# Writing Dynamic (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: Create!

1. SOMEONE YOU KNOW? Describe someone you know very well (your spouse, a parent, a sibling); there's a character.

2. WHAT ABOUT YOU? After all, you should know yourself pretty well. There's another one.
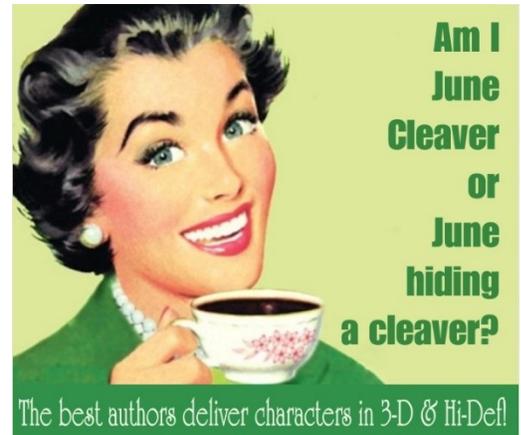
3. WHO ELSE? How about your neighbor? She strolls through her yard at midnight, pointing her cane at the moon. She's strange in other ways, too. What else do you know? **Is she waiting for her spaceship to return?** This is the start of a new character. Taking the smallest building blocks and fleshing her out until she's as real as you are! *That's character creation!*

STEP TWO: Flesh the Character Out!

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.**

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!

Worksheet Time !! *

* *Download the FULL UNEDITED worksheet free at* http://www.ellencmaze.com/author-appearances.php *- Labeled 2019)*

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.

"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*