SCENE AND REVISION CHECKLIST

Use the below questions to prompt you as you critique either your own work, or someone else's. They may help you define problem areas. Remember to give the author an example if you can, as this will help them better see your viewpoint and understand your feedback.

The Quick 'n' Dirty Checklist:

Opening

- Was I pulled into the POV character's life/situation right away?

Character

- Did I get a good sense of who they are (identity) and what they want/need?
- Could I 'see' them to some degree?
- Did their emotions come through in each scene?

Plot

- Did I understand what was happening in each scene?
- Were the characters working toward a specific goal?
- Did the storyline keep me interested?

Setting

- Did I feel part of the setting in each scene? Was there enough detail, or too little/too much?

Dialogue

- Did I always know who was speaking?
- Was there enough dialogue, too little or too much?
- Did the dialogue flow like a real conversation? Were dialogue tags used correctly?

Pacing

- Did the chapter/scene flow well? (Did it feel too slow or too fast at any point?)
- Was I able to follow the events as they happened?

Description

- Could I see what was happening clearly? Did the author create strong imagery?
- Did I skim anywhere or feel distracted as I read? Was it interesting?
- Did anything need more detail to make the scene feel more important and real?

Voice:

- Was the writing unique in some way? Do I feel like only this writer could write this story? Does the viewpoint feel authentic?

Ending:

- Did the scene end on a cliffhanger or create the urge to read on? Did the chapter feel complete?

The In-Depth Checklist:

Opening

- Do the opening lines provide a strong hook that pulls me deeper into the story?
- Is the main character introduced? Secondary characters?
- Can I clearly see the opening scene (time, place, circumstances?)
- Does the author convey what the character's up against?

Character

- Is the character's motivation & needs apparent?
- Were they described well? Is their personality distinct and unique? Are they likable?
- Did their emotions seem realistic? Did the author show not tell emotions?
- Did I empathize with the POV character? Is the POV consistent? Do I feel close to the character?
- Do their thoughts/observations match their age, personality and life experience?
- Did their actions feel unique to who they are?
- Is it clear they are flawed in some way? Can I see their weaknesses and strengths?
- Are secondary characters well drawn? Do they need to be in this scene?

Plot/Conflict

- Could I follow the action in the scene? Is this scene important to the overall story?
- Were the stakes high enough for the circumstances? Did they raise higher by scene's end?
- Were the characters working toward a specific goal? What got in the way?
- Did the events keep me interested? Was there enough tension and conflict?
- Did the end of the scene leave the character changed in some way, or better/worse off?
- Did this scene move the story forward and reveal character on a deeper level?
- Were events predictable, or did they hold some surprise? Did the plot hold my interest?
- Do the subplots add to or detract from the main plot?

Setting

- How meaningful was this setting to the scene? Was it the best choice of location for the events?
- Did the description include different senses for texture (sight, smell, taste, touch, sound)?
- Was there anything symbolic about the setting description or weather? Did it work?
- Did the scene foreshadow events in some way?
- Was the mood appropriate for the scene? Did it feel emotionally charged in some way?

Dialogue

- Could I follow the dialogue exchanges well? Was the pacing appropriate?
- Was the dialogue emotionally charged?
- Did I gain insight from what was said or what characters chose not to say?
- Did they reveal emotion through body language during the conversation?
- Did the characters repeat information the reader knew already? Was anything a ploy to get exposition across, or did it feel authentic?
- Did it add to the story or reveal character? Both?

Pacing

- Was the pacing strong and match the events unfolding? Could I follow what was happening?
- Did I skim read anywhere? Was description long winded? Was there too much inner thoughts and reflection? Too little?
- Any Info dumps? Any flashbacks that stopped the pace and/or felt unnecessary?
- Could I see the POV character's emotions progress from one to another?
- Was there enough tension and conflict? Too much? Were new roadblocks introduced? Did the character resolve some issues or work toward resolving them?

Description

- Could I see what was happening clearly?
- Did I skim anywhere or feel distracted as I read?
- Did I feel anything needed more detail to make the scene feel more important and real?
- Did the author "zoom in" on meaningful details that anchored me in the setting?
- Was there the right mix of showing and telling?

Voice:

- Did the writing style feel unique and natural? Do you believe only this writer could write this story? Does the viewpoint feel authentic? Did narrative summary/exposition feel voice-y?
- Does the POV character's thoughts and observations stand out as original & mesh with their identity?

Logic & Consistency

- Were the events in the scene logical? Does each scene add to the overall story?
- Does my understanding of characters and events deepen as the book progresses?

- Do characters behave in alignment with their personalities? Does the MC evolve over time?
- Are all subplots adding to the bigger story?
- Do scenes transition smoothly from one to the next? Is the passage of time observed?
- Are the characters physical attributes & mannerisms consistent? Do they move from one place to the next logically?
- Is the POV consistent?

Ending (story/novel)
- Was everything wrapped up that should be? Was the denouement short, or go on too long?
- Do I feel satisfied by the resolution?

*Other things to touch on if you like:

THEME:

STYLE:
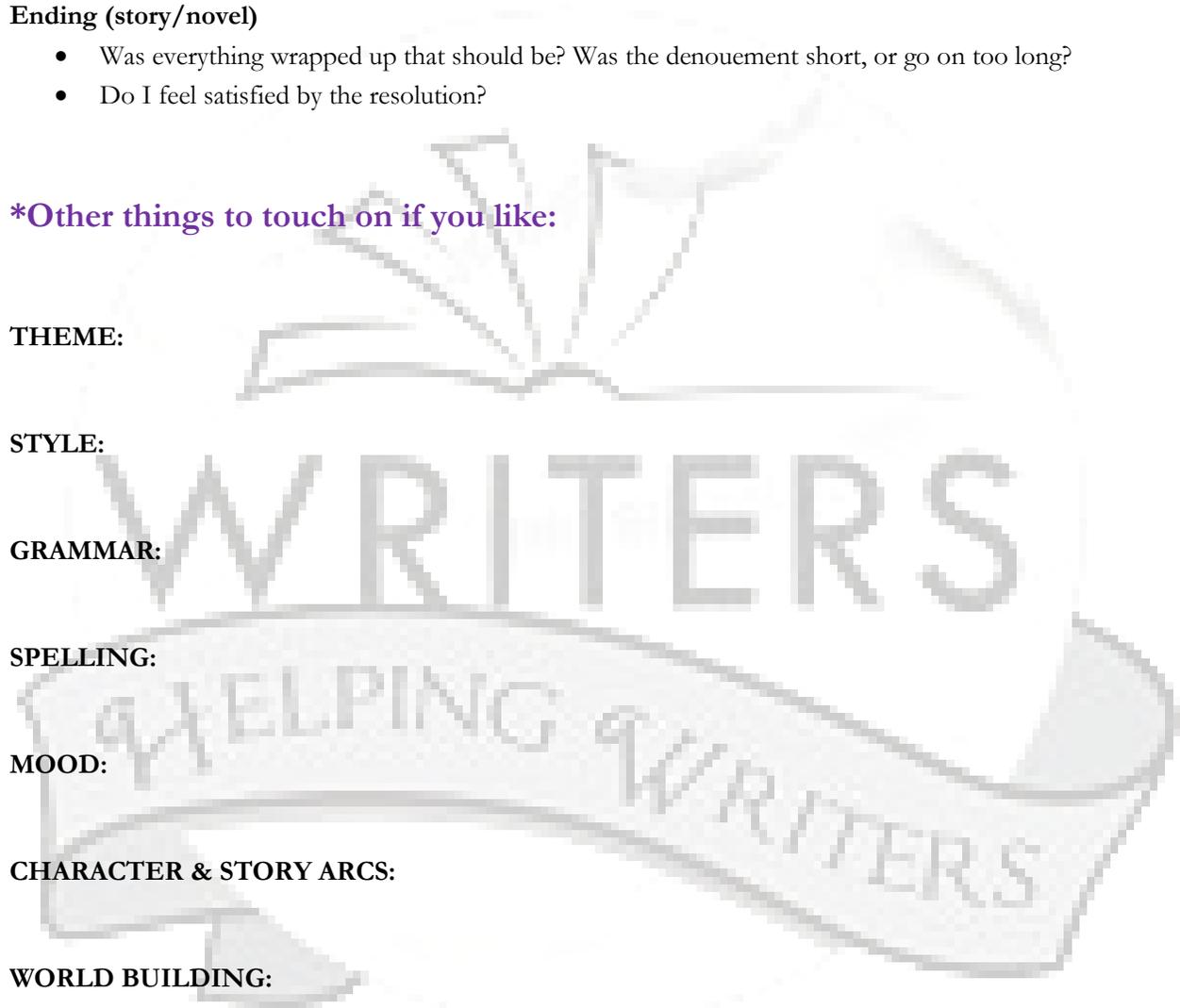
GRAMMAR:

SPELLING:

MOOD:

CHARACTER & STORY ARCS:

WORLD BUILDING:

PREMISE:

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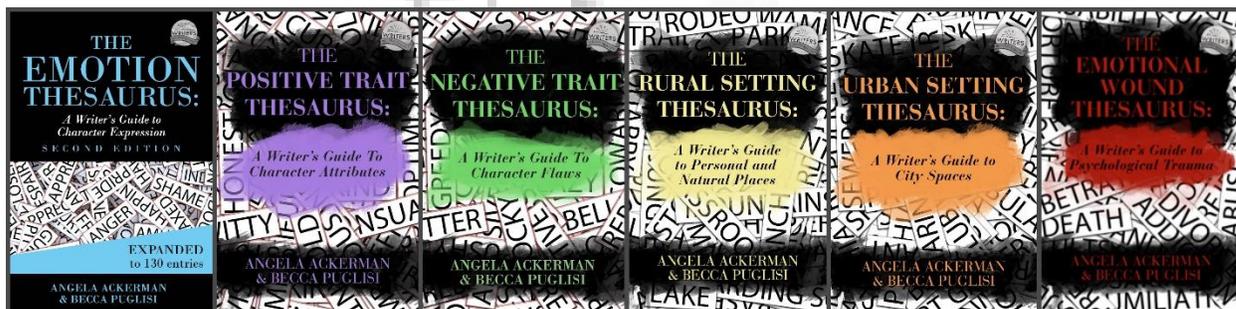
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