

NOTE: This is the way I outline a novel. A good old-fashioned bullet-pointed format just like you learned in 6th grade. The notations are just cues to myself as to the content/theme of each chapter. By plotting all the way through the book in this way I can see the story as a whole and begin to lay the groundwork for clues, foreshadowing, the development of subplots, pace, complications and tension....and build all of these toward a satisfying resolution.

The most important thing to remember when writing an outline --and when writing a novel based on your outline—is that *nothing is set in stone*. A novel is organic and should be allowed to change as it grows. The outline is merely a guide, not an order from the Gods of Writing that ‘You Must Do it This Way’. You are the sole creator of your universe, the world of your story, and all its characters. The outline serves you and guides you, but if the story wants to change and grow, then know that it has permission to do so.

One last point: with an outline you can write your story in any order you choose. You don’t have to start with page one and then write in a linear fashion all the way until you type ‘The End’. Outlines allow for nonsequential writing –write the scenes in whatever order you choose, but use the outline to assemble them in the correct order. After which you do a polish draft to smooth out the flow.

SAMPLE NOVEL OUTLINE 1: Long Chapters with sub=chapters

GHOST ROAD BLUES

By Jonathan Maberry

CHAPTER OUTLINE

PROLOGUE -1976

- 1. The Bone Man killed the devil with a guitar.**
- 2. Bone Man buries Griswold; is blamed and lynched**
- 3. John Guthrie buries Morse; season ends**

MODERN DAY

PART I: DOWN AT THE CROSSROADS

- 1. September 30 -Morning**
 - a. Guthrie Farm - Val working; Crow & Val smooching**
 - b. Terry waking up after bad dream; puts on his Mayor face.**
 - c. Crow driving; Pine Deep wakes up.**
 - d. Breakfast with Vic, Lois and Mike**
 - e. Tow-Truck Eddie listening to God**

- f. Crow stops at Hayride to do some repairs; as he works he keeps humming *Black Ghost Blues*.
2. September 30 -Sunset
 - a. That was the year the monsters came to town
 - b. Morse rises; Ruger's car passes
 - c. Ruger & co in car
3. September 30
 - a. Ferro & LaMastra at shoot-out scene
 - b. Vic naps -has dream
 - c. Ruger's accident; Griswold's ghost
4. Just past sunset
 - a. Griswold & the Bone Man
 - b. Crow at his store with Terry
 - c. Ruger & Co after the crash
 - d. Tony after the shooting
5. Just past sunset; around 8
 - a. Crow & Val on the phone
 - b. Terry walking through town toward sheriff's office; Mandy's ghost appears
 - c. Iron Mike Sweeney
 - d. Terry at sheriff's office; meets Ferro & LaMastra
 - e. Val; pregnancy worries; dreams of making love and then of a pale stranger
6. Half an hour after sunset –around 8 pm
 - a. Tony, the coke and the shotgun; the arrival of the shape
 - b. Terry & the cops; Ruger back-story
 - c. The Wrecker driving through the night
 - d. Boyd breaks his leg
 - e. Iron Mike contemplates a belting; gets run down by tow truck
 - f. The Bone Man in Black Hollow
7. -8:30-9 pm
 - a. Mike after the accident; walking & thinking; white stag
 - b. The stag becomes the Bone Man
 - c. Crow driving; biker anecdote
 - d. Mike on the road near Shandy's Curve
 - e. Boyd in the cornfield; the homunculus
8. -9:30
 - a. Crow almost runs down Mike
 - b. The Bone Man listens to the night

- c. Val & Guthrie; “trick or treat”

PART II: MR. DEVIL BLUES

9. 9:45 pm

- a. Tow-truck Eddie flashback to killing Tony; speaks his own name
- b. Crow calls Terry
- c. Terry in the office; Mandy through the window
- d. Ruger and the Guthrie's; Q&A

10. 9:45-10 p,

- a. Tow-truck Eddie at home
- b. Vic at home making flyers; gets call from Terry
- c. Mike & Crow; Cape May Killer

11. Same time

- a. Terry in office; about Pine Deep; deployment & resources
- b. Ruger & the hockey team; Connie gets rope; door opens, shots fired

12. 10:15

- a. Crow & Mike arrive at Hayride
- b. Blood on the wind
- c. Ruger & Mark
- d. Rhoda & Head find crash site; Castle & Toombes arrive

13. Late 10:15-10:30

- a. Ruger organizes a stretcher party
- b. Head & Co find body
- c. Terry gets call from Mandy; call comes in from Head
- d. Boyd is missing; Guthrie & Val make a break for it

14. Same timeframe

- a. Terry & cops arrive at crime scene
- b. Crow leaves on ATV; Vic arrives and brutalizes Mike
- c. Crow finds kids at Hayride; shuts it down

15. -10:30

- a. At the crime scene; photos of horrors
- b. Hayride empties; Crow tries to call Val; Mark tries to answer; Crow leaves for the farm
- c. Ferro at crime scene; Terry realizes whose farm is closest to crash site
- d. The fight in the corn; vision of Bone Man tells her to go back to the farm
- e. Crow in car; Bone Man tells him to hurry

16. -10:30-10:45
 - a. Cop cars race toward Guthrie farm
 - b. Henry Guthrie is shot
 - c. Ruger beats up Mark, attacks Connie
 - d. Val heads back to the house
 - e. Ruger attacking Connie; Val attacks him; he chases her; Crow arrives
17. 10:45
 - a. Crow and Ruger fight it out and then shoot it out; Rhoda also shot; Ruger flees into the woods
18. 11pm
 - a. Storm ends; cops arrive
 - b. Ambulances arrive; Ruger can't be found
19. 11-midnight
 - a. Ruger lay dying the dark; the homunculus comes for him
 - b. Guthrie lay dying in the dark; the Bone Man comes and sits with him, playing blues to help him pass over
 - c. The homunculus whispers secrets to Ruger

PART III: DRY BONE SHUFFLE

20. -September 31 / late morning
 - a. Crow wakes up in hospital; Terry fills him in
 - b. Police roll call
 - c. Vic drives out to Griswold's house; gets money from homunculus
 - d. Newton calls his editor; decides to pursue things on his own
 - e. Mike in bed, recovering; hears story about Crow
 - f. Crow and the cops
21. Morning to afternoon
 - a. Vic's musings at the garage; gets a psychic message from the Man and heads out to Dark Hollow
 - b. Two-truck Eddie's sacrament
 - c. Mike with Golub; Mike meets Newton, spills the beans by accident
 - d. Shunned places; Vic at the swamp; Ruger arrives, dies, is reborn; black blood of the earth
22. – Afternoon
 - a. Terry on elevator with Mandy
 - b. Polk & Vic; 30 pieces of silver
 - c. Terry, cops, FBI & cover-up; Weinstock comes in with med report
 - d. Crow falls asleep and "dreams" of Ruger; Ruger threatens to destroy his life; he wakes and Val is there

- 23. –Sunset**
- a. Vic at the Passion Pit, gets Boyd
 - b. Terry wakes up out of a dream; nurse thinks she hears a “roar”
 - c. Polk & hooker; black blood of the earth
 - d. Mike throwing up in gutter; & black blood of the earth
 - e. Vic & Boyd – Trying to be seen; drops Boyd off in Black Marsh
 - f. Tow-truck Eddie & black blood of the earth
 - g. Bone Man weeping
 - h. Crow black blood; Val is taken back to her room; Head visits Crow; cops are missing
- 24. -After sunset**
- a. LaMastra and Ferro at the Harvestman
 - b. Terry gets drunk
 - c. Tow-Truck Eddie’s musings
 - d. Crow with Head & Val; cops checking building; doctor checks Crow’s bruises; lights go out
- 25. Night**
- a. Ruger in the basement shutting down hospital generators
 - b. Crow and Val barricade room
 - c. Ruger breaks in; Crow and he fight to the death; Val shoots him
 - d. As Ruger is dying he whispers to Crow “Ubel Griswold says hello!”
- 26. Midnight**
- a. Police backup arrives
 - b. Ruger’s body is taken away
 - c. Crow and Val are together, injured but alive.
 - d. Everyone thinks they’ve won.

EPILOGUE –Middle of the night

- Ruger wakes up in the morgue
- In the swamp in Dark Hollow the ghost of Ubel Griswold laughs