



Revising & Editing

NEV MARCH

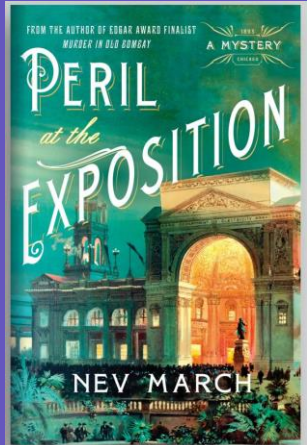
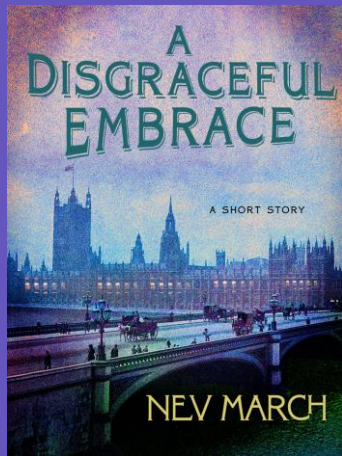
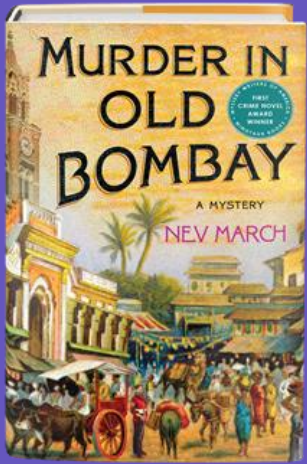
Nev March

Author of Historical Mysteries and other stories

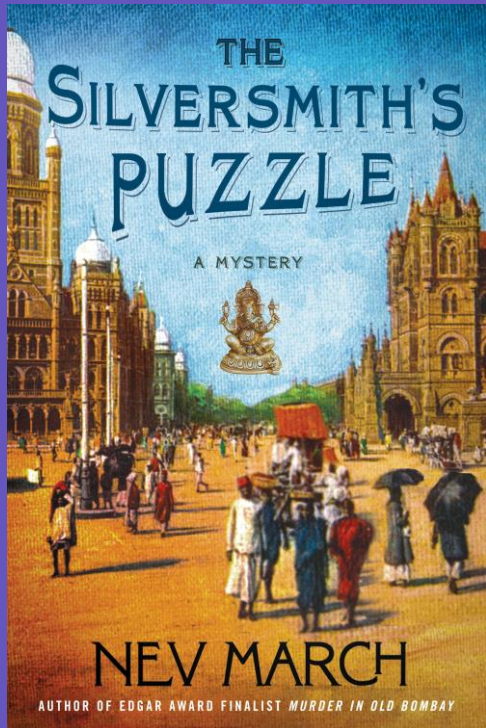
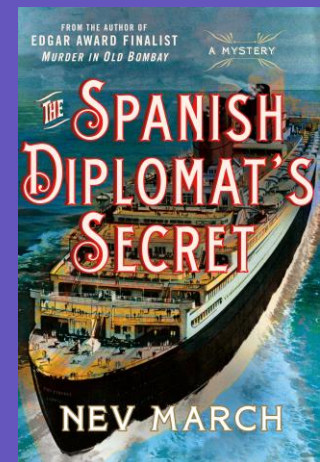


After 20 years in business analysis, I returned to my passion (writing fiction)

- First Indian born writer to win Mystery Writers of America's award (and the Audiofile award 2021)
- Finalist for 6 national awards (Edgar and Anthony, Hammett, Barry, McCavity and Audie Awards)
- LOST the audie award 2022 (to Stephen King and President Obama!)



May 2025



Historical mysteries across the globe

2020: Murder in Old Bombay

- Based on a real unsolved tragedy in 1891—Captain Jim investigates the deaths of two young women who fell to their deaths from a university clock tower. His case takes him all over colonial India and into a whole lot of trouble!

2022: Peril at the Exposition

- In 1893, twenty-seven million visitors visited Chicago's World's Fair, while the World Congress of Anarchists is being held. What could possibly go wrong?

2023: The Spanish Diplomat's Secret

- Captain Jim and Diana are on board an ocean liner for Liverpool where a Spanish diplomat is viciously killed.

2025: The Silversmith's Puzzle

- Our intrepid duo returns to Bombay to save Diana's brother who is accused of murder!

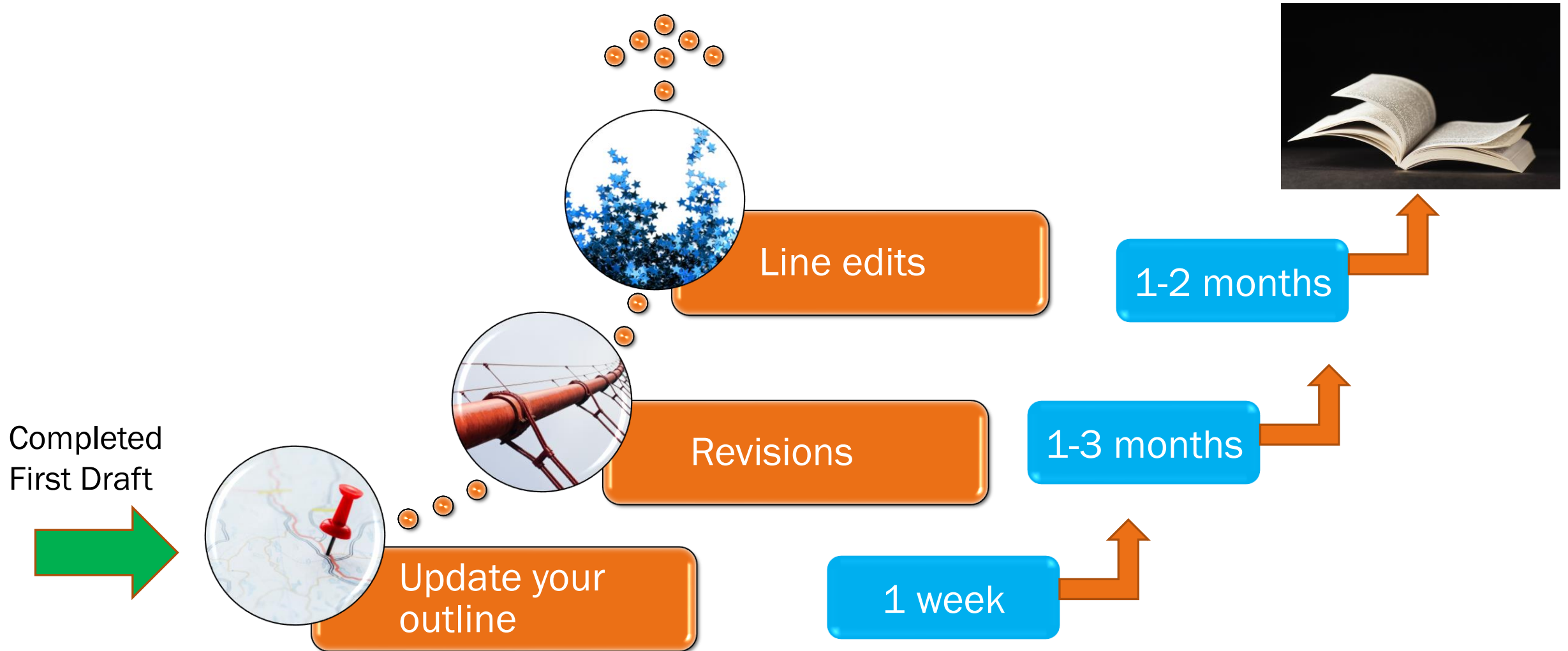
Stephen King says...

LOCK YOUR BOOK IN A DRAWER
FOR AT LEAST 6 WEEKS
BEFORE YOU TRY TO REVISE AND
EDIT IT.

WHY?



It's a process! How long will it take?

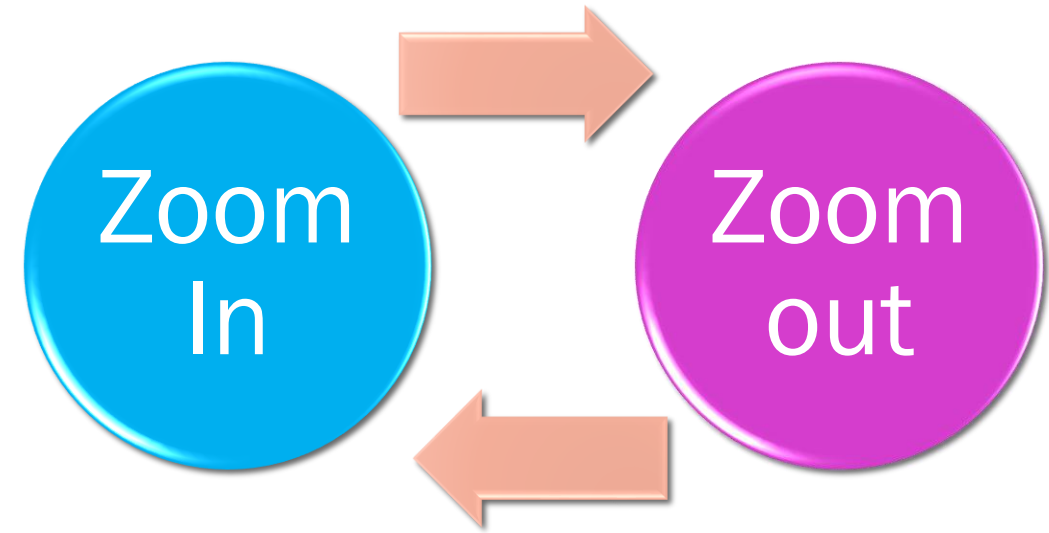


Steps to revision and editing

1. Gather feedback



2. Evaluate it
3. Use it in your ms



Steps to revision and editing

1. Pull out your outline and update it (Create one now?)

2. **Zoom out** and examine your outline for List #1 (Big questions)

3. List (or add to list of) plot holes. Decide which to fix.

4. <Gain early reader input and add to your list.>

5. **Zoom in** to the relevant chapter and fix it.

6. Repeat 2-5 until satisfied that all items on List #1 are as good as you can make them

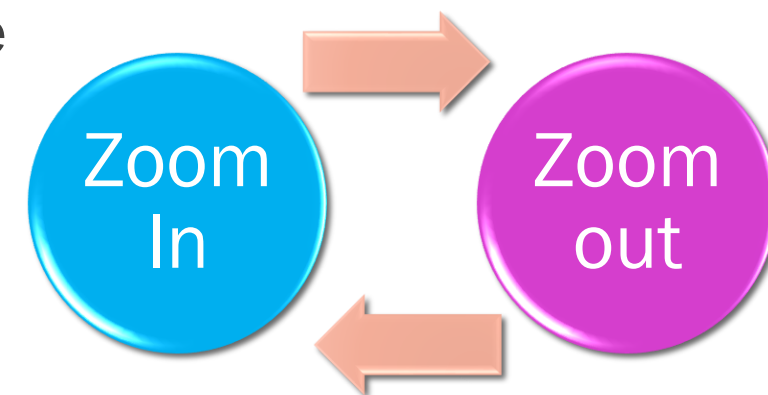
7. Examine each chapter for List #2 (Language)

8. Repeat 2&5 until satisfied that all items on List #2 are as good as you can make them

9. When to STOP?

Revising

Editing



“When are you done editing?”



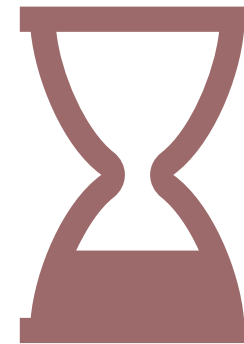
(Walter Mosely Quote)

“I see what’s wrong, I fix it.
I see what’s wrong, I fix it.
When I don’t know how to
fix it, it’s done!”

Why do you need an outline?



Because you can TEST your revision ideas in the OUTLINE



Save WEEKS/MONTHS and endless CONFUSION by working out the impact in the outline BEFORE you change your ms!

What's an outline?



An outline is a map

- Lays out the list of chapters
- Shows how the chapters are connected
- Identifies key turning points
- Highlights high and low points
- Ensures that promises are made
- Ensures that promises are kept
- Shows where the reader is surprised. Surprises are good!

Create your outline (either Word/Excel)

1. Copy each chapter title into a document.
2. Add columns for Action, Internal landscape, Pace
3. Complete the columns. In **Action**, mention the key change in the chapter. For **Internal landscape**, list surprises, your MC's emotions or what they want.
4. For **Pace**, rate each chapter from 1 (low tension) to 10 (maximum tension). Pace should vary, but not drop too low.

CUT & CHOP!

- Important action should be SHOWN, less important action can be TOLD: combine it into another chapter, summarize in a few lines
- If chapters don't propel the story forward, cut them



MOVE!

- Do all the chapters connect to the next? If not, move the chapter titles around

What's the difference?

REVISING

EDITING



Major changes



Fixing/minor
changes

What's the difference?

REVISING

EDITING



Adding paragraphs/chapters

Cutting duplications/slow chapters

Moving chapters around

May add/trim sentences, making them more powerful

Line edits to fix grammar/tense, hanging quotes, para breaks

What's the difference?

REVISING

EDITING

BIG PICTURE Do this first! Else you may spend time fixing a chapter that needs to be deleted or rewritten!

1. Asks big questions like: Is there a problem early in the book, by page 3? If not, add it to your list of PLOT HOLES.
2. Are you telling the story in an interesting way? Do you need to move chapters around to add more **surprises**?
3. **PACE**: Are there low-tension chapters that you need to cut or combine by telling the action in a few lines?
4. Internal landscape: What is the character feeling in each chapter? Does it connect to the action? Does it change?
5. Does each chapter connect to the next?
6. **FIX PLOT HOLES**. Keep adding to the list as you notice gaps.

DETAILED LINE EDITS

1. Add in the correct manuscript format
2. Switch to active voice
3. Drop repeated information or dull paragraphs
4. Check dialog tags
5. Check transitions from one thought to next and add in where needed
6. Remove repeated words
7. Strengthen verbs. Drop WAS and THERE WAS
8. Vary the sentence structure

List #1 (9 Big questions) From the Writer Magazine



Why did I write this? What fundamental, underlying questions, tensions, fears, or emotions did you wish to explore when you set out to write this story?



What makes this a story only I can tell? Ask yourself what exactly you bring to this story – and these sentences – that makes it uniquely *yours*.



What universal truth is at this story's core? The more personal and specific you can make it, the more broadly it will resonate.



What are the emotional stakes for each character? How can you raise them? And in what ways does each character's emotional arc shape or affect the plot, or vice versa?



What emotional arc will the reader experience? Over the course of the story, what do you want the reader to be thinking, feeling, wondering, and rooting for? What do you want them to walk away from it thinking, feeling, wondering, questioning, or understanding?

Emotion in the writer=emotion in the reader

DON'T name emotions – **show them instead**



TIP: *The Emotion Thesaurus* (by Angela Ackerman) shows:

1. Physical Signals
2. Internal sensation
3. Mental responses
4. Cues of suppressed or acute emotion
5. May escalate to...



List #1 cont. (9 Big questions) From *The Writer Magazine*



Where does the real story begin? How much of what came before it does the reader need to know, and when?



What's happening in or during the story that is not on the page? Especially: What are your secondary characters – who are the main characters of their own stories, adjacent to this one – experiencing concurrent to this?



What else can I leave out? What details, scenes, adjectives, backstories, manifestos, explanations, and descriptions are included that were necessary for you to write but aren't necessary for the reader to read?



What's missing? If you read your story like a reader, not like its author, what will you experience? How much of what you intended to write is truly present on the page?

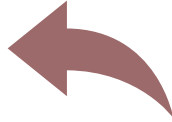
Now the details...building layer by layer



List #2 (11 things to check re. Language)



Add a title page; Your contact info top left, Title in CAPS mid page, centered, below that add Author's Name.



Fix the format: Times New Roman 12, 1 inch margins, leading line indent, double space.

Each chapter starts on a page break with 5 blank lines.



Use active voice. Move sentences to better connect paragraphs.



Is the dialog smooth? Does one thought lead to another?

Use observations, internal thoughts, physical sensations to escalate emotion



Maintain tense (past or present)



It's not a sprint, it's a
marathon

Take breaks!

Breaks give you a fresh
perspective and energy

List #2 cont. (11 things to check re. Language)



Alternate metaphors (figurative language) and literal language. Reconsider crowded sentences.



Vary sentence lengths. Vary sentence construction



Consider context, US or UK?
Grey-gray, britches-breeches, travelling-traveling
theatre-theater



Drop mitigating words: saw and heard, felt, wondered, stared, thought,

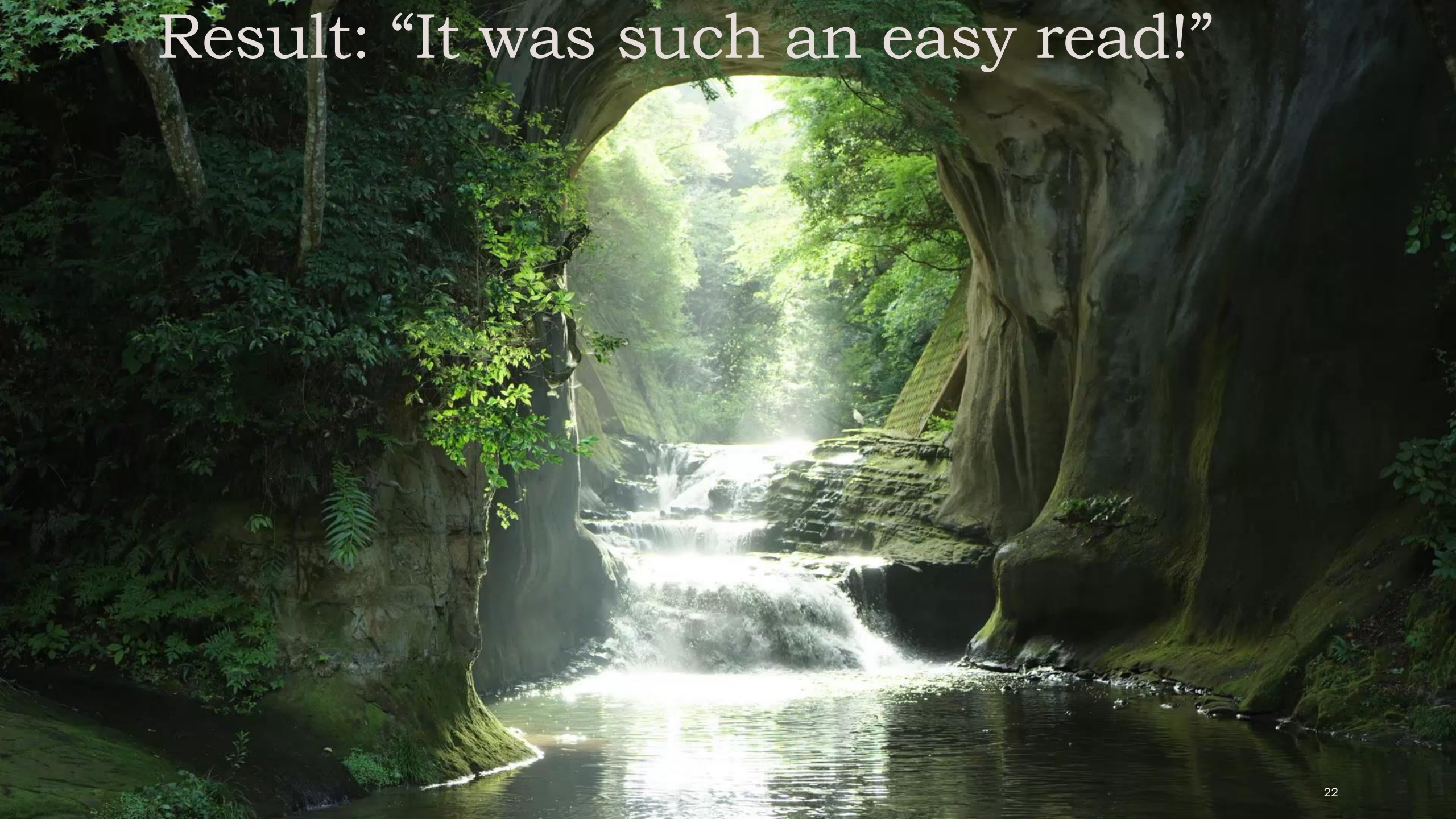


What words do you tend to repeat? Winced, sigh, muttered? Drop some of them.

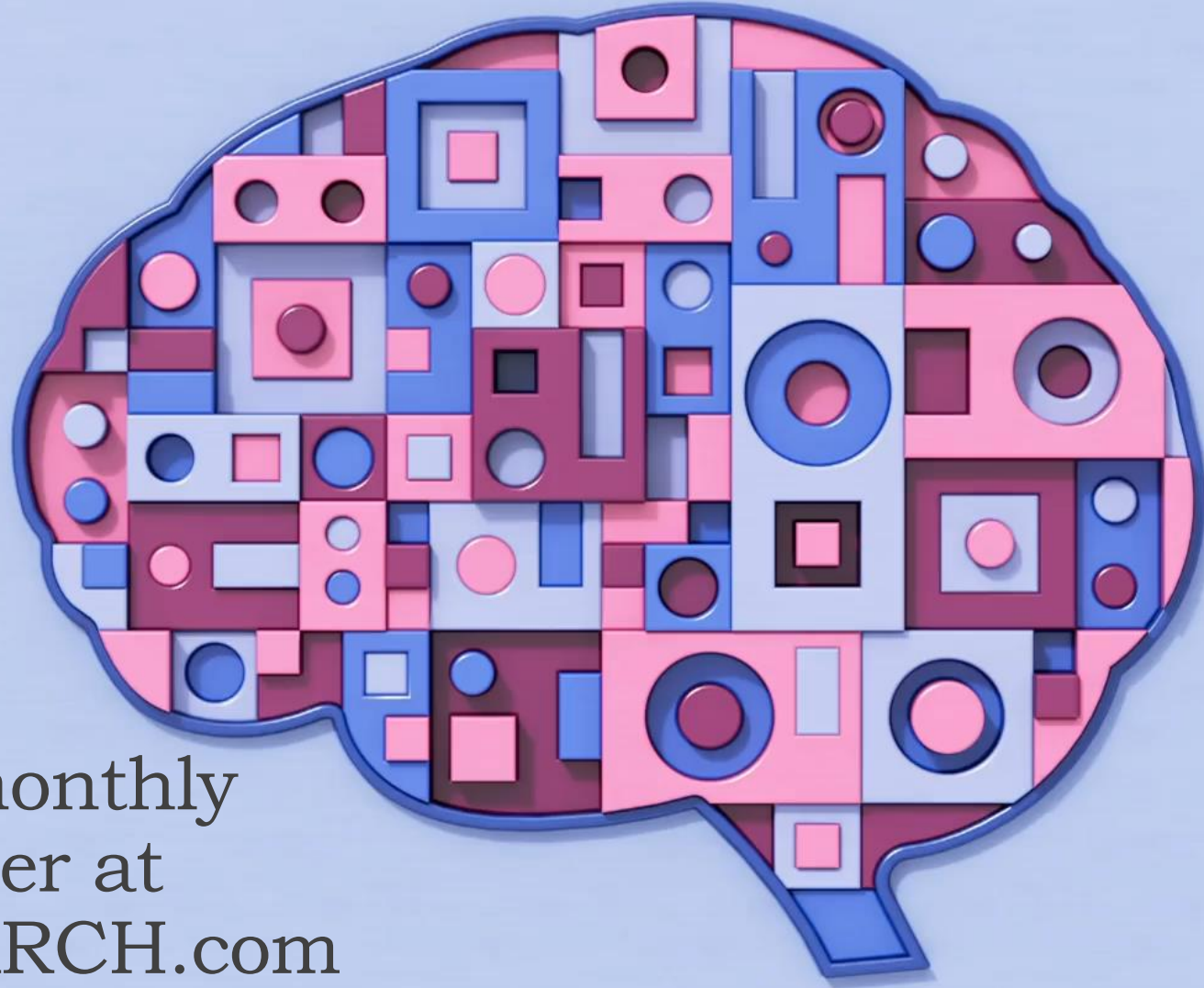


Grammar and spellcheck;
Read your chapters aloud,
make changes for rhythm

Result: "It was such an easy read!"



Thanks for listening!
Q&A



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newsletter at
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