

## **My Storybook Process (Part 2): creating new characters**

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/my-storybook-process-part-2-creating-new-characters/>

This entry is part 2 of 10 in the series [My Storybook Process](#)

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Last week I shared with you my first inkling for a new storybook series along with the promise to reveal my process in creating the first book, week to week. I'm now already into week two. It sort of snuck up on me.

**Time flies, but even more so when you're working on a project. When held publicly accountable for that project, I don't have one deadline in a couple of months, I have weekly deadlines.**

This weekly scheduling is something I do with all of my writing, but if I miss by a day I don't have to worry overly much. Here, that doesn't apply. By promising to write about what I've accomplished every Tuesday, I can't even be a half-day late.

For those of you who are thinking about blogging, you might consider doing this as well. The only thing you need to be aware of is that some publishers will not consider your work unpublished if you do blog about your process. I'm willing to take that risk with this particular series, because I know it fills a niche on the market. (For a bit more about that, read about [last week's steps](#).)

**Where I Started From...**

I know what I want my books to generally be about (good behavior, proper manners), I know the tone (funny), and I know the general style or feeling I want to capture (simple, clean silliness wrapped in a life lesson).

I also know that I really just want two primary characters. There will be parents and teachers (and other adults) in some of the stories, but I don't know that I want to see any of them in the pictures. It's possible that they may only "appear" as dialogue the main characters react to.

The characters are definitely going to be girls. I decided that almost immediately. I thought about the possibility of a girl and a boy, but tossed it out because I didn't want the series to be about a - men vs. women - thing. This should really be clear and focused. Here's where I am this week:

### Who Are Bunny and Witch?

Bunny and Witch: these are going to be archetypal characters - ones that never age. One is slightly sweeter and more intelligent than the other. That would be Bunny. She is the type of girl who observes before taking action. She considers and is considerate.

Witch is more spontaneous and tends to do whatever she pleases (and often without thinking about it first) rather than what is correct. It isn't that Witch always does the wrong thing and Bunny always does the right thing... sort of. Witch does try, she just takes a bit longer in getting there - to the right place where she is doing the right thing.

Bunny and Witch are friends, but they also antagonize each other, so that is the dynamic I want to establish here. As so often happens with little kids, there are moments when they are thick as thieves and others when they are archenemies. Sometimes this change happens within a span of seconds.

I want to capture that in a funny way that serves to teach a lesson - a simple lesson. I might write a song or a poem as well to serve the story. I'm not sure about that yet. Whatever I decide for this first book, I'll need to stick with that for the entire series. So that means I have to love it or drop it. I don't want to be stuck for four (or more) books feeling like I'm actually *working*. Doing this should be fun - a challenge, to be sure - but a fun challenge.

### The Story Sense

At this point, a lot of what I'm doing is from the gut. It's very fuzzy and most of what I'm wanting to do is about feelings. That's hard to put on paper. What I know for certain is that I want the actual story to have very few words. Sparse. A lot of the story will be revealed in the illustrations. So this series will be quite different from some of my other stories, which sometimes have a higher wordcount (though still within the [audience's expectations](#)).

I do like the idea of the story having purpose-layers, and for that reason I'm considering a poem and probably after-reading questions as a way of making the project more rounded.

The girls will definitely look different from each other, but mostly I want them to *behave* differently from

each other. Witch is sassy. Bunny is more the quiet type. Witch might look a bit like a witch and bunny... I need to have something bunny-ish about her.

I want the girls to have aspects of their names (a witch and a bunny) but to not actually be those things in a literal sense. Not totally literal, anyway.

### Doodling Just for Me

I've painted a concept painting of the girls. I decided as soon as it was done that this is NOT going to be used in the book. It *isn't* the look I want - not for the characters or the book's pages; I know that for sure. But for the moment, it shows me my feelings about the project so I can move forward with it. The canvas gives me something I can toss aside instead of the vague stuff cluttering my head.

This will NOT be used in the book. This is just to get something down in front of me that I can look at. I like the expression on Witch's face - that pretty much captures her but she doesn't look right. Bunny is too generic. She needs a lot more work.

If you do not consider yourself an artist, [don't let that stop](#) you from sketching or doodling a bit. Even if you plan to collaborate with an artist (as I sometimes do), drawing or painting the characters can be a good way to help you give that character a little more form.

Sometimes certain details about what's inside my head are revealed to me in the doodle or painting. In the case of this first Bunny and Witch book, my concern is that my writing-mind might not want to listen to my drawing-mind. I need to stay on this and be sure that I don't let one override the other.

I'm collaborating with myself, so there needs to be a balance of my interests so that in the end I've created a solid storybook. When you work with someone else, this can sometimes be a much easier process.

There will be things that I create along the way that I will have to throw out (like the green painting), and the part of me that created the stuff that goes in the trash is just going to have to accept that.

No draft is final up until the story is on the market. This is sort of my mantra and it helps me slash things that aren't working that well and get down to doing it over and over until I'm really satisfied with it.

Next week, I'll (I hope) be at a point where I can start drafting the story text and maybe a bit of panel planning. We'll see. Whatever I'm doing with it, I'll be posting about it here. No excuses. [Subscribe to my newsletter](#), and I'll send you my Complete Character Creator worksheets, something I use for really complicated characters that *feel real*.

What are you creating these days? There's always something, even if it's the dusty stuff you shoved in a drawer somewhere. Share below, let me know - or write me an email. You know I love those.

Keep going, keep at it. So long as you don't give up on it, you'll do it.

**This entry is part of the series**

[My Storybook Process](#)

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