand to lose, and how it all turns out.
8. Yes, you must put the conclusion to your novel in your synopsis. No cliffhangers or teasers. Agents and editors want to know that you know how to successfully conclude your story. (Often agents don't read the synopsis until after they've read the entire ms--but not always.)

### FORMATTING YOUR SYNOPSIS

1. In the upper left hand corner you should have the following info: Synopsis of "Title here" Genre:..... Word count: By \_\_\_\_\_

e.g.

Synopsis of TALES FROM THE FIRE ZONE  
Supernatural Thriller  
57,000 Words  
By Jonathan Maberry

2. **If the synopsis is going to run one page, single-space it.**
3. **Synopses longer than one page should be double-spaced. Its paragraphs are usually indented, with no spaces between paragraphs.**
4. **Don't use a cover page or any fancy headings or fonts. Stick with Times New Roman or Courier, at 10-12 points (12 is preferred unless you're really trying to fit it to one page)**

### **TIPS ON WRITING THE SYNOPSIS**

- **Does the opening paragraph have a strong narrative hook to grab the reader and keep him reading?**
- **Are your main characters' conflicts clearly defined?**
- **Are your characters sympathetic?**
- **Can the reader relate to them and worry about them?**
- **Have you avoided all grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes?**
- **Have you hit on the major scenes, the major plot points of your book?**
- **Did you resolve all important conflicts?**
- **Did you use present tense?**