

How a Reader Gets Access to Your Story **by Carolyn J. Rose**

Just as much of an iceberg lies beneath the surface of the water, much of a well-crafted novel lies beneath the words on the page. Like those blocks of ice bobbing on the sea, stories float on an understructure of plot, logic, scene components, character development, description, style, and subtext.

It may take a writer many drafts and many years to meld structure and technique, to cultivate style and character voice, to put all the elements of novelcraft together so well that the understructure supports the tale but isn't visible except to those who know where to look and what to look for.

If elements of craft are missing and the understructure is too flimsy or full of holes, the story may sink. If the understructure is too massive, craft can appear forced or contrived and the tale may capsize.

As you self-critique and revise to build a seamless understructure to support your story, the following acronym will help you decide whether you have all the elements in place and whether a reader GETS ACCESS, gets interested, and wants to read more.

Goals and scene structure

Emotions

Thoughts and memories

Setting details

Action

Conflict, internal and external

Characterization and voice

Established point of view

Showing with all the senses

Style

I keep this above my computer and use it to check each scene and chapter to determine whether my story is afloat or whether my characters are floundering in a sea of words.