Chapter evaluation table

Found in: Developmental assessment · Full manuscript review

Every chapter is scored 1–5 for structure, pacing and character, with what works, what weakens it, quick wins with time estimates, and a one-line verdict. You can see at a glance where the book is strong and where it sags.

About these samples. Each example is a short excerpt from a real report we prepared for a client, used with the client's permission. To protect their privacy we changed character names, places and plot details that could identify the book, and each excerpt says what was changed. "[…]" marks a cut. Nothing was added to the findings.

The reports analyze the manuscript and suggest where things may be off. We don't write or rewrite any of the book. The writing stays entirely the author's.

EXAMPLE 1 · FROM A 2026 REPORT ON AN UPMARKET FAMILY DRAMA

Chapter scores: chapters 1–10

Chapter	Structure	Pacing	Character
1 *(deep dive — the opening)*	4/5	3/5	5/5
2	5/5	4/5	4/5
3	5/5	4/5	5/5
4 *(deep dive — the inciting incident)*	5/5	5/5	5/5 (emotion) / 2/5 (financial logic)
5	4/5	3/5	4/5
6	3/5	3/5	4/5
7	4/5	4/5	2/5
8	4/5	2/5	3/5
9	3/5	2/5	3/5
10	3/5	2/5	4/5

Excerpt from a real client report. Scores shown as written; chapter titles removed and the chapter lines gathered into one table. Used with permission.

EXAMPLE 2 · FROM A 2026 REPORT ON AN UPMARKET FAMILY DRAMA

Chapter 26 *(deep dive — duplicated conflict)*

What Happens: Bea comes to Nora's house and reveals she accepted a large sum from Theo, out of the family funds, to secure her home. Nora explodes over both the secrecy and the source.

Score: Structure 1/5 | Pacing 1/5 | Character 2/5

Why It Works:

- **It dramatises the widening wealth-and-ethics gap** between the sisters.

What Weakens It:

- 🔴 **Near-exact repetition of Chapter 14.** The structure is identical to the earlier money fight: Bea admits a sum, Nora attacks the source, Bea invokes her son, stalemate. The escalation to a far larger sum is the one new element — and it deserves to land inside a single, definitive confrontation, not a re-run.
- 🔴 **Likability risk.** Berating her sister for a decision made to protect her family — for a second time — makes Nora's moral absolutism exhausting rather than principled (see Section 2.3).

Quick Wins: Remove the stated-subtext lines (2 min). **Deep work:** Cut this chapter as a standalone and move the revelation into the Chapter 14 fight, so the two sums detonate in one escalating rupture with real consequence.

Verdict: Redundant. Consolidate into Chapter 14 and let the combined fight go somewhere the individual fights never do.

Excerpt from a real client report, shortened. Names and identifying details changed to protect privacy. Used with permission.

EXAMPLE 3 · FROM A 2026 REPORT ON AN UPMARKET FAMILY DRAMA

Chapter 30 *(deep dive — plot delivery)*

What Happens: In quick succession, Nora learns by phone of two serious diagnoses in the family.

Score: Structure 4/5 | Pacing 4/5 | Character 5/5

What Weakens It:

- 🔴 **The phone-call crutch.** Two life-altering diagnoses delivered as sequential phone calls, with Nora a passive receiver, limits the on-page drama. At least one of these should be witnessed.
- 🟡 **Physiological clichés.** "A shiver down my spine," "a pang in my stomach" (see Section 3).
- 🟢 **A residual editorial marker is embedded in the text here** — one of 94 such markers to strip (see Section 4).

Verdict: Enormous stakes; upgrade the delivery so the reader experiences them rather than overhears them.

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