



Writing Blurbs & Pitches that Sell

The Plan for This Talk

- Introduction & Definitions
- Foundation of Blurb Writing
- Tips for How to Get Started
- Enhancing the Blurb
- Final Thoughts
- Questions



Why Do I Need a Pitch?

To catch agents' & editors' attention.

To write advertising and social media copy.

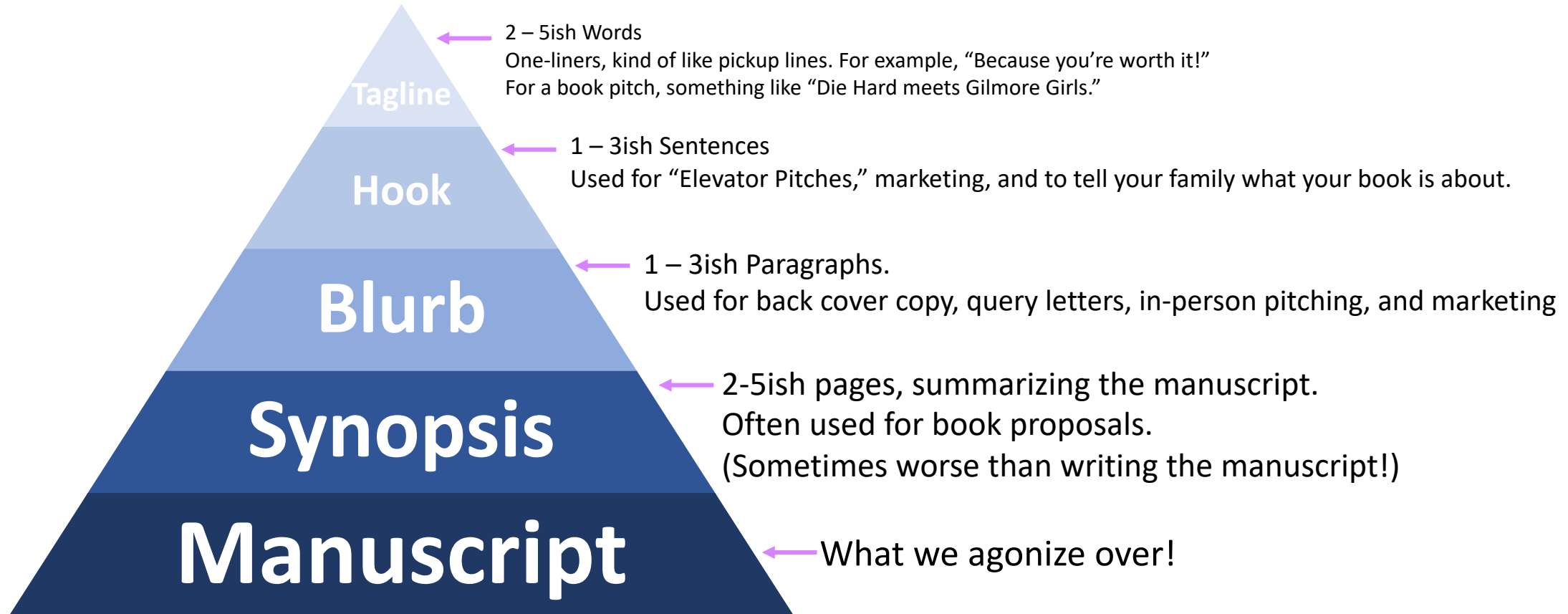


To tell people what the book is about.

To write back cover copy.

To Hook Readers!

Some Pitch Definitions



Foundation: The 4 Ws

- **Who** is your protagonist(s)?
- **What** do they want?(Goal)
- **Why** do they want it?(Motivation)
- **Why can't they** have it?(Conflict)



Find the 4 Ws in Mystery

Who? What? Why? Why can't they?

Former spy Maggie Bird came to the seaside village of Purity, Maine, eager to put the past behind her after a mission went tragically wrong. These days, she's living quietly on her chicken farm, still wary of blowback from the events that forced her early retirement

But when a body turns up in Maggie's driveway, she knows it's a message from former foes who haven't forgotten her. Maggie turns to her local circle of old friends—all retirees from the CIA—to help uncover the truth about who is trying to kill her, and why. This "Martini Club" of former spies may be retired, but they still have a few useful skills that they're eager to use again, if only to spice up their rather sedate new lives.

Complicating their efforts is Purity's acting police chief, Jo Thibodeau. More accustomed to dealing with rowdy tourists than homicide, Jo is puzzled by Maggie's reluctance to share information—and by her odd circle of friends, who seem to be a step ahead of her at every turn.

As Jo's investigation collides with the Martini Club's maneuvers, Maggie's hunt for answers will force her to revisit a clandestine career that spanned the globe, from Bangkok to Istanbul, from London to Malta. The ghosts of her past have returned, but with the help of her friends—and the reluctant Jo Thibodeau—Maggie might just be able to save the life she's built.

From Tess Gerritsen's *The Spy Coast*



Find the 4 Ws in Romance

Who? What? Why? Why can't they?

Anyone can be tempted...

Xavier Hollow is the king of destruction. A shifter, a vampire, a demon—every nightmare you have—all rolled into one very smoking hot package. Xavier snaps his fingers, and the world falls at his feet. His enemies tremble in fear. And the women who want him? They tremble with yearning. Life (and death) is one fabulous ride...until a certain very old curse kicks in for him. A curse that threatens to take away all of his dark power.

He needs someone good...to fall for him. STAT.

Three days. That's how long Xavier has to tempt one Mercy Josephine. Innocent, pure, the actual descendant of an angel, she's all the things that normally give him hives—literally. He's allergic to good and just can't stand it. Committing a "good" act causes Xavier physical pain. The bigger the act, the more intense his suffering. But, for Mercy, he'll have to pretend to be someone very, very different. Someone who is—unfortunately and ever-so-disgustingly—good.

He'll corrupt her. She'll save him.

A simple enough task. Go to the costume ball. Charm the modern-day princess. Get her to sacrifice her soul for him. Done. He could probably bring her to the dark side with just a kiss. But then he meets Mercy and realizes that he's not the only one looking to destroy some goodness. Other beasts are closing in, and in order to break the curse that haunts him Xavier will have to do the one thing he never expected...protect Mercy. Beautiful, brave, and—shudder—good Mercy.

From Cynthia Eden's *Monster without Mercy*



Craft the 4 Ws

- **Who is the protagonist?**

Molly Nyland, a twenty-six year old forensic artist who can tell what people say doesn't match what they saw. These powers came to her when she was hit by lightning at age 12. The accident covered her arm and shoulder in white scars that itch when people aren't telling the full truth.

- **What does she want?**

Catch the serial killer who's haunting her town.

- **Why does she want it?**

The killer is killing people.

- **Why can't she have it?**

The killer is really smart and evades her and the police.



Craft the 4 Ws—Take 2



- **Who?** Molly Nyland, a twenty-six year old forensic artist who can tell what people say doesn't match what they saw. These powers came to her when she was hit by lightning at age 12. The accident covered her arm and shoulder in white scars that itch when people aren't telling the full truth.
- **What?** She wants to keep her secret at all cost.
- **Why?** Her rural, religious, uneducated family and community labeled her a witch after the lightning strike. She was treated as a freak and called the devil's spawn.
- **Why can't they?** Her new working partner, Detective Rankin, is a master at ferreting out secrets and knows that Molly is keeping something from him. She ends up as one of the suspects in a serial killer case and is hunted by the real killer. The only way to clear her name and stay alive is to trust Rankin.

Tips for Working the 4 Ws



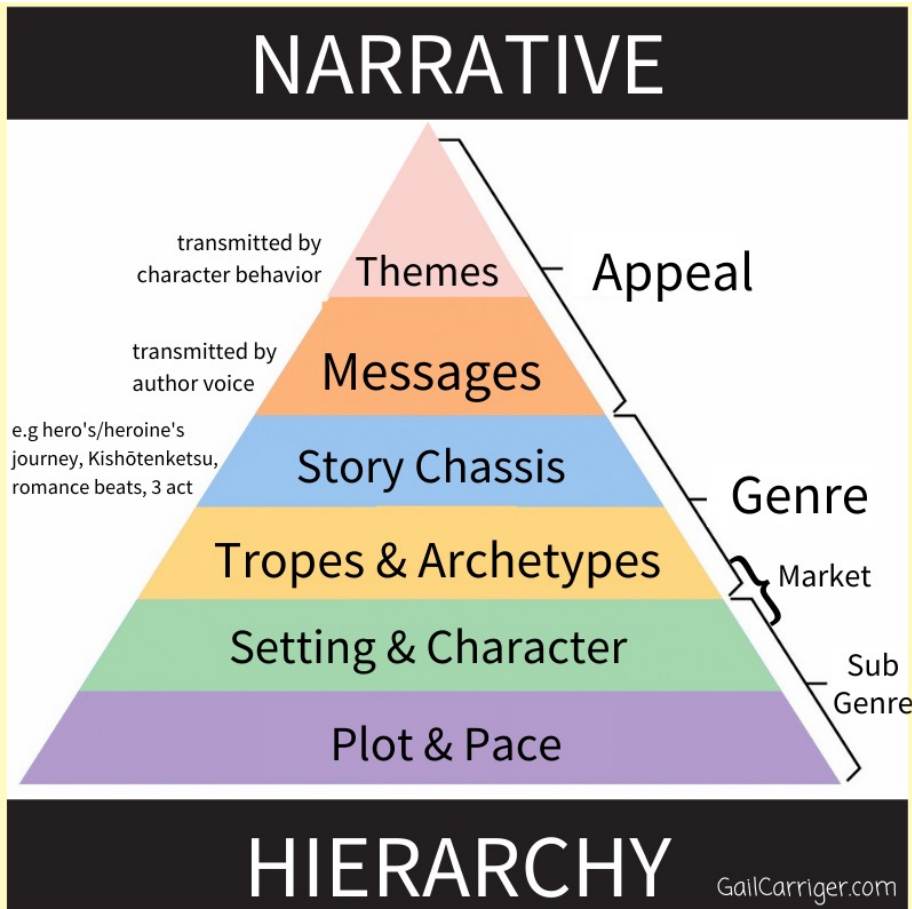
- Apply them to both external and internal conflict.
- If you have more than one main character, do it for all of them.
- Pick and choose the sentences and paragraphs that have the most action and power words.
- Read your pitch out loud.
- Try it out on (unsuspecting) friends. Ask them what grabbed them the most.

Enhancements



- **Include Your Genre**
 - *Xavier Hollow is the king of destruction. A shifter, a vampire, a demon...*
 - *... very old curse...the actual descendant of an angel...*
 - *...former spies may be retired, but still have a few useful skills...*
- **Show Your Character Development**
 - *More accustomed to dealing with rowdy tourists than homicide...*
 - *Xavier snaps his fingers, and the world falls at his feet.*
- **Include Your Writing Voice**
 - *Someone who is—unfortunately and ever-so-disgustingly—good.*
 - *Beautiful, brave, and—shudder—good Mercy.*
- **Sprinkle with Tropes**

Tropes vs Archetypes vs Themes



From Gail Carriger's *A Heroine's Journey*:

- **Trope**: a socially shared concept that is imbued with social meaning that helps to create a predictable metaphor or outcome.
- **Archetype**: a recurring character or idea that's actually a symbol or motif. Examples: trickster guide, wise mentor.
- **Themes**: a central topic or implication of the story—an emotional response. Examples: self-discovery, betrayal.

Macbeth has a **theme** of unchecked ambition, uses the **trope** of a fated outcome, and has the evil witch **archetype** at the beginning of the story.

Trope vs Cliches





The Power of Tropes

- Provides a predictable character, setting, plot, or type of story.
- Creates multi-dimensional characters by building tension.
- Strengthens conflict—internal and external.
- Tells readers that you write what they like.



Trope Examples

Romance

- Enemies to Lovers
- Friend's Sibling
- Forced Proximity
- Secret Baby
- Arranged Marriage
- One Night Stand
- Fated Mates

Mystery/Thriller

- Loner/Scarred Sleuth
- Serial Killer
- Protector/Guardian
- Amnesia
- Amateur Sleuth
- Stalker
- Revenge

Fantasy

- Chosen One
- Quest
- Secret/Lost Heir
- Second Chance
- Misfiring Powers
- Time Travel
- Redemption

Sprinkle Tropes & Themes

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Sprinkle Tropes & Themes

Once upon a time, the pressure to be the perfect daughter nearly broke Kayla Whitman. Desperate to find an outlet away from her controlling mother, she picked up a pair of drumsticks, forever altering the rhythm of her life. Since then, she's been determined to make her own way, finding her home with her bandmates even as she fights to keep her past and her present firmly separate.

Things were simple enough when the Lillys were playing local gigs at dive bars, but now they're on their first official tour—and all Kayla can see are warning signs. Desperate to escape the worry churning inside her, Kayla finds solace in quiet tour bus driver Ty Baldwin...and discovers in him a kindred spirit like no one she's ever met before.

Their connection is immediate and intense, but when increasing scrutiny from the press threatens to destroy Ty's newfound peace and Kayla's carefully guarded secrets, Kayla's forced to make an impossible choice: pursue her dream and risk destroying everyone around her? Or give in and lose the chance of ever becoming the person she's always known she could be.

From Xio Axelrod's [Girls with Bad Reputations](#)

A More Direct Approach

Turns out the gorgeous stranger I had a one-night stand with is not only my sister's best friend but also my new employee.

Worse? I shared a whole lot more with Avery than one mind-blowing night.

I told her my deepest, darkest secret.

Despite my constant worry that she'll let the truth slip to my family, I can't stay away from her. And when we're tossed together for an out of town trip and forced to share a room with only one bed, the chemistry between us finally explodes...again.

I have no problem making her see stars—or breaking the bed. The trouble is, the longer our secret relationship goes on, the more I want to keep her.

But she's eight years my junior, the sunshine to my grump, and I know her free spirit wants more than the small town of Starlight Cove can offer.

I have no doubt no one will ever give her more pleasure than I will, but I refuse to hold her back.

Even if that means letting her go when her three month contract is up.

From Brighton Walsh's [Reckless Heart](#)

Tropes & Themes in Marketing

GRUMPY SUNSHINE

ONE NIGHT STAND TO OOPS HE'S MY BOSS

BEST FRIEND'S BROTHER

HE WRITES SMUT

"GOOD GIRL"

WHOOPS WE BROKE THE BED

"WHO DID THIS TO YOU?"

AGE GAP

PLEASURE DOM

BRAT TAMER

STERN BRUNCH DADDY

RECKLESS HEART

BRIGHTON WALSH

kindleunlimited

THE LILLYS SERIES CONTINUES!

Women Who Rock

Found Family

Friends to Lovers

"A brilliant standout. I couldn't put it down."
—CHRISTINA LAUREN, bestselling author, *The Girl with Stars in Her Eyes*

Word Nerds in Love

Pansexual MMC

Tour Bus Shenanigans

Girls with Bad Reputations

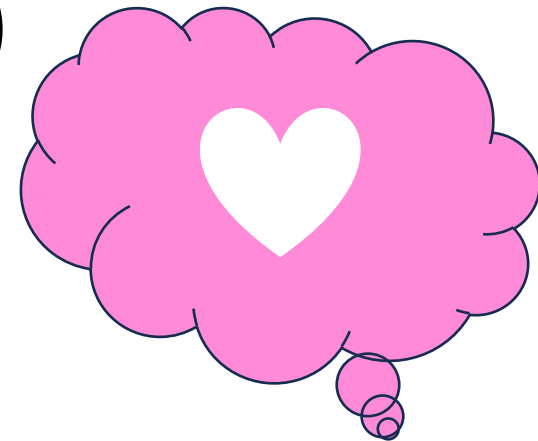
USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

XIO AXELROD

FEBRUARY 6 2024

Some Final Thoughts

- Don't worry about tropes & themes in your first draft. (Manuscript or Blurb)
- Writing your trope in the same POV (1st vs 3d) works best.
- Study the blurbs of the best sellers in your genre. (Length? Specific power words?)
- Have Fun!



Questions?

