

Connection to Character

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After School Village - Tarzana

Jump Into Writing!



Imagine the relationships between these children. Become one of the children and write a dialogue for him/her. What do you understand or know that no one else does? What will happen next?

Development of the Idea

- What's the most important choice your character must make in the story you have imagined?
- What pressures make that choice difficult?
- What is a memory from the past that makes your reader understand your character's choices better?
- Make a quick list of images associated with that memory.

The Interview

Last week, I invited you to write an interview between yourself and your main character. Here is a sample:

“She wanted to create the space for a conversation, almost an interview of sorts, where I would ask her about her experience. I could ask her about the room, the one I met her in last, the one she lived in for many years. I could ask what it was like, and why she stayed for so long, how she got into it, and how she left. But I feel that wouldn’t be kind right now. She left to come here, so I could ask her about where she lives now. Even this doesn’t feel right. Instead we’ll sit together for the evening and see what comes.”

What do we know about this character right now?

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Developing a Character

- Tell us an anecdote about a family member and how that expresses something about their character.
- Can you think of an anecdote that would be simple yet express something about the character in the story we just read? Use concrete details, rather than thoughts.

What Makes a Character “Real”?

Direct characterization =

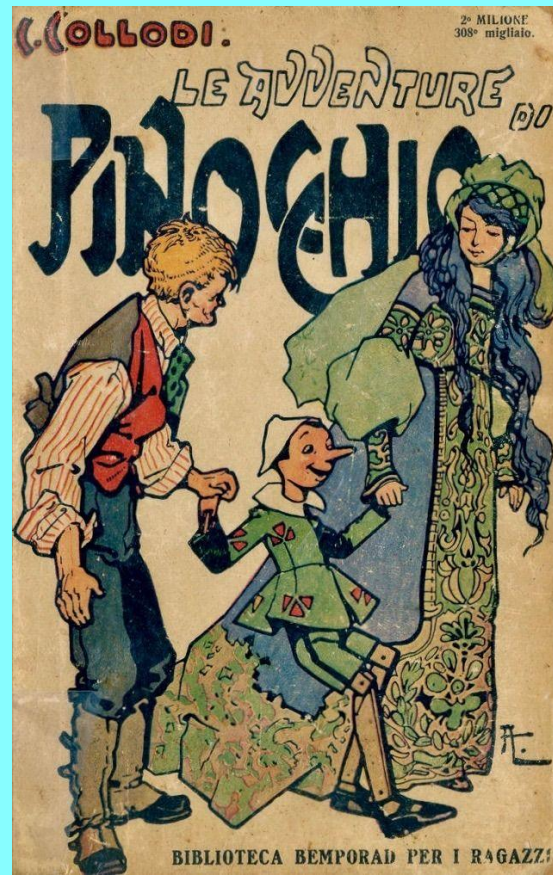
- Appearance
- Action
- Dialogue
- Thought



Unlike real people, fictional people do not (necessarily) need to be screened by privacy and secrecy. One of the real pleasures of reading fiction is the sense of intimacy and the sharing of an inner world.

Was Pinocchio “Real”?

- Or the Velveteen Rabbit or the Straw Man? Why or why not?



Sensory Impressions

Writing about character is the same as other aspects of telling stories.

- It has to convey sensory information.
- It has to allow readers to become involved.
- It has to illustrate attitude (either the narrator's or the character's)

***Describe your character in a few unique sentences now.**

Don't say she has brown curly hair and is mid-height, mid-weight and sort of smiling because you just described half the world.

Appearance

- All senses convey appearance
- Give examples of visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory or olfactory details that convey the appearance of a character.



Action

Stories record a process of change and that change happens through a series of escalating actions taken or rejected.

“When he returned to the kitchen, the cat was scratching in her box. She looked t him steadily for a minute before she turned back to the litter. He opened all the cupboards and examined the canned goods, the cereals, the packaged foods, the cocktail and wine glasses, the china, the pots and pans. He opened the refrigerator. He sniffed some ceelery, took two bites of cheddar cheese, and chewed on an apple as he walked into the bedroom, The bed seemed enormous, with the fluffy white bedspread draped to the floor. He pulled out a nightstand drawer, found a half-empty packet of cigarettes and stuffed them into his pocket. Then he stepped to the closet and was opening it when...” Raymod Carver “Neighbours”

Bill Miller has intruded into his neighbour’s home. Note how each action is more problematic than the one before it.

Dialogue

- Speech is an attempt to externalize the internal
- A person's internal sense of themselves is conveyed in the way in which they speak. "What a pleasure to meet you" comes out of a different character than "Hey man, what's up?"

Based solely on his dialogue, what kind of a person is Calvin?



Thought

Like in speech, thought should convey more than just information. It can also set the scene and the mood, reveal motivation, betray contradictions, and create themes.



What Is Thought?

Aristotle says that “a man is his desire”, his character is defined by his purpose, good or bad.

Thought, according to Aristotle, is the way a person works backwards in his mind from his goal to determine what action he can take towards his goal in any given moment.

Do you agree?

Try It At Home

- Come up with a list of things that you want that are at odds with other things that you want. Can you write a paragraph or two about having to choose between these two desires?

