

**Summary of Content** (extract from a workshop feedback report by Carolyn Parker)

Character development was explored by participants reflecting on their own favourite characters, those they found memorable and then extrapolating what is involved in developing a good fictional character. A fiction extract was closely examined to identify what was communicated by the writer in terms of initial characterisation, and how the characterisation was achieved by use of dialogue, action, and other characters' responses to the protagonist rather than by use of exposition.

The ways to group characteristics under types were explored, such as socio-economic factors, beliefs, backstory, and personality.

Four core techniques for conveying character were identified:

- interior monologue;
- actions;
- description; and
- dialogue.

Approaches to the establishment of ongoing characterisation were explored, and examples and prompts provided. The ways to provide character backstory were examined, primarily the use of a summation or list in contrast with drip-feeding background throughout text. The use of aspects of dialogue including grammar, slang, context and content were reviewed in terms of what can be communicated about character.

The relationship between point of view and character was touched on, centring on the constraints or relative freedom of various points of view in terms of closeness or distance from the character's experience, and the use of other characters in revealing the protagonist or other character's characteristics via how they are seen and how they interact.

The arc of character development was examined in the context of plot development and cross-over points identified.

**Workshop participant feedback on their learning and how they will apply it (extracts from various participants):**

“This workshop revealed aspects of character I’d never considered or didn’t fully understand. It was amazing to discover how just two pages of a book can reveal a long list of characteristics about a character, without the author needing to reveal anything directly to the reader ... The workshop also helped me better understand how to leverage point of view to show character, and how the main character’s goals, fears, choices and realisations are what come together to drive the plot.”

“The practical tools and exercises were useful to help unstick some character traits. There's a particular scene in my novel that needed some work and using a habit or physical trait to show character helped flesh it out.”

“I think what I most took out of Annabel’s workshop is that I don’t need to feel fear when approaching a character – I can show that character in all their flaws and glory, and that is what makes them exciting complex and fun to work with.”

“I particularly found useful a suggestion concerning using a light touch when using dialect and also the technique of using a range of tools other than description in bringing a character to life.”

“I will be using the analysis tools acquired in the workshop to review the characters that currently appear in the first draft of my book length manuscript. This will help me to assess their role and effectiveness to the overall narrative and determine whether there are aspects of the characters that need to be changed, enhanced, or omitted as well as determining when in the piece to reveal information about the characters to the reader. I will definitely be using the tools in the workbook for this workshop as I continue to re-draft my manuscript.”

“The specific aspects of characterisation that I intend to apply following the workshop include:

- The character as an agent of change;
- The role of contradictory flaws in character development and the need for the character to make “shit choices” to create a sense of internal conflict and engage the reader;
- The intrigue created by “showing” character in dialogue, in their actions (and those of others), via internal monologue and by use of description rather than by use of exposition;
- The use of other characters’ responses to, thinking about, and dialogue toward the protagonist in defining their character;
- Identification of ways to “flesh-out” characters;
- The relationship between character development and plot.