**CREATING YOUR OWN VIDEO TRAILER**

**PART 1: BEST PRACTICES**

1. **KEEP IT SHORT:** in my experience, you want to keep book trailers snappy as viewers’ attention spans are short and you want them to get to the end and see the call to action/rewatch/share. 15-30 seconds is the sweet spot, in my experience.
2. **VIBES > PLOT:** In a perfect world, book trailers would be like movie trailers and perfectly showcase your characters/plot. In reality, when you’re limited to stock footage, that’s almost impossible to achieve. So think of your book trailer as a live action aesthetic for your book. Themes and vibes will translate far better than trying to recreate your novel.
3. **IT’S A VIDEO, NOT A NOVEL:** Nothing turns viewers off faster than walls of text. Text does work well in book trailers, but you’ll want to keep it as concise as possible—so more log line than query.

**PART 2: SOURCING FOOTAGE**

**Free footage:**

FREE: https://www.pexels.com/

FREE: <https://mixkit.co/free-stock-video/>

FREE: <https://pixabay.com/>

FREE: https://coverr.co/

**Some free/some paid with plan:**

<https://www.videezy.com/>

<https://www.videvo.net/>

**Paid:**

<https://artgrid.io/>

<https://www.shutterstock.com/>

<https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/>

<https://www.pond5.com/>

<https://elements.envato.com/stock-video>

**THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN SOURCING FOOTAGE**

1. The more specific the clip, the harder it will be to find, so be prepared to think big picture and more generic.
2. You will only find perfect face casts for your characters if you’re EXTREMELY lucky—especially on free sites.
3. The same goes for specific locations, in many cases, ‘close enough’ is the best you can do.

**TO COMBAT THIS:**

1. Be flexible: the footage doesn’t need to perfectly tell the story of your book, it just needs to invoke the right feeling and tone, much like a book aesthetic
2. Think creatively: more abstract images can help convey tone alongside more specific images.
3. Use the ‘similar clips’ feature many of these sites have. The hardest part of searching stock footage is knowing what search terms to use, and a lot of times, you’ll find the clips you want labelled as something completely different. So when you find a clip you want, follow the rabbit hole down. Look at the title and description of those clips, try searching for those words. And don’t get discouraged! Sourcing footage is usually the most time-consuming part of the job.

**MUSIC**

Music is a huge part of what makes a trailer memorable but is much harder to secure for free—and using commercial music can often get your video removed from website.

**Free music:**

FREE: <https://pixabay.com/>

**Some free/some paid with plan:**

https://uppbeat.io/

**Paid:**

<https://www.audionetwork.com/>

https://audiojungle.net/

When choosing music for your trailer, think about the tone you want to set and what music best conveys that. For example, tension filled tracks are good for thrillers, whereas a romance book might better suit a happier, more laid-back track. A fundamental mis-match between footage and music is the easiest way to make a book trailer feel cheap or poorly made.

**NB. Some of these resources I use, others I haven’t yet tested so be aware that quality/licensing will differ between them. With all music and video sourcing, be sure to check the website terms for what their licenses cover, how their footage/tracks can be used, and whether or not attribution is required.**

**PART 3: SCRIPTING**

The golden rule is: keep your sentences **short**.

You want no more than a handful of words per sentence, and you want no more than a handful of sentences.

**EXAMPLE:**

*The light of Eternal Spring* by Angel Di Zhang

**Full pitch:**

Amy Hilton, born Wu Aimee in the tiny Chinese village of Eternal Spring, has been living and working as a photographer in New York City for so long she's started to dream in English. When in the fall of 1999 she receives a letter from her sister, written in her birth tongue of Manchu, she needs to take it to a Chinatown produce vendor to get it translated. And so it is this stranger who tells Amy that her mother has died of a broken heart.

Amy blames herself. How could she not? Her mother has never recovered from her oldest daughter leaving her, first for school, then to pursue her art, and finally to marry a white man. Vowing to be there for her mother in death as she hasn't been in life, she books a flight to China. Haunted by the folk stories her mother told her about a shaman's journey to the underworld to retrieve her child, Amy undertakes a quest that strips away all the elements of her new identity, leaving her ready to make amends. But when she finally reunites with her family, things are far different than she remembers, and her loved ones are less than thrilled to welcome their prodigal daughter home.

*The Light of Eternal Spring* is a tenderly told story about leaving home and returning again, and about forgetting where you come from until you can't forget any longer. Blending playful magical realism with the family balancing acts all immigrants and artists know so well, Angel Di Zhang creates a nuanced portrait of family lost and family found, of the transformative power of art, and of the need to transform yourself in order to make art that's true

**Trailer script:**

A life lived

Through photographs

An identity

Cleaved in two

And a young woman’s quest

To reconcile with her dead mother

**PART 4: EDITING**

For a simple trailer, any basic video editor will be fine, the important thing is to create your video to work in the frame in which it’ll be shown.

I usually recommend creating a standard 16x9 (1920x1080) frame—which is what standard video looks like, for youtube, vimeo etc. and an additional 1x1(1024x1024) or 4x5 (1024x1350) frame for socials. Tiktok frame is 9x16 (1080x1920)

If you’re not a natural editor, keep it simple—look at your script, and place shots based on where they feel most natural to support the text on screen. Cutting to the beat of the music will also help with making the video feel polished.

**NOTE RE: SAFETY/ACCESSIBILITY**

Fast cuts, flashing lights, and popular glitch effects can be a seizure risk—much more so than you think. Most popular video cutting styles do not account for this, and it can be hard to create dynamic videos that you’re 100% confident won’t put someone at risk.

If in doubt, I always suggest putting a 1 second warning frame at the head of your video to allow those with photosensitive conditions to scroll away. I also suggest adding a warning to tweets/captions.

**PART 5: GRAPHICS**

**THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN CREATING GRAPHICS:**

1. Keep it short—walls of text will see people scroll away.
2. Keep it legible—this means making sure the text is placed well and is on screen for long enough (general rule: no more than 5 words per 1 second of screentime).
3. Keep it cohesive—if you can match the colours/style of your cover, the graphics will feel like they were made specifically for your book, and this will elevate the video.
4. Keep it informative—your final call to action should feature your cover, your release date, and either a short blurb, or a short call to action (i.e Buy it now!).

And if you’re wondering how people make those cool 3D book mock ups for their graphics, this website is an incredible resource and entirely free:

<https://diybookcovers.com/3Dmockups/>

**TRAILER EXAMPLES**

**Mindwalker 1 + 2**

****

**Light of Eternal Spring The stars in their Eyes**

****

**The Seawomen At the Speed of Lies**

****

**One Tough Cookie**

****