

How to Write Character Physicality Readers Never Forget

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<http://greatstorybook.com/write-character-physicality-readers-never-forget/>

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Ever read a book, and then into page 20, you're not sure who is who? Is the guy Dan a boyfriend, the uncle or the neighbor? This kind of confusion happens when either the character doesn't matter and should be cut entirely, or because the character physicality wasn't distinguishable enough.

Characters are built through characterization, a 5-point process. The first and perhaps most important is Physicality.

Here's how to write Character Physicality that matters.

Artwork by Mystic Art Design.

If a character's first impression on the page isn't strong enough, it's almost impossible to fix or compensate for that in later pages. It's just like real life.

First Impressions

Describing the physicality of a character in your story is exactly like making an introduction. And just as in real life, first impressions are extremely important. Once made, they're incredibly hard to overcome – or to repair or expand upon with more pages.

Done right, you build a character that feels so unique, your readers will always remember. I don't know about you, but I want to create the sort of characters that feel real. I want readers to care about the

characters.

When it flops

If your descriptions aren't captivating, aren't clear or specific enough to that character, they will fade-out in the blaze of everything-else-in-life that bombards your readers. I don't just mean everything else in your story though.

I mean everything else, even the things outside your story. The dog barks to be let out, the baby cries for a new diaper, the postman rings for a signature – and all the other stuff that pulls a reader away from a story.

To get readers swept up in your story, even after a distraction, your characters have to be vivid enough to step off the page and right into another person's imagination.

Here are 3 great ways to make your character's physicality descriptions so uniquely about that character, no one will ever confuse it for another.

Avoid the Laundry List. *Right?*

One pitfall in writing about a character's physicality is ending up with a basic laundry list of physical traits and adjectives.

Usually, a laundry list description looks something like this:

Jane's brown eyes matched her brown hair and her brown skin. Today, she walked in the door covered in mud.

The problem with laundry listing is that it doesn't stick in our minds.

While I would say you should generally avoid list making, there is an exception. Of course there's an exception!

The Exception: Bring in the Context

You can use the laundry listing to make a particularly strong impression. Here's an example of what I mean:

Jane's hair is brown, as are her eyes, and her skin is brown and her shoes are brown too, just like the brown mud splattered all over every inch of her. Amongst all that brown shines her sparkling, devious eyes and her broad crooked grin. In her tiny brown hand, Jane holds a toad, just as brown and wet as she. But no one knows and no one sees it. They are all too busy looking at the rest of her.

If you establish context (the mud, the toad, the contrast of her plain appearance and her deviousness, that no one sees her toad), you can pretty much break every other writing rule ever created. Pretty much.

But maybe I'm being a little unfair. I added a LOT of context here. So let's grab the first example again, and just add a smidge of context. Like this:

Jane's brown eyes matched her brown hair and her brown skin. Today, she walked in the door covered in mud. Her mother was furious, and that was before she noticed the toad.

Adding one sentence of context adds quite a bit. This will stick out in a person's mind. But if it weren't for the mentioning of the toad that went unnoticed by Jane's angry mom, we'd forget all about what Jane looks like.

Use Descriptive Adjectives with Punch

Adjectives are incredibly important in establishing Character Physicality. What you have to be wary of is getting cliché, because it's just so easy to do.

I'm all for exceptions, so if you want to write a book using ONLY cliché stuff, here's your inspiration source: [S. Morgan Friedman offers an awesome Cliché Finder HERE](#).

Sparkling eyes (like in my example above) could be considered cliché, sure. But I like using that anyway. When eyes sparkle, that's how I think of them.

But if I want to pull away from the cliché, how might I do that? Metaphor is a powerful writing tool you can use to bring out adjectives that are incredibly memorable.

If your character is someone we should distrust completely – an antagonist, then you might use something like this:

His mouth twitched, eyes were shining slits in his face. This was thought to be his way of smiling.

You can tell immediately that this is someone you shouldn't like and shouldn't trust. Maybe he has allergies? No, not remotely possible.

What do you use?

Do you have a way of making characters memorable that I haven't covered here? Write below, let me know – or, as ever, just send me an email. You know I love getting those.

Keep creating, no matter what.

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