

Motivation Reaction Units (MRUs)

By Azalea Dabill

This knowledge was given to me by Lynn Squires, very generous with her time for a new ACFW Scribe. It greatly helped my paragraph organization. I pray it does the same for you.

Here it is in a nutshell. The first paragraph motivates, and the second shows reaction to it, which often triggers the next motivation, and so on. Each two paragraphs make up a unit.

1st Paragraph: In the first, something happens outside your POV character. (POV means “point of view”.) What happens can be seen or felt by *any* character, but the seeing or the feeling must be *described or shown* by the POV character. Seen through his or her eyes, so to speak.

2d Paragraph: The second takes the reader into the POV character’s head for the reaction to what happened. The reaction comes in three or less parts (not every detail must be given to the reader at once). First, there is a physical involuntary reaction. The heart races, etc. Second is the knee-jerk reaction. Punching the threat, for example. The conscious reaction is third, when our mind catches up with our instinct and heart, usually manifesting as internal or external dialogue.

One note: the unit size is not a hard and fast rule. I have found that this concept works often on the sentence level for me, not only the paragraph level. Look to this MRU method if you find yourself or your readers coming up with the word “confusion” about your writing.

In this flyer where I use block quotes (if applicable), I have changed to single-spacing for readability.