# Novel writing tips II

- story ideas
  - play the what-if game
  - make up a cool title; write the story to go with it
  - create a list of mental images from your past and quickly write one or two word reminders
  - what issues are your hot buttons?
  - let your imagination play the movie of the story you want to write
  - listen to music that moves you
  - take the essential pattern from stories you like and make it yours through your own originality
  - flip a genre or two
  - create a character; give it an obsession
  - brainstorm opening lines
  - write a gripping 1000-2000 word prologue
  - use mind mapping; freemind is a great tool for this
  - visualize a terrific ending and work your way backwards
- one sentence pitch
- scenes
  - major chords
    - action (scene)
      - what a character does to achieve his/her goals
    - reaction (sequel)
      - emotional response to action
  - minor chords
    - setup
    - deepening
  - HIP
    - Hook
      - grab the reader's attention/interest at the start of every scene
    - Intensity
      - intensity level of scenes should increase through the story
      - rachet the tension through conflict
    - Prompt
      - end scenes with a prompt to the reader to continue
      - keep the reader's attention
      - *suggestions*
        - mysterious line of dialogue
        - a secret suddenly revealed
        - a major decision
        - announcement/discovery of a shattering event
        - reversal or surprise
        - a question left hanging
- References
  - Book in a Month, by Victoria Lynn Schmidt
  - Plot and Structure, by James Scott Bell
  - Freemind: http://freemind.sourceforge.net/
  - NaperWriMo: http://naperwrimo.org/wiki
- advice
  - write who you are; be original
  - does the story you are writing hit a nerve within you?
  - write with passion and intensity
  - make your story fascinating, unique, extraordinary
  - handle exposition subtly
    - act first, explain later
    - when you explain, do the iceberg--withold most of the information until the right time
    - release information through intense confrontation
  - keep them reading
    - stretch the tension
      - physical peril
      - emotional turmoil
      - ensure that readers care about the lead character
    - raise the stakes
  - descriptions
    - engage all the senses
    - memorable quirks
- story holes
  - character holes
    - acting out of character
    - characters gone missing?
    - too many characters on stage at once?
    - characters reacting instead of acting?
  - plot holes
    - does the plot slow down?
    - too confusing?
    - trying to do too much in one scene?
    - too many subplots/characters?
    - no big payoff for a subplot?
  - believability holes
    - villain too over the top?
    - hero's commitment to the goal still believable?
    - all characters' actions/reactions motivated?
- tools
  - subplots
    - support and advance the main storyline
    - revealing character
    - illustrate the theme
    - create conflict and complications
    - evoking emotions in readers
    - relieving tension in readers; give them a break
  - domino scene test
    - remove a scene and see if the storyline holds; if so, that scene is not necessary
  - theme spider
    - why you wrote this story
    - what you like about this story
    - what you want readers to get
    - how your main character and theme are connected
    - scenes critical to conveying your theme
  - intensity scale
    - map each scene's intensity from its start to finish (0 .. 10)
    - scenes with a median > 5 are SHOW, not TELL (good)
    - 10! - over the top, only 2-3 such in the novel
    - 8-9: good range for big, turning point scenes
    - 6-7: conflict, sharp dialogue, important emotions, inner turmoil
    - 5: good starting point for big scenes
    - 3-4: setup scenes (keep short)