

CRITIQUING FICTION

In a workshop setting, it's easy to fall into the habit of critiquing fiction based on your gut reaction. Instead of picking a story apart based on intuition, it's helpful to have guidelines in mind as we evaluate a work in progress.

by JC Bronsted and Kristine Gill

**1**

CHARACTERS

Could you picture the characters? Did they feel real and unique in comparison to others on the page? Did you understand their motivations, desires and conflicts? Were you drawn to these characters?

2

PLOT

Did the plot interest you? Was it believable? Could you follow the plot and understand each part as it unfolded? Was the conflict in the story clear to you from the beginning and throughout the piece?

3

SETTING

Strong settings are either tantamount to a story's premise or at least help to build a world and provide a backdrop for plot. Could you picture the setting? Did you want more description or less?

4

SCENE

Did each scene feel necessary to the piece? Did each scene move the plot along somehow? Did these scenes need more or less description? Could you picture and follow each scene as it unfolded?

5

DIALOGUE

Did the dialogue sound authentic? Did it move the story along? Did each character sound unique? Was it confusing?

6

VOICE

Did the point of view in the story make sense? Did the piece have a pace and flavor that made it unique? Could you distinguish this story from another based on its voice? Did the characters have their own unique voices and thoughts?

7

BEGINNING

Did the beginning quickly establish a tone and a set of expectations for the reader? Were you able to understand what the story would be about? Were you invested early on? Remember you can dislike a story even if this is done well!

8

ENDING

Were you satisfied with the story by the end of the piece? Were you left hanging somehow? Or did the story feel complete?

9

NUTS AND BOLTS

Did the story use proper grammar, spelling and punctuation? Were you distracted by any errors?