

Once you have these steps down, you'll be churning out books faster than Krispy Kreme churns out hot doughnuts.

Construct the Cannon. You might have already answered the question “What does your main character want more than anything else?” This question is so important that you'll be answering it for all of your characters, including your villain. This will give you enough subplots for a trilogy!

Whether it's true love, sweet revenge, or a cupcake-filled swimming pool, a character's greatest desire is the cannon that propels her toward her destiny.

Build the mountain. If you want to write a book people will actually read instead of use as a face pillow, you're going to have to inflict some pain on the character you've grown to love.

Create conflict, suspense, and heart-wrenching drama by stacking a mountain of setbacks (fears, weaknesses, villains, spider monkeys) in front of your protagonist. That way, when your protagonist finally does find the person, planet, or swimming pool of her dreams, it will be so much more satisfying!

Light the fuse. Like you or me, your main character is a creature of habit. In order to start him on his quest, you'll need to literally light a fire beneath him. This event ignites the fuse on your character's cannon; it's the phone call from an old lover, the tragic loss, the trip to Vegas. It's what makes it impossible for your main character to continue in his old ways.

Plot the problems. Conflict is the fuel that moves your plot forward. And we are not talking about just one big blowout at your climax. Exciting plots have characters encountering problems right from the get-go.

Think of the last comedy you saw. We bet our bottom dollar that the main character had to cleverly get himself out of one pickle after another until he had to wiggle his way out of the there's-no-way-he's-going-to-get-himself-out-of-this-pickle pickle at the climax of the film. The same should go for your book. Creating mini-problems to build up to the mega-problem is the best way to keep readers reading.

Meet him or her on the other side. The person that you load into the cannon at the start of your novel will be much different from the person you meet at the end, after she's reached the other side of the mountain.

At the beginning, your protagonist may be a sad and reclusive computer nerd, but after saving the world from a nuclear holocaust she becomes a confident warrior. How your main character changes in your book might not be as simplistic as nerd to superhero, but it's important that he or she does change and that your readers see the transformation unfold along the course of your novel.

Excerpted by Michael Adamson, with permission from [Chronicle Books](#).

<http://blog.nanowrimo.org/post/61412565075/no-plot-no-problem-five-secret-steps-to-story>