PACING FOR YOUR SPOOKY STORY . . .

What is pacing, anyway? To put it simply, pacing is how quickly or slowly your story progresses. Some stories are fast-paced, meaning that there’s a lot of action and not many slow moments. Others are slower-paced and really take their time getting from point A to point B.

So, is one better than the other? Nope! It just depends on what’s right for your story! Actually, the pacing in my books changes from scene-to-scene. Some scenes – like the ones where I’m developing my characters or the setting/tone are slower-paced. Other scenes – like the ones where something frightening or truly mysterious is happening, tend to be faster paced. The key is making sure your reader doesn’t get bored, or confused. Good pacing will help you accomplish that!

Let’s continue our exploration of pacing by thinking of books that were either fast-paced or more slowly-paced.

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

FAST OR SLOW PACING: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

DID THE PACING WORK FOR YOU? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

WOULD YOU CHANGE THE PACING? IF SO, WHAT SCENE/S? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Now that you understand pacing, let’s talk about how we can determine pacing for our own stories! How do authors know if their pacing is too fast or too slow? Well, I definitely have a few tricks up my sleeve to help you with this!

* Tip #1 – READ YOUR STORY ALOUD. If it seems like the events are unfolding too slowly and your attention is starting to drift, or you’re thinking about a future scene that’s more interesting, then you might need to speed up your pacing a little! On the other hand, if things seem to be happening so fast that you worry your readers might not understand (and therefore stop reading), slow it down a little!
* Tip #2 – LOOK FOR “FILLER” PARTS. What do I mean by “filler”? I mean any sentence, paragraph, or scene that doesn’t move your story forward somehow. If it doesn’t help develop your character, your setting, your plot, or something critical in your book, cut it. Yup, you heard me right. SNIP SNIP. Sometimes in order to make our stories the best they can be, we need to get rid of the extra bits. This will help your pacing TONS, guys!
* Let someone you trust read over your work. Remember that a good critique partner doesn’t just tell you what you want to hear; they tell you the truth. Ask them if there are any parts of the book that were boring, or seemed too slow. Ask them if anything happened too quickly! From there, decide if you agree with their feedback. If you do, consider making some changes!

Now it’s your turn! Write a short story using one of the prompts below. As you write, be aware of your pacing. Do your best to match the pacing to what’s happening in your story!

* Mom said she needed a few things from the store, so I stayed home. Right after she left, the power went out and the entire house got dark. The front door creaked open, revealing a (you continue here!)
* I was on my way home from school when a mysterious envelope landed at my feet. I looked up at the sky, confused about where it could have come from. The script on the front was elegant, spelling out my name. I lifted it from the ground, tore it open and gasped at what was inside! (you continue here!)
* Summer vacation had finally arrived. I tossed my backpack on the ground in the living room and wandered into the kitchen, finding it empty. Dirty plates were out on the table and water was boiling on the stove, like someone forgot about it. Weird. My eyes trailed to the back door where a large blob of thick, green slime was puddled on the floor. (you continue here!)

Awesome work, guys! I hope your new understanding of pacing helped you create an amazing short story! Don’t forget to check out the other activities and writing prompts in the SPOOKY 101 toolbox!