

BELIEVABLE CHARACTERS

SUZANNE FLEMING AUTHOR

MASTER
CLASS



PLEASE READ THE COPYRIGHT INFORMATION ON THE LAST SLIDE

**MASTER
CLASS**



CREATIVE WRITING

Welcome to the
Virtual Classroom

This presentation looks
at developing
BELIEVABLE CHARACTERS



Fiction writers develop their craft by writing.

Although writing is an art, there are skills, tools, and techniques that can be learned in order to develop talent.

Constructive criticism and feedback can help this process.



CREATIVE WRITING

Creating the more complex **PRIMARY** characters takes time.

Time spent thinking about how your characters look, where they're from, and what motivates them, for instance.

The following questions will provide structure to this important thought process.

While the reader does not need to know all the details, it's important that you do.

The more in-depth knowledge you have about the character, the more **realistic** your story or novel will be.

Definition:

A **PRIMARY** character is a character who encounters conflict and is changed by it.

PRIMARY characters are developed and described more fully than **SECONDARY** characters.

Also known as: **Round Characters**, **Major Characters**, **Main Characters**, and **Dynamic Characters**.

**Examples: Heathcliff,
Anna Karenina, Jayne Eyre,**
are all characters in classic literature who
could easily be considered
PRIMARY characters.

**We have a clear sense of their emotions,
motivations, and histories
as we read their stories.**

these tips and ideas will help you build
believable characters

The characters in your stories **MUST** have well
developed personalities.

The reader should gain
a true sense
of who the characters are.

The reader should gain some insight into your character's personal values and beliefs.

You should know your character as well as your best friends.

Your characters must become so real to you that they live in your head and your heart.

1. Where does your character live?

Michael Adams (*"Anniversaries in the Blood"*), the novelist and writing professor, believes setting is the most important element of any story.

It's definitely true that character, if not story, in many ways grows out of a sense of place.

What country does your character live in?

What region or state?

Does he live alone or with a family?

In a trailer park or on an estate?

How did he end up living there?

How does he feel about it?

2. Where is your character from?

Where did your character's life begin?

Did she grow up running around a remote town and did she spend a lot of time in the hills and bushland?

Or was she sent to a city boarding school and did she become an A student who spent many hours in the science labs.

2. Where is your character from?

This is an important aspect of character development.

Their early life will have had an influence on their development, so you need to build a **LIFE** picture of each character if you really want to know and understand them.

Where your character grew up will influence their speech, attitudes and interests etc.

3. How old is your character?

Though this might seem like an obvious question, it's important to make a clear decision about this before you begin writing, otherwise, it's impossible to get the details right.

Remember the devil is in the detail

For instance, would your character have a cell phone, a land line, or both?

Does your character drink martinis or cheap beer?

Does he still get money from his parents, or worry about what will happen to his parents as they age?

4. What is your character called?

Names are important.

**Give your character a name
as you are developing their identity.**

**Giving them a name will help you become
really attached to them.**

If your main character is Christian Zeilig,
then he's most probably a Jewish man.

Or if your character is called Nicholo Rossi
his ancestry is Italian.

Your character's name provides a lot of information: not only about ethnicity, but about your character's age, background, and social class.

If the main female is named Skye, then she's probably under 30.

5. What does your character look like?

Is your character tall enough to see over the heads of a crowd at a bar, or to notice the dust on the top of his girlfriend's refrigerator?

How does she deal with weight issues?

Does she avoid looking at herself in the mirror?

5. What does your character look like?

Physical details are also important. Even though you may not describe all the details to your reader, you need to give them clues, and you need to know the physical details really well, otherwise you might make mistakes when you're writing about them.

5. What does your character look like?

For example: you might say the character had been a frail child, and then later in the story you have them climbing a mountain.

You will have to give the reader some idea of how they managed to overcome a childhood of illness to become a strong and powerful adult.

6. What kind of childhood did he or she have?

As with real people, many things about your character's personality will be determined by his background.

6. What kind of childhood did he or she have?

Did his parents have a good marriage?

Was she raised by a single mum?

How your character interacts with other people, whether he's defensive or confident, stable or rootless, may be influenced by his past.

7. What does your character do for a living?

As with all of these questions, how much information you need, depends in some part on the plot, but you'll need some idea of how your character makes money.

7. What does your character do for a living?

A dancer will look at the world very differently from an accountant, for instance, and a construction worker will use very different language from either one.

How they feel about a host of issues, from money to family, will be in some part dependent on their choice of careers.

8. How does your character deal with conflict and change?

Most stories involve some element of conflict and change - they're part of what makes a story a story.

Is your character passive or active?

8. How does your character deal with conflict and change?

If someone confronts her, does she change the subject, head for the mini-bar, stalk off, or do a deep-breathing exercise?

When someone insults him, is he more likely to take it, become abusive, or excuse himself and find someone else to talk to?

9. Who else is in your character's life?

Relationships: We know how people interact with others reveals a lot about their character.

The other characters in your story will allow you to introduce great dialogue and you can use them to tell the reader about your main character, their background etc.

9. Who else is in your character's life?

Dialogue is more powerful than narration.

Think about the type of people who would be in your primary character's world.

Bring them into the story and let them build the plot by what they say and how they interact with the other characters.

10. What is your character's goal or motivation in this story or scene?

In longer stories or novels, you'll have to remind yourself repeatedly about each character's personality, goal, and social skills.

10. What is your character's goal or motivation in this story or scene?

Many of your character's actions will result from the intersection of what she's trying to achieve, and her own personality.

10. What is your character's goal or motivation in this story or scene?

When in doubt about how your character should behave, ask yourself what your character wants from the situation, and think about the answers you've given to all the Question 1–9.

MASTER CLASS



*Well that's it
for now folks.*

I hope you check in
each week and stay
up-to-date with the
latest material.

Cheers,
Suzanne



BELIEVABLE CHARACTERS



All content and images used in this presentation
are subject to copyright.

© Suzanne Fleming 2015 – 2021

**The online use and/or download of the material
may ONLY be for non-commercial research
and/or private study**

The material, in whole or part, may **NOT** be used for
commercial purposes without the written consent
of the author.

COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT WILL BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY