

Write your best Characters now! **- Karen Farrell Jaworski -**

You hear so much talk about the importance of believable characters to a memorable story. So you have to sit back and think about it, what really is the main thing you remember long after you've finished the book and put it away? Yep, that's right, it *is* the people in the story. While you're with them it's like spending time with a friend. So, if we've established the fact that you need good strong characters to get readers to love your story, then how do you go about putting onto paper what you see in real life to make each character in your book come alive?

First, it's important to think about all of the people you see in an average day. Ones you pass by without giving it a second thought while you're going through your normal routine. Next time you're out and about remember to stop and take a look around you. Watch how the people you see walk, talk, act, etc. Personally, my favorite thing to do is to find a good spot at the local Starbucks or find a coffee shop in the local mall (it's better to go there in the evening time) and just watch the people around you. Look at their expressions, measure their stature, pay attention to every one of their gestures then write down every single thing that caught your eye as fast as you can so you don't forget a thing. Take it home and begin creating someone out of it.

Make sure to add as many of the characteristics as you can from your day of observation. Just height, weight, hair color, name and so forth will not be enough to create a memorable character. In fact, if you want what the publishing world calls "three-dimensional" characters, you'll need to go much deeper than that. You'll have to dig deeper and create even the smallest of personality quirks about each character to make them work. For instance, you should think about how their:

- moral standards
- code of ethics
- likes and dislikes
- habits
- hobbies
- hopes & dreams
- goals & desires
- and so forth are...

Just think of yourself as a "puppet master" if you will. You will be the overseer of every nuance of your character's personality, actions, reactions, dialogue with each other and so forth while they're "on-stage" interacting with each other in front of the reader. You are in a sense, in control of their very being, so make it good. Making your characters your own and not stereo-typical is very important to making your story interesting and believable. If your reader has seen this character in other books time and again, what would make your story any better or any different? It wouldn't. Actually, readers will be more inclined to put the book down and go on to the next one that has people in it they can relate to.

Also, don't forget, that this process of setting up your main characters and supporting cast before you begin the task of putting the story together will help the rest of the writing process go much smoother. Since you'll have already decided exactly how each person will act or react in any given situation when they are "onstage," this will basically settle the scenes before they happen. Especially if you decide ahead of time the role each character will play in your story.

So, now that you have the basic idea on how to create a believable character, there are just a few extra pointers to make your story shine:

1. When you're creating your character's personality profile, one of the most integral points to remember is to decide your character's strengths. Give him/her several strong traits then add in one weakness in that will stand out. Your character must still be someone you would normally like with this weakness, but the weakness itself must form the underlying tension that drives your character's behavior. Next, take that weakness and create a problem that preys on that flaw. It must be something that's difficult for your character to overcome so by the end of the story you can use it as a victory when they finally do conquer it.
2. Next, your protagonist must have many problems or a complex problem that's hard for him/her to solve. That way you can better highlight the above character flaw that drives him/her as well as their many strong character traits. The supporting characters should only have one problem to solve so they take a backseat to the main characters place in the story.
3. Make sure when you're creating the scenes for your characters that you involve all five of the senses. To make each character within the scene come alive, they need to experience their environment in the same way as we do. Think of the last novel you got caught up in and go back to your favorite parts and I'll bet you'll find a section that vividly describes your favorite scene in a very sensory way.
4. Last, make sure to choose your crisis points wisely. This can make or break the believability of your main characters and of the story itself. Make sure to give your protagonist an agonizing decision to make at just the pivotal time. It must be clear what his/her choice is and what the natural consequences are once the character chose the path he/she wanted to walk down.

Finally, creating memorable characters is as simple as taking the time to get to know who you want to act out the story you're sharing with your readers. When deciding on and setting up the cast for your book, think about the kind of people you'd want to hang out with day in and day out for the next few months and then put them down on paper and begin having some fun!