


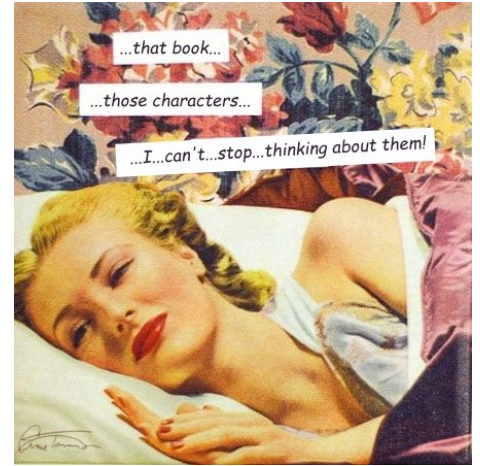


“Writing Amazing, True-to-Life Characters”

Character and plot are the two main ingredients of excellent fiction. **Characters bring your plot to life.** How do we create good characters and bring them to life?

STEP ONE: Character Creation

-  **Let's start easy.** Describe someone you know very well (your spouse, a parent, a sibling); there's a character.
-  **How about yourself?** After all, you should know yourself pretty well. There's another one.
-  **We need more.** How about your boss? He wears a toupee and flirts with the new girl. What else do you know? Not much, so you fantasize the rest, make up his past, his weaknesses and strengths, quirks and obsessions, all to build him into a 3-dimensional character your reader can love (or hate).





That's character creation!

STEP TWO: Character Fleshing

It is imperative you flesh out every character that interacts with the plot. If you don't, he/she will eventually act out of character, **distress the plot**, and disenfranchise the reader. Yes, it's THAT drastic. So, let's begin talking about **how to build incredible characters** that will actually **help you write your book**.

Side note: experts “leak” the physical description. Show, don't tell.

 **TELLING:** Steve wore a **Stetson** and **Ray-Ban** sunglasses. Today he had on a **frayed flannel shirt** under his **dirty and ripped coveralls**. He wore **cowboy boots with silver toes, and they were so old that the stitched detail had disappeared**.

 **SHOWING:** Steve whipped off his **Ray-Bans**, but the wide-brim of his **Stetson** made it difficult to read his gaze. Was he angry or bored? I know his wife; she'd never let him leave the house with that **tattered flannel shirt**, and she was fastidious—she'd wash those **coveralls** three times before she let him don them for a trip to fix the neighbor's fence. So, where was she? Was she sick? I began to think Steve might have hurt her, hit her like he did at last year's street party. He stomped the **silver-tipped toe** of his **worn-out cowboy boot** and cleared his throat. I knew that sound. Steve was having bad thoughts and there was no one around but us.

Each character is made up of **how he looks** (appearance) and **how he acts** (personality), and everything those entail.

Follow these steps and figure out who he really is and your character will take on a life of his own. Once your character is real, he will begin behaving like a real person – unpredictable and whimsical.

“This is where you enter hazy territory of characters influencing—even defining—the story.” (Noah Lukeman, *The Plot Thickens*, St. Martin's Press 2002, page 26)

This is a workshop, so let's
WORKSHOP, BABY!

Worksheet Time !! *

* Download the worksheet free at
<http://www.ellencmaze.com/author-appearances.php>

“The moment comes when a character does or says something you hadn't thought about. At that moment, he's alive and you leave it to him.”

Graham Greene