Write Right Now! With PeggySue Wells

Creative Characters

Character

Whether your story is character driven or plot driven, character is the organization and structure of a person's character or personality.

The common denominator of the nine basic plots is **Character** vs

- self (Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*)
- God (Jonah)

- their destiny (Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars*)
- another character (Jean Valjean vs Inspector Javert in *Les Miserables*)
- environment (*The Perfect Storm*)
- society or culture (*Anne Frank* and *The Hiding Place*)
- machine (John Henry)
- situation or circumstance (The Good Samaritan)
- the unknown (*Star Trek*)

To hold a reader's interest, create a character the reader cares about

- For youth, make character two years older than your reader
- Male main characters appeal to male and female readers
- Female main characters primarily appeal to female readers
- For a wider audience, consider a male main character with female sidekick
- Sidekick has the best lines
- Main character has a great need or longing
- What is your character's kryptonite?
- What is your character afraid of? (Snakes! Why does it always have to be snakes?)
- Describe what is unusual about your character • How are your good and bad guys interconnected?

Character must

- Wrestle tough topics such as slavery, adultery, theft, jealousy, envy, betrayal, loss, being misunderstood, love
- Face his worst fears

Bad Guys

- Bring out the worst and best in our characters
- Are not all bad
- Have a motivation for their behavior

Know Your Characters

To know what your character would or would not do and why, know what events shaped your character, their history, fears, affections, motivations.

- Take a personality test as your character
- Write out their backstory
- Do a psychological intake

Birth: Planned, wanted, named for someone? Birth order? How old were the parents? What was the family's socio-economic status? Culturally what was happening? Mother's health? Was birth easy or complicated? Did parents have expectations for the child? How prepared were parents to be parents?

Early Life: Loss of significant people? Quality of nutrition? Diseases? Bonding? Trust issues? Pets? Finances? Learning abilities? Peer relationships? Mentorships or lack of? Temperament? Best friends?

Puberty: When did puberty begin? Sexual awareness? Early romance? Were there parental surrogates like coaches, teachers, etc.?

Teenage: When and how did character separate from parents? What was first job? How did character create of unique sense of self? What unresolved issues linger from younger life? What is the character's personality, moods, and outlook?

Early adult: Higher education? Career? Relocation? Separation from family? What are character's hopes and dreams? Any sexual relationships? Accomplishments? Frustrations? What is the culture where character lives?, What are character's habits? Roadblocks? Love interests? Does character have children? Influences?

How does the character change as a result of facing the story's challenges? What is the character's arc?

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