Editing Review Sheet

Don't give your readers information – give them experiences.

- Self-Editing by Browne and King

☐ **First Read Through**

1. **Beginnings**
   - Check the implicit promise (you will see the world differently, you will verify your view of the world, you will be introduced to a new world).
   - Character – do we care?
   - Conflict – why are we here?
   - Specificity – leads to credibility.

2. **Middles**
   - Whose story is it?
   - Who is the POV?
   - What is the through line?
   - Is there appropriate planning for the climax?
   - Is there sufficient character development? (Beginning must provide enough so that the reader believes the decisions the MC makes and so the middle needs to provide lots of evidence and opportunities for change. If the motivation changes, it needs to be set up here.)

3. **Ends**
   - Does the climax satisfy?
   - Does it deliver emotion?
   - Is it logical?
   - Are the character changes appropriate and believable?
   - Does it match in strength to the opener?

4. Determine **theme**. Does it match the story as is?
5. Verify that all **characters have unique personalities**.
6. Does the **hero perform the action** that resolves the conflict?
7. Does the **beginning hint at the ending**?
8. **Motivation check**. What does the MC want overall? Why can't s/he get it? Are the obstacles sufficient and interesting? What/How doe s/he have to do/change to get it?

☐ **Write a synopsis for the novel as it is. Is this what you want? Identify changes.**

☐ **Write a synopsis for each scene.**

☐ **From the above analysis identify scenes to be added and to be cut.**

☐ **Re/write those scenes.**

☐ **Now do a scene-by-scene edit.**

☐ **Scene Checks**

1. Does each scene do one or more of the following?
    - Move the story along via action
    - Characterize through reaction
    - Set up essential scenes to come
2. Apply the three O's to action scenes: What is the **objective**, the **obstacle** and the **outcome**?
3. Apply the EAD for reaction scenes? (**Emotion**, **Analysis** and **Decision**)
4. Do a **motivation check** for everyone in each scene.
5. Do a **stakes check** for everyone in each scene.
6. Do a **trouble check** for everyone in each scene. Too nice?
7. Do a **tension check** for each scene. Boring?
8. Is there too much expository at the beginning of each scene or chapter?
9. Verify that the ends of the scenes aren't all the same, that there is a mix of cliffhangers and rewards.
10. Is there a **hook**? Enough **intensity** and a **prompt** to the next scene?
11. Enrich **imagery** via the five senses.
12. **Show and don't tell**.

☐ **Settings Check**

1. Is there enough?
2. Avoid the telling trap.
3. Use the five senses.
4. Tiniest details are the most important.
5. **Characters must INTERACT** with the setting. Get a twofer.

☐ **POV Check**

1. Are the descriptions things the POV character would notice?
2. Are there things the POV character can't know or wouldn't care about (i.e. s/he's just a tool for the author)?

☐ **Dialog Checks**

1. Must be essential to story
2. Must be from one character to another and not a data dump
3. Has to have conflict or tension
4. Matches style of character
5. Sounds different for each character but not too much slang etc.
6. Is compressed
7. Rich with subtext
8. Act it out
9. Eliminate dialog tags that explain the dialog content or tell emotion

☐ **Line Edits**

1. Do a **word analysis** and make appropriate changes.
2. Do a **word search** for particular offenders:
   - had
   - very
   - suddenly
   - too many adverbs
   - looked like (seemed etc.)
   - search for emotions (angry, happy, sad) outside of dialog and look for R.U. E. (Resist the Urge to Explain).
   - search for as + ing constructions.
   - to be verbs
   - filter words (MC watched something, sends reader further away... just say it happens)
   - that
   - weak adjectives
   - comma check
   - attribution check
   - watch for repetition, echoes, alliteration etc.
   - look for excessive !'s
   - check for sentence variety (length and pacing)
3. Add **specificity** via strong verbs and nouns. ("Birds flew overhead." should be "Gulls flew overhead.")
4. **R.U.E.** resist the urge to explain in general.
5. Check that **sentence lengths vary**.

☐ **Final Edit Read Through**

1. Check for **white space**.
2. Check that **chapter lengths vary**.
3. Have you **read it aloud** to check for voice and smoothness?
4. **Foreshadowing** check, too much? Too little?
5. **Check for focus**. Kill your darlings if they aren't germane.
6. **Repeat the keys points of the First Read Through** analysis:
   - Is the **implicit promise kept**?
   - Is there **appropriate set up** for the climax?
   - Is there sufficient **character development**?
   - Does the **climax** satisfy both emotionally and logically?
   - Are the **character changes** appropriate and believable?
   - Are the **themes** maintained?
   - **Motivation, conflict and obstacles check**. What does the MC want overall? Why can't s/he have it? Are the obstacles sufficient and interesting?

☐ **Submit**