

Heroes & Shadows

Top Tips & Tricks

Character

- Characters reveal themselves by their actions, not by what they say
'I'm mad me, I'm really crazy' How many genuinely exciting, funny and inspiring people have said that to you?
- Know your characters inside out
earnings, job, career, values, politics, wardrobe, home, childhood, dreams, ambitions, guilt, pride, music, pets, accent, walk, ... and on, and on ...
- Choose the right name
Dickens was brilliant at this
- Characters don't always know themselves
You should know them better than they know themselves. Have you ever watched a mate heading for a fall because they just can't keep their mouth shut and no matter what you say, they still believe they're right?
- Know your Hero *
Can be a group or an individual
Not always human
Heroes have faults like the rest of us
They usually want something. They could have had something taken away from them and they want it back. They might need medicine, be searching for treasure, lost their lover. They take action and make decisions. Heroes react to stuff that happens to them rather than just sitting there or giving up.
- What do your characters want?
Your Hero's wants and needs are the most important but you should be able to answer this question of all your characters.
- The Villain is the hero of their own story
Shadow characters believe they are right. Keep this in mind, it'll help avoid stereotypes.
Strong shadow characters make for strong stories
- Suggest characteristics rather than stating them.
Mr Savage was the grumpiest old man in the city.
In the two hours it took Mr Savage to shuffle through the city centre, he'd clocked up three hundred and twenty things to moan about.

Story

- Know what your story is about
Nothing to do with what happens.
This is the theme or your work, between the lines of what you write.
- Know who your story is about
This is the Hero, sometimes called Protagonist
See above *
- Respect the world of your story
Get historical facts right
Fantasy & Sci-Fi, be consistent with how your world works
- Coincidences only work at the beginning
Can be a great way of setting up a story but coincidences toward the end can feel disappointing.

Methods

- Don't worry
Let yourself go
Write something you would want to read
- Time Travel
Play around with time, flashback / flash-forward
- Sensuality
Sight, smell, touch, hearing, taste
Make my mouth water, make me shudder: feel sick, breathe deeply, scratch, squirm... and so on.
- Emotions
Don't tell me how she feels. Try to make me feel that way too.
- Respect your Audience
Let me work some things out for myself
- Tension
Once you know what your Hero wants, make it harder and harder for her to achieve.
Give your Heroes a really hard time, don't be afraid to make them suffer, it's all the more rewarding once they succeed.
- Re-write
Ask people to read your work
Accept constructive criticism
Stay true to your vision
- Enjoy it

with the Bluecoat.