

## Preventing the Sagging Middle

If the fire has gone out of your book one-third of the way in, ask yourself these questions:

1. **About conflict:** Is my conflict faulty? Did I set up a premise that looked fine on paper, but goes nowhere once they're together? Have I created a too easily resolved conflict? Is my conflict rooted in circumstances instead of character?
2. **About plot:** Does my plot still make sense? Am I trying to shoe horn my characters into it? Am I playing "add-a-plot" because I've run out of plot?
3. **About character (See Character Chart):** Who are my characters? Why do they come across as boring? Is it possible I was so eager to get them together and establish their connection that I don't really know them and why they continue to be interested in each other? Is it even possible I don't like them now? If so, how can I make them likable?

If these aren't faulty, try some techniques to refresh your writing:

1. Experiment with changing one of the following:
  - Point of view
  - Incident being depicted (we'll talk more about this in the afternoon session)
  - Sequence of events
  - Setting
  - Emphasis on the romance
  - Narrative vs. dialogue (and vice-versa)
2. Cut, cut, cut. See the article on my website about self-editing—[www.sabrinajeffries.com/zindex.cfm?fuseaction=author&pageID=9](http://www.sabrinajeffries.com/zindex.cfm?fuseaction=author&pageID=9)
3. Tweak your plot. Your synopsis/outline/vision for your book isn't carved in stone.

### Character Chart

<b>Major Factors</b>	<b><i>Hero</i></b>	<b><i>Heroine</i></b>
Profession		
Education		
Financial status as child		
Financial status as adult		
Social status as child		
Social status as adult		
Relationship with mother		
Relationship with father		
Social environment as child		
Social environment as adult		
Geographical environment as child		
Geographical environment as adult		
Gen. health as child		
Gen. health as adult		
Personality		
Ways of knowing		
Age		
Physical appearance		
Expletives Used		
Endearments for h/h		
Smells/Tastes like		
Images Used To describe h/h		
Talents/Abilities		
Ethnicity		
Interests		
Greatest ambition		
Real ambition		

Attitude re central problem of book		
Reasons for attitude		
Attitude toward opposite sex		
Reasons for attitude		
Attitude toward love		
Reasons for attitude		
Attitude toward marriage		
Reasons for attitude		
Attitude toward children		
Reasons for attitude		
Attitude toward family (not prospective, so much as h/h own)		
Reasons for attraction to h/h:		
Nature		
Nurture		
Philosophies		
Talents/Abilities		

Highlight lines where the hero block and heroine block are the same.