

Character Development

REFLECTION on First Impressions from last meeting

When we are first introduced to a new character in a book we are, just like in real life, relying on this first impression to give us information about the character.

Read: introduction of Ruby Bell from *Ruby* by Cynthia Bond

Discussion: of famous character, Archie Bunker (appearance, personality, backstory)

Discussion: of Rosanne Barr using same criteria.

Character Development

USING DIALOGUE

Read: [the dialogue](#) taken from Ernie Briginshaw's book

Discuss:

1. Do you get a good sense of the characters' personalities from reading this.
2. What are their personalities?
3. What is their relationship with one another?

Read: the dialogue taken from the play titled, *Trying*

Good Dialogue

- It develops characters; helps define the character's personality, emotions, and actions. With dialogue you can show who the character is instead of describing how the character is;
- it conveys conflict, attitudes, and intentions. Rather than telling about the character, it reveals character;
- It provides information that the reader senses (often unconsciously) about the relationship between the characters;
- it tends to be short and spare. Generally no character will speak for more than two or three lines;
- it is like a tennis match, the ball moves back and forth between characters representing a constant exchange of power that can be sexual, physical, political, or social;

What is Bad Dialogue

If the elements that make up good dialogue include conflict, attitudes, and emotions. What, then, is bad dialogue?

- With bad dialogue, all characters sound alike, and none of them sounds like a real person;
- Bad dialogue, rather than revealing character it spells out every thought and feeling;
- Bad dialogue simplifies people, instead of revealing their complexity.

According to Shelly Lowenkopf, “Dialogue in a novel was never intended to be an exact representation of speech, it represents the attitude of the characters. You should be able to tell who is speaking by what he or she wants. So dialogue should be an outpouring of the secret part of the character. Part of constructing good dialogue is to think through and understand what a character wants to keep secret.”

A few things to remember: If your dialogue does not:

- make the story advance, OR
- help to develop the character

then what is its purpose? Delete it so it doesn't bore the reader.

Developing Character using Dialogue: its about each individual character and their personality, what they think, who they are and why they act the way they do. It's mostly based on their backstory ... understanding what happened in their history to make them think like that, or be like that.

As a writer, you have to imagine each individual character and their personality; and conjure up for each of them a backstory that would realistically make them be this way.

THE CHALLENGE (homework): due before January 8th

Submit the pdf file by to joyce@thethirdhouse.ca

Most recently, you have twice been given the Challenges of creating a character, complete with physical and non-physical characteristics. You've also written their backstories. Since you now know these two characters so well, and know what they will do in any given situation, your challenge is to put them into the same situation and write a dialogue scene between the two of them. Be sure that the dialogue helps us, the readers, understand their character — aka character development in the mind of the reader. *(If you haven't already created two different characters, please do so before you continue.)*

Choose from one of the following scenarios or make up a Christmas scenario of your own:

- Your two characters are waiting up for Santa together, Santa doesn't arrive,
- They came home from Christmas Eve concert to find the gifts under the tree are gone,
- Come home from Christmas Eve event to find somebody in the act of robbing the gifts from under the Christmas tree,
- Come home from Christmas Eve concert to find a goodwill bag on the doorstep with a note, "Merry Christmas from the Random Acts of Kindness Society."
- Open a present from under the tree to find it contains a long-lost pearl necklace that used to belong to long-since-deceased grandmother, and somebody should have inherited it long ago but it had gone missing,
- They are putting up posters for the Christmas concert when they notice that the wrong person's name is listed as the director.