

WRITE A PREMISE – 50 WORDS, NO MORE

SYNOPSIS OR PREMISE?

You may hear both terms used interchangeably, but should you want to publish your book now or later, you need to know the difference. A premise is the setup –the foundational idea that expresses the plot in simple terms. A good premise will communicate your story’s essence in a one-sentence or two-sentence statement.

There are three questions to ask yourself as you write your premise (some call it a “logline” or a “one-sentence pitch”):

1. Who is the main character and what does he or she want?
2. Who or what is standing in the way of the main character?
3. What makes this story unique?

EXAMPLES OF PREMISES:

Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*

An old and simple fisherman struggles to stay in touch with the times and reality as the world progresses around him. He sets out alone for a normal day on the sea, with modest hope for a catch, and soon finds himself in a struggle of wills between man and beast.

Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*

The lives of four characters intertwine after meeting at an Italian villa during World War II: A man burned beyond recognition (the patient of the title), his Canadian nurse, a Sikh sapper for the British Army, and a Canadian thief.

Cheryl Strayed *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*

In June 1995, despite a lack of hiking experience, recent divorcée Cheryl Strayed leaves Minneapolis, Minnesota, to hike 1,100 miles of the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail on a journey of self-discovery and healing.

YOUR TURN TO WRITE YOUR PREMISE



