

Fleshing It Out with Linda Rohrbough

By Cathy Dilts

I attended the Thursday workshop at the Pikes Peak Writers Conference with some misgivings. I was sure I already knew it all. But I was willing to give “Fleshing It Out: Take Your Novel to the Next Level with Tools the Pros Use” a chance to teach me something new.

Then Linda Rohrbough knocked me off my seat with her statement, “You’re here because you have a problem.” With new humility, I took copious notes on techniques I knew, but which I had to admit I wasn’t using. The workshop was designed for people who had already written a novel, published or not. Interactive sessions encouraged attendees to apply the information to their work.

Using examples like the movies Jerry Maguire and The Fugitive, Linda didn’t just present fiction concepts. She demonstrated their use, walking us through the application of various plotting formulas, spreadsheets, character arcs and character grids. Why have I not created goal, motivation, and conflict charts for characters in my murder mystery? I will now!

Much to my surprise, I did learn new ideas, as well as fresh ways to look at old techniques. The Enneagram was a fascinating tool, taking the concept of the archetype into new realms.

Linda used her laptop to show us various Web sites, and to demonstrate electronic tools. From basics such as showing the “track changes” tool in Word, to critiques of mindmapping software, she covered an array of fiction aids.

We were not allowed to sit still. Breaking into groups, rearranging groups, and changing seats, Linda pushed us out of our comfort zones. Toward the end of the day, she asked how many of us were going home to rewrite our novels. My hand went up.

It’s one thing to know the tools of your craft. But when you’re pushed to apply them in a room full of writers, you quickly discover where you’ve failed to implement what you know. Linda Rohrbough’s workshop lived up to its title. Using what we learned, we should all be able to take our novels to the next level.

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