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Character Creation - Who is that Masked Man anyway?

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The Big Question

What does this do for my story?

In everything you learn in this industry, always test it before you change your entire manuscript. Even if something works for another writer, it does not mean it will work for you. Remember, creativity is subjective. - DRAKE

Character Creation

“Character cannot be developed in ease or quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

- Helen Keller 1880 - 1968

Well-done characters are hard to create. Why? Because creating a new, living breathing sentient being is not natural for most people.

Story Motivation.

Before you start creating characters, you had better understand at least the basics of the story you are going to tell. This should give you some basic ideas about what types of characters you will need, and how they can enhance your story.

Character Tropes

Character Tropes are wonderful starting points. Using them, you can quickly create a cast of characters to use as a base.

<http://tvtropes.org>

Just don't limit yourself with them.

How to create unique characters?

Let's face it, every character you create comes from you. So how do we write a story where every character is an individual, and not just carbon copies of the author?

Rule # 1

Your Characters don't care about you!

No matter how much you love your characters, it's not reciprocated. Just like every single person who shares this blue planet with you, your characters do not care about your moral compass, your belief structure, your political views, your world views, your goals or aspirations, your desires or dreams, your interests or fetishes, your prejudices or loves – basically, everything that is you!

Forget Yourself

The first step in creating unique characters is to detach them from yourself. They are not you, so do not write them as if they are.

Empathize

A person is unique because of their values, goals, desires, prejudices, lusts, experiences, upbringing, social influences, and the list goes on.

For a writer to create vibrant characters, they need figure out a way to empathize everything that is the character.

Learn your Characters

To make your characters real, you need to know who they are. Obviously you will want to know their physical appearances. But you also need to know so much more. The simple things like; What food do they like? What is their favorite color? Who do they read/listen to/watch? Then you need to delve so much deeper. What is their political affiliation, their religious convictions, their moral compass, and their dark secrets? The more time you put into knowing your characters, the more you will understand how they will react to the situations they find themselves in as they move through your story.

Become your Characters

Remember the opening quote: Characters are developed through experiences.

Once you know the basics of who your characters are, put some meat on their bones. Delve into their past and write the events that formed them into who they are.

Give voice to your Character's back-story

If your character is afraid of spiders, create the scene in which they first developed their fear.

If your character has relationship issues because their parents fought all the time, create some pivotal emotional scenes that your character lived through.

If your character is a serial killer because they witnessed their father kill their mother, write that scene.

If you, the author, live through the events that shape your characters, you will have a tremendous understanding of why they act the way they do.

Limitations are more interesting than abilities!

Anyone can win a fight if they are invulnerable. But is that drama? One of the best things you can do to create interesting characters is to give them hard limitations, then have them figure out how to get around those limitations during the story.

Motivation Drives Everything!

Motivation is what drives us all. If you understand what motivates your characters, then you will understand how they will react when you drop them into any situation.

Keep in mind, motivations can change over the course of the story.

The Question that Defines Characters

What does your Character want?

Answer this, and you will understand how your character (not you) will react in every single scene you place them in. They will behave according to how THEY feel they should, becoming unique to your story.

The Question that Grows Characters

What does your Character need?

Answer this, and you will understand how the story will react to the character, driving them toward becoming the hero the story needs to overcome the plot.

End

Thank you for your time and attention. I hope you found it informative. I have started a blog dedicated to the discussion of the craft of writing. If you have specific questions, please send them to me at author@maxadrake.com and I will include them on blog.maxwellalexanderdrake.com.

I am on Facebook and Twitter as well. Please look me up.

If you want to help further my teaching career, please visit <http://www.meetup.com/Las-Vegas-Creative-Writing-Class/> and review this class. It would be a tremendous help to me.

DRAKE