

## Tips for Inlet Beta Readers

Assume that this is a book you pick up on the shelf. Get ready to sit back in a cozy chair and enjoy.

First and foremost, read for pleasure—the feel of the book. Don't worry about making detailed edits or line edits. In fact, intentionally refrain from doing so. This isn't a critique. You're a "beta tester," asked to simply experience the natural momentum of the story, as it plays out on the page. Does it 'work' as we writers want our books to work—is it satisfying? Where might you think, I want more or less of this or that? That may be a good thing for the novel in some places, and not so good in others.

Read for engagement, joy, curiosity. Read to discover the deeper meanings delivered in the text. And allow yourself to simply be aware of when the writing stalls, loses your interest, confuses, loses focus. What's getting in the way of that novel momentum you know and love?

Two great articles on the classic Beta Reader—pay special attention to the target audience tips:

- Reedsy Blog: <https://blog.reedsy.com/beta-readers/>
- Jane Friedman: <https://www.janefriedman.com/find-beta-readers/>

As an Inlet Beta Reader you are also a writer, so when you share your reader response with the novel's author, you can not only speak to the reader experience—the places you leaned in, or felt yanked out of the story; the characters you delighted in, loved to hate, or couldn't quite connect with—but you can also at times share why you felt the way you felt, from a writer's vantage point.

To mark your progress, here are a couple options. Either:

- Read from beginning to end, then make a few "gut check" notes when you're done.
- As you read, periodically note your responses to any "gut check" responses (look over the prompts), passages that move you or get in the way, and/or responses to prompts the author may have sent your way.
- Simply read for pleasure, and let the author with ask you questions during your "Afterwords" meeting.

And be sure to check in with the Author before you do your read, to see if they have any preferences for your reader response.

## Gut-Check Checklist for Inlet Beta Readers

You're asked to bring your attention to what draws you in and any barriers to that readerly pleasure. That's it in a nutshell.

You may want to share your response anecdotally rather than through an analysis. A journey metaphor may be apt: was the book off to a rocky start, or was it smooth sailing? Were there detours, meanderings? Please you wanted to linger, couldn't wait to get to, or found yourself whining "are we there yet?" In other words, where did you lose interest? Were there vistas that grabbed you, slogs that slowed? Light at the end of a tunnel? Flashing lights that thrilled in the tunnel, or resonated after?

Here are some other ways to frame your considerations:

- What kept you curious? What moments did you "lean in" and feel especially entranced or excited to read more?
- Was it easy to get into the book? If not, where did it become easier?
- How and where did the writing slow? Lose your interest? Cause confusion?
- What did you skip and why? In other words, what seemed irrelevant, or got in the way? What made you feel impatient to move forward? Where in the writing y your engagement pick up, what drew you in further? Answer this for the middle & end as well. The "what" can be anything from place to voice to character to hilarious asides, surprising twists, stabilizing tone, brooding reflection, tension packed inner conflict or high speed plot, etc. You name it, literally. What's the what that you couldn't help but notice find difficult or enjoyable or otherwise?
- What did you want the story to do it didn't quite do, but seemed like it was about to do, or you wished it would have done? What did you miss and wished was there but wasn't?
- What scenes stay with you—in a good way? Or not so good way? Can you describe why?
- Could you visualize the action clearly while reading? Throughout, or was that harder in some sections than in others? Was there too much detail? Too little? When did that matter and when didn't it?
- Which characters were memorable? Who was likable, unlikable, and/or a character you loved to hate? Were the characters clearly drawn, so you could see/visualize them as you read? When or where was their presence obscured in a way that detracted?
- What hit you emotionally about the novel's characters, themes, actions, events? Where did you feel there was an emotional payoff? And what was the emotional payoff for you in the opening, middle, at the end?
- When you finished the novel, how did you feel about the work overall? What big picture ideas did you find yourself wondering about—in ways that felt unsatisfying or satisfying?