

Character

Created by Caitlin Horrocks for the Grand Rapids Public Library

GR Reads 2020

You are a 21st century writer

- Think about what opportunities and challenges fiction offers you that are different from what is available in other storytelling mediums.
- This is especially true when it comes to **character**

Character interiority

From the short story "The Upholsterer" by Désirée Zamorano
in *Kenyon Review Online*, May/June 2018

He opened his eyes and became immediately disoriented. He was lying on his sofa but no longer in his living room; he was in the bright outdoor sunshine. What kind of prank was this? Had someone moved him in his sleep? Was he drunk? Medicated? Having an attack of the nerves?

He blinked against the light up into an unfamiliar shade of blue sky; glancing around he saw that he and the couch were propped against a building. He inhaled—there was no longer a trace of diesel, a whisper of salt. He inhaled the scent of the earth and something familiar—the grass-like weed at his feet he recognized as pipicha. When was the last time he had eaten this? He grasped a clump, inhaled, and chewed on a stalk: hints of mint and cilantro, this was the taste of home. He stood, a little unevenly, and the view of the valley was like a blow to his sternum: he knew that valley from childhood—although the buildings and acres of fields must have exploded four times at least. He looked around wildly. He knew where he was, and he didn't care how he had gotten there.



robert baratheon



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rhaegar targaryen



trident



war hammer



fan art



henry cavill



mark addy



king



prime



cersei lannister



Robert Baratheon - Wikiped... en.wikipedia.org



Robert I Baratheon - A Wiki of... awoiaf.westeros.org



How Robert Baratheon became The Demon ... youtube.com



Robert Baratheon | Gam... gameofthrones.fandom.co...



40 Best 'Game of Thrones' Characters ... rollingstone.com



Tom Hardy as Robert Bar... reddit.com



King robert baratheon ... pinterest.com



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NO SPOILERS] Robert Barathe... reddit.com



Robert Baratheon Totally Predicted GAME ... nerdist.com



King Robert Baratheon and Renly ... pinterest.com



Robert Baratheon Really Predicted the... news.yahoo.com

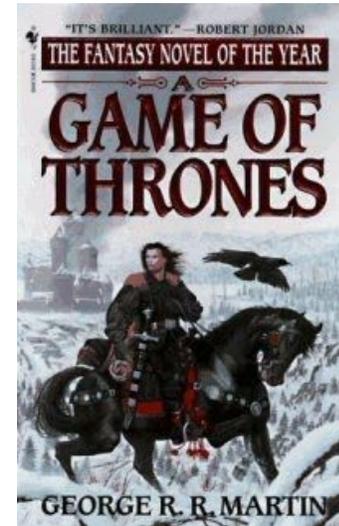


Relationship of character to time/own past selves, and to other characters

Fifteen years past, when they had ridden forth to win a throne, the Lord of Storm's End had been clean-shaven, clear-eyed, and muscled...He'd had a giant's strength too, his weapon of choice a spiked iron warhammer that Ned could scarcely lift. In those days, the smell of leather and blood had clung to him like perfume.

Now it was perfume that clung to him like perfume, and he had a girth to match his height. Since the night they had stood side by side in Balin Greyjoy's fallen stronghold...the king had gained at least eight stone. A beard as coarse and black as iron covered his jaw to hide his double chin and the sag of his royal jowls, but nothing could hide his stomach or the dark circles under his eyes.

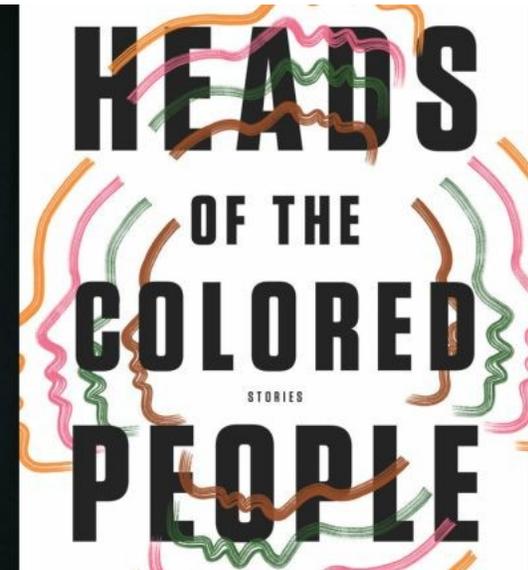
– from *A Game of Thrones* by George R.R. Martin



Riley wore blue contact lenses and bleached his hair—which he worked with gel and a blow-dryer and a flatiron some morning into Sonic the Hedgehog spikes so stiff you could prick your finger on them, and sometimes into a wispy side-swooped bob with long bangs—and he was black. But this wasn't any kind of self-hatred thing. He'd read *The Bluest Eye* and *Invisible Man* in school and even picked up *Disgruntled* at a book fair, and yes, they were good and there was some resonance in those books for him, but this story isn't about race or “the shame of being alive” or any of those things. He was not self-hating; he was even listening to Drake—though you could make it Fetty Wap if his appreciation for trap music changes something for you, because all that's relevant here is that he wasn't against the music of “his people” or anything like that—as he walked down Figueroa with his earbuds pushed in just far enough so as not to feel itchy.

—from *Heads of the Colored People* by Nafissa Thompson-Spires

Author commenting on character, putting character in context of larger world, or reader's assumptions and expectations



A writing exercise

1. Take a familiar story from mythology, fairy tales, folk tales, fables, Shakespeare, maybe true history, etc.

2. Start re-telling the story making at least one of the following changes:

a) a POV character who does not usually get to tell their side of the story (ex. Cinderella from the Prince's perspective)

b) a POV switch from the original (ex. Cinderella is still our star, but we read about her in first person rather than third, using "I" rather than she/he/they etc.)

c) a shift in psychic distance from the original (ex. Cinderella is the star, but we move the psychic distance way, way closer, to a stream-of-consciousness narration from inside her head)

Questions to ask yourself after writing for at least several minutes (and maybe much longer!):

1. What am I getting to explore here that I haven't seen in other versions of this story?
2. What is the reader getting to explore or experience here that they won't have seen in other versions of the story?
3. What sources of heat or tension do I see? What doors have I opened for the story to walk through? (another way to think about it: if the story is a juggling act, what balls have you thrown up into the air so far that you could catch later?)

Questions?

Feel free to email me
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