



The Writer's Digest Sourcebook for Building Believable Characters

Marc Mucutcheon , Marc Mucutcheon

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Using this reference, readers can create characters who think, hope, love, cry, cause or feel pain, save the day - and seize readers by emotion. Mark McCutcheon eases the process of building convincing characters for stories and novels. He starts by conducting an inspiring and informative roundtable where six novelists reveal their approaches to characterization. Next, he provides a character questionnaire more detailed than the nosiest survey. Readers will fill it out and they'll know fictional people as though they'd grown up with them. Finally, there is a thesaurus of human characteristics - physical and psychological. Fit them together artfully and characters will climb right off the page.

The Writer's Digest Sourcebook for Building Believable Characters Details

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From Reader Review The Writer's Digest Sourcebook for Building Believable Characters for online ebook

Gabriella Slade says

Such a good source! I am learning SO much more through this book about my characters such as How they laugh, their speaking style, their fears, jobs, collage degrees. I'd give it 5 stars, but I didn't like the minor cussing in the beginning. :)

Abigail says

More of a reference book than I thought. Very helpful though! In order to have more time to properly peruse it, I will most likely buy it. Knocked one star off as my copy was published in 1996. Outdated, yet still useful. I hope I can find a book like this that's more current.

Carolee Noury says

I borrowed this book from my library to see if it would be a good reference to add to my writing library.

Verdict: Buy.

It was published in 1996, so there are probably more current tools.

However, this book gives all kinds of great info from a handful of vocab in other languages and the very thorough, very good Character Questionnaire.

CaliGirlRae says

Characters are the driving force in storytelling. For those writers who like to build their characters' backgrounds, appearance and history this is a great resource. The book also includes a bit of a thesaurus for character descriptions of everything from eye, skin, hair and even meanings of names across different nationalities. Highly recommend this book for all writers.

Jeff Bailey says

I just pulled one of my favorite writer's resource books off my shelf. I'm working on a new novel and need a little inspiration for a character. I turned to Building Believable Characters by Marc McCutchen. Great characters are the corner stone of any story, the better the characters, often times, the better the story. I find the McCutchen's reference extremely useful. I immerse myself in the descriptions and examples in the book and, invariably, an alloy of various characters coalesce into a new character. I have Building Believable

Characters on my reference writer's shelf. Jeff Bailey, author of The Defect.

J.D. says

I have notes and marks and stickies all over this book, the sign of one that contains very useful information. There are lots of categories and lists, which I find incredibly helpful.

G.C. Neff says

I read somewhere that this book gives only cliché descriptions. Okay. Question: how many ways can you move your head? Sorry, but there just aren't that many motions you can make with it. So I suppose in that respect one could say that the descriptions are cliché.

However, I enjoy using the book, especially for ways to describe a character that I hadn't thought of before. I don't think that any writer could do better than to add this book to his/her reference shelf.

By the way, this is my second copy of the book, since I'd gotten rid of my first one a long time ago when I'd decided to stop writing. So when I got back at it again, I had to get another copy. Proof that I value this book and its wealth of material.

Eric says

The first section of this book is a fairly mundane, round-table conversation between six authors (none of whom I am familiar with), where they give rehashed advice such as "show, don't tell" and "use 'said' instead of dozens of different dialogue modifiers."

After that is the most useful part of this book -- a thesaurus of character traits, which is handy for anyone tongue-tied in trying to create an interesting minor character for any kind of literary work.

Anne Harmon says

This is basically a thesaurus for writers, giving synonyms for character traits, eye colours, body descriptions, hairstyles, and so forth. I found it helpful, but the large amount of profanity turned me off. Overall, not bad for a book I randomly picked off the library shelf.

Wendy Mills says

This is a very informative book for writers. It not only gives you tips on how to write character descriptions, but also gives you an extensive character questionnaire, along with Foreign languages(Russian, Spanish, Italian, French, etc) to English phrase translations, and various body to clothing descriptions.

Charity says

This was fun. It is a thesaurus of sorts. The first part is a question and answer section with six different authors and gives a good idea of the different ways to approach writing and developing your characters. The second part contains a character dossier and a long thesaurus of descriptors. From things like "soup strainer moustache" "rheumy eyes" and "Cleopatra hair" to clothing styles and bad habits. It loved reading the thesaurus and recognizing my own and my family's characteristics and habits. It helps you, the author, to really flesh out a character in your mind. Even if you don't use all the descriptions in your story you know the character well enough at that point to make them believable and consistent. This book is a good reference to have on hand.

I decided that it would be fun to create my own personal dossier from the workbook pages that are in the book. It should help my posterity to know me a little better than my journal entries do. Plus, as I get older I'll have a clearer picture of what I was like.

I'd recommend making a dossier for yourselves for a family home evening activity. It's fun to laugh at yourself, it will give your kids something to laugh at as they get older, and it might help you see where you can improve.

InfinitexLibrary says

VERY USEFUL FOR WRITERS.

Rodney Richards says

Another compendium of simple lists. At least topical, and as stated in the intro, slightly better than a Thesaurus looking up synonyms. Again, not really a "book," but lists of traits of characters, so it does fulfill its title, but as in all things writing, the writer must work at it. This book is best used for building fictional characters, but helpful in nonfiction also.

I find similes and metaphors better for describing characters than a list of traits, like "he looked exactly like Angel from the Rockford files," for example.

The introductory discussion by authors was fun, and the "Do not's" helpful.

Pauline Youd says

This should be a valuable book in the future. It is primarily a lexicon to show you words you might not think of. For instance you'll find lists of words describing 23 different mustaches, 31 noses, 41 beards, 68 shoes and boots, 102 facial types, 360 facial expressions, 5,000 foreign given names and surnames, plus personality traits, quirks, bad habits, occupations, psychological problems and diseases. It fits on your bookshelf between your dictionary and thesaurus.

Audri Nichols says

This is one of my favorite quick reference writing guides. Out of ALL of the writing books out there, this is one of five that I reference the most often. Almost daily. You HAVE to add this one to your resources library.
