



MAKE YOUR VILLAINS VILLAINOUS

Character development is an important aspect of writing fiction. If your characters don't seem real, your story will fizzle out before it sparks your readers' interest. The same holds for non-fiction; you must put meat on the bones of everyone you write about.

Just as there is good and evil in the world, there must be protagonists and antagonists in your stories, whatever the genre. Because I create a lot of murder mysteries I'll admit to a certain bias when it comes to fleshing out characters. Antagonists are my favourite people. They break the rules, behave outrageously and often live in their own universe. They're a writer's dream!

Your antagonist may have some redeeming qualities but remember their role in the story is to garner dislike, if not hatred. Children's authors have always favoured their evil-doers. And young readers would never take to fairy tales that didn't feature mean queens, nasty gnomes or wicked witches. So make your villains believable and prove they belong in your story. Like every character, they must play a role in advancing the plot; they must exhibit some depth, some logic and some perspective that makes readers care they're there.

A word to the wise: treat your villains with respect. Never judge them. Leave that to your readers.

WORDS' WORTH PROJECT #2: CHARACTER BUILDING

Materials Needed: Magazines you can cut up; scissors, craft paper, glue; writing paper & pen

- ✂ Flip through magazines looking for things that define your antagonist. Consider food, possessions, hobbies, clothes, interests. You're building the character's profile so search for likes & dislikes.
- ✂ Cut out these clues to their character & glue them to a piece of craft paper. Use several sheets if you feel so inclined.
- ✂ Study your collection of pictures.
- ✂ On another sheet of craft paper, describe the character's appearance as well as their personality, background and mannerisms - use single words or phrases.
- ✂ Create your villain's biography. Be brutally honest.
- ✂ Now that your villain lives, write him (or her) into your story.