Fiction Developmental Self-Editing Checklist

Theme

- What is the book about?
- If the story isn't developed enough so you can answer this question, what do you see the story striving to be about?
- What notes can you make to yourself to help bring forth the story's theme at various points in the book?

Purpose

- Does the book have overall momentum and energy?
- At any part, do you feel the work slows down (or do you notice spots where your attention drifts?)
- Is something at stake in every scene? What is the point of each scene?

Setting and Detail

- Do you know where/when you are in every scene?
- Are you transitioning smoothly from one physical setting to the next, so you always know where you are?
- Check how much detail you use to establish (and then later maintain) setting. Do you use a mixture of characters interacting with the space and exposition?
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Plot

- Is there tension throughout (but with some moments of release for reprieve)?
- Do you feel yourself wanting to know more about why or what is going to happen in every scene? Is anything predictable?
- Does the “spine” of the story unfold logically, or are there gaps? How would you fill those gaps?
- Does the way you present the drama of the story work in the narrative's best interests?

Story Structure

- Does each chapter (and each scene) line up on the narrative arc model? Do any scenes/sections feel misplaced?
- Does each scene logically follow the next? Do you need transitions or should some sections be cut or relocated?

Pace and Flow

- Does the story feel as though it’s keeping a good pace throughout, or is it rushed/too slow at parts?
- Are there sections that can be cut to brighten the flow?
- Do you need to slow any areas down for dramatic effect, to describe a character or setting, or to establish exposition?
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Character
- Are the characters developing into interesting, round, complicated people?
- Is it clear what each character wants in every scene?
- Do their actions make sense? If not, is it working to leave the reader in the dark as to what motivates your character(s)?

Dialogue
- Does your dialogue feel realistic or tonally in line with the book's purpose?
- Do your conversations reveal character, use subtext, and maintain tension?
- Is the dialogue well-placed and employed? Are there sections of exposition that would be better illustrated through dialogue?

Vivid Prose and Detail
- Does the first line/paragraph hook you?
- Is the work interesting to read on a prose (language) level?
- How would you describe your lyric style? Attaching adjectives to it will help you remain consistent through subsequent revisions.
## Fiction Developmental Self-Editing Checklist

### Ending
- Did you satisfyingly wrap up or braid together the various plotlines?
- Are the last few paragraphs engaging and tonally appropriate?
- How do you want the reader to feel when they put down your book?

### Logistics
- Are your chapters consistent lengths or do you want to upend form by having erratic chapter lengths?
- Is the book specific to one genre? How might you market it?