

Planning the Book

Below is a table with many aspects of a book and examples of how to brainstorm ideas or outline definitive ones using the column to the right. Not every aspect will be applicable for every project, particularly experimental fiction and certain genres of non-fiction.

Aspect	Fiction	Nonfiction	Your Project
Purpose	To serve as an allegory, to entertain, to warn, to share an emotional anecdote, to satisfy yourself, etc.	To inform, to educate, to persuade, to entertain, to discover, to share an interesting anecdote, to satisfy yourself, etc.	
Scope	A nation's tale, or an individual's story? Etc.	Broad, narrow. . . general, detailed, etc.	
Timeframe	24 Hours, 100 years, a million years, five years, etc.	24 Hours, 100 years, a million years, five years, etc.	
Tense	Past, present, future	Past, present, future	
Narration	Voice? Narrator? Main character Focal character Method	Voice? Narrator? Main character Focal character Method	
Main Characters	Major characters. List by either role in-story or out-of-story and/or name. IS: King, detective, etc. OOS: Narrator, Villain, Romantic interest, etc.	Major persons. List by name and/or one or two word explanation: i.e. Caesar, Roman emperor; Jesus Christ; George Bush, President 2000-2008, etc.	
Minor Characters	Minor characters. List by either Role in-story or Out of story And/or name	Minor persons. List by name and major person with whom they are affiliated.	
Time Period	Realistic. Futuristic. 60s. Year 3500 AD. Jesus' time, etc.	Realistic. Futuristic. 60s. Year 3500 AD. Jesus' time, etc.	

Location	List location(s): i.e. King's palace; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; America; Joe's basement, etc.	List location(s): i.e. King's palace; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; America; Joe's basement, etc.	
Style	Prose, series of poems, series of letters/diary entries/reports/etc, Long/short chapters, segments, etc.	Prose, series of poems, series of letters/diary entries/reports/etc, Long/short chapters, segments, etc.	
Tone	Witty, ironic, sorrowful, dark, light, contrite, indignant, etc.	Witty, ironic, sorrowful, dark, light, contrite, indignant, etc.	
Prefatory(ies)?	Prologue? What is in the prologue? Letters of endorsement? Preface? Introduction? Acknowledgements? Notes? Quotes? Etc.	Prologue? What is in the prologue? Letters of endorsement? Preface? Introduction? Acknowledgements? Notes? Quotes? Etc.	
Opening	Prefatory? Letter? Flashback? Vision of future? Poem? Prose piece? Song? Introduction of a character? Event? Method? Etc.	Prefatory? Letter? Flashback? Vision of future? Poem? Prose piece? Song? Introduction of a character? Event? Method? Etc.	
Inciting Incident?	What draws in the Reader? Event? Feeling? Action? Etc.	What draws in the Reader? Get their attention.	
Major Conflict(s)?	Internal and external: i.e. Dad/teenage daughter; want to forgive but still angry; impudent boss; totalitarian government; divorced spouses; etc.	Same, but possibly on a larger scale, or addressed to the reader or author directly.	
Source or Method of Resolution(s)?	One or another character, word, item, divine act or revelation, action, etc.	One or another character, word, item, divine act or revelation, action, etc.	
Conclusion?	Where or how do you want to conclude? With a feeling, event/accomplishment, resolution of conflict, etc.?	Where or how do you want to conclude? With a feeling, event/accomplishment, resolution of conflict, etc.?	
Future plans?	Publication? Private work? Experimental?	Publication? Private work? Experimental?	