

Discussion Paper September 2020

Character Building.

Over the past few weeks, I have read a couple of stories, both fiction, where, in one, the character description is over the top, where the description gives every intimate detail (an information dump as it is termed) and the other story where the character appears as a name, no introduction or where the character fits in. The character just appears and enters the conversation.

Which is correct or where do you strike a happy medium?

When I looked at the subject, it dawned on me there could well be two sides to this argument. One for fiction and one for memoir.

In going through articles on character building, there seems to be some basic acceptable ways to build a character for fiction:

1: Use backstory for an important character introduction. Telling a character's history upfront immediately gives readers a sense of formative experiences and character psychology. If you choose this approach to introducing a character, avoid the info dump

2: Introduce a central character through other characters' words. As in life, fictional characters' reputations sometimes precede them. This is especially true for villains. Showing other characters talking about a dubious character before they arrive builds suspense.

3: Show a character performing a typical action. Introducing characters with actions is a simple and effective way to show what makes your characters uniquely themselves.

Any other suggestions by members?

I have written one major finished work (not counting countless short stories) and two work in progress. My finished work has two main characters and as strange as it may seem, one is me. The story is basically a wish list or a day dream that, while based partially on fact, the bulk is strictly a farfetched adventure and (mild) romance.

Of the three points above, I hope I have bought them out in the narrative. While the story and writing method probably does not follow the acceptable story pattern laid out by all the acceptable methods, I hide behind Stephen King's words. *"Write to please yourself. You will never please everybody."*