



Module Five

Handout: Big picture editing

Big picture editing, or structural editing, is the first stage of the process. You need to ensure your picture book is working as a whole story.

Use the following checklist, when editing your story.

- Does the story follow the 3-act arc?
- Is there a clear, single theme?
- Do you need all the characters?
- Do you have a single main character and do they have a strong motivation and goal?
- Is the character active throughout the story?
- Does the main character solve their own problem?
- Is the story all in a single perspective, told from the point of view of the main character?
- Is the story in linear time (doesn't jump around time zones)?
- Is the story age-appropriate?
- Is the main character the same age or slightly older than the reader?
- Is the story relatable?
- Is the story best-suited for a picture book format? Or would it better suit a novelty book or maybe a chapter book?
- Have you removed all clichés, e.g. that boys have to play with trucks? Or that princesses have to be good?





Ways to improve your story might include:

- Strengthening the goal
- Heightening the character's stakes (you need to know what the consequences will be if the character doesn't achieve their goal)
- Tightening the timeline (give them a short time to achieve goal)
- Reducing characters and complexity
- Heightening the climax
- Creating bigger problems for your character
- Exaggerating your character (e.g. giving them more defining, iconic features).

Don't be afraid to revisit the story from a completely different perspective, e.g. telling the story in first person, rather than third. You might be surprised by the results!

