

The Art of The Critique (Part 1)

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The Art of the Critique: Part 1 in a series of several.

Allan Price made what I thought was a telling comment in a recent conversation. "I was trying to have a conversation about writing, and all we ended up talking about was Critiquing."

Critiquing is a critical tool for a writer. At some point, if you ever want to get published, you will need to have someone who is not a friend or a relative read your work, and give you an unbiased opinion.

It is almost impossible to be entirely impartial about your own work. You are too close to it. Also, if you are still learning the trade, you may be finding that there are problems with your work that you don't know how to fix. The prose, sparkling in your head, lies dull and lifeless on the page.

A good critiquer can be an incredible asset. What is more, learning how to give good critique is amazing useful, too. If you can look at someone's work, and see what they've done wrong, then you can apply the same tools to your own work.

OK. So ... what is a Critique?

A Critique differs from a Review in that a Critique is all about positive criticism. It is aimed at improving the story, not tearing it down.

A Critiquer differs from a Critic, in that whereas a critic merely says what is wrong (and sometimes right) with a story, a Critiquer is doing his or her best to help improve it.

A critique can vary from a general, overall comment on plot and characterization, down to an individual line by line edit, depending on the state of the story and how keen the Critiquer is.

Getting your work critiqued can be a painful experience. It's your baby, and you're sending it out in the world alone and unprotected. Someone might not like it. Everyone might hate it. It might be terrible.

Fact 1: It is not possible to write something everyone likes. About 80% is as good as you are likely to get, from anything.

Fact 2: If you are going to get your story published, you have to get used to rejection. It will happen. No one gets accepted everywhere every single time -- unless you are Steven King, and you can bet he had his share of rejections in the early days.

Fact 3: Your story might be terrible. The only sure way you can improve your story is to get meaningful feedback. For most people, three drafts is a minimum. Many need far more.

Next: [Getting Meaningful Critiques.](#)