

Making Good Characters **by Wen Spencer**

A member of Forward Motion asked: What makes a good character, one that is interesting to read.

I took this to mean "want makes a strong, memorable" character.

I have found that characters that are done in bold strokes are the best.

Not to say over the top, so goody goody or straight evil with greased mustache to twirl.

I went to dinner at convention with a herd of 15 people. We took up one long table. I knew everyone except a woman sitting way at the other end. There was something about her, the snide sense of humor, her laugh, the way she look that had me pointing down to the other end of the table saying "WHO IS SHE?" When compared to her, everyone else at the table faded to background.

That is what you want in a character. Someone that stamps themselves into the reader's mind of "this is who I am" so deeply that they can say "yes, they will do this act in the book" or "no, they won't do that" or "this line of dialogue was spoken from x."

One has to admit that Buffy the vampire slayer had a cast of good strong characters. The ones that were too weak got weeded out. The ones that were great got moved to Angel. There's Buffy with the "hey, I'm the slayer, I'm kick ass, and no one is doing shit in my town without me closing them down." There's Spike, the vampire that reluctantly turns good and happily sneers at everyone else.

Guard against wishy-washy characters. Yes, they are out there, but they're hard to write well. Start with strong bold statements about your character.

The important thing to keep your character from going cardboard is to make sure that you mix. No one is black and white, so your characters should have good and bad qualities. Heroes should have failings. Villains should have good qualities. And shade these qualities. The hero can be brave -- to a point. It is their fear that makes them real. It is getting around their fear that makes them heroes.