

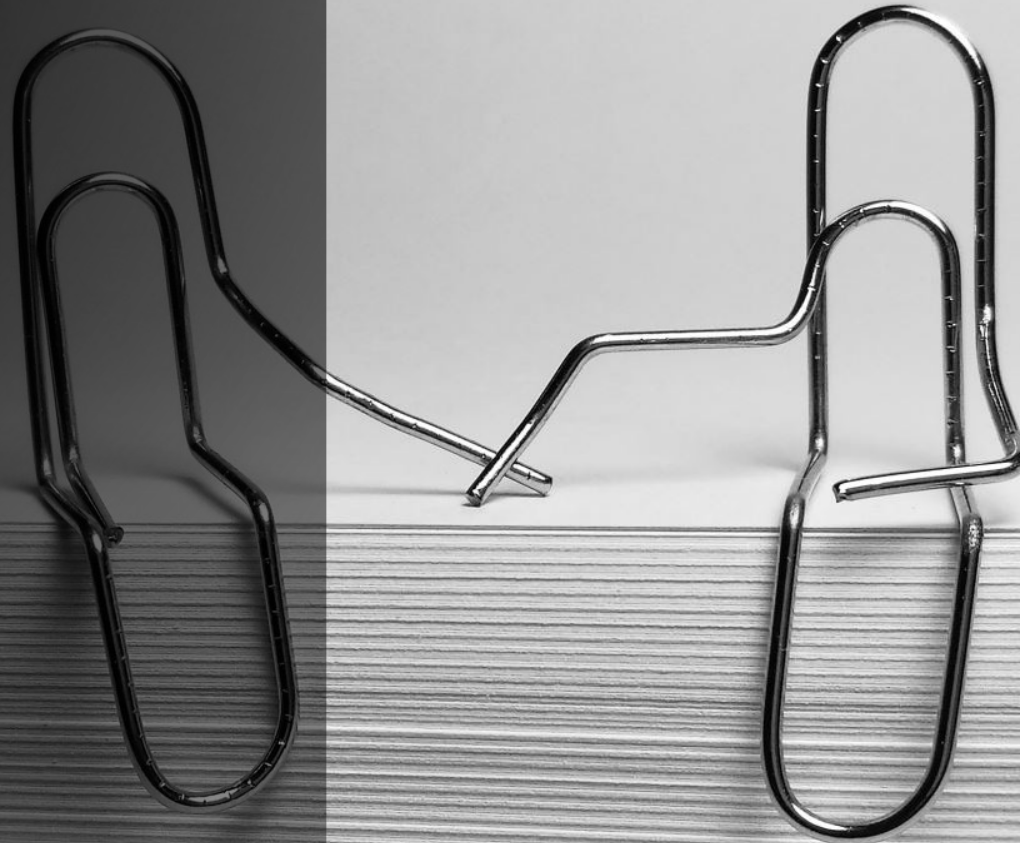
BOOK HOOKS

Eight Seconds
or Bust

Writers Table

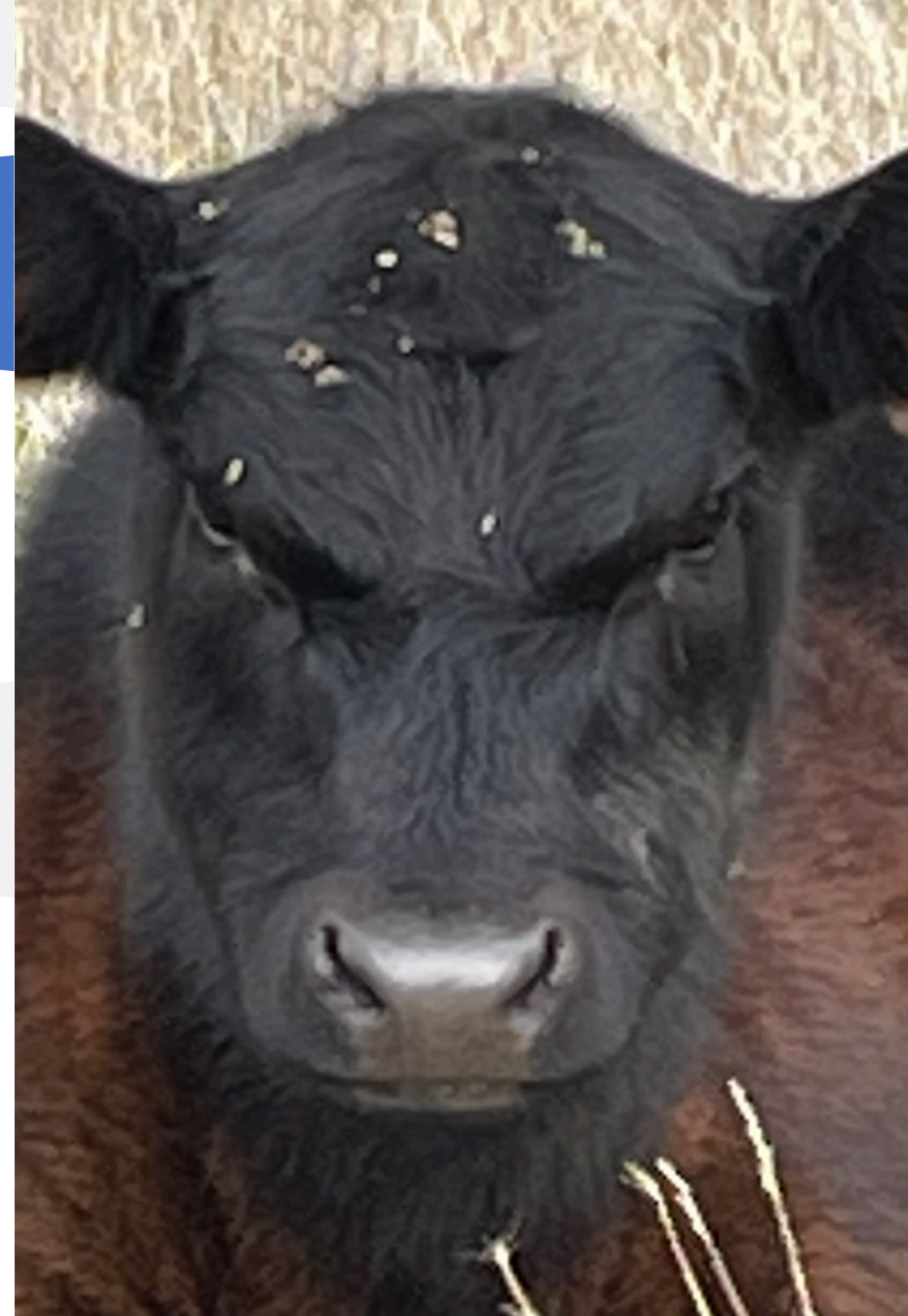
Jill Hedgecock

February 11, 2023



How Long is Eight Seconds?

- 8 seconds is how long a reader takes to decide if they'll buy your book
 - The U.S. Census Bureau reports a child is born every 8 seconds in this country
 - It's how long a rodeo cowboy must ride a bucking bull to score points
 - 8 seconds is less than a goldfish's attention span (9 seconds)
-



What I'll Cover Today

- Explore the key elements in different types of hooks
 - Learn the advantages of hooks
 - Discover how fiction and nonfiction hooks are different
 - Practice writing hooks from simplest (What's Your Book Hook) to several 1-3 sentence Book Blurb Hooks
-



Raise Your Hand If....

You're published in any genre,
any format or have a WIP

Can you describe your book
or other published piece in
one sentence?



Different Types of Hooks

- What's Your Book Pitch (one sentence hook)
- Book blurb hooks
- Chapter 1 beginning "hooks" or chapter ending cliffhanger "hooks" (not discussing today)



Advantages of Hooks

- Hooks can help authors:
 - Find a subtitle
 - Nail down your genre or subgenre
 - Understand the stakes, the theme or message in your memoir/true crime, or hone in on the problem that a nonfiction book solves
 - Provide the reader with enough information that this is kind of book they like to read
-



Goal of a Fiction Hook

Intrigue your readers with up to 4 key elements:

- dramatic action (high stakes)
 - compelling character
 - life-altering decision
 - unusual situation or setting
-



What's Your Book (WYB) Hook - Fiction



Describe your book in one sentence



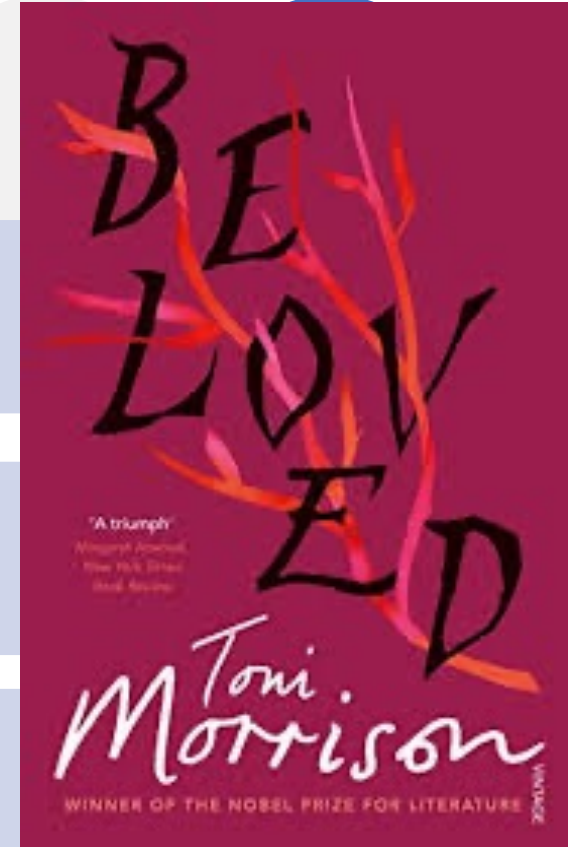
Formula



Title is an **adjective** genre about a **trope/subgenre/setting**



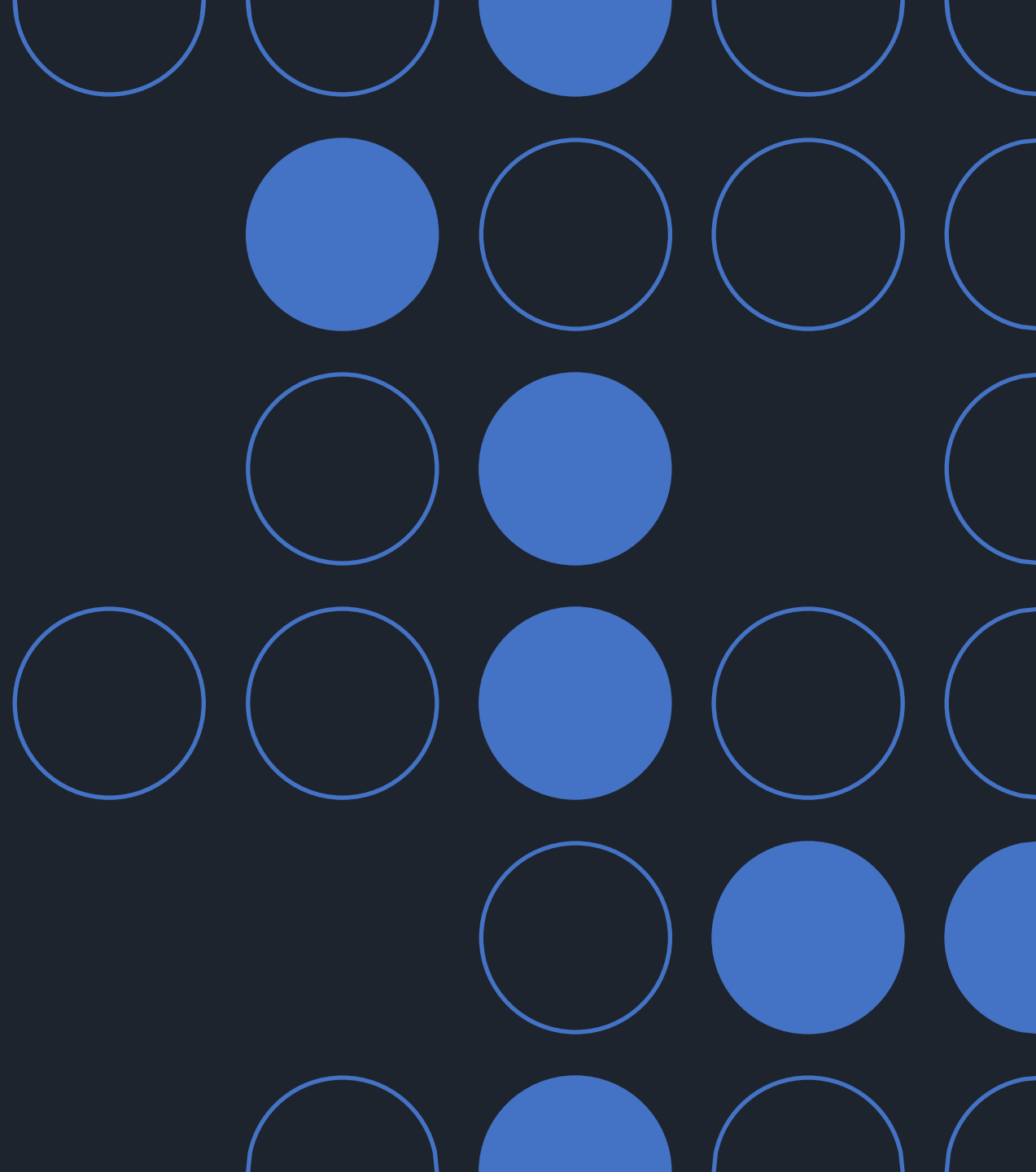
Beloved is a **compelling magical realism novel** about a **dysfunctional family** living in a **haunted house**.



What is a Trope?

A plot device or character attribute that is commonly used in the genre.

- **Romance – love triangle, friends to lovers**
 - **Fantasy – chosen one or a dark lord**
 - **Time traveler**
 - **Mistaken identity**
 - **Defective detective**
 - **Femme fatale**
 - **Isolated location**
 - **Amateur sleuth**
-



What's Your Book – Identifying Genre is Key (Fiction Example #1)

- Formula with 4 elements added: Title is an adjective genre about a trope/subgenre/setting
 - dramatic action (high stakes)
 - compelling character
 - life-altering decision
 - unusual situation or setting
- *Gumshoe* is an edge-of-your-seat murder mystery where a donkey's handler travels to Athens to solve Elon Musk's murder.



What's Your Book – Identifying Genre is Key (Fiction Example 2)

- Formula with 4 elements added: Title is an adjective genre about a trope/subgenre/setting
 - dramatic action (high stakes)
 - compelling character
 - life-altering decision
 - unusual situation or setting

Gumshoe is a hilarious cozy mystery where a donkey's handler's decision to vacation in Athens results in his donkey solving Elon Musk's murder.



What's Your Book Hook - Nonfiction

Self help

Memoir

True
crime

Nature

Disaster

What's Your Book Hook - Nonfiction

- **Title** is an adjective genre and who it's for (target reader)
 - *The Closet Organizer* is a life-transforming book for anyone who suffers from cluttered closets.
 - *Up in the Trees and Underground* is an illuminating nature book for plant enthusiasts and gardeners.
 - *My Mother's Secret Life* is an uplifting memoir of an unlikely World War II era spy that's perfect for history buffs.
-

Exercise 1: Write a What's Your Book Hook

- **Title** is an **adjective** **genre** about a **trope/subgenre/setting**
 - Nonfiction instead of trope/subgenre/setting, you'll want to include **target reader**
-

Book Blurb Hooks - Fiction

- Succinctly summarize in 1-3 sentences:
 - what your main character wants
 - problem to be solved
 - what question the main character needs to answer or the obstacle that they must overcome to achieve their goal
 - If you want dual purpose hooks for book blurb and Amazon ad copy, it needs to be 149 ***characters*** or less.
-

Book Blurb Hooks – Nonfiction (Self Help)

- start with a question of the problem to be fixed.
- end with what the reader will learn or discover.

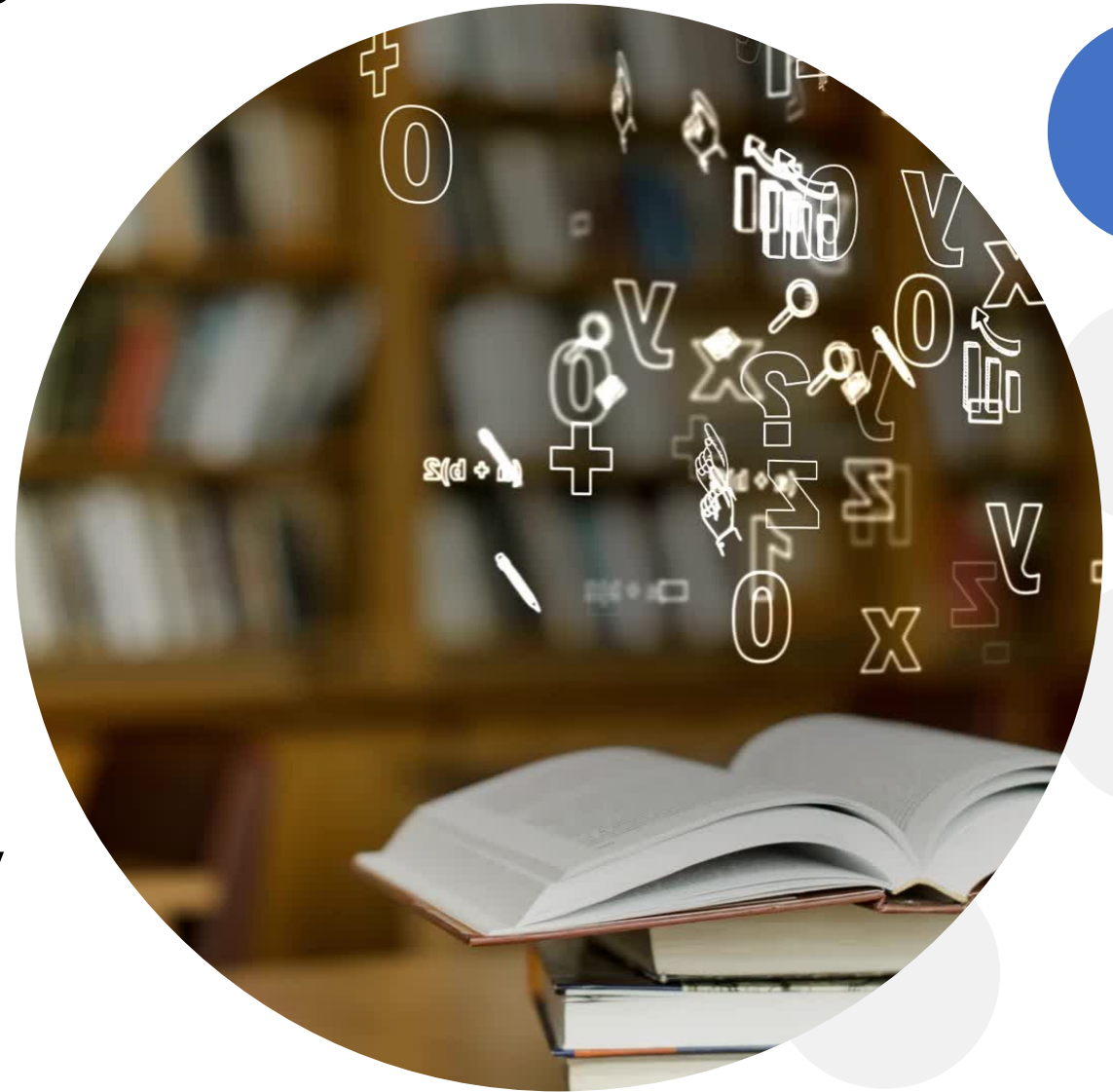
*Want to organize that cluttered closet?
Learn twelve easy steps to downsize
those unnecessary possessions.*

- Note: Avoid the words “you/your”
-



Book Blurb Hooks Examples – Nonfiction

- One pole dancer with a chip on her shoulder is found dead. A girl next door goes missing. How are these crimes related?
 - He grew up in poverty. As a stow away on a ship, he was nearly swept overboard. How is it possible this boy became the CEO of a Fortune 500 company?
-
- Hint for memoirists: Why did you write this book?



Exercise 2:

**1 long
sentence with
a “but”**

Fiction Example:

*A teen wizard wants a loving family, **but** destiny forces him to save the world.*

Nonfiction Example:

Most people can diet and lose weight, **but** those who want to keep it off permanently will want to learn these three tools to be successful.

Exercise 3: Two Short Sentences

Fiction Example:

- *She's a southern Belle living a privileged life. Now she must survive a war to save her beloved family plantation.*

Nonfiction Example:

- *He was an ordinary family man. His secret life as a serial murderer was revealed by an obsessed detective.*
-

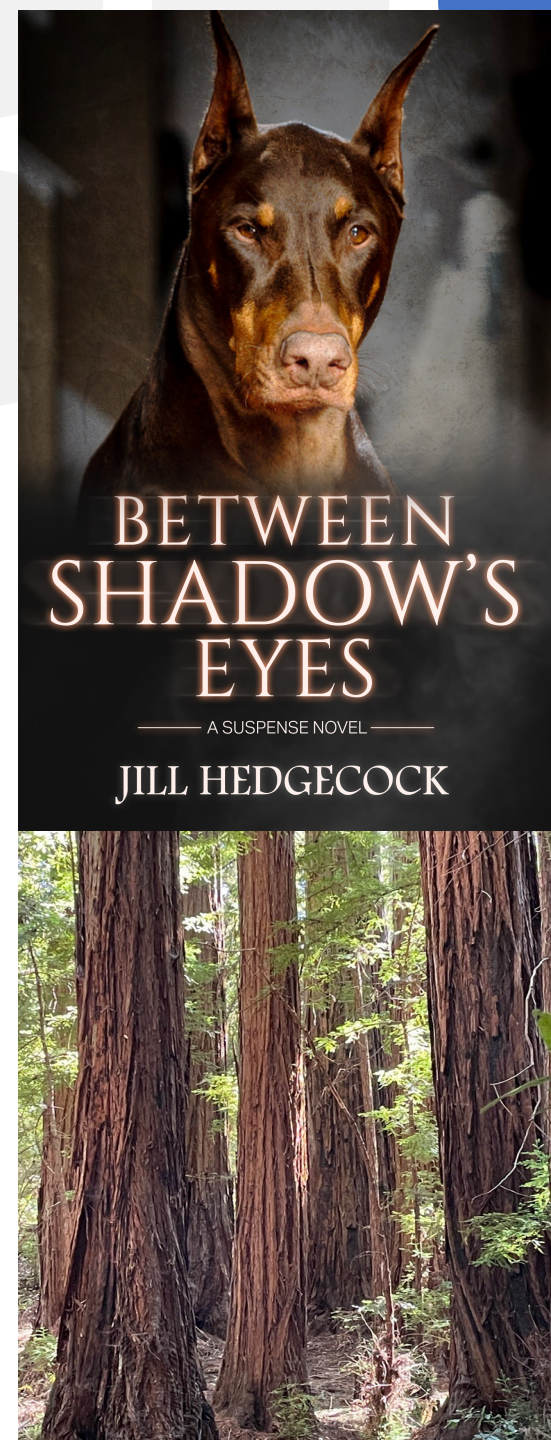
Exercise 4: Three Short Sentences

- **Fiction Example:**

- *A ghost-seeing Doberman. An orphaned girl with a secret. A poltergeist out for revenge.*

- **Nonfiction Example:**

- *Weird and wonderful arboreal life. Redwood roots feed sister trees. Trees scream.*



Tips

- Read other author's blurbs in your genre.
 - Don't use names, except maybe the main character. *New readers don't care about your character enough yet and may worry it's a second book in a series.*
 - Readers of X book or X authors will like this book and movie comparisons can work, but if you use obscure comparisons, it won't.
 - Try to end with dramatic cliffhanger words: murder, revenge, killer, explosion, scream.
-



QUESTIONS & CONTACT INFORMATION

Jill Hedgecock

rhinorecord2019@gmail.com

www.jillhedgecock.com

