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**Creative Writing Tips – Have You Established Your Main Character At The Start?**

**By Nick Vernon**

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In the beginning of your story you have to grab your readers' interest and sustain it till the end. Our hook is our character. Readers keep on reading to find out more about the character. To see what he'll do in the story; how he'll solve his problems. What his goals are and whether he'll achieve them.

And because our character is the reason readers become hooked on our stories, establishing him at the start is a must in a short story. And it is essential to establish him at the start because we don't have the capacity in our limited word length to introduce him at our leisure.

The bond between readers and character has to be developed almost immediately.

You might have a few characters though. How do you decide who your main character will be? A main character is one that drives the story.

Think of it this way... If we were to take him away, there will be no story because it's his story we are telling. The story will unfold by what is happening or what has happened to him.

When you establish who your main character will be, the next thing to do is to find which of your characters is in the best position to tell the story. Will your main character tell his story or will you give that role to another character?

This is what we call Viewpoint and what we'll see in more detail in proceeding chapters.

Your main character isn't necessarily the one who is telling the story; he might not even appear in our story `physically' but will be there through the thoughts of others. So the viewpoint character might be a secondary character.

Whoever is telling the story is the viewpoint character.

## Creative Writing Tips – Have You Established Your Main Character At The Start?

The viewpoint character gives the coloring of the story. Whatever this characters says, we will believe. It may or may not be true, according to the main character, but because he isn't there `physically' to voice his opinions, we will have to take the viewpoint character's word for it.

In a novel you can play around with viewpoint. You can have several viewpoint characters. In a short story it works best with one.

So your main character, whether he'll be telling his own story or someone else will be doing it for him, has to be established at the start of your story.

Having said that, let's see the reasons why the main character may not be telling his own story... Perhaps our main character is one that readers won't sympathize or empathize with. Or the main character will not view highly with our readers Or the viewpoint character knows all the facts and can

tell the story better Etc.

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Let me give you an example of a secondary character telling the story of a main character...

Let's say your secondary character is a psychiatrist and the main character is the patient. Depending on what's going to go on in the story, we'll have to choose who's in a better position to tell it. In this case, I will choose the psychiatrist.

I've done this because the patient is confused, being the one with the problems. The psychiatrist knows all the facts and his opinions will make things clearer to readers.

So, as the secondary character (the psychiatrist) unravels the story, we'll become involved in the main character because it's the main character's story that is been told.

This may get a little confusing to the beginner writer. As they write they will have to keep in mind that the secondary character, although he's telling the story, is NOT our main character.

The secondary character is there to do perform a task. He's only the voice. It's the main character we'll become involved with.

A secondary character doesn't play such an important role as a main character does. Therefore, information about secondary characters should be kept to a minimum. It's not his story - it's the main character's story and the spotlight must, most times, be kept on the main character.

Take the above example for instance. It's no relevance to the story how the psychiatrist started his career or where he received his diploma - what's important, is what he has to say about the main character, his patient.

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## Creative Writing Tips – Have You Established Your Main Character At The Start?

Introduce your main character straight away, as close to the beginning of the story that's possible. Enable your readers to form a bond and that will keep them hooked.

Is your main character established at the start of your story?

Besides his passion for writing, Nick Vernon runs an online gift site where you will find gift information, articles and readers' funny stories. Visit

### **If The Viewpoint Character Is A Secondary Character, Have You Established Who He is?**

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Creative Writing Tips -

I have said above that if a secondary character tells the story of the main character, then the spotlight should be kept on the main character.

This shouldn't be taken to the extreme though.

In other words, you don't just write the story of the main character without telling your readers a bit about your secondary character.

Unless the reader understands the reason a secondary character is telling the story, it will seem peculiar that the main character isn't telling it himself. It is, after all, the main character's story.

So, the following have to be answered... Who is this secondary character? Why is he telling the story instead of the main character? What is his connection with the main character?

Weave in some information about the secondary character so we can gain a better understanding of his role in the story.

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