



# The Chemistry of Winning Contests in 5 Steps

By Cindy Lescarbeau

(Directions: Quickly fill in the first draft of this story planner with a pencil so you can change any items you need to as your story unfolds. Save corrections for your read-through. Get it done.)

## STEP 1: Create a gripping Book Hook.

Book Hook – Start with your title and make a surprising one sentence statement that drops your reader into the middle of the protagonist’s action, generate immediate curiosity and make the reader desire to know more about your book, evoke emotion or curiosity; include active, strong verbs; use present tense, no explaining, no questions (50 words or less)

Two Book Hook Options:

Option 1: When [this terrible villain did this dreadful thing] to [our interesting main character], he must [figure out an action in a short amount of time]; otherwise, [this even more terrible thing will happen].

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Option 2: [*Book Title*] is about [an interesting protagonist] who [has fallen into a terrible situation with a bizarre antagonist] and must [figure out a creative and prompt solution] or [a life-shattering event will take place].

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## STEP 2: Expand your Book Hook into an irresistible Book Blurb/Elevator Pitch/Back Cover Copy.

Book Blurb/Elevator Pitch/Back Cover Copy – A story description of vivid details using strong verbs and nouns to entice readers to buy it (children's books/100 words, adult books/200 words)

## STEP 3: Choose 3 sensational working titles.

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_



## STEP 4: Outline the 7 Literary Elements needed for your compelling story.

1. Characters – Name and a brief description (personalities, motivations, and eventually add backstories)

Protagonist/Hero \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary Protagonist \_\_\_\_\_

Antagonist/Villain \_\_\_\_\_

Protagonist’s Foil Character \_\_\_\_\_

Antagonist’s Foil Character \_\_\_\_\_

2. Setting – Interesting story locations \_\_\_\_\_  
 Story time period \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Conflict – The internal and external struggles that hinder the protagonists and drive the story forward  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Plot – The sequence of events  
 Beginning \_\_\_\_\_  
 Middle \_\_\_\_\_  
 End \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Theme – The underlying message or idea \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Point of View (POV) – The perspective from which the story is told, such as first person or third person (Second person is rarely used in novellas and novels.)  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Tone – a cumulative effect of word choice, sentence length and variety, and the setting, including weather to encourage a foreboding, nostalgia, romance or optimism and more.  
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STEP 5: Write your story while following this 5 Element Plot Order. (It's also a great practice to use this order for chapters but switch the resolution out for twists and cliffhangers till the last chapter or two.)

1. Exposition – Setting the scene, introducing the main character, establishing the setting and tone
2. Rising action – Inciting incident/conflict (close to the beginning)
3. Climax – At the height of the story, the main character defeats the antagonist or conflict (Include one or two, depending on the number of character arcs in the story.)
4. Falling action – When other character arcs begin to resolve
5. Resolution – The satisfying ending where all questions are answered (or intentionally unanswered)



Cindy Freed Lescarbeau is an award-winning author of poetry, picture books, and plays, which she directs for her nonprofit, FREED Performing Arts, Inc., in Ormond Beach, Florida. Cindy is a Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators member and is president of an online KidLit critique group for Word Weavers International. This writer's organization named her their 2020 Writer of the Year. She received twelve other awards, primarily for her short stories, poetry, and children's books, including first-place awards for her picture books, early readers, and children's literature. Cindy's stories, articles, and poems appear in periodicals, including Focus on the Family's *Clubhouse Jr.* Magazine for young readers. She is represented by Agent Peter Rubie of FinePrint Literary Management in New York City. Cindy's oceanside town provides a glorious setting for reading, writing, and enjoying God's creation. Her favorite writing distractions are world travel, her cuddly cats, Mr. Darcy and Creamsicle, and her two-year-old grandson, who reminds her what a funny and magical world we live in.

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