

The Emotional Craft of Fiction: How to Write the Story Beneath the Surface

by Donald Maass

Audio (MP3) version: https://books.kim/mp3/book/www.books.kim_973_summary-The_Emotional_Craft_.mp3

Summary:

The Emotional Craft of Fiction: How to Write the Story Beneath the Surface by Donald Maass is a book that provides writers with an in-depth look at how to craft emotionally engaging stories. The book begins by discussing why emotion is so important in fiction, and then moves on to discuss techniques for creating emotional depth in characters, settings, plotlines, and dialogue. It also covers topics such as using sensory details to evoke emotion, developing empathy between readers and characters, and exploring themes through story structure.

Maass explains that emotions are essential for connecting readers with stories because they provide insight into what motivates characters' actions. He emphasizes that it's not enough just to tell readers what a character feels; instead writers must show them how those feelings affect their decisions. To do this effectively he suggests using sensory details like smells or sounds which can help bring scenes alive for readers.

He also discusses ways of creating empathy between reader and character by making sure each has something at stake in the story—whether it be physical danger or psychological turmoil—and showing how these stakes play out over time. Additionally he encourages writers to explore themes through story structure rather than simply stating them outright.

Finally Maass offers advice on writing powerful dialogue which should reflect both inner thoughts as well as external conversations between characters. He stresses the importance of avoiding cliches when crafting dialogue since they can make conversations feel flat or unoriginal.

Overall The Emotional Craft of Fiction provides valuable guidance on how best to create emotionally engaging stories that will draw readers in from start to finish. By following its advice authors can ensure their work resonates deeply with audiences long after they turn the last page.

Main ideas:

#1. *Understand Your Characters: To create a compelling story, you must understand your characters'™ motivations and emotions. This means delving into their inner lives and exploring their hopes, fears, and desires.*

Understanding your characters is essential to creating a compelling story. To do this, you must explore their inner lives and get to know them on a deeper level. What are their hopes and dreams? What fears keep them up at night? What drives them forward in life? By understanding the motivations and emotions of your characters, you can create stories that feel real and alive.

In The Emotional Craft of Fiction: How to Write the Story Beneath the Surface by Donald Maass, he explains how important it is for writers to understand their characters' emotional journeys. He encourages writers to ask questions about each characters backstory, relationships with other characters, goals in life, values they hold dear, etc., so that readers can connect with these people on an emotional level.

By taking time to really get into the minds of our fictional creations we can craft stories that resonate with readers long after theyve finished reading. We can make our stories come alive by giving our characters depth and complexity—by

making sure they have wants and needs just like any real person would.

#2. Create Conflict: Conflict is essential to a good story. It should be present in every scene and should be driven by the characters'™ emotions and motivations.

Conflict is an essential element of any story. It should be present in every scene and should drive the characters' emotions and motivations. Conflict can take many forms, from internal struggles to external battles between characters or forces. Internal conflict often involves a character's inner struggle with their own beliefs, values, or desires that are at odds with each other. External conflicts involve two opposing forces such as a protagonist versus antagonist, man vs nature, or even man vs himself. Conflict creates tension and suspense which keeps readers engaged in the story.

When creating conflict for your story it is important to consider how it will affect your characters emotionally. Characters must have something at stake when they enter into a conflict; this could be physical safety, emotional wellbeing, relationships with others etc.. The stakes should increase throughout the story so that by its conclusion there is much more on the line than what was initially presented.

It is also important to remember that not all conflicts need to end in violence or destruction; sometimes resolution can come through understanding and compromise instead of battle. This type of resolution can provide insight into both sides of an argument while still providing satisfying closure for readers.

#3. Use Emotional Language: To bring your story to life, use language that conveys emotion. This will help your readers connect with your characters and become invested in the story.

Using emotional language in your writing can help to bring your story to life. It allows readers to connect with the characters and become invested in their journey. By using words that evoke strong feelings, you can create a vivid picture of the events unfolding on the page.

When crafting dialogue, use language that reflects how each character is feeling. This will give them depth and make them more believable. Similarly, when describing settings or scenes, choose words that capture the atmosphere and mood of what's happening.

By taking time to think about how best to express emotion through language, you can craft stories that are powerful and engaging for readers.

#4. Show, Don't Tell: Instead of telling your readers what your characters are feeling, show it through their actions and dialogue. This will make your story more vivid and engaging.

The idea of "Show, Don't Tell" is an important concept for writers to understand. Instead of simply telling readers what a character is feeling, it's better to show their emotions through their actions and dialogue. This will make the story more vivid and engaging for readers.

For example, instead of saying that a character was angry, you could have them slam a door or yell at someone. Or if they were sad, you could have them cry or sit in silence. These types of details can help bring your characters to life and create an emotional connection with your audience.

It's also important to remember that showing emotion doesn't just mean physical reactions; it can also include inner thoughts and feelings as well. For instance, if a character is feeling anxious about something they are about to do, you could describe how their heart races or how their palms start sweating.

By using this technique effectively throughout your story, you can create powerful moments that will draw readers in and keep them engaged until the very end.

#5. Use Subtext: Subtext is the underlying meaning of a scene or conversation. It can be used to add depth and complexity to your story and to hint at what's going on beneath the surface.

Subtext can be used to create a sense of mystery and suspense in your story. It allows you to hint at what's going on without explicitly stating it, leaving the reader guessing as to what will happen next. By using subtext, you can also add layers of meaning and emotion that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to convey through dialogue alone.

For example, if two characters are having an argument but neither one is willing to say exactly why they're angry with each other, then the underlying tension between them can be conveyed through their body language and facial expressions. This subtle use of subtext helps build up the emotional stakes in the scene without spelling out every detail.

Subtext can also help reveal character motivations and relationships more effectively than direct exposition ever could. For instance, if two characters have a strained relationship but never actually talk about it directly, then their interactions with each other may still give away clues as to how they feel about one another. Through careful use of subtext, readers will get a better understanding of these characters even though they don't know all the details.

Finally, by using subtext you can make your story more engaging for readers by allowing them to draw their own conclusions from hints rather than being told everything outright. This encourages active reading which makes for a much more enjoyable experience overall.

#6. Use Symbolism: Symbols can be used to convey emotion and meaning in a subtle way. They can also be used to foreshadow events and to hint at what's to come.

Symbolism can be a powerful tool for writers to convey emotion and meaning in their stories. It can also be used to hint at what's coming or foreshadow events that will occur later on in the story. Symbols are often subtle, but they can have a profound impact on readers if used correctly. For example, an author might use a symbol of light to represent hope or optimism, while darkness could signify despair or fear.

Symbols don't always need to be literal objects either; they can also take the form of metaphors and other figurative language. A character's actions may serve as symbols too - such as when someone takes a journey that represents their own personal growth and development. Writers should think carefully about how they want to use symbolism in their work so that it resonates with readers.

Ultimately, symbolism is an effective way for authors to add depth and complexity to their stories without having characters explicitly state what they're feeling or thinking. By using symbols strategically throughout the narrative, authors can create meaningful connections between characters and plot points that will stay with readers long after they've finished reading.

#7. Create Tension: Tension is essential to a good story. It should be present in every scene and should be driven by the characters' emotions and motivations.

Creating tension in a story is essential to keep readers engaged and invested. It should be present throughout the entire narrative, from beginning to end. Tension can be created by introducing characters with conflicting goals or desires, placing them in difficult situations that require hard decisions, or having them face obstacles they must overcome. The emotions of the characters should drive the tension forward as they struggle against their own inner turmoil and external forces.

Tension can also come from suspenseful moments where readers are left wondering what will happen next. This could include cliffhangers at the end of chapters or scenes that leave readers on edge until they find out what happens next. Additionally, creating an atmosphere of mystery and intrigue can help build tension as well.

Ultimately, it's important for writers to remember that tension isn't just about action-packed sequences; it's about making sure every scene has some kind of emotional weight behind it so that readers feel connected to the story and its characters.

#8. Use Dialogue: Dialogue can be used to reveal character, create tension, and move the story forward. It should be realistic and should reflect the characters'™ emotions and motivations.

Dialogue is an essential tool for any storyteller. It can be used to bring characters to life, create tension and suspense, and move the plot forward. When crafting dialogue, it's important to make sure that it sounds realistic and reflects the emotions of the characters involved.

For example, if two characters are in a heated argument, their dialogue should reflect this by being more aggressive or confrontational than usual. On the other hand, if two people are having a romantic conversation then their words should be softer and more intimate.

By using dialogue effectively you can give your readers insight into each character's thoughts and feelings without explicitly telling them what those thoughts or feelings are. This allows for greater depth in your storytelling as well as creating an emotional connection between reader and character.

#9. Use Setting: Setting can be used to create atmosphere and to convey emotion. It can also be used to foreshadow events and to hint at what's™ to come.

Setting is an incredibly powerful tool for authors. It can be used to create a vivid atmosphere and evoke strong emotions in readers. By carefully crafting the setting of a story, authors can hint at what's to come and foreshadow events that will take place later on in the narrative. For example, if a character enters a dark alleyway with broken streetlights, this could suggest danger or impending doom ahead.

In addition to creating atmosphere and conveying emotion, setting can also be used as a way of developing characters further. A character's reaction to their environment can tell us more about them than any dialogue ever could; it gives us insight into how they think and feel about certain situations. Furthermore, by placing characters in different settings throughout the story we are able to explore their personalities even further.

Ultimately, setting is one of the most important elements when it comes to writing fiction – it has the power to shape entire stories and bring them alive for readers. Authors should use this tool wisely so that they can craft compelling narratives that leave lasting impressions.

#10. Use Point of View: Point of view can be used to create tension and to reveal character. It can also be used to create suspense and to hint at what's™ to come.

Point of view is a powerful tool for creating tension and suspense in fiction. By choosing the right point of view, authors can hint at what's to come while still keeping readers guessing. For example, if an author chooses to tell a story from the perspective of one character, they can use that character's limited knowledge to create suspense and mystery. The reader will be kept on their toes as they try to figure out what's going on before the protagonist does.

Using point of view also allows authors to reveal characters in unique ways. By telling a story through one particular character's eyes, readers get an intimate look into that person's thoughts and feelings. This helps them understand why certain decisions are made or how certain events affect different people differently.

Finally, point of view can be used as a way for authors to explore themes within their stories without being too overt about it. By using multiple points of view throughout the narrative, writers can show how different characters perceive similar situations differently based on their own experiences and beliefs.

#11. Use Pacing: Pacing is essential to a good story. It should be used to create tension and to move the story forward.

Pacing is an important tool for any storyteller. It can be used to create tension, build suspense, and move the plot forward. By controlling the speed of a narrative, authors can keep readers engaged and invested in their stories. Pacing also helps to establish the tone of a story; it can make moments feel more intense or relaxed depending on how quickly events unfold.

When using pacing effectively, authors should consider both short-term and long-term effects. Short-term pacing involves manipulating the speed at which individual scenes progress while long-term pacing focuses on how quickly major plot points are revealed throughout the course of a novel or screenplay. Authors should strive to maintain consistent pacing throughout their work so that readers don't become bored or overwhelmed by too much action.

In addition to creating tension and establishing tone, effective use of pacing can help draw attention to certain elements within a story such as character development or foreshadowing. By slowing down during key moments in order to emphasize them, authors can ensure that readers will pay close attention when these elements appear later in the narrative.

#12. Use Description: Description can be used to create atmosphere and to convey emotion. It can also be used to foreshadow events and to hint at what's to come.

Description is a powerful tool for writers. It can be used to create atmosphere and set the tone of a story, allowing readers to feel as if they are in the world that has been created. Description can also be used to convey emotion, giving readers insight into how characters are feeling or what their motivations may be. Additionally, description can be used to foreshadow events and hint at what's coming next in the story. By using vivid imagery and sensory details, authors can give readers clues about where the plot is headed without explicitly stating it.

For example, an author might use descriptions of dark clouds gathering on the horizon or a chill wind blowing through a character's hair as subtle hints that something bad is about to happen. Or they might describe someone's face lighting up with joy when they see another person as an indication that there will soon be some kind of romantic connection between them. In this way, description helps build suspense and anticipation while keeping readers engaged.

By utilizing descriptive language effectively, authors have the power to craft stories that draw readers in emotionally and keep them hooked until the very end.

#13. Use Imagery: Imagery can be used to create atmosphere and to convey emotion. It can also be used to foreshadow events and to hint at what's to come.

Imagery can be used to create a vivid and immersive experience for readers. It can help them feel as if they are right there in the story, experiencing it alongside the characters. By using imagery, authors can evoke powerful emotions such as fear, joy, sadness or anger. They can also use imagery to hint at what's coming next in the story or foreshadow events that will take place later on.

For example, an author might describe a character walking through a dark forest with trees looming overhead like menacing shadows. This could be used to set up tension and suspense by suggesting something sinister is lurking nearby. Or perhaps an author might describe a beautiful sunset over rolling hills of green grass – this could suggest hope and optimism for what lies ahead.

By carefully crafting images with words, authors have the power to transport their readers into another world where anything is possible. Imagery allows us to explore our imaginations and bring stories alive in ways we never thought possible.

#14. Use Theme: Theme can be used to tie the story together and to convey a deeper meaning. It should be present in every scene and should be driven by the characters'™ emotions and motivations.

A theme is an essential element of any story. It can be used to create a sense of unity and purpose throughout the narrative, as well as to convey a deeper meaning that resonates with readers. A strong theme should be present in every scene and should be driven by the characters' emotions and motivations. This will help ensure that each scene contributes to the overall story arc, rather than feeling like it was added just for show.

Themes are often expressed through symbols or motifs which appear repeatedly throughout the story. These elements can represent ideas such as love, loss, hope or despair – whatever emotion you want your reader to feel when they reach the end of your book. By using these symbols consistently throughout your work, you can create a powerful emotional impact on readers.

When crafting themes for your stories, think about what message you want to communicate with them. What do you want readers to take away from their experience? Consider how different scenes could contribute towards this goal and use those moments to further develop your themes.

Ultimately, themes are an important part of storytelling because they give us something more than just entertainment; they provide us with insight into our own lives and experiences. When done right, themes can make stories truly memorable – so don't forget about them!

#15. Use Structure: Structure is essential to a good story. It should be used to create tension and to move the story forward.

Structure is an important element of storytelling. It helps to create tension and suspense, as well as move the story forward. By using structure, writers can build up anticipation for a climax or resolution, while also providing readers with clues about what will happen next in the narrative. Structure can be used to introduce characters and settings, establish relationships between them, and provide insight into their motivations. It can also be used to reveal plot twists or unexpected events that keep readers engaged.

In *The Emotional Craft of Fiction: How to Write the Story Beneath the Surface* by Donald Maass, he explains how structure should be used in order to craft compelling stories. He suggests that writers use structure not only for its traditional purpose of creating suspense but also for emotional impact – to evoke feelings from readers such as fear or joy. He encourages authors to think beyond linear structures when crafting stories; instead they should consider non-linear approaches like flashbacks or multiple points of view.

By understanding how structure works within a story and utilizing it effectively, authors are able to create powerful narratives that engage readers emotionally on many levels. With careful consideration given towards structuring their stories properly, writers have the potential to craft truly captivating tales.

#16. Use Plot Twists: Plot twists can be used to surprise the reader and to keep them engaged. They should be driven by the characters'™ emotions and motivations.

Plot twists can be used to great effect in fiction writing. They should be carefully crafted and driven by the characters' emotions and motivations. A plot twist should surprise the reader, but also make sense within the context of the story. It should not feel like a cheap trick or an artificial device; rather, it should feel organic and natural.

When crafting a plot twist, consider how it will affect your characters emotionally. What kind of impact will this have on them? How does it change their outlook on life? Will they learn something new about themselves or others as a result? These are all important questions to ask when creating a plot twist that is meaningful and engaging for readers.

In addition to being emotionally driven, plot twists should also move the story forward in some way. This could mean

introducing new elements into the narrative or revealing previously unknown information about characters or events. Whatever you choose, make sure that your plot twist has purpose and meaning beyond simply shocking readers.

#17. Use Suspense: Suspense can be used to create tension and to keep the reader guessing. It should be driven by the characters'™ emotions and motivations.

Suspense is a powerful tool for creating tension and keeping readers guessing. It should be used to drive the emotions and motivations of the characters in your story. By withholding information from the reader, you can create an atmosphere of anticipation that will keep them engaged with your narrative. You can also use suspense to build up to a climax or reveal important plot points at just the right moment.

When using suspense, it's important to remember that it should always serve a purpose within your story. Don't simply withhold information for no reason; instead, make sure there is an emotional payoff when you finally do reveal what has been kept hidden. This could be anything from surprise or shock to relief or joy – whatever best serves your story.

Finally, don't forget that suspense isn't only about withholding information; it can also be used as a way of foreshadowing future events in your story. By hinting at something before it happens, you can create even more tension and excitement for readers as they wait eagerly for what comes next.

#18. Use Foreshadowing: Foreshadowing can be used to hint at what's™ to come and to create suspense. It should be driven by the characters'™ emotions and motivations.

Foreshadowing is a powerful tool for creating suspense and anticipation in a story. It can be used to hint at what's coming, or to set up the reader for an unexpected twist. By using foreshadowing, authors can create tension and intrigue that will keep readers engaged throughout the narrative.

When employing foreshadowing, it's important to focus on the characters' emotions and motivations. This helps ensure that the hints are subtle enough so as not to give away too much of what's going to happen next. For example, if a character is feeling anxious about something they're about to do, this could be used as a way of hinting at potential danger ahead without giving away any specifics.

In addition, foreshadowing should also be woven into other elements of the story such as dialogue or setting descriptions. This allows authors to further build suspense by providing clues through seemingly innocuous details that may only become clear later on in the narrative.

By utilizing foreshadowing effectively within their stories, authors can craft narratives with greater depth and complexity while still keeping readers guessing until the very end.

#19. Use Genre: Genre can be used to create atmosphere and to convey emotion. It can also be used to foreshadow events and to hint at what's™ to come.

Genre is a powerful tool for writers to create atmosphere and convey emotion in their stories. It can be used to set the tone of a scene, hint at what's coming next, or even foreshadow events that will occur later on. For example, if you are writing a horror story, using elements of suspenseful music and dark imagery can help build tension and evoke fear in your readers.

In addition to setting the mood of a story, genre can also be used to explore themes within it. By choosing certain genres such as romance or comedy, authors can delve into topics like love or humor in ways that wouldn't be possible with other types of storytelling. This allows them to add depth and complexity to their work while still maintaining an entertaining narrative.

Finally, genre provides structure for stories by providing boundaries within which authors must work. While this may

seem restrictive at first glance, it actually gives writers more freedom because they know exactly what type of story they are trying to tell from the outset. This helps them focus on crafting compelling characters and plotlines without getting lost in the details.

#20. Use Voice: Voice can be used to create atmosphere and to convey emotion. It can also be used to foreshadow events and to hint at what's to come.

Voice can be used to create atmosphere and to convey emotion. It is a powerful tool for writers, allowing them to bring their characters and stories alive in the minds of readers. By using voice, authors can give their work an added layer of depth and complexity that will draw readers in.

Using voice effectively requires skillful manipulation of language. Writers must choose words carefully so as not to overstate or understate the emotions they are trying to convey. They should also consider how each sentence contributes to the overall tone of the story, as well as how it fits into the larger narrative arc.

Voice can also be used to foreshadow events and hint at what's coming next. This technique allows authors to build suspense without giving away too much information upfront. By subtly hinting at future plot points, writers can keep readers engaged while still leaving room for surprise.

Ultimately, voice is one of many tools available for creating compelling fiction. When used correctly, it has the power to transport readers into another world where they become fully immersed in your story.