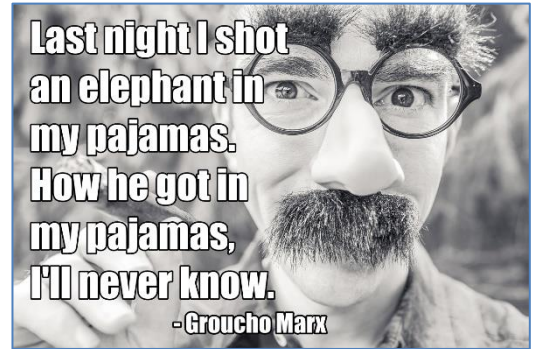





WRITING AMAZING, TRUE-TO-LIFE CHARACTERS

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.
-  **NOW ADD MORE.** How about your boss? He wears too much cologne & talks too close. What else do you know? Doesn't matter, you have an imagination, fantasize the rest. Make up his past, his weaknesses and strengths, quirks and obsessions, and 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 talk 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 !! *

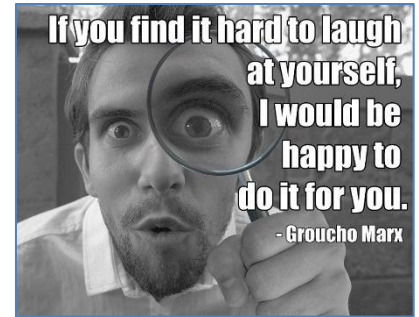
"The moment comes when a character does or says something you hadn't thought about. At that moment, he's alive and you leave it to him."

Graham Greene

WRITING AMAZING, TRUE-TO-LIFE CHARACTERS WORKSHEET

Character and plot are the two main ingredients of excellent fiction. **Characters bring your plot to life.** Let's look into **HOW** to create good characters and **HOW** to bring them to life.

Character is the basis (and catharsis) for every element of the book: the journey, the conflict, the suspense, and the resolution. Each character is made up of his **appearance** & his **personality**.



Think of a main character you already created or build one right now.
WE'RE ABOUT TO WORKSHOP!

1: APPEARANCE *...more than a pretty face...*

a) Face & body, clothes, grooming, body language, voice, health (handicaps, illness, shining with fitness?):

b) Psychology and family background (so often intertwined!).

c) Does he/she have children? How many, what gender? Did he have them young in life, old, average? Do they live with him?

d) WHERE does he / she live?

e) Education? Employment? Does he/she have a police record?

f) Finances, past and now? What are their material possessions, and do they have a favorite belonging?

g) What's the romantic history?

h) What are the animals or pets in his / her life?

2: PERSONALITY: WHAT ARE YOUR CHARACTER'S

a) **INHERENT ABILITIES OR DISABILITIES?** Is he a genius? Prodigy? Color blind? ADD? Dyslexic?

b) **RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY?** Organized religion? At home or in-heart religion? New Ager? Etc.

c) **IDENTITY?** Roles in life – dad, mom, son, police officer, teacher—also become our identity. How about your character?

d) **MORALITY?** Is he prejudiced? Does he know right from wrong the way God sees it? The way man sees it? In his own mind?

e) **SEXUALITY?** His orientation? Is he open about his sexuality or closed off? Wanton? Prudish? Etc.

f) **MOTIVATION?** What drives him? What are his secret dreams and goals?

g) **FRIENDSHIPS AND CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS:** you are affected by the company you keep. Who does your character hang with?

h) **SELF-AWARENESS / CONFIDENCE:** how does he perceive himself?

i) **WHAT ARE HIS VICES? HABITS? QUIRKS? FAVORITE FOODS?**

j) **IS HE CHARITABLE?**

MAKE A SHEET LIKE THIS ON YOUR MAIN CHARACTERS - IT WILL REALLY HELP BRING THEM TO LIFE!

Download this worksheet as often as needed at this link: <http://www.ellencmaze.com/author-appearances.php>

Sections of this teaching were gleaned from *THE PLOT THICKENS* by Noah Lukeman. Highly recommended reading! ~ Ellen