

## EXCLUSIVE GUIDE TO CREATING BADASS CHARACTERS FOR YOUR NEXT NOVEL

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Characters are the heart of every novel that you will ever think of writing.

They are the guys that tell the story to the reader. Characters will hold the reader's attention to the end of the [novel](#) or just loose him at the beginning of the novel. I am sure you want your readers to stick with your novel to the end.

I am sure you want Hollywood to consider making a movie out of your book.

If that is right, then I think it is also right to say that you will need to think ahead of starting to **pen out your novel** about the characters that you will be putting in your book. This is a guide that I wrote that will help you out with tips and ideas that will get you to understand all the basics for creating badass characters. I have taken inspiration from the numerous novels I have read and analyzed.

Are you ready to create compelling characters?

I bet your answer is yes...

### 7 TIPS FOR CREATING GREAT CHARACTERS FOR YOUR NEXT NOVEL

#### 1. LET YOUR CHARACTERS BE FLAWED BUT SYMPATHETIC

Ever watched a movie that had a character that was completely flawless. What was the experience with that movie and the character specifically?

I will guess... The experience was not that awesome.

Ever watched a movie that had a character that was flawed but yet sympathetic? A character who forgot to file his tax returns in time? A character who completely messed up his or her job interview. A character who made bad choices. A character who has a really bad temper.

This character should also be sympathetic. This will allow the readers to forgive the many flaws that he or she has.

What being flawed helps in is by making the story and the character relatable.

Nobody wants to read a book with characters that all seem to be like robots. Doing the right thing at the right time and in the right place. Not unless that robot goes haywire at some point and the operating system crashes such that the robot starts messing around.

We are flawed human beings. And we all are searching for hints that being flawed is okay.

That is why when we find a character in a book that we can relate to we are likely to stick around reading the book as compared to when we find a character that we can never relate to.

"Perfect" characters usually seem annoying, narcissistic, or unstable. Fiction's purpose may be to entertain, but it also helps us connect with difficult aspects of the human condition. It validates and explains the complex array of emotions that color our experiences and our lives. (In fact, researchers at The New School of New York conducted a study, published in the October 2015 issue of the

journal *Science*, that revealed that fiction readers show an increased capacity for empathy and for experiencing compassion for people vastly different from themselves.) The more *surmountable* flaws your characters have, the better readers will connect with them.

And I assume to make a best seller, your aim is to make sure that your readers are connecting with your characters.

A small sneak peek at the best sellers to find out what I am talking about:

- **Katniss Everdeen of The Hunger Games series can be stubborn and self-sacrificing. This flaw eventually translates into honesty and integrity that allow her to speak hard truths and stand up for the underdog.**
- **Hermione Granger in the Harry Potter books often blurts out information like a know-it-all, but she has the actual knowledge to back up this flaw, and this trait becomes valuable to dozens of other characters over the course of the books.**

## 2. CREATE PROBLEMS AND CREATE HIGH STAKES FOR IF THE CHARACTER FAILS

The problem that you introduce while creating characters should not just be a mediocre challenge.

To sustain a whole plot and keep the plot real interesting, the problem has to be able to force the character into changing his or her life. If the character does not change his or her life in order to rise up to the challenge, then there should be dire consequences or what I am calling **high stakes**.

Stakes are what the character stands to gain or lose – and usually, the consequences of losing should be dire. High stakes raise questions such as, *how badly does the hero want to solve that problem?* and *What is he prepared to do – and risk – to get it?* A writer who loses sight of what's at stake is likely to lose his readers.

Stakes need to escalate through the story and reach a peak at the climax. Stakes can be global (i.e. affecting a community, country or the world) or personal (affecting someone the hero knows and cares about). Stakes are more compelling when there is a personal element, such as the fate of another character the hero cares about. *The more emotional the stakes, the more your readers will care about the outcome.*

***Imagine of story like where a character receives a negative medical diagnosis that tells him or her that he has [diabetes](#) a day before he joins the army. He still wants to join the army but that now means he will have to deal with managing his diabetes while firing bullets to save his country (including administering insulin).***

***The character is currently an alcoholic and a don't care kind of a guy such that he is really horrible at choosing the kind of diet that can be called healthy.***

***If this character does not rise up to the challenge of having diabetes and still wanting to join the army and decide to change his life, the stakes are that he might lose his life due to diabetes complications which might happen to him in the future or even never get to join the army.***

You see, a problem is introduced that has high enough stakes such that the reader wishes to continue reading to see what happens to the character.

Does he change his life to rise up to the challenges that he is currently facing or does he just slack off?

### 3. CREATE CHARACTERS THAT HAVE AN EMOTIONAL IMPACT ON THE READER

We all know how emotions are strong for people in general.

Yeah, Love is an emotion.

Make sure that you make the reader feel a very strong emotion for the character such that he or she feels connected.

A good example is making the reader feel sorry for the **underdog**. The underdog is a character in a book who is constantly mistreated and is often powerless.

But how can I make the reader feel sorry for the underdog?

Glad you could ask.

Here:

- **Undeserved mistreatment, injustice and contempt.** Teasing, humiliation, mockery, embarrassment, being snubbed or passed over, prejudice, false accusation, physical brutality and violence. These are heightened if a defenseless character is abused, exploited or made to suffer.
- **Undeserved misfortune.** Death of a loved one, loss of someone or something important or valuable, someone down on his luck, someone who has had an accident, or sheer bad luck.
- **Physical, mental, health or financial handicaps.** Characters with a physical deformity, handicap, mental illness, who are trapped by their situation or by a fear or phobia, are ugly, burdened by an addiction or disease, or enduring extreme poverty or hardship.
- **Suffering an injury.** We empathize for any character who is injured or wounded and in pain or danger.
- **Fear** of a secret being found out, or a desperate need to achieve a certain goal. If the need is too great, the protagonist may be crushed if he fails to achieve his goal.
- **Revealing weakness or vulnerability** – any weakness will do, when a character is suffering pain, grief, self-doubt, fear etc, but especially when the character has reached rock bottom and lost all hope.
- **Betrayal or deception** (but we applaud when the hero does it to a villain).
- **Disbelieved when telling the truth.**
- **Exclusion and rejection.** Because the need for love and belonging is universal, exclusion or rejection creates instant empathy. Also, unrequited love, and involuntary outcasts, loners and misfits.
- **Regret for mistakes made.** Readers feel sorry for the character and identify with him because it shows he's human.

- **Jeopardy.** Whenever a character is put in danger, readers empathize, and the greater the danger (eg of being captured, maimed, killed, arrested, caught out or exposed) the greater the empathy.
- **Vulnerability,** i.e. they can be killed, trapped, enslaved, destroyed politically or professionally, or ruined financially or socially. Vulnerability can come from the character's own physical, mental or emotional shortcomings and conflicts as well as from the machinations of the adversary.

Empathy is such a great emotional feeling. It is strong enough to create a great connection between your readers and your characters.

#### 4. CREATE CHARACTERS THAT YOUR READERS CAN LOOK UP TO

We all love the greatest people in the history of the planet.

The reason behind this is the fact that we can look up to them.

**Readers are attracted to good or decent characters, people who exemplify humanity at its finest. They have strength of character – they fight for their rights, and what they believe in, and for others weaker than themselves. They show courage in the face of overwhelming opposition, and despite their own fear:**

- Those who help others, especially those less fortunate. George Bailey from *It's a Wonderful Life* exemplifies this. Characters from the service professions – doctor, teacher, nurse, fire-fighter, police officer, etc – are attractive for this reason.
- Acting in any nurturing way creates a bond with the reader, such as characters who relate to or are liked by children or animals. If an animal comes to like a dark character, it's appealing because it suggests that the animal senses his true nature.
- Characters who have a change of heart (eg accepting someone he previously disliked) or show forgiveness.
- Characters who risk their life for others, or sacrifice something important to help another person. Fighting or dying for a just cause, or any other courageous or selfless act.
- Attributes such as being ethical, moral, dependable, loyal and responsible are highly appealing.
- Mattering to others. A character becomes appealing if the people around him like him, respect his skills or consider him an expert in something useful.
- Showing humanity in private moments, such as a character who reveals her true self when she thinks no one is looking. If this is combined with undeserved mistreatment, such as ridicule or humiliation, readers will engage even more strongly with the character.

**We also look up to characters who are exceptional. Characters who are strong, important, unusual or extraordinary are attractive and fascinating, partly because of reader wish-fulfilment, and partly because such characters provide glimpses into a life ordinary people never experience. Readers admire characters who are really good at something, whatever it is – and it's especially interesting if it's something they would not be expected to know.**

For example:

- Power – because of noble birth, wealth, high office, rank or position, intelligence or physical strength, leadership or charisma;
- Physical or mental courage; or sheer persistence;
- Natural gifts, great skills or expertise at something important or useful; or a glamorous profession.
- Physical attractiveness, charm, wit or wisdom; or are funny, dangerous or mysterious; or have sex appeal. If you show, early on, that other characters are drawn to the protagonist, readers will also find him more interesting;
- Passion; childlike innocence or enthusiasm;
- Are unusual (in appearance, a rare ability or an amazing life experience), extraordinary, strange, eccentric or downright weird – “If you look at the fiction that survived the 20<sup>th</sup> century, you’ll find that almost all the main characters are eccentric.” Sol Stein;
- Are surprising (they don’t fit the stereotype of their character type). A warrior who’s also a poet; a nun who excels in poisons. The contradiction makes them more interesting;
- Or are misfits, rebels or eccentrics.

## 5. CREATE CHARACTERS THAT HAVE INTERNAL CONFLICTS JUST LIKE THE NORMAL HUMAN BEING

Real people often vacillate, are wracked by indecision, have guilt pangs, fears, misgivings, doubts and second thoughts, and such inner conflicts make these characters highly memorable because they show what the character has to lose. Inner conflict makes the character’s choices more difficult, and therefore more engaging for the reader.

For example, you can create a character whose darkest secrets becomes his or her greatest desires.

This character will have to deal with a lot of internal conflict given that he or she is harboring a secret that she or he doesn’t want getting out in the open but that same secret has become the greatest desire.

Should he or she act upon her or his desires or should she or he let it just go by?

## 6. CREATE A CHARACTER WITH TROUBLING PAST

Memorable characters are often dealing with something from their past which has created a psychological or emotional scar). For Harry Potter, it’s the murder of his parents when he was a baby. He has to find out exactly what happened to them, and defeat Voldemort, before he can move on.

The hero’s wound may come from:

- A traumatic event, e.g. a serious injury, an attack, abuse, bullying or neglect, a tragic loss or deep shame);
- Or her life and upbringing (e.g. a poverty-stricken existence, a rigidly religious or intolerant community).

This wound may be the reason why she's so driven to achieve her goal. It may also cause the hero to:

- Live in a fantasy world;
- Fear intimacy or relationships;
- Avoid conflict or troubling areas of life;
- Be embittered and angry at the world;
- Become an attention seeker;
- Or avoid conflict.

The emotional wound drives the character's arc as she struggles to overcome its legacy. Until she can deal with her past it must always control her, and this provides a powerful motivation for the hero's actions which keeps the readers hooked up.

## 7. CRAFT A CHARACTER THAT DISPLAYS CONTRADICTION

Don't we all love a contradiction?

Don't we all get thrilled when we see a person do something that we never expected that person to ever do?

This is the kind of thrill that we are trying to put into our [writing](#) in order to keep our readers reading our books and even coming for more of our books.

We all know people who are both shy and rude, cruel but funny, bigoted but protective. This complexity, which seems to particularly manifest itself during times of stress or conflict, is what can make a person inherently unpredictable, setting the stage for the kind of surprising behavior that can keep readers enthralled, wondering what might happen next.

Our senses and minds are tuned to focus on irregularities—the thing that doesn't quite fit, doesn't make sense, or is simply changing. This is an evolutionarily adaptive trait; it helps in analyzing the environment for threats. But it also attunes us to whatever is unusual in what we perceive; contradictions reveal what we couldn't predict, the enigma, the surprise.

## CLOSING WORD

So, there they are.

The top seven tips in details that you will need in order to create the best characters that will fit your [novel](#) and even make sure that your readers are hooked up on your novels.

Do you think that there is a tip that I should have put up in this post but you never found it?

I would like to hear about it in the comments below.

Happy writing family!

