

## OUTLINING

### Is it necessary to spend my valuable writing time creating an outline?

- Yes...no...maybe
- Every writer works differently and it isn't necessary to do something just because "everyone" says you should. Accept the kind of writer you are and move on. Glory in it.
- Remember, outlining a story is *not* the painstaking process you learned in school.

### Why you might consider creating a story outline:

- It can help you organize your scattered thoughts about starting a new project.
- The bigger the project, the more intimidating all of it can seem.

### What are the basic steps in preparing a story outline?

- Know the basic genre, theme, potential story length before you even take another step in the process.
- Make a list of your main characters, possibly side characters as well.
- Determine the main conflict that will keep your character(s) from reaching his goal by page 2.
- Make a list of additional conflicts (stumbling blocks, walls to run into) that further keep your character(s) from reaching the goal(s) too easily.
- Make a list of settings: the initial one, other potential ones.
- Come up with scene ideas, particularly important ones that drive the story forward. Sometimes you need minor scenes as well so both the character(s) and the reader can take a breather, absorb what has happened and what still must be faced.

### Key items to remember about the outline:

- It should *never* be set in stone. Life happens to all of us. We are constantly making adjustments to our relationships, to family, to work, to health situations. Need I go on? Those needs to make adjustments happen to characters, too.
- You, the writer, might have every tiny detail mapped out for how the story should progress. But if you hold rigidly to that and don't allow the characters to be "real" people and make some decisions themselves... Well, you will all be miserable.
- Let the placement of scenes you came up with move around to more appropriate places as the story progresses. (That whole "stone" issue.)
- Don't panic if a scene or two you originally planned isn't needed and should go away.
- Allow new scenes to develop. Just because they weren't in the original plan, doesn't mean they aren't right for the way the story is progressing.

## VARIOUS METHODS TO THE MADNESS OF OUTLINING