

DEAD TO WRITES

A MALICE IN MEMPHIS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2015 ISSUE

From the President:

Our president is in Florida helping her mom take care of her 99 year old grandmother, to give her aunt and uncle a much needed break for their anniversary. Missy and family will be traveling back home next week please keep them in your prayers for safe travels. We will not have this room next month due to a conflict with the library schedule.

Below you will find the agenda.

Juanita D. Houston

AGENDA FOR MALICE IN MEMPHIS * JUNE 13, 2015

Call Meeting to Order

Welcome Members and guests

Old Business

New Business

Angelyn will present info on Wiggio, a possible new ongoing project for Malice.

Updates from Carolyn on the Ghost Stories

Continue with the Bios from anybody that has not presented them to the group.

Questions about scrivener tutorial and if you have any questions you, Seth has provided his email address and you can contact him at seth.wood@me.com.

Call Meeting to end. Lunch at Brad's BBQ unless otherwise decided

All,

Since we have no guest lined up for this Saturday, we will discuss our Scrivener tutorial from last month and answer any questions that may have arisen. Next, we will give Carolyn the floor to go over any questions/concerns regarding the second anthology. Then if time allows, we will go over bio's for the members who haven't already given theirs to update our member database. Also Angelyn will provide info on a possible ongoing project for Malice and will be able to answer any questions that anybody might have about it.

Hope to see everyone this Saturday.

Best,

Kristi Bradley
VP Malice in Memphis

Check out our new Anthology:

Malice in Memphis:Bluff City Mysteries. You can get it at

<http://www.darkoakpress.com/malice.html> or on Amazon.

Minutes for May 2015

A motion made to dispense with business last month due to presentation of Scrivener. Thank You Seth for the great presentation.

WRITING TIP:

Adding texture to your work makes it come alive. It can be as simple as putting in a simple word or phrase that helps the reader visualize the scene. A phrase like: The dead body was at the edge of the curb. The crumpled body hung half on and half off the edge of the curb. Some people add texture while writing the first draft. I tend to write a scene then go back and add the texture. Whichever way you write adding texture is good, just don't go overboard. Like all aspects of writing: a little goes a long way.

Happy writing
Barbara Christopher

Disclaimer: I signed up for a newsletter called Creative Writing Newsletter back in July 2010 and it is a great newsletter. I recommend that every writer check it out. You get prompts, and help with just about any issue you might have. I hope that you check it out and that Nancy from Creative Writing doesn't mind me posting this in our newsletter. She does an awesome job. I am hoping this will get her many more followers.

I subscribe to Creative Writing Newsletter on line and receive emails with some writing tips and ideas each week. I thought I would pull from the saved emails and put some in the newsletter so that you can enjoy them as well. The schedule will be as follows: Lesson 1 – June Newsletter

Lesson 2 - July Newsletter Lesson 3 - August Newsletter

After August I will post some of the other email contents: hope you enjoy this series.

Welcome to Lesson 1 of Endless Story Ideas!

In this course, you'll generate lots of story ideas that you can use later. And, more importantly, you'll learn techniques for getting new story ideas whenever you need them.

Today, we're going to focus on generating ideas for fictional characters.

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Elements of a story
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There are three elements that a story needs: a character, a setting, and a conflict.

A piece of writing is not a story unless something happens in it. If nothing happens, the piece might be a description or an article or a philosophical discourse, but not a story.

In a story, something has to happen. It happens to someone (a *character*), and it happens somewhere (*a setting*).

A *conflict* -- or problem -- is what makes something happen. We'll talk more about conflict, and why it's necessary, in tomorrow's lesson.

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How story ideas are born
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Authors generally start with one of three elements (character, setting, or conflict) and use the one chosen to come up with the other two. There's no right or wrong order to this process.

An idea for a conflict (for example, high school bullying), can lead both to character ideas (Who's the bully? What motivates him? Who are the victims? How will they respond?) and also to setting ideas (What kind of school do these characters attend? Where is this school located? Is it a rough public school, a snooty private one?).

An idea for a setting (for example, a Mississippi cotton plantation just before the Civil War) can lead to conflict ideas (slaves forcibly separated

from their children), and character ideas (a pregnant slave willing to risk her life to keep her unborn child).

Or an idea for a character (for example, a woman who is obsessed with neatness) can lead to conflict ideas (In what situation would the character's obsession with neatness become a problem? In what situation would she face a mess she couldn't control?), and setting ideas (the woman's ultra-organized apartment with its elaborate systems of cabinets, compartments, and labeled containers).

Now, let's start coming up with some character ideas that you'll use over the next two days of the course to get ideas for conflict and setting.

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5 ways to get character ideas

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How do you get ideas for characters? Here are five different ways. EACH ONE of these is a gold mine.

***** Method # 1: People-watch. *****

Observe people who pass you on the street; go to a mall or a café and watch the people around you. Look at how they dress and present themselves, their facial expressions, their gestures, how they move, how they interact with each other. Try to imagine their lives.

Watch people in line at the supermarket -- listen to their conversations, pay attention to what they're buying. Do they live by themselves or with children? Do they have pets? Do they cook a lot, or do they keep precooked food in their freezers? Are they planning a party? Or, are they possibly drinking too much alone?

Every one of these people can become a fictional character in your stories.

***** Method # 2: Get ideas from the newspaper. *****

Newspapers are a rich source of character ideas.

When you read about ordinary people in extraordinary situations, try to imagine the people behind the headlines. What might have caused a

particular woman to shoot her husband? What kind of person might she be, and what might her husband have been like?

The people you imagine are likely to be very different from the real people involved in the news item. That's fine. They're fictional characters that you have invented. Now you can use them however you like in your stories.

Wedding announcements and obituaries are another great place to look for character ideas. Use your imagination to fill in the blank space around the information the newspaper reports.

***** Method # 3: Get ideas from names. *****

A name triggers a complex set of associations, based on its sound and the way it looks on a page, based also on the people we have known or heard of with that name or similar names.

Take a moment to picture a woman named Gertrude, a woman named Donna, a woman named Veronique. What images do these names bring to mind? I imagine three very different women.

The name Gertrude makes me think of a sixty-year-old woman with graying chin-length hair pushed back behind her ears. She wears no makeup and has deep lines along the sides of her mouth. She is tall and lean -- she takes long walks every day, and she has a swift, determined stride as if she's always on her way to solve an urgent problem.

Your Gertrude is probably completely different from mine. That's great.

Whenever you need character ideas, write down three names. Choose the names at random from a phone book or another directory, or just write down the first three names that occur to you.

Try to picture a person with each of the names you've chosen. Take notes on what you imagine. You've just come up with the seeds of three characters!

***** Method # 4: Mix and match. *****

Often, writers base characters on real people they know. That sometimes works well, but in other cases, it can be limiting. It can be hard to stop thinking of the real person and imagine the character separately.

Here's a different method to try: create a character that mixes aspects of several people you know.

For example, you might invent a character who is partly based on your father, partly based on one of your high school teachers, and partly based on your boss at work. Or, you might base a character on your father, but make that character a woman. You could base the character's physical appearance on a waitress you saw at a restaurant.

The result of each combination will be a character who shares similarities with all of these people but, at the same time, is different from all of them, unique.

***** Method # 5: Turn characters into more characters. *****

Each character you create can be the seed of more character ideas.

Who is in your character's family? What are your character's parents like? Who is your character's best friend? Who is your character's enemy? What kind of person gets on your character's nerves? What kind of person attracts your character romantically or feels attracted by your character?

Brainstorm on questions like these, then develop the answers into new characters.

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How to develop a character

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Once you have an idea for a character, you can start developing the character by imagining more aspects of this person and his or her life.

Here's a questionnaire that you can use to create character profiles. Feel free to change any of the questions or add new ones:

- What's the character's occupation?
- What's the character's family like?

- Is the character in a relationship? What's his or her partner like?
- What is the character's home like? His or her neighborhood?
- Does your character have hobbies? What does he or she enjoy doing?
- What are your character's greatest strengths?
- What are his or her greatest weaknesses?
- What is his/her deepest desire?
- What is his/her greatest fear?
- What is something this character desperately wants to change about himself or herself?
- What is something this character doesn't know about himself or herself?

Most of this information will not actually go into your stories, but it will help you to flesh out the characters in your own mind so that you can write about them in a convincing way.

Your answers to these questions can also become an endless source of story ideas. I will show you how that works in tomorrow's lesson.

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Homework

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1) Start your Idea Journal. This is simply a place where you save your creative writing ideas so that you can come back to them later. Your Idea Journal doesn't have to be in any special format. It might simply be a file on your computer, or you might prefer to use a blank book or notebook. If you're already keeping a writer's journal, you can do the Idea Journal exercises there.

2) Try at least *two* of the five methods we've discussed to get character ideas for your Idea Journal. Come up with ideas for at least *three* characters. Use the Character Questionnaire to write character profiles for all three of these characters.

Happy writing!

Nancy

p.s. In [Description Writing Secrets](#), we look at advanced techniques for bringing your characters to life. You can find out more here:
<http://www.creative-writing-now.com/descriptive-writing.html>

We had a great discussion at the April meeting and one issue that was raised was the idea of developing a group forum, where members who have questions or need research ideas can access each member of Malice in relative ease.

Of course, that's the idea of email, however we know that everyone doesn't always monitor their email on a regular basis. We tossed around several ideas, one of them included starting a member's only workgroup. I suggested that we consider **WIGGIO.COM**
Their tag line: We make it easy to work in groups. LOL!

I've used this service before and it's super easy and has great functionality. Group emails, group texts, teleconferencing, videoconferencing and more AND it allows for group discussion in a forum type set up, similar to the News Feed on Facebook.

I've attached a YouTube clip. Take a look. Please share your opinion about using this site and I suppose we can make a decision during the next meeting.

<https://www.youtube.com/v/7jcsXTu93CU>

Angelyn Sherrod