



WHAT'S THE POINT?

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Thinking about the point of their book can stress writers out in a really big way, so we get it if you're panicking a little bit right now. ("My POINT? I don't have a point! I just have this nagging idea about making layer cakes!")

But chances are excellent that the reason your story is nagging at you is because you have something to SAY through this story – something about life or love or sports or crime or God or death or healthcare. If you didn't have something to say, you would probably be spending your days knitting or planting zucchini instead of trying to write a book.

Look hard for clues to your story's point in why you want to write this book. Sometimes people talk about the theme of a book, but that term can be somewhat slippery and hard to grasp. Asking, "What's the point?" is so much easier to understand – and to answer.

Don't be alarmed if the point sounds like a cliché. There are a vast number of stories that can be told with the point, "Love conquers all," or "Technology is evil," or "Cheaters never prosper." When you can frame your idea as a cliché, it means you're getting down to something universal. *You will make it specific through the structure, shape, and voice, so there's no need to worry about it being obvious.*

If you have trouble with this concept, try to think about the fact that you are making an argument. Every book is, at heart, an argument for something – for a belief, a way of life, a vision of the future, a way to solve a problem, a way to make a friend, a way to lose your soul.

Examples

What's the point of these popular books?

- *Made to Stick* argues that every company is in the business of telling stories.
- *Big Magic* proves that everyone possesses the power to be creative.
- *The Price of Privilege* argues that the high-pressure culture of achievement is toxic to kids.
- *Strengths Finder* argues that it's more powerful to focus on your strengths than your weaknesses.
- *Grain Brain* argues that carbs are bad for your brain.
- *The Happiness Project* shows that changing small habits can lead to a happier life.
- *The Tipping Point* proves that ideas spread like epidemics.

Take Action

Write one short line about what your point is.