

WEEK FIVE REVIEW

Hope you enjoyed your first week of the more traditional building blocks to storytelling and writing: **Characters** and **Heroes**.

I still stand by the first half of this course, that you need to spend time on that boring stuff (reading, language, structure, concept) to be able to dig in on the more actionable topics.

It is something that makes the master writers so good and lasting.

They learned that foundation so that they could apply it to the actual process of writing.

Characters are creatures (even when human) that are often watered down to their most basic demographics. Especially in modern writing, when we're all in a rush to pay off our readers with a bit of information that sends them on their way.

But the enduring characters, that are still quoted and referenced a century or more later, are the ones that are well-developed. That we as readers can connect with.

Even when they're fictional or conceptual, they're real. They feel like someone we *know*.

Because, after all the work a writer (that's you!) does to create them, they almost are.



DAY 29 - MOBY DICK

(Key Takeaways)

- Rarely does flat-out describing a character make for interesting reading
- A character becomes even more interesting when you are able to learn more about their “why” and “how” than their “what” and “who”
- Writers often do this by describing their characters through the lens/viewpoint of another character or concept
- Give the reader just enough information to make them want to ask questions about your characters, then give them the answers
- In a book called *Moby Dick*, told by a man named Ishmael, you wouldn't consider that the actual main character is a random ship captain named Ahab

Things to Consider

- Do you primarily write about your characters only by describing their physical, vocational, and habitual demographics?
- Or do you also share some of their wishes, desires, fears, appetites, and motivations for action (remember Aristotle's *Organon*?) since that is what we as readers (and humans) want as well?
- Is the main character or focus for your story or article *actually* the main character you are writing about?
- What third-party and supporting characters can you incorporate to tell readers about your main characters?



DAY 30 - DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

(Key Takeaways)

- Learning about great writing isn't just about studying rules and language and foundations; it is also about finding connections and correlations in (sometimes) the most random of places
- Even in fantasy and fiction, the understanding of data and demographics and statistics can be central to the storyline (obviously even moreso in nonfiction and journalistic writing)
- People like to have proof and information for *why* characters would do the things that make a story move along
- We want to read about and create characters they can connect with; we want to understand our character's life and motivations
- Everybody wants to be the hero in their own story

Things to Consider

- Are you creating characters that are so developed and detailed that a reader needs a spellbook and rules guide to understand everything that is happening? (This isn't a bad thing (hey *Game of Thrones*) but it takes a LOT more work and effort.)
- Can you support your story with information and data and statistics? Even in a completely imaginary world and space?
- Do you give your readers characters that they can connect with?
- Do you make your readers feel like the heroes in their own stories?



DAY 31 - THE ROSIE PROJECT

(Key Takeaways)

- It is possible to create your ideal character by answering a slew of questions
- Ideal characters look great on paper, but rarely exist in reality
- When we cling too much to what we think an ideal character is supposed to be and do, we don't give them the opportunity to grow or change
- Sometimes we need outside views and trusted opinions to be able to see the flaws and holes in our thought process and writing
- If a character gets written into a corner, letting go of the "shoulds" will give you (as the writer) the chance to see where the story *really* needs to go

Things to Consider

- Do you know who *you* want your ideal character to be?
- Have you gone through the hard work of asking a ton of questions about your ideal character and considered what you want the answers to be?
- What answers are you willing to compromise on?
- What answers are more about what *you* want than what your ideal character would want?
- Are you clinging too tightly to an ideal that is impossible?
- Have you gotten any outside views or trusted opinions on whether your ideal character is unrelatable and unreal?



DAY 32 - MEET JIMMY

(Key Takeaways)

- Characters exist in all good writing, whether it is fiction or nonfiction (or any other genre that exists outside or in-between)
- Ideal customers are important not only for entrepreneurs and business/copywriters, but for all writers (in fiction, they are more “ideal readers”)
- The process of creating an ideal customer/reader is similar to the process of creating any sort of character
- Knowing about the motivations and desires of your ideal customer/reader could be considered even more important than knowing the demographics and information (but it’s pretty hard to figure that stuff out if you *don’t* know about their hard data)

Things to Consider

- Do you have an ideal customer or reader profile?
- Is it just about the demographics and details? Or does it dig into their reasons for taking action?
- Do you know them as a real person? Could you introduce them to someone, knowing who they’d most like to meet anyway?
- Do you have different profiles, one for your ideal customer, and one for your ideal reader (if you are a business writer or entrepreneur); is it the same or two different people?
- Does your ideal customer or reader have enough flexibility to appeal to more than just their exact match? Or have you written them into a corner?



DAY 33 - MY BRILLIANT FRIEND

(Key Takeaways)

- A character is never just about their experience in the present—there's always a backstory to consider, sometimes known and sometimes unknown or inferred
- It is possible to describe someone physically without having to write it like a detective's report
- The antagonist or villain in a story can be admired, if you make them multi-dimensional
- Sometimes the more engaging challenges and writing are not situations that are so black and white that it is easy to decide who or what is right and wrong. Because real life rarely works that way, and readers know that

Things to Consider

- Do you focus on making your characters likeable? Or do you focus on making them real?
- Is your antagonist or challenge the exact opposite of your protagonist?
- Have you written a story that is what would actually happen in reality? Where we tend to live in the grey areas more than the absolutes?
- How much of your character's backstory do you know? Or have you thought about?
- Why does your character do what they do?

