

Novel Title Brainstorming Worksheets

Worksheet A: Novel Title Source Sheet

Struggling to find the right title for your novel? No worries! The Novel Title Source Sheet can help by taking you on a “guided tour” of your story’s most important elements.

Based on the article [“Chronicling The Craft: Digging for Ideas for Book Titles.”](#) the Novel Title Source Sheet offers a list of tried-and-true sources of inspiration for novel titles. Use this to study the titles in your personal book collection (physical, e-book, etc.) and to brainstorm potential titles for your work.

Instructions: Print out a copy of this worksheet. Follow the activities outlined below, writing down any titles from your personal book collection and any potential titles from your novel that fall under each category.

NOTE: This exercise works best if you have already completed a draft of your novel.

Source #1: Characters

Reflecting on your book’s characters is a great way to mine for potential titles. The idea can be as explicit as the character’s name, or just ambiguous enough to tease the reader’s interest. Character-influenced titles have been popular choices for a long time, and authors have used a few variants on this “scheme”:

- **Protagonist’s Name:** *Bitterblue* by Kristin Cashore, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte
- **Nickname or Alias for the Protagonist:** *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, *Cleopatra’s Daughter* by Michelle Moran
- **Nickname or Alias for a Pivotal Secondary Character:** *Radiant* by Karina Sumner-Smith, *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho
- **Multiple Characters or Significant Groups of Characters:** *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* by Susanna Clarke, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* by J.R.R. Tolkien

Activity #1A: Browse the titles in your book collection. Which ones fall under any of the four subcategories for character-inspired titles?

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Activity #1B: What are some possible character-inspired titles for your novel?

Source # 2: Setting

Using the name of an important location from your novel can offer hints about the novel's genre, time period, and/or tone. Examples include:

- *The Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell
- *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett
- *The Tombs of Atuan* by Ursula K. Le Guin

Activity #2A: Browse the titles in your book collection. Which ones are inspired by setting?

Activity #2B: What are some possible setting-inspired titles for your novel?

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Source #3: Events

Sometimes there's no better hint to a novel's plot and themes than using the name of an event from the external conflict. Examples include:

- *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins
- *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* by Mark Haddon
- *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by C.S. Lewis

Activity #3A: Browse the titles in your book collection. Which ones are inspired by plot events?

Activity #3B: What are some possible event-inspired titles for your novel?

Source #4: Significant Objects

Naming a book after an item (or more than one item) that's central to the overall plot can accomplish many of the same objectives as Sources #1 through #3 above. And like with character names, the object(s) can be clearly called out or woven in as suggestions of what to expect:

- **Clearly Stated Objects:** *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, *The Golden Compass* by Phillip Pullman

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- **Objects of Implied or Cryptic Importance:** *Shadow and Bone* by Leigh Bardugo, *Poison Study* by Maria V. Snyder)

Activity #4A: Browse the titles in your book collection. Which ones fall under either subcategory for titles inspired by significant objects?

Activity #4B: What are some possible titles for your novel that are inspired by significant objects?

Source #5: Quotes, Adages, and Metaphors

This can be a tricky method. It requires selecting a single phrase from the novel's text – or creating a brand new one – that ties in metaphor with the novel's characters, themes, and/or plot. The examples below, grouped by source type, accomplish that feat:

- **Quotes or Sayings Taken Directly from the Text:** *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold, *A Game of Thrones* by George R.R. Martin
- **Metaphors or Phrases Inspired by Aspects of the Novel But Not Directly Stated in the Text:** *All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr, *The Distance Between Lost and Found* by Kathryn Holmes

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Activity #5A: Browse the titles in your book collection. Which ones fall under either subcategory for titles inspired by quotes, adages, and metaphors?

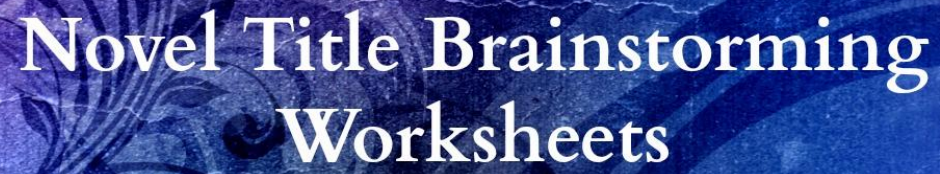
Activity #5B: What are some possible titles for your novel that are inspired by quotes, adages, and metaphors?

Source #6: A Combination of Two or More Sources

Some book titles combine two or more of the above sources into something truly memorable and relevant to the story. Be careful with this method, though. Using two sources can result in a lengthy title; and while there's nothing wrong with a long book title, you want to ensure it's a good one. Examples include:

- *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis
- *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (and all the other Harry Potter titles) by J.K. Rowling

Activity #6A: Browse the titles on your bookshelf. Which ones contain elements from?



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Activity #6B: What are some possible titles for your novel that are inspired by quotes, adages, and metaphors? Write down any that come to mind, even if they might not work.

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Worksheet B: Novel Title Checklist

This Novel Title Checklist (based on the article [“Chronicling The Craft: Digging for Ideas for Book Titles.”](#)) poses eight questions for you to consider when brainstorming possible novel titles. Don’t worry if a title doesn’t answer “Yes” to all of the questions. However, if a title does answer “Yes” multiple times, that’s a promising sign.

Instructions: Fill out this Novel Title Checklist for each novel title you brainstormed using the Novel Title Source Sheet (Worksheet A) or other title brainstorming sessions.

Possible Title: _____

Genre: _____

Target Audience (MG, YA, A): _____

QUESTION	YES	NO
1. Does the title intrigue the reader? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it catchy? Poetic? Humorous? How does it grab your attention? How do other people react to the title? Does it make them want to read the novel? 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notes:		
2. Is your title unique?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research the title on Google, Amazon, Goodreads, etc. Do any previously published books have titles similar to (or exactly the same as) yours? (Book titles aren’t copyrighted, but your novel will have a better chance of standing out in its respective market and in search engine rankings if its title hasn’t been used before.)		
Notes:		

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QUESTION	YES	NO
3. Is your title memorable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it stick with you after you read it? • Does it have the same effect on other people after you share it with them? 		
Notes:		
4. Does the title fit your book's genre?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What elements or strategies do published novels in your book's genre take? • Do the words in your title evoke images or an ambiance that's appropriate for your intended audience? 		
Notes:		
5. Does the title hint at the book's external conflict or main character arc(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it tease about the above items without spoiling the book for the reader?		
Notes:		

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QUESTION	YES	NO
6. Does the title accurately reflect what your book is about?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your novel character-centric? Does the setting, the plot's events, or a specific object play a special role? • Does the title still make sense by the time you finish reading the book? 		
Notes:		
7. Does the title match your book's POV and/or voice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your novel told in first-person (I, me, my) or third-person (he / she, his / her)? FYI – Many novel titles don't contain pronouns, so don't feel obligated to use pronouns in yours.		
Notes:		
8. Does the title have a "double meaning"?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it capture the story's essence or symbolize any of the themes without being too obvious?		
Notes:		