

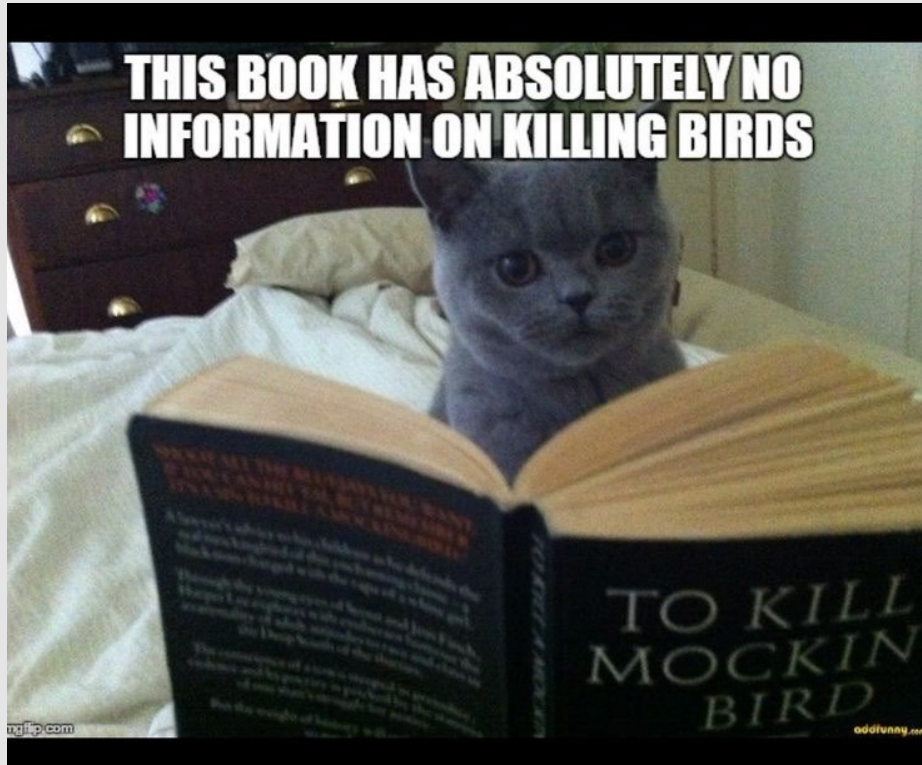


Cover Design Basics

How to design a book
cover that grabs attention

By Babski Creative Studios

Be honest. Do you judge a book by its cover?



You know you do!

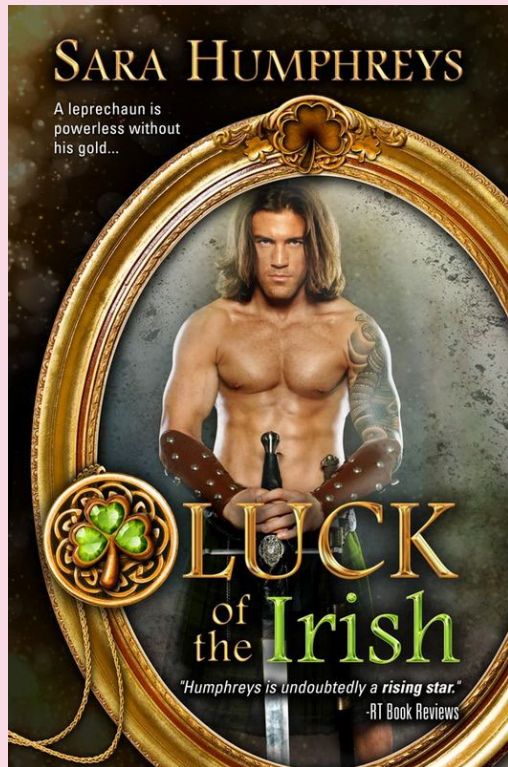
With so many books competing for attention, the cover is often the way we find our next read.

A great cover can convince a reader to stop and take a look at your book on the shelf. That's half the battle. Then it's up to your writing to close the sale.

So, what makes a good cover?



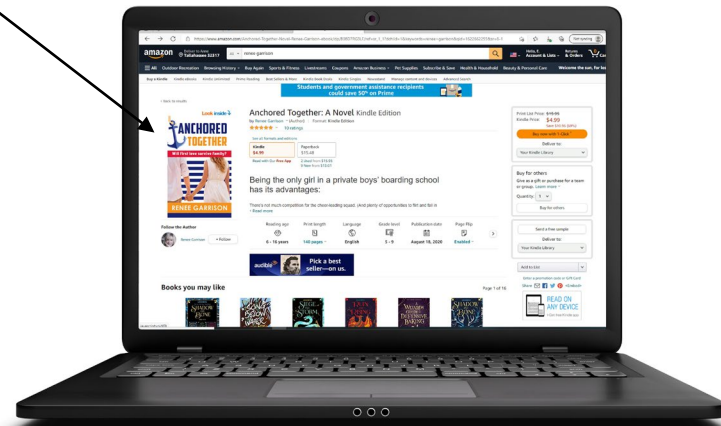
1. Embrace Your Genre



Know your genre and market.

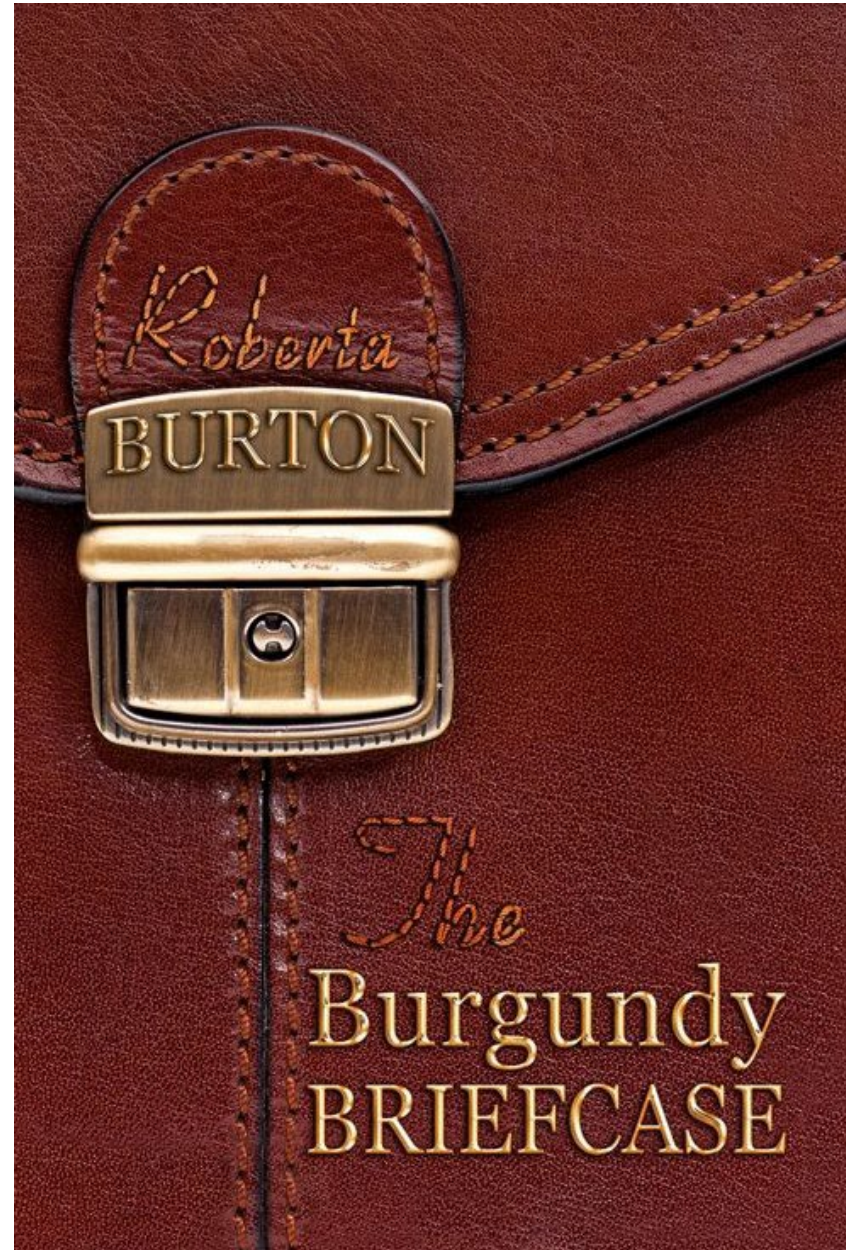
- Readers have expectations for how books in their category should look. This is a code your ideal reader will use to help find your book.
- It's great to be unique, but you also need to respect genre conventions. A fantasy novel should not look like a memoir. A middle-grade book should not look like an adult literary novel. Steamy romance needs a sizzling cover.
- Research popular books in your category. What are some design elements common to books in your genre?

2. Showcase Your Title



- The title of your book should be a main focus of the design and be clearly visible.
- Choose a font that's easy to read and communicates the tone of your book.
- Font color should stand out sharply from the background color.
- The title should be large enough to be easily legible even at thumbnail size, such as an online bookseller's page or a phone app.

3. Feature a Main Theme



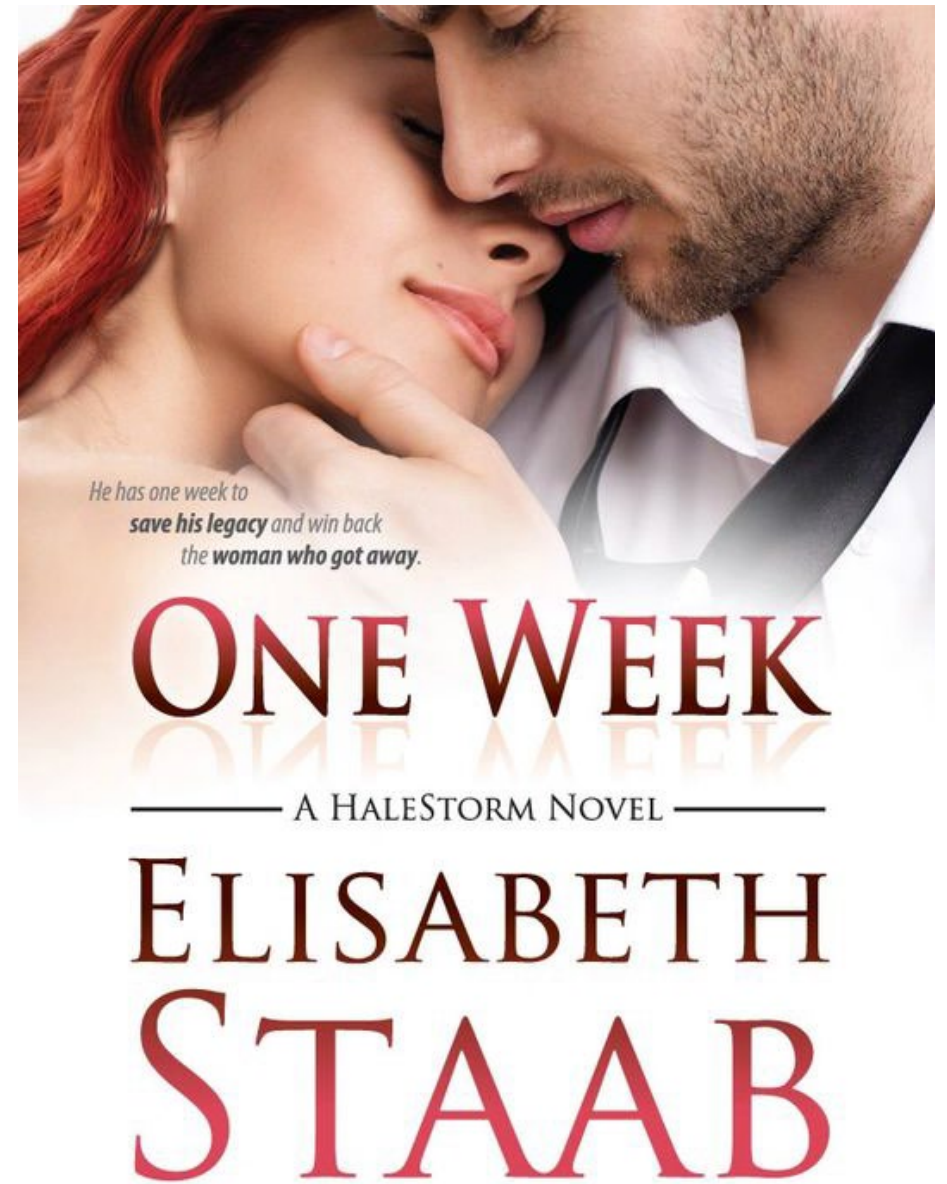
The cover should feature a main theme or concept from your book. Help the reader get a sense of what the story is about. This can be a:

- Character
- Symbolic image
- Scene
- Thematic element

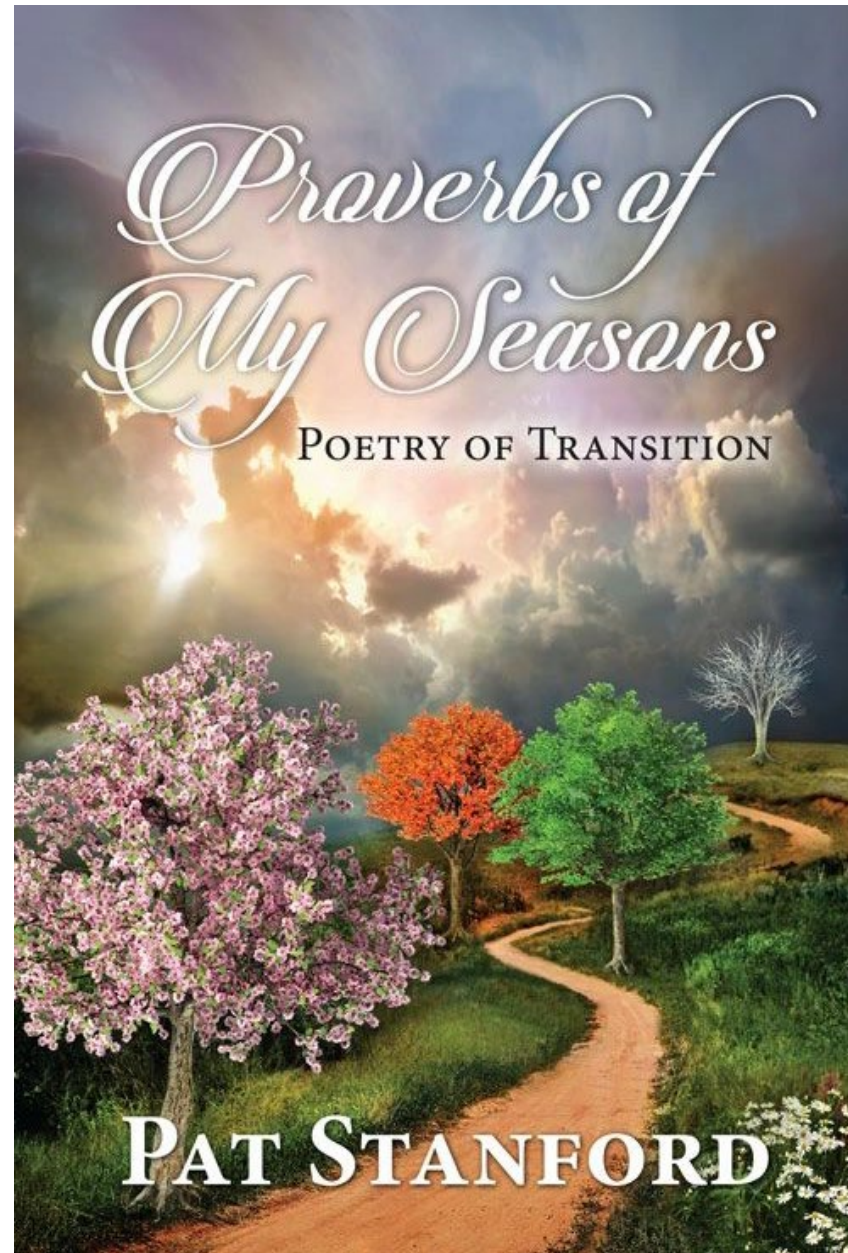
In most cases you want to emphasize only one or two elements.

4. Keep it Simple

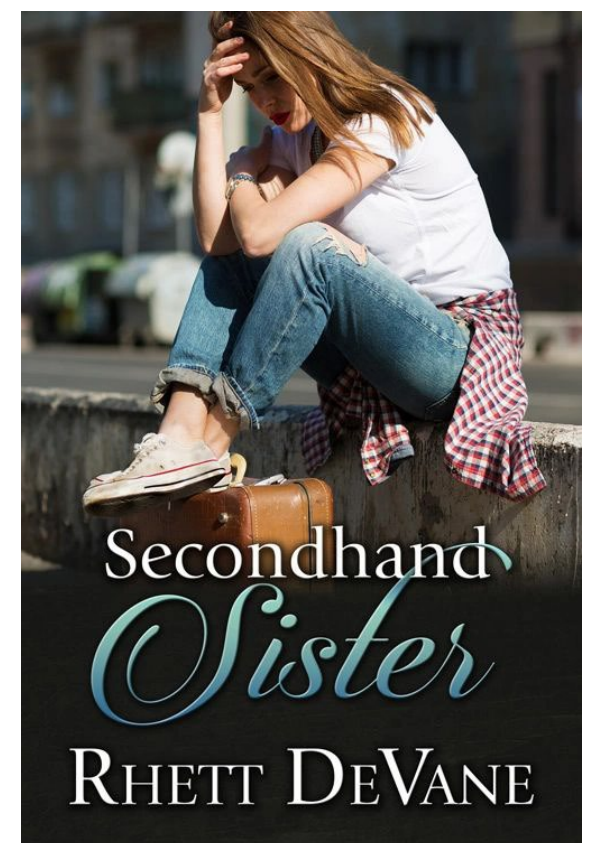
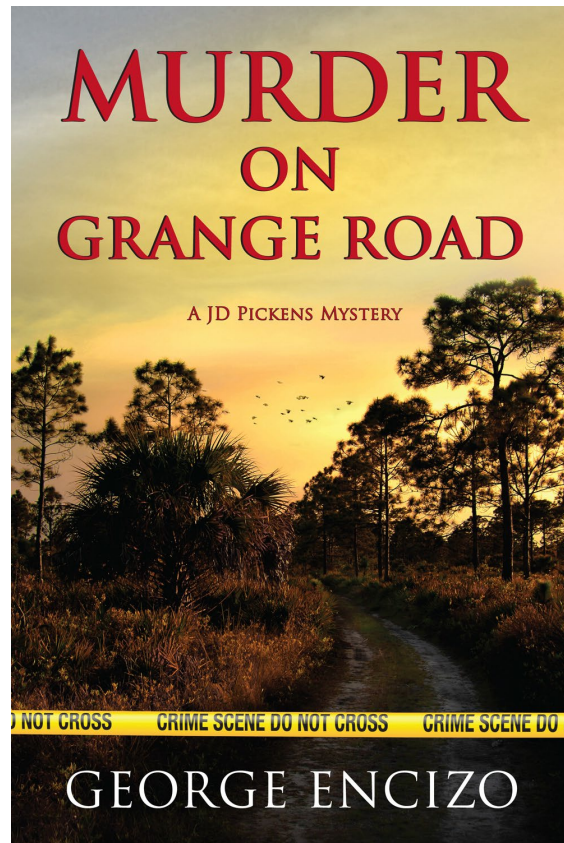
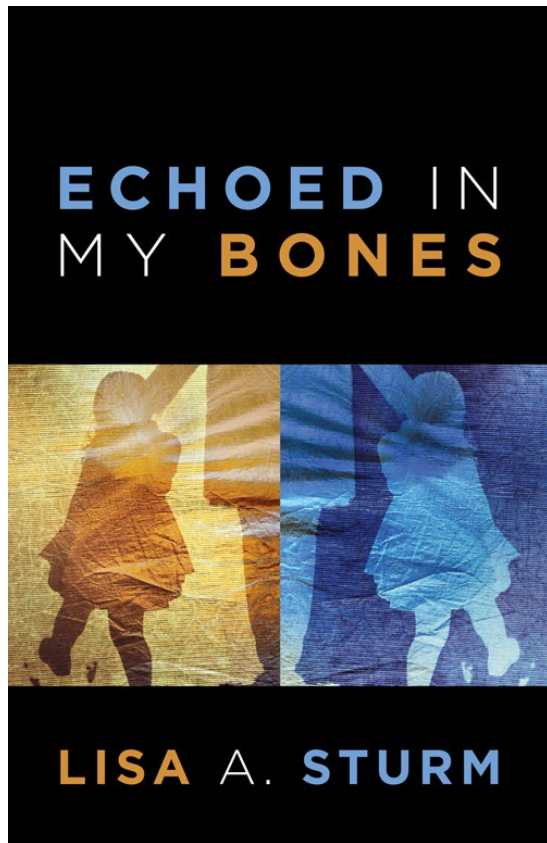
- Don't try to put everything in your story on the cover. This will confuse a reader.
- Open space helps direct the eye and create dimension.
- Limit your fonts to two families. Taglines or viewer quotes can work well if balanced, but clutter will detract and split the viewer's attention.
- Choose color wisely. Colors can help convey theme and attract your specific market. Research the psychology of color.



5. Include a Sense of Mystery

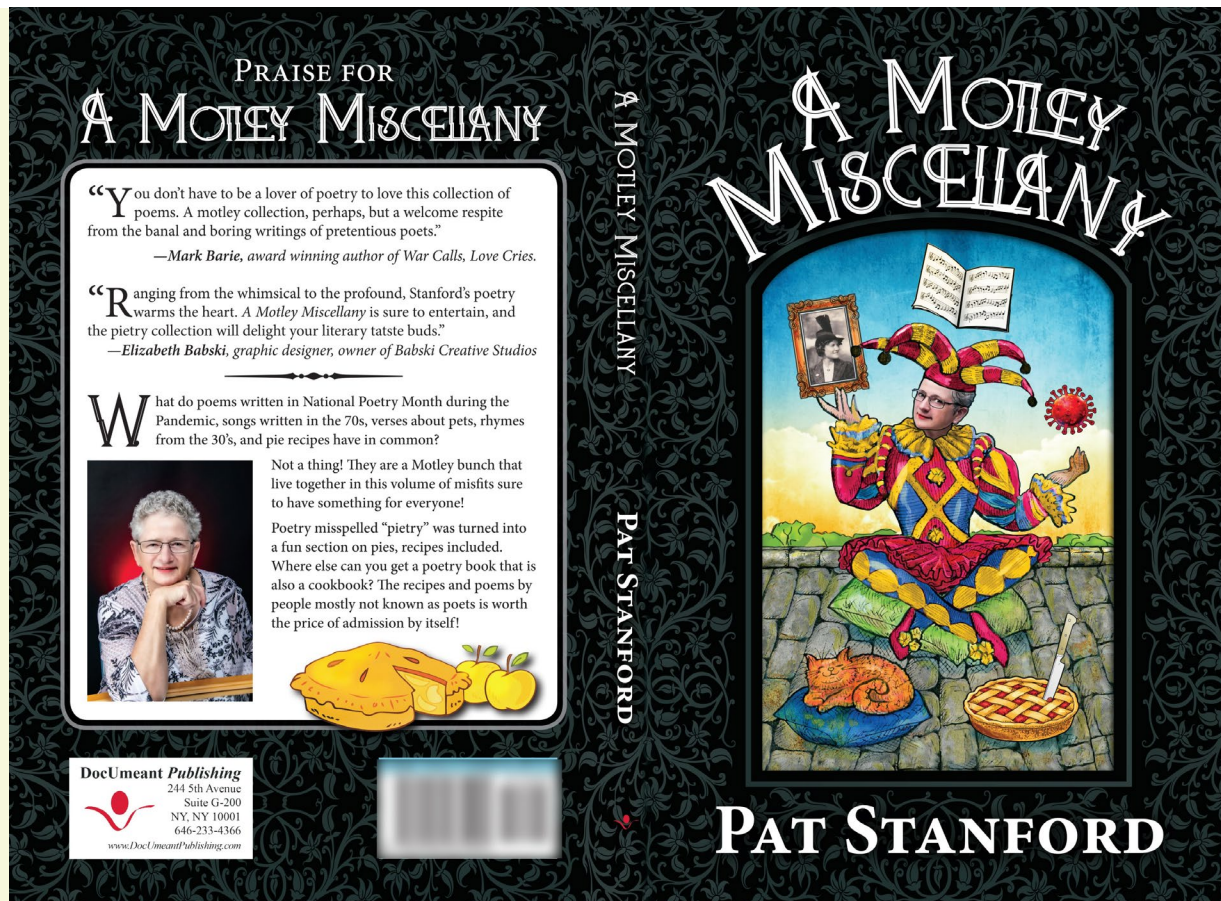


- You want the reader to stop and look when they see your cover.
- They should wonder, “What’s the story here?”
- A hint of mystery will help them want to read the book in order to answer the "question" posed by the cover.
- Direct the eye and draw them into the image with visual flow.



more examples of cover images that “ask questions”

6. Carry it through to the Back



- When your potential reader flips to the back, keep them interested. Your marketing copy should sing—graphics on the back are important but secondary.
- Continue cover background colors/textures across the spine and back to assure a seamless printed product. The on-demand printing process can often shift your design a few millimeters left and right from the template, so avoid hard lines at the edges of the spine if possible.

Working with a Professional Designer

GRAPHIC DESIGNER



What my friends think I do



What my mom thinks I do



What society thinks I do



What my clients think I do



What I think I do



What I actually do

An experienced graphic designer has the knowledge, tools and software to help you create an amazing cover.

- You can find great designers online, by recommendation of other authors, and through professional networks like FAPA.
- **Browse their portfolio.** Does their style jive with your own? You want a versatile designer who can create a cover that fits your visual brand.
- **Ask for client references.** Did they deliver in a timely manner? Did they stay in budget? Did the files they provided work well with the printer?
- **Once you've hired them, give them an excerpt or book blurb.** Often this helps a designer find the right tone and mood for your cover design.

Types of Cover Construction

Aside from theme and design choices, there are several types of “cover construction” you can choose from when working with a graphic designer or building your own cover. Some take more time than others, so the costs involved will reflect the overall work and time required.

Simple Photo Background

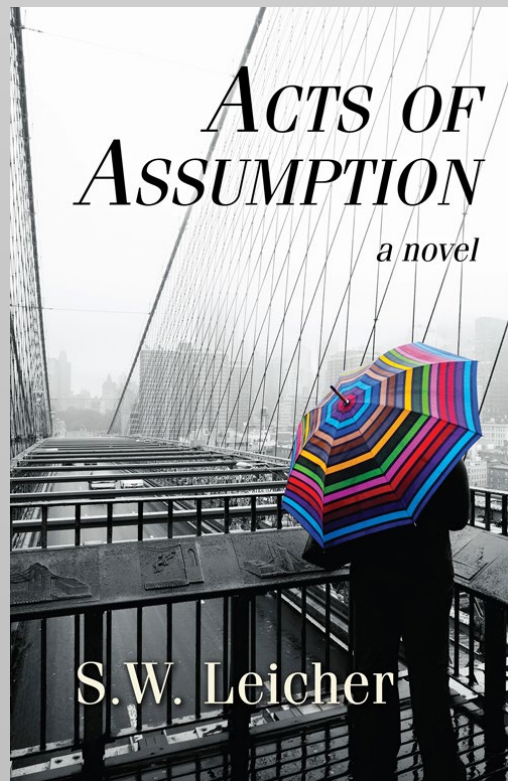
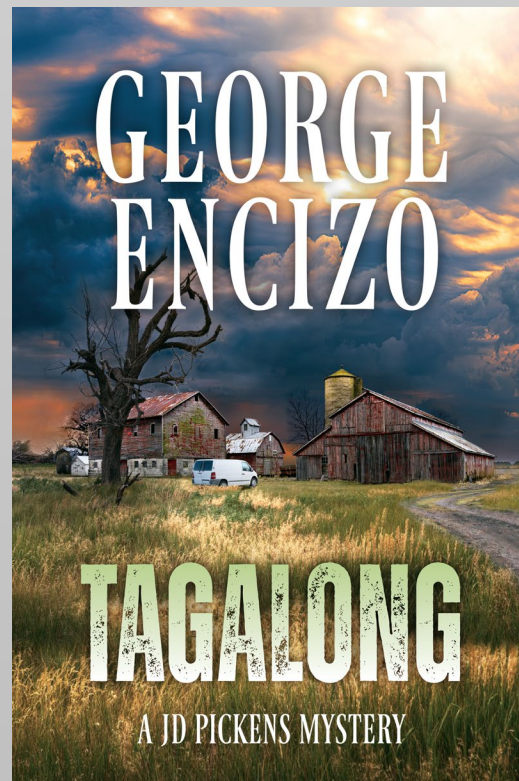
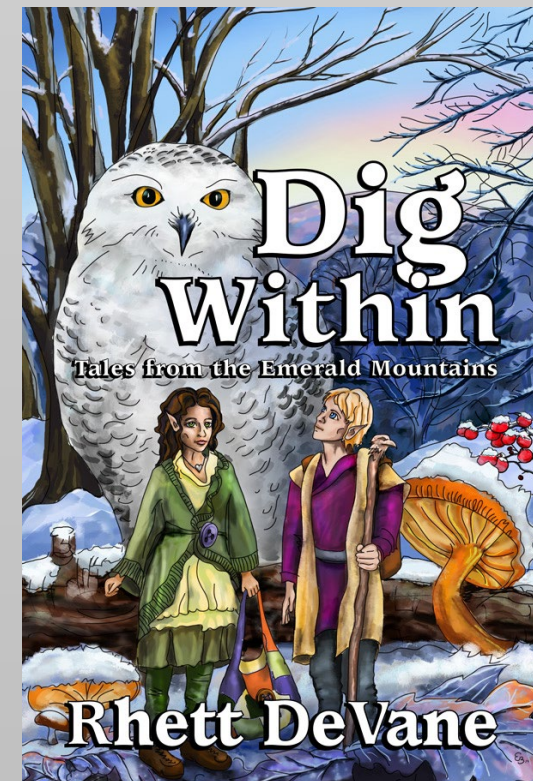


Photo Manipulation



Custom Illustration



Designing Your Own Cover

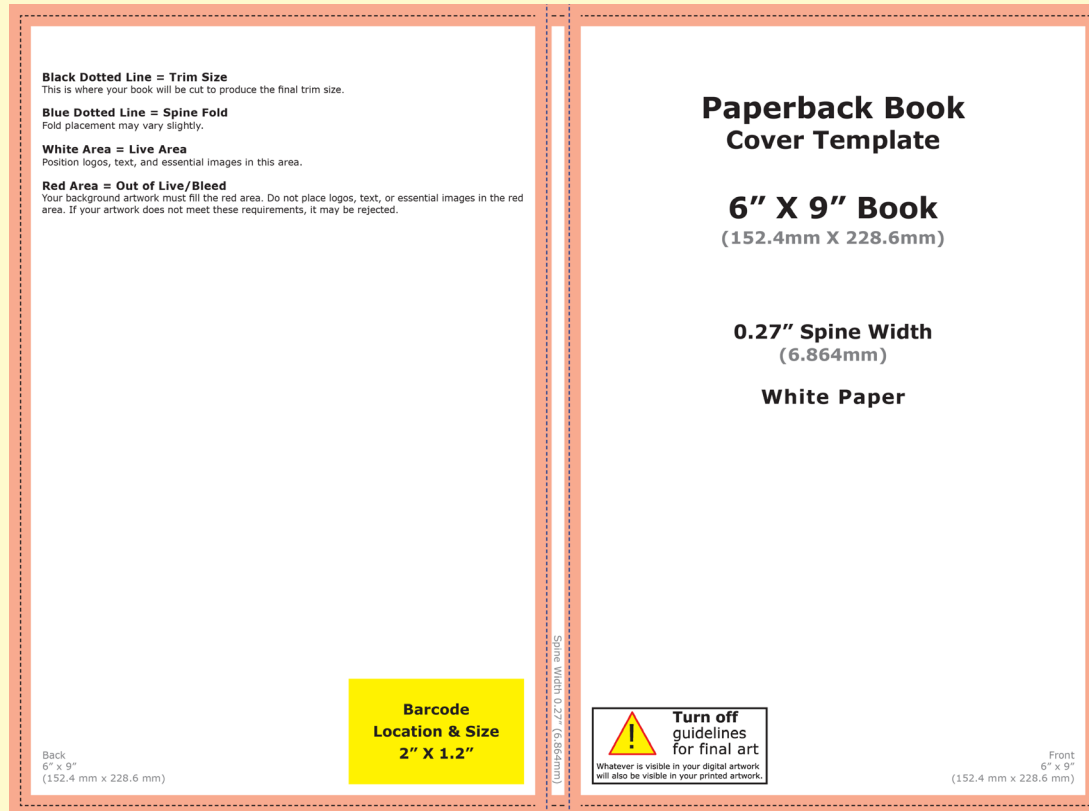


If you have graphic design experience, an artist's eye and/or the right software, you can tackle the job yourself.

Here are some tips:

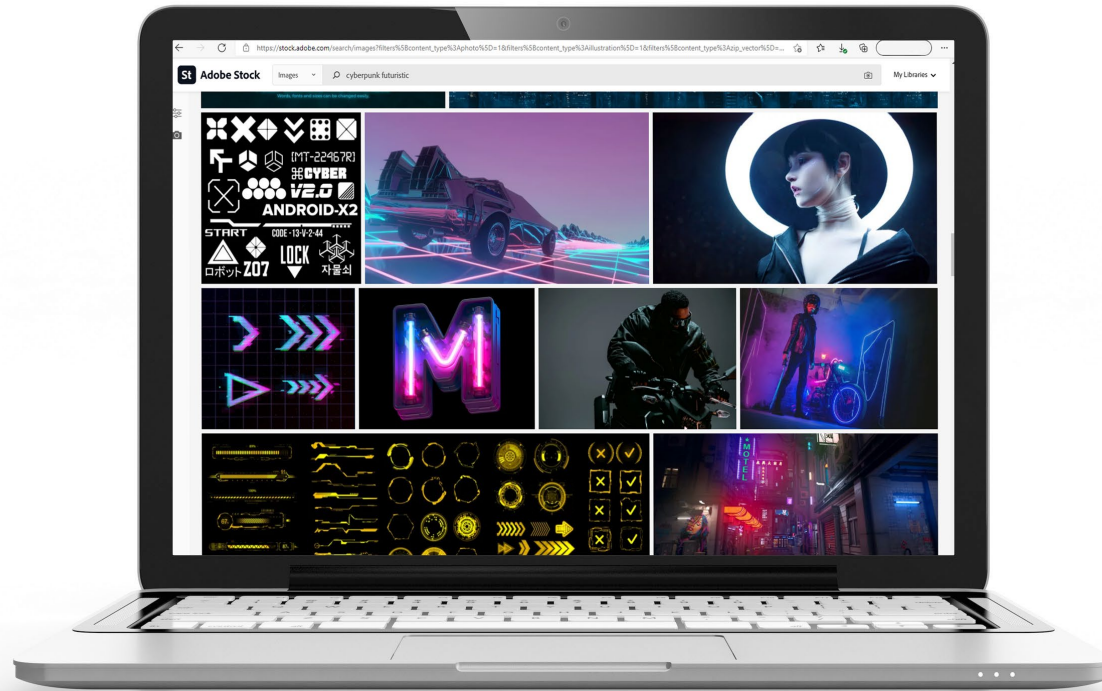


Book Printing Templates



- Get a correctly-sized template from your printer.
- KDP, Ingram, Lulu and other book printers often have graphic templates for you to download.
- Read their specifications and seek help from member forums if you get stuck.
- You will want to download the template after you've finalized the book's interior so you have an accurate page count and trim size.

Stock Images

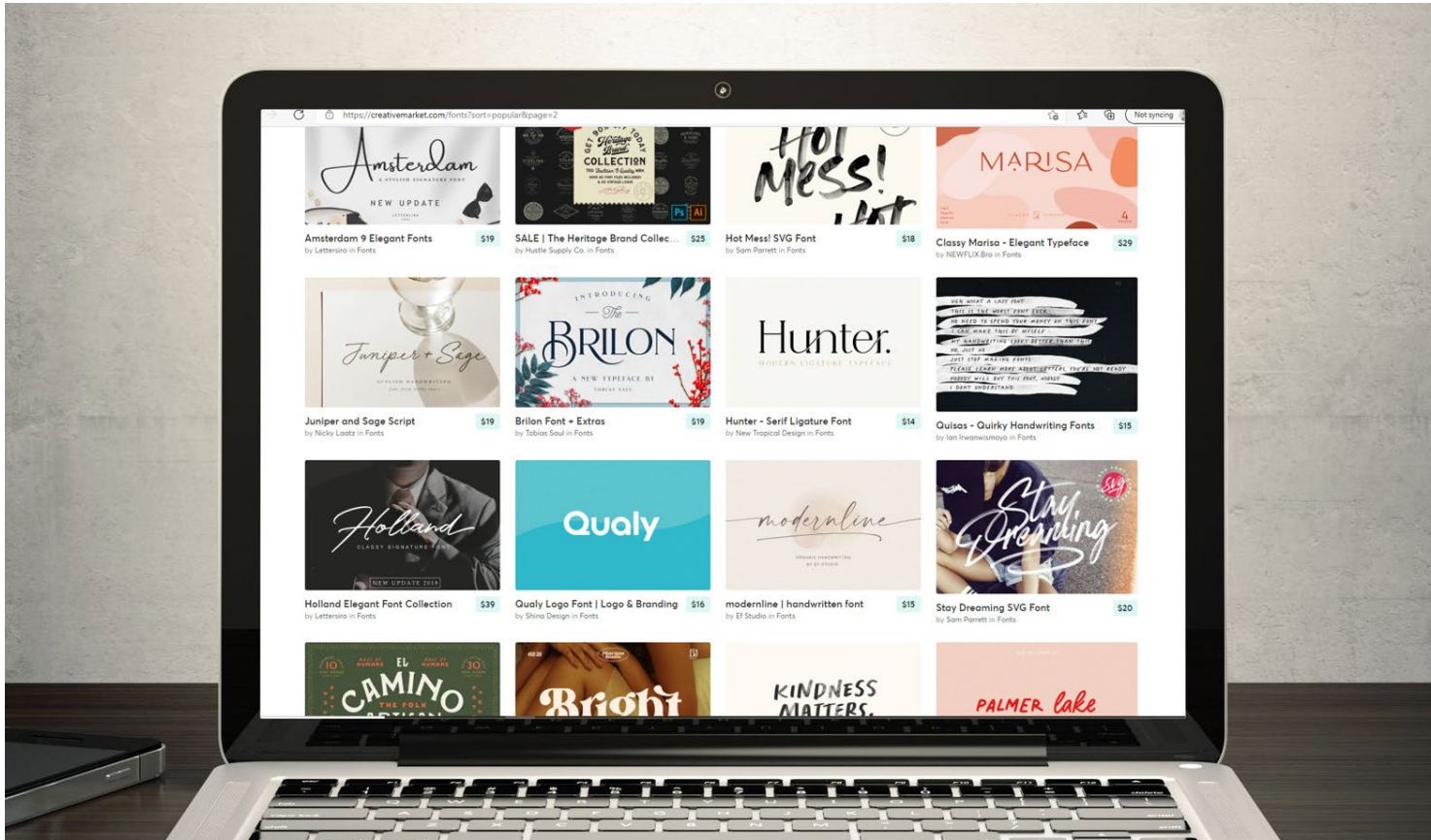


Purchase your Image from a trustworthy source

- Don't use an image that you found via Google. Unless you know for a fact it's in the public domain, chances are you don't have the right to use it.
- You can find great images from royalty-free stock art sites such as istockphoto.com, shutterstock.com, Adobe Stock, etc. Most can be purchased from \$10 to \$50.
- You can also buy rights-managed photography or work with a photographer if you want an exclusive image.

Use “free” images with caution

- Sites like Unsplash and Pixabay can be a good source, but make sure to read the license agreements. Ensure use on a book-cover is allowed.
- Also, be sure to credit the photographer either on your back cover or in the front matter of your book. You generally do not need to credit photography purchased through a royalty-free stock art site.



- You aren't limited to the fonts which came pre-installed on your computer. There's a world of typographic choices out there. (The photo at left shows a selection of fonts at creativemarket.com.)
- You can buy unique fonts for as low as a few dollars, up into the hundreds. Shop around and compare.
- Free fonts are also available, but make sure the shareware license allows for commercial use; most free fonts are for personal use only.
- If you are using Canva, they also provide impressive font options.
- A good rule of thumb is to limit your design to one or two font families.

The PERFECT Title font

Software

A DESIGNERS DESK

What they tell you
on social media



The actual truth



- You need design software that will allow you to work with the printer's template and produce a high-resolution (at least 300 dpi) final image.
- You can purchase **Adobe Photoshop** and/or **InDesign** on a month-per-month basis. You can also use other design software like **Microsoft Publisher** or **CorelDraw**.
- Online software like **Canva** can work well for making e-book front covers, and with a little effort you can create the whole cover wrap, although it doesn't allow for advanced photo editing or illustration. *(See Canva cover design sample on the following slides.)*
- Make sure to save the final cover file in a format acceptable to your printer. Most often this will be a **high-resolution, CMYK-color PDF file**. Online forums are useful if you get stuck.

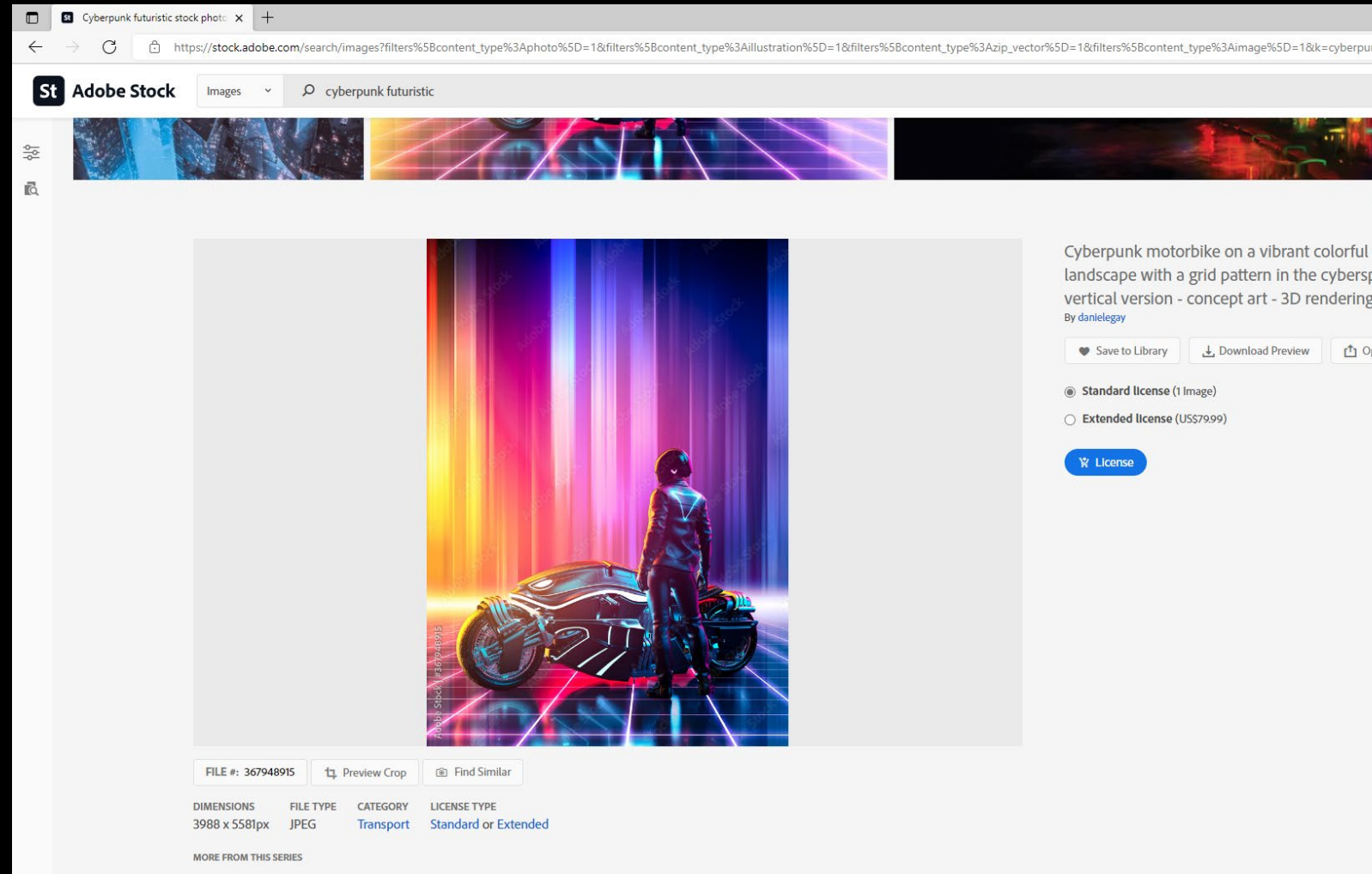
Designing a Cover with Canva

- Canva is an impressive free app you can use to design your own cover for little or no cost.
- Follow along with this example cover to see how I designed an Ebook cover as well as a full KDP print cover in about an hour.



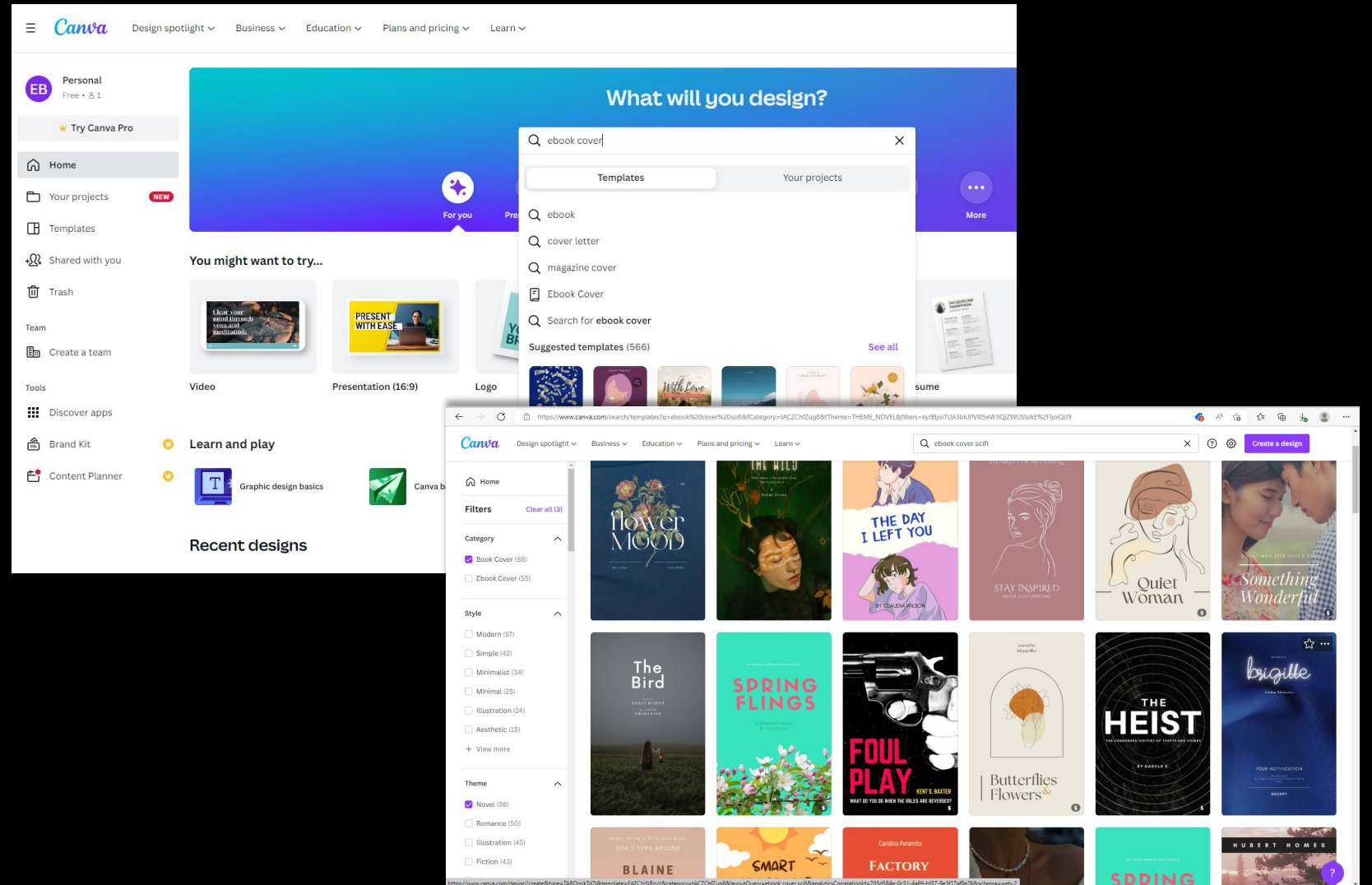
Designing a Cover with Canva: **STEP 1**

- Choose your main art.
- You can browse Canva's selection of graphics and photos, or you can purchase your own stock image, like I did for this example (from Adobe Stock).
- A good photo is key!



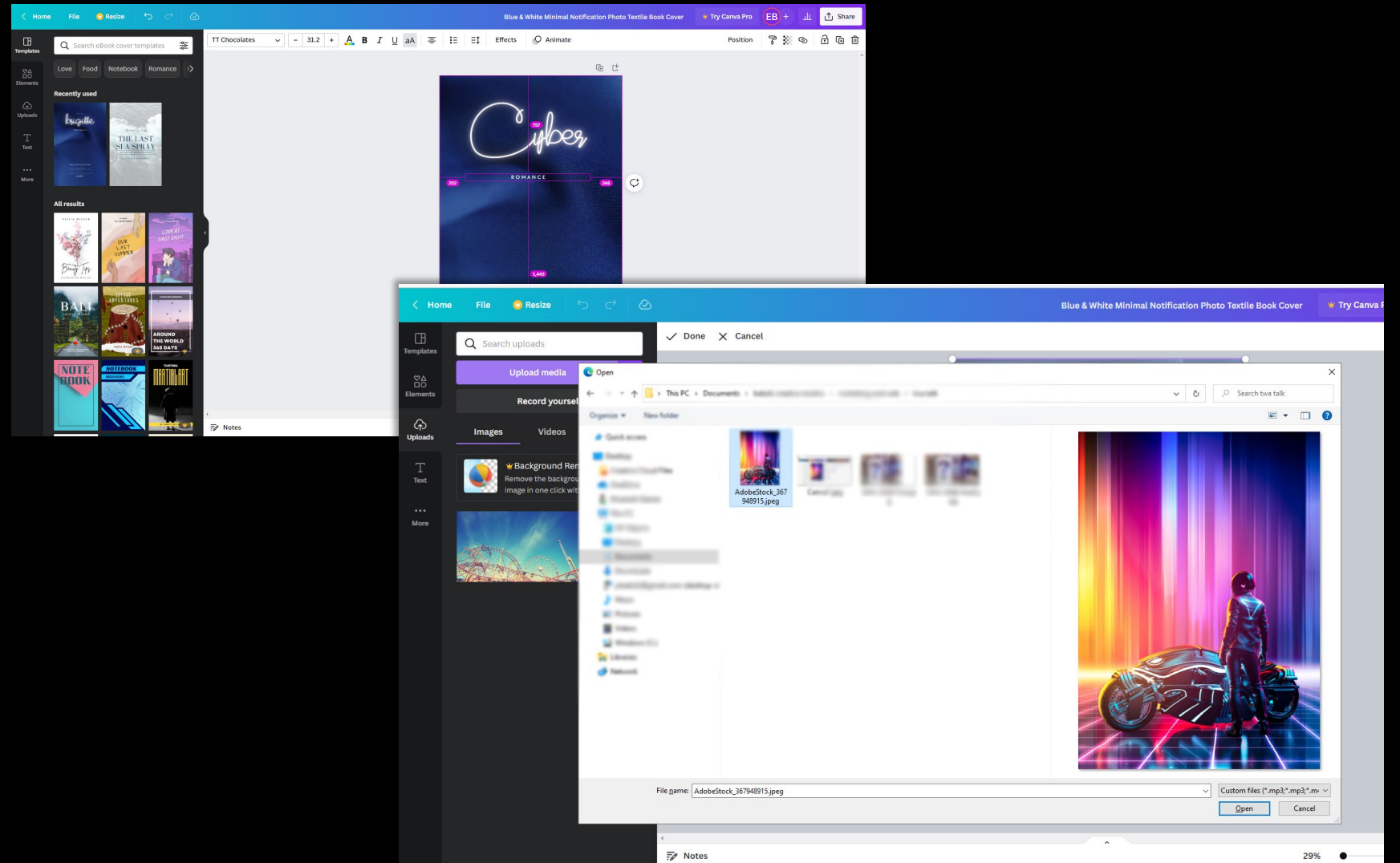
Designing a Cover with Canva: STEP 2

- Choose a Canva Ebook template or start from scratch.
- It's a good idea to design at a 6" x 9" size at 300dpi if you are starting from scratch.



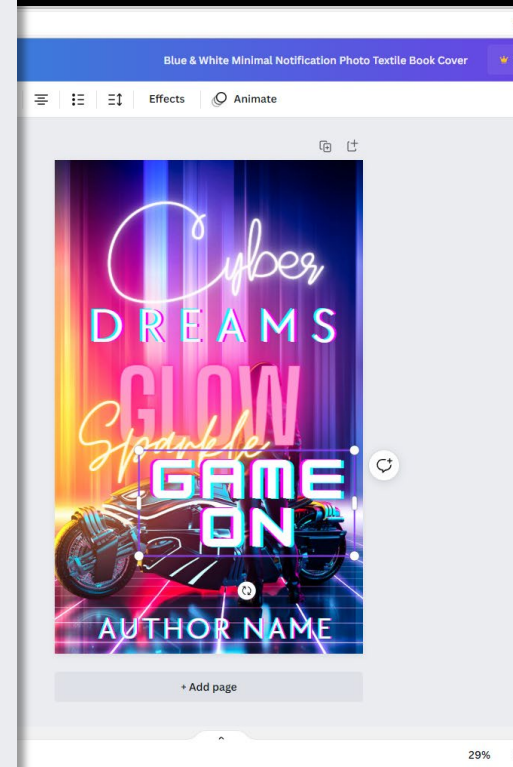
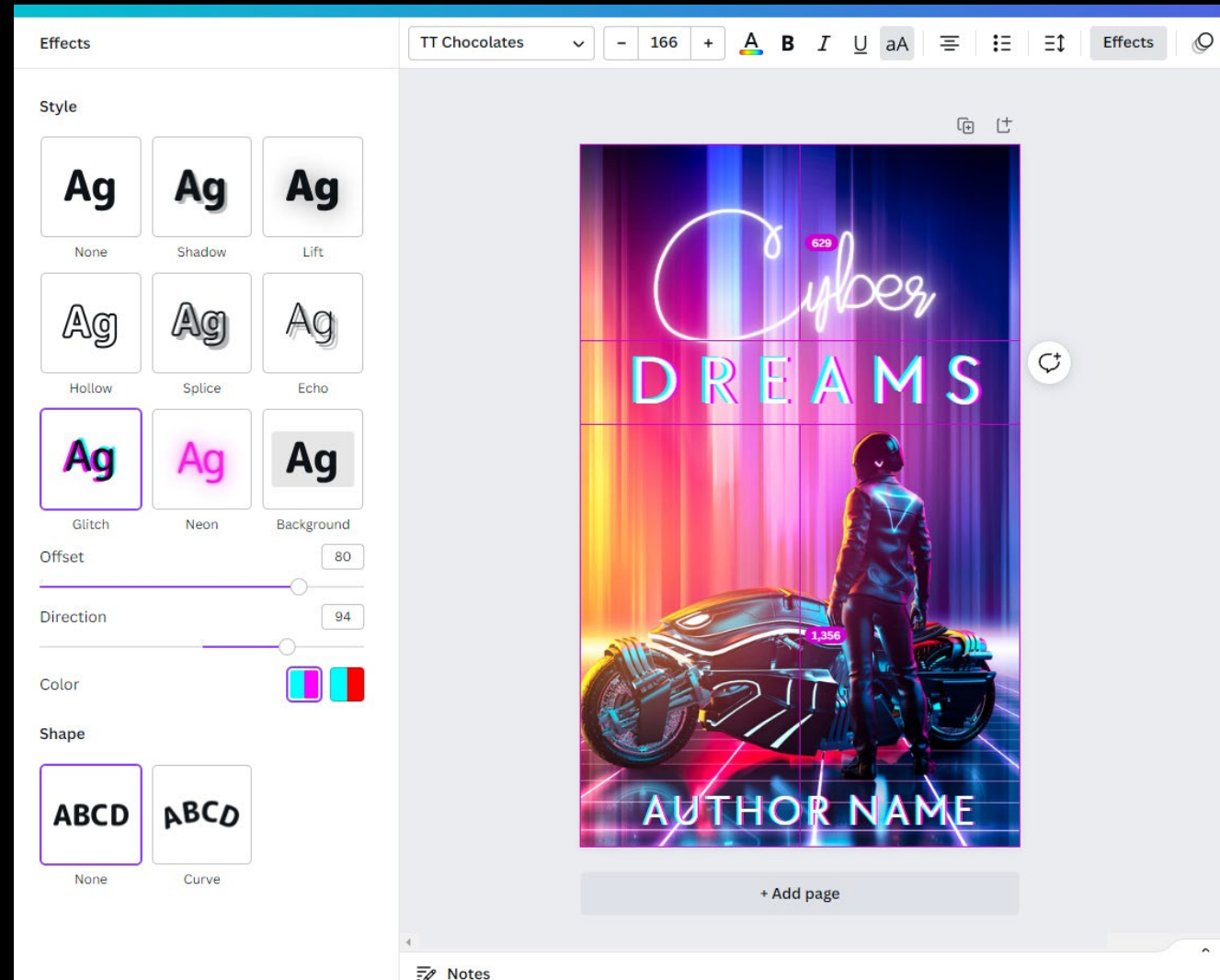
Designing a Cover with Canva: STEP 3

- Begin modifying your chosen template:
- Upload the stock art you purchased for your cover if you opted for that route.



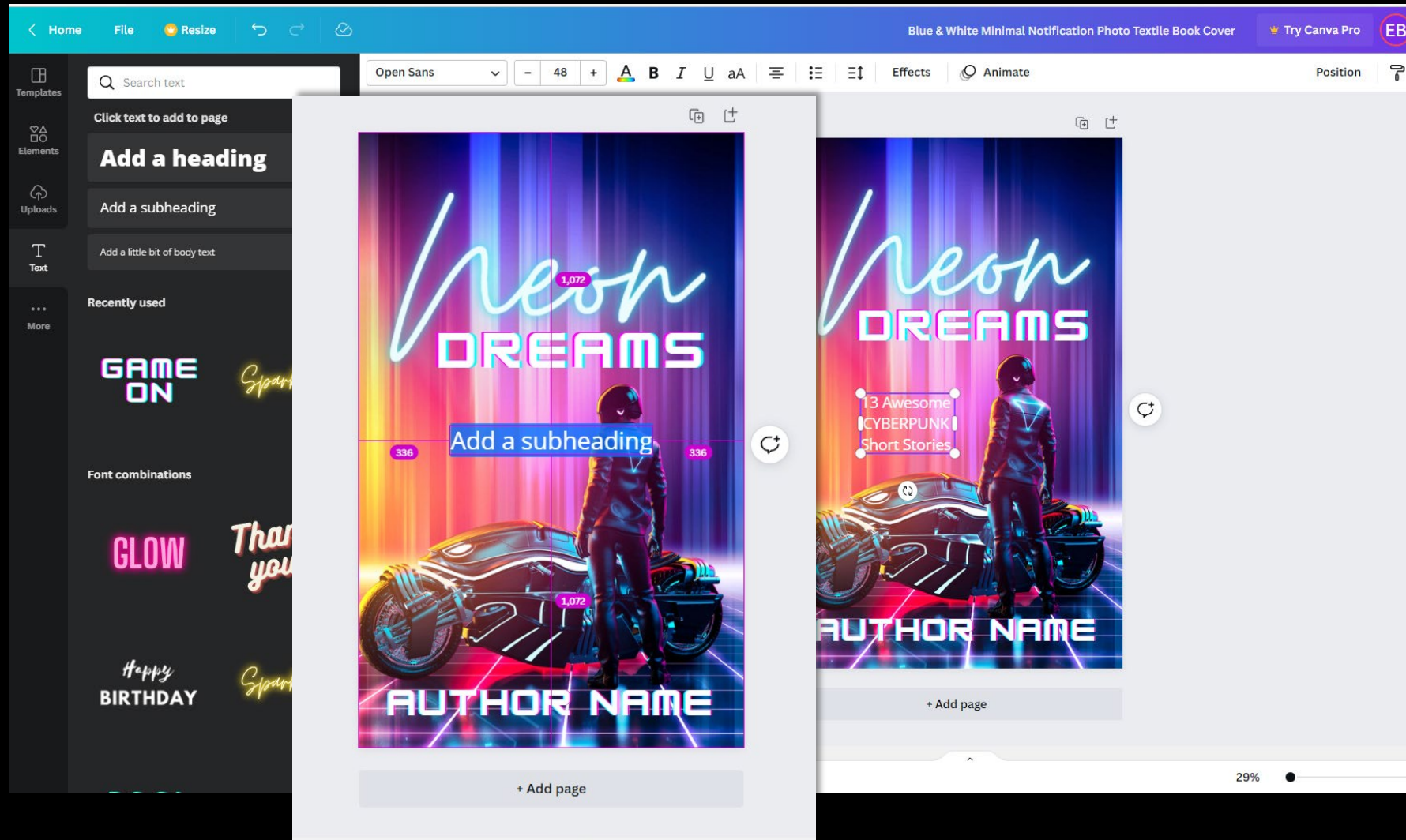
Designing a Cover with Canva: STEP 4

- Experiment with different title fonts and font “Effects” until you find a combination that works with your design.



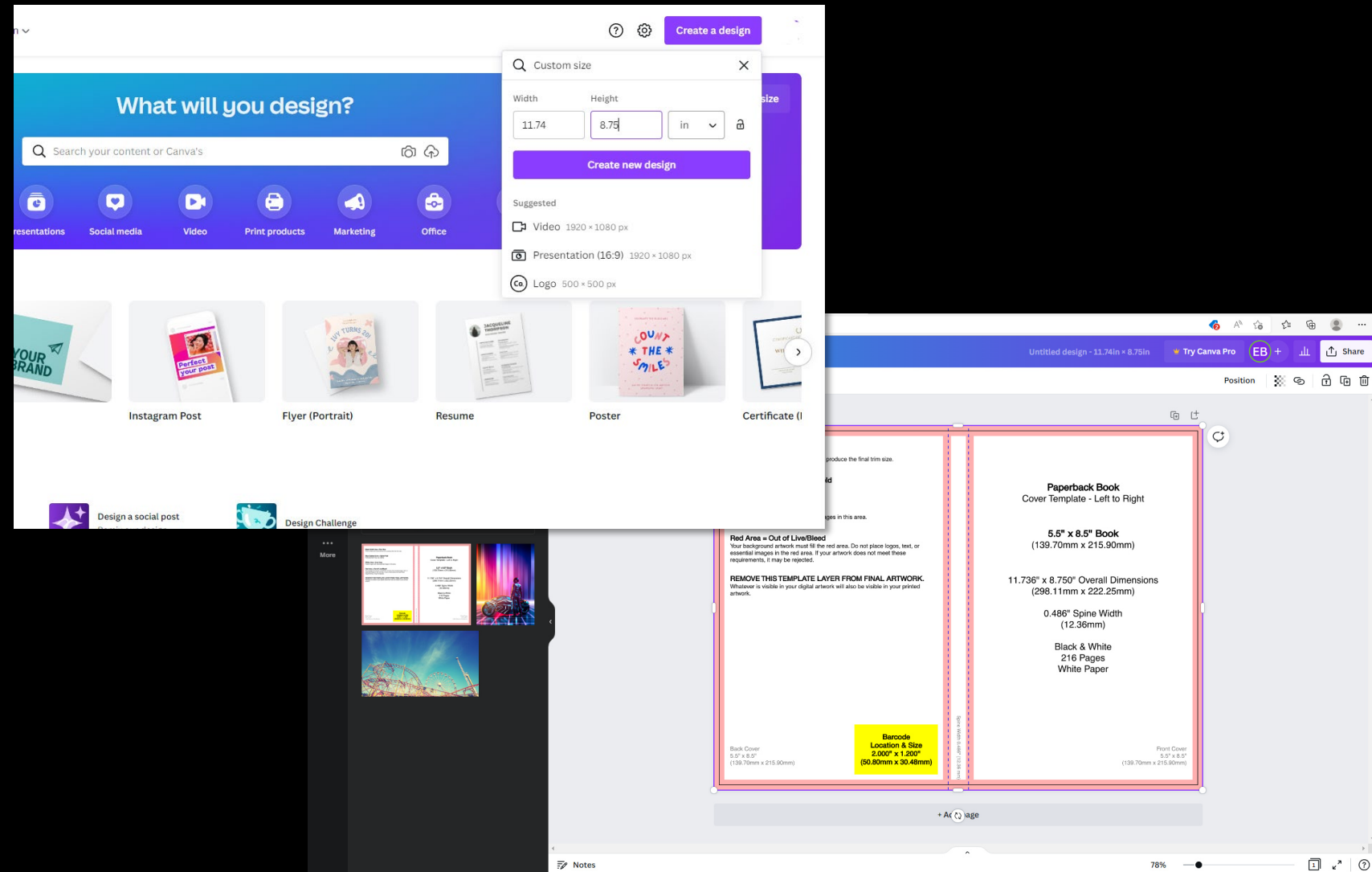
Designing a Cover with Canva: STEP 5

- Add subheads or other graphic elements until you're happy.
- Keep approx. ½ inch clear of text at the margins.
- Export a high-resolution final front cover.



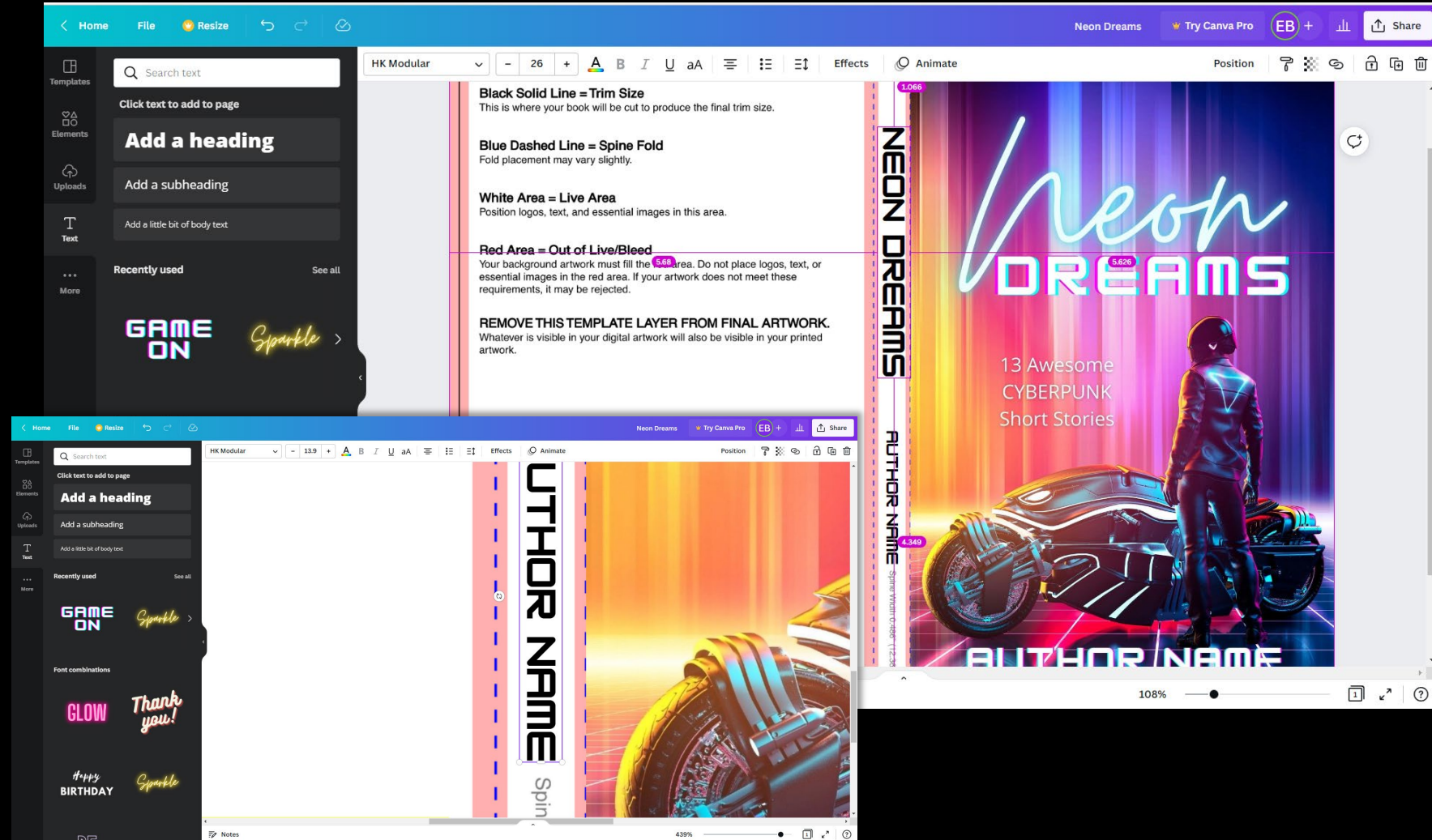
Designing a Cover with Canva: STEP 6

- Check the overall page size of your KDP (or Ingram, etc.) print template, and input this into the “Create a Design” tab.
- Upload the template image and place it at full size into your document. This will be in the background.



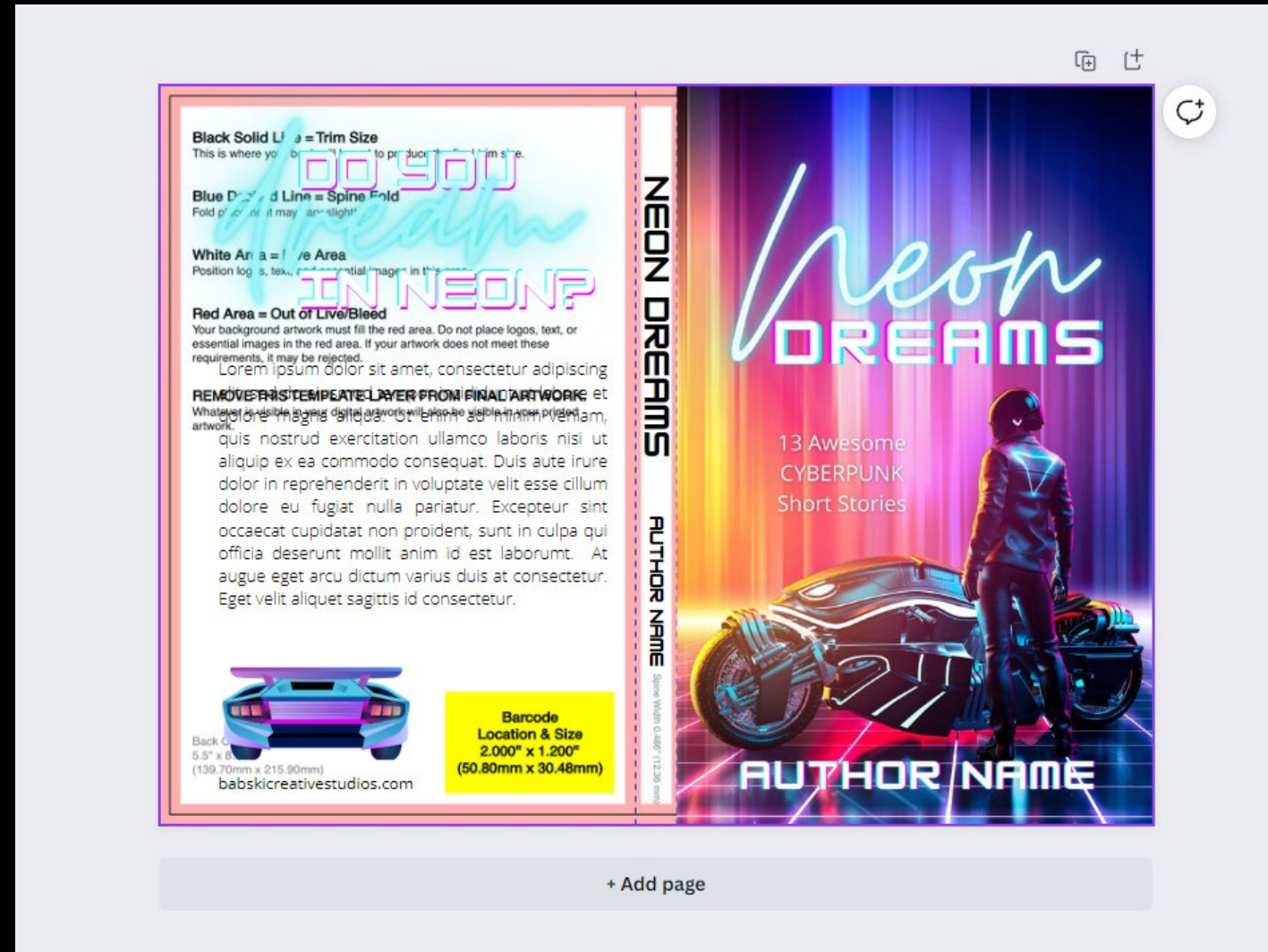
Designing a Cover with Canva: STEP 7

- Upload and place your finished front cover image within the lines of the front cover template.
- Add your spine text within the template guidelines.
- Zoom in to check alignment.



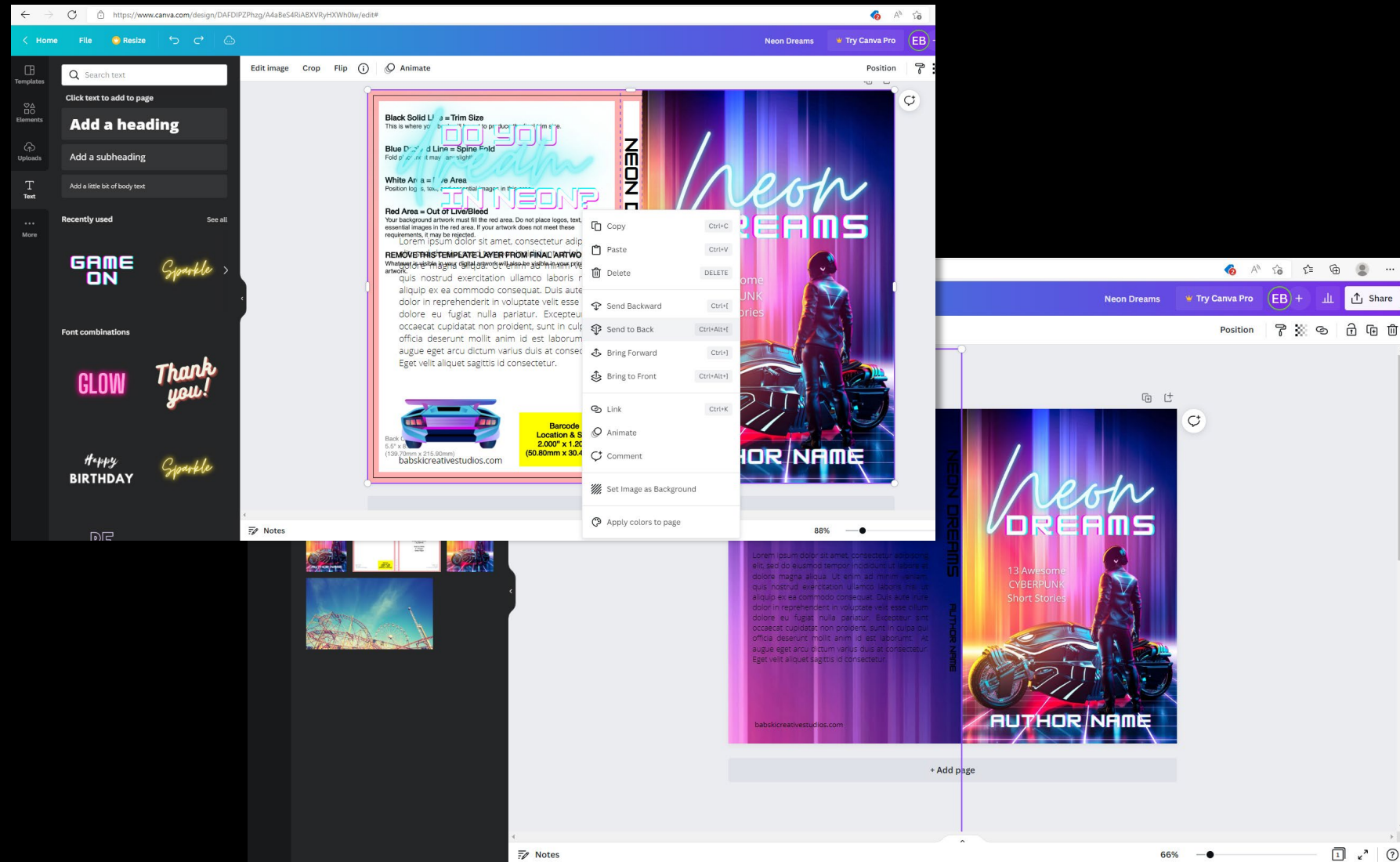
Designing a Cover with Canva: STEP 8

- Add your back cover text and elements such as your logo, etc.
- Keep the barcode area clear of all graphics.
- Keep all front/back text at least ½ inch away from the trim edge to avoid KDP review issues.



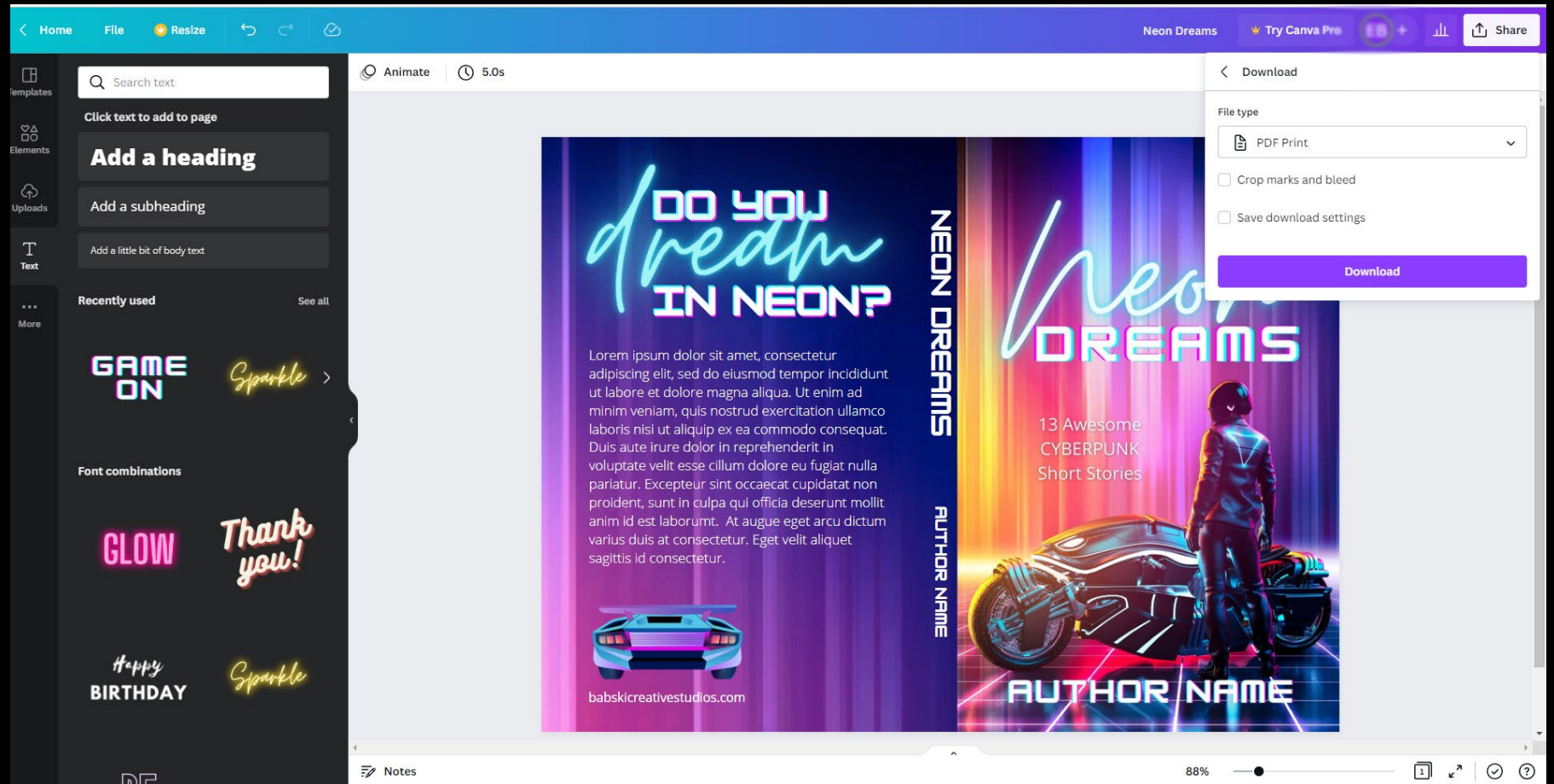
Designing a Cover with Canva: STEP 9

- Once your back cover and spine text is finalized, either delete the template image, or “Send to Back” and your background color or background image can now show through.
- Adjust final text color as needed.



Designing a Cover with Canva: STEP 10

- When the design is finalized, download a “PDF Print” format PDF that will be ready for you to upload to KDP or your printer of choice.



Designing a Cover with Canva: Preflight

- Ensure your final PDF is the correct size and resolution to match the KDP template.
- For this example, I layered the template over the final design so you can see it should be good to go for upload.

Black Solid Line = Trim Size
This is where your book will be cut to produce the final trim size.

Blue Dashed Line = Spine Fold
Fold placement may vary slightly.

White Area = Live Area
Position logos, text, and essential images in this area.

Red Area = Out of Live/Bleed
Your background artwork must fill the red area. Do not place logos, text, or essential images in the red area. If your artwork does not meet these requirements, it may be rejected.

REMOVE THIS TEMPLATE LAYER FROM FINAL ARTWORK.
Whatever is visible in your digital artwork will also be visible in your printed artwork.

Barcode Location & Size
2.000" x 1.200"
(50.80mm x 30.48mm)

Paperback Book
Cover Template - Left to Right

5.5" x 8.5" Book
(139.70mm x 215.90mm)

11.736" x 8.750" Overall Dimensions
(298.11mm x 222.25mm)

13 Awesome
CYBERPUNK
Short Stories

0.486" Spine Width
(12.36mm)

Black & White
216 Pages
White Paper

Back Cover
5.5" x 8.5"
(139.70mm x 215.90mm)
babskicreativestudios.com

Front Cover
5.5" x 8.5"
(139.70mm x 215.90mm)

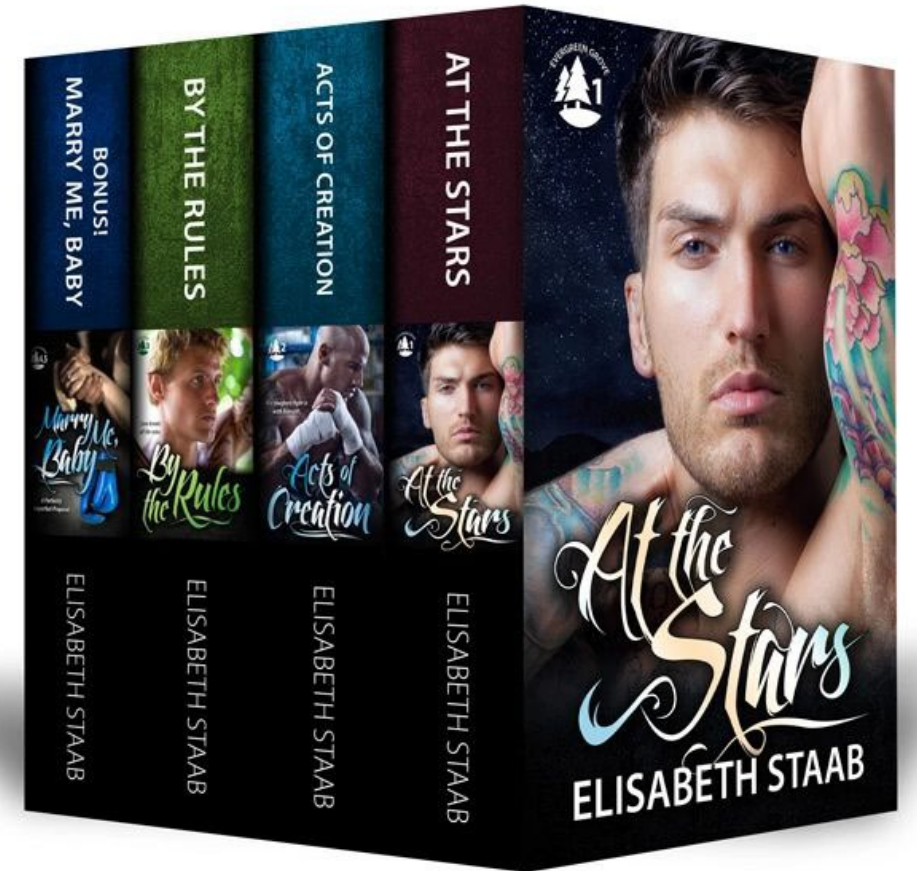
NEON DREAMS

AUTHOR NAME

Big Picture:

Stay True to Your “Visual Brand”

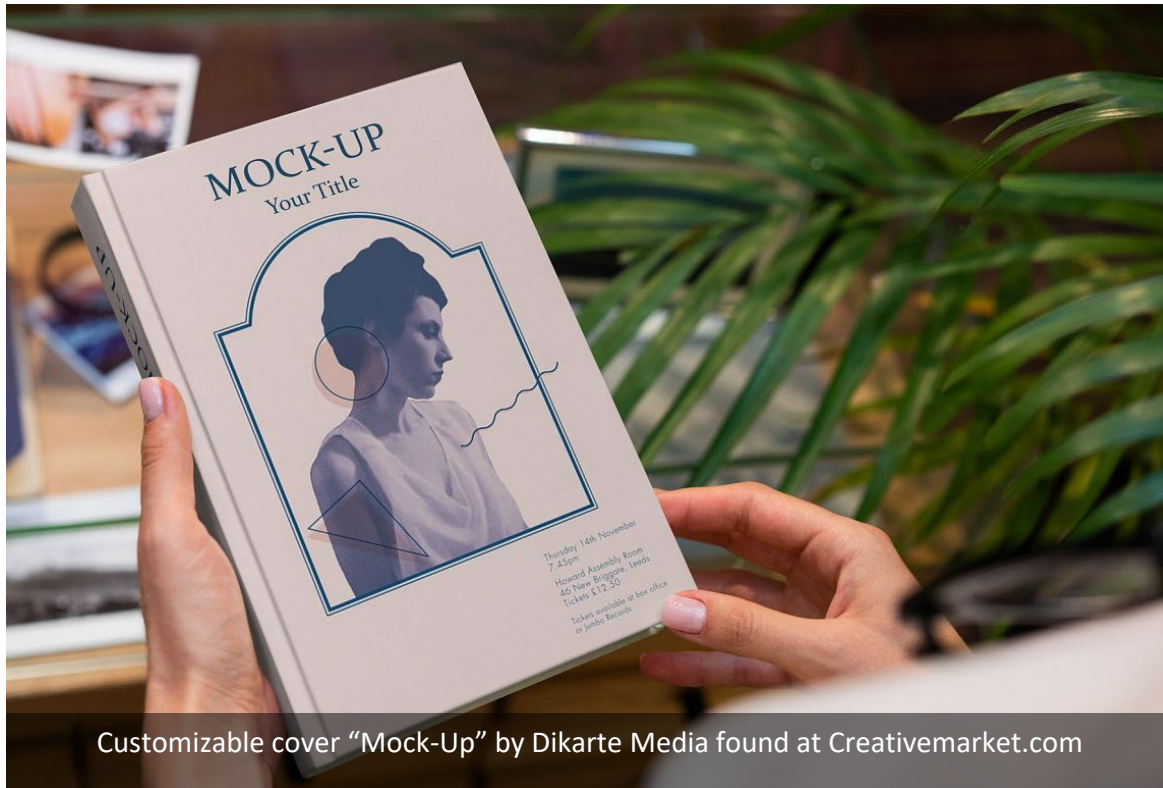
- Is this book one of a series?
- Do you want your cover to coordinate with your social media brand?
- It's a good idea for the reader to recognize your author "style" when they see your newest cover, newsletter or blog post. They will recognize communications from you based on your brand.
- A good designer can help create an author logo, social media headers, trade-show displays and more.



WELCOME TO **EVERGREEN GROVE**

Using Your Cover Art for Book Promotion

- For social media and web promos, you can display your cover on a simple background, or you can find digital “mock-ups” that are ready for you to add a cover image.
- Including a quote from your book helps grab reader attention.



Customizable cover “Mock-Up” by Dikarte Media found at Creativemarket.com



“She’s angry—
hell, she’s probably
plotting my untimely
demise—and she’s
more beautiful than
I’ve ever seen her.”

Think Outside the Book



Book Cover Wrap Mug from CafePress

- You can print your cover image on mugs, t-shirts, bookmarks and just about anything you want.
- These can be given away as contests and promos, used to entice subscribers to your Patreon, or even sold as stand-alone products.
- Explore printing options at sites like Printify, Printful, CafePress, 4imprint and more.

Thank You!



where DESIGN and
Imagination
Meet

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