

Writing a Good Villain and Interesting Characters

JF Garrard, Deputy Editor, *Ricepaper Magazine*

Why do you need a villain?

- The villain is the person in conflict with the main character with opposite needs and wants
- Villains are the antagonists, they move the plot along and they challenge the hero to do better
- Villains that are purely evil are one-dimensional and not believable, they need to have a motive and are the heroes in their own stories
- Motives are important because opposite motives cause conflict and the conflict drives the story
 - Why + Motive = Villain Action
 - Villain Action = Hero Reaction

Different types of villains

- Villains can take many forms, but generally are either abstracta, are humans or have human characteristics
- An abstract villain can be a setting, a society, something supernatural or even the protagonist's self.
- It may be difficult for readers to connect with an abstract villain, so sometimes a person is assigned to represent it
- The villain is someone that the reader loves to hate and elicits strong emotions
- Without the villain, there is no hero

What Are the Characteristics of a Good Villain?

1. Connect them to the hero - the villains actions are what makes the protagonist grow
2. Clear moral code - the villain believes they are doing the right thing and it is clear what they will do and not do
3. Let the Villain win sometimes - this shows that they are a real threat to the hero and a worthy opponent
4. Strong backstory - this connects the readers to the villain and elicits sympathy to make them seem realistic
5. They are grey - villains are like real people and will have good qualities as well

Writing a Good Villain

1. Use real people as the muse with different names - create a character sketch in which you list their positive and negative attributes, their physical appearance, state of mind and other characteristics
2. Tap into your own emotions - if you are the villain, how would you feel if you were in the same situations
3. Consider their motivations - are they realistic? What would you do to achieve a goal?
4. First appearances - when readers first meet the villain, what will they remember?

What Is Character Development?

- This refers to writing characters that appear realistic to the readers
- The character seems three dimensional, with depth, personality, and motivations or undergoes a change in the story
- Why is this important? In the story, the plot happens to the character and if the reader does not understand the character as things happen to them, the story will not work
- The main character's goal sets the stage for the story and it doesn't matter if the stake is big or small as long as it makes the reader care enough to read on

What are the different types of characters?

- Protagonist - main character with the main stake in the story. They are usually flawed and there is a change in them by the end of the story
- Antagonist/villain - has their own motivations and is a barrier to the protagonist to drive conflict
- Secondary characters - they can help the protagonist or help the antagonist or just give the main character a hard time to make things more interesting

Writing Interesting Characters

- Specific conflicts between the protagonist and antagonist - if the conflict and stakes in the story aren't explained thoroughly, the reader will lose interest in the story
- Develop backstories - do character sketches of the character's past, their preferences, trauma, motivations, jobs, etc. to help flesh out the person
- Unique qualities - give each character quirks which will help distinguish them from another character
- Reveal inner thoughts - this will help the reader understand why the character is acting a certain way as things happen

Writing Interesting Characters (continued)

- Using visual aids - sometimes it helps to look at pictures of real people and build a Word doc to help with writing the character's physical description
- Paying attention to dialogue - when the characters speak, do they sound realistic to the time period they are supposed to be existing in?
- Show versus tell - when action is happening, let the readers figure out why the character did that action rather than telling them
- Character worksheet -
<https://www.writerswrite.com/characters/character-profile/>

References

5 Tips For Writing Superbad Villains

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