



STONECURRENT
P R E S S

Stonecurrent Five Hats

Day Zero and Reader Hat

Solo Edition working prototype

Every manuscript must satisfy five people.

Each is asking a different question.

A genuine free resource from Stonecurrent Press

What this prototype does

Day Zero prepares the case. Day One asks the Reader to report what the opening actually gives them - not what the author intended it to give.

This pack contains the first two stages of Stonecurrent Five Hats. Complete it locally and keep it with you. Stonecurrent Press does not receive or store your manuscript, notes, answers, reports or final decision.

The six day rhythm

Stage	Person	Question
Day Zero	Prepare	What must the five people know before they begin?
Day One	Reader	Would I continue?
Day Two	Editor	Is there a coherent book here?
Day Three	Bookseller	Where does it belong, and how would I recommend it?
Day Four	Marketer	Who needs it, and how will they discover it?
Day Five	Sceptic	What assumption could undo the whole case?
Day Six	Chair	What does the evidence say the manuscript needs next?

What success looks like

The game does not produce a score or predict publication. It succeeds when you can explain, with evidence, what the manuscript needs next and what later revision must not destroy.

You do not win by receiving five green lights. You win by making one better decision.

Rules of play

The five perspectives work only if they remain separate. Read these rules before preparing the Board Papers.

1. Wear one hat at a time.
2. Support every important judgement with evidence.
3. Record strengths as carefully as weaknesses.
4. Distinguish personal taste from a demonstrable problem.
5. Give each problem one practical next action.
6. Do not revise while the Board is in session.
7. Treat green, amber and red as signals, not votes.
8. Remember that not ready is a diagnosis, not a defeat.

The evidence standard

A useful observation contains three things:

- What you noticed.
- Where or how the manuscript produced it.
- Why it matters to the decision held by that hat.

Weak: The opening is slow.

Useful: By page four, I still do not know which problem the story wants me to care about, so I am trying to work that out instead of wondering what happens next.

One action only

Each hat ends with one priority action. If you discover twelve possible changes, identify the one that would make the others easier to judge. The Board is meant to reduce noise, not manufacture an endless revision list.

Prepare the Board Papers

Create one concise pack. Do not improve the manuscript while assembling it; use the material as it stands today.

-
- ☐ Working title
 - ☐ Genre or subject
 - ☐ Approximate word count
 - ☐ Current stage
 - ☐ One-sentence description
 - ☐ Reader promise of no more than 150 words
 - ☐ Synopsis of no more than 750 words
 - ☐ Intended reader
 - ☐ Three reasonably comparable books
 - ☐ Opening 2,000 words
 - ☐ Sealed Fear card

Core facts

Working title

Genre or subject

Approximate word count

Current stage *Draft, revising, nearly ready or previously submitted*

One-sentence description

State the book

These statements are working evidence, not sales copy. If something is difficult to express clearly, record the difficulty rather than disguising it.

Reader promise *In no more than 150 words, what experience, knowledge or change does the book offer?*

Intended reader *Describe what they read, seek, discuss, attend or need.*

Comparable books *Name three books and state briefly why each comparison is useful.*

Synopsis and Sealed Fear

Attach a synopsis of no more than 750 words to the Board Papers. Then complete the private question below.

Synopsis check

- ☐ The synopsis describes the whole book, including the ending or conclusion.
- ☐ It shows what changes rather than listing every event, chapter or topic.
- ☐ It does not hide the part I find hardest to explain.

The question I most fear the Board will expose

Write one direct question. Do not answer it, soften it or use it to begin revising. Fold this page, cover the answer or place it in an envelope until Day Six.

My sealed question

Private: do not send this page to Stonecurrent Press or another participant unless you choose to do so.

The Reader has entered the room

The Reader is the guardian of attention. This role reports what the opening communicates and whether it earns continued interest.

The Reader asks

Would I continue?

The Reader may

- Notice curiosity, clarity, involvement, confusion and resistance.
- Distinguish productive uncertainty from obstructive confusion.
- Identify the exact point at which a reaction occurs.
- Compare the experience promised with the experience delivered.

The Reader may not

- Rewrite sentences or repair the opening while reading.
- Diagnose the complete structure from the opening alone.
- Forecast sales or decide whether an agent would represent it.
- Treat personal taste as a universal reader response.

Material available

Use only the title, genre or subject, reader promise and opening 2,000 words. Put the synopsis, comparable books and later chapters out of sight.

Read without repairing

Set a timer for twenty minutes. Read once. Mark up where interest rises and down where attention weakens. Do not edit.

Before reading

What experience does the title suggest?

What does the reader promise lead me to expect?

What would make this worth continuing?

Attention map

Location	Up or down	What changed in my attention and why

What the opening gave me

Answer as the Reader. Report the experience before explaining its cause.

Where am I, or what subject am I entering?

Whose experience, argument or question matters?

What does the book seem to promise?

What tension, desire or question carries me forward?

Which detail remains most clearly in mind?

Where is the opening most alive - and most distant?

The Reader's judgement

A clear No or Not yet is more useful than a polite Yes unsupported by evidence.

Would I willingly read the next 2,000 words

☐ Yes ☐ Not yet ☐ No

Why *Identify the strongest evidence behind the answer.*

Confusion test

☐ The uncertainty increases curiosity. ☐ The confusion obstructs understanding. ☐ Both.

The point at which this became clear

Promise test

☐ The opening delivers the promised experience. ☐ Partly. ☐ It currently promises a different book.

Evidence

Reader report

Complete the common report. One observation supported by evidence is more useful than a page of general advice.

What I believe this book is about

Strongest reason to continue

Principal resistance

Evidence *Where and how did the opening create that response?*

Protected quality *What must later revision not destroy?*

One priority action

Provisional signal

- ☐ Green - I understand the experience and want to continue.
- ☐ Amber - there is a worthwhile reason to continue, but one obstacle needs attention.
- ☐ Red - the opening does not yet create a clear or worthwhile reason to continue.

Leave the Reader's chair

The report is complete when another person could understand the judgement without hearing an explanation from the author.

Completion check

- ☐ I read without repairing the manuscript.
- ☐ I distinguished productive uncertainty from obstructive confusion.
- ☐ I recorded a strongest reason to continue as well as a resistance.
- ☐ I supported the judgement with evidence from the opening.
- ☐ I named something revision must protect.
- ☐ I chose one priority action rather than a general revision list.

Now stop

Close the manuscript and put the Reader report away. Do not begin revising. The next perspective must be allowed to ask its own question without inheriting the Reader's authority.

Tomorrow

The Editor asks: Is there a coherent book here?

The Editor will see the whole proposition and will make a different decision. The Reader's report remains evidence, not a verdict on the complete manuscript.

Prototype note

If an instruction required rereading or produced only a vague answer, mark it before leaving the page. That observation will help improve the game; it is not a failure by the participant.

One instruction that could be clearer
