



SUSPENSE

We are not talking about the genre in this article. We are speaking of the suspense that keeps a reader turning pages in general.

Suspense is the state of uncertainty about an outcome. It carries the emotions of fear or excitement. As an author, you establish the conditions for your reader so that they will feel these emotions. Subtle (Jane Austin) is just as effective as dramatic (Roxane Gay).

Suspense is created by either not knowing what is going to happen or being the only one who knows. There are various ways to accomplish these methods. One is by not allowing confidence that your main character is going to succeed. Either by his own faults or the incredible odds against him, or both, which is even better, your reader is kept from knowing success is guaranteed. Maybe it isn't.

Another way to create suspense is by using multiple viewpoint over single. In this technique the reader gets a peek at what your main character's rival is doing. The suspense comes by knowing in this case. The reader is the one with the fearful excitement because they, not the main character, knows what is coming.

Another way to create suspense is by adding the element of time. Beating the clock always creates tension. Perhaps the romantic interest is moving away or getting married. Create a deadline in some way, and set your main character up with plenty of hurdles.

Your assignment: With your character fully sketched on paper, your general plot idea in mind, brainstorm ways to introduce suspense into your story. Vary subtle with dramatic.