

Concrete and Ethereal Characters

character development

**On Edge: Damian Rogers in the Writing Centre
@ 6 p.m.**

**Collaborative Group Meetings +
Generate questions for Damian Rogers**

Workshop Group 3
(group 4 posts by midnight tonight)

The Function of Art Junot Diaz:

<http://bigthink.com/videos/junot-diaz-on-the-function-of-art>

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Miranda July, "I Began with Performance"

Character Exercise

What is your character's agenda? What do they want? What will they do to get what they want?

Relate to Miranda July + Junot Diaz stories.

What do those characters want? What actions do they take to get what they want?

Character Experiment: Revealing through Dialogue

Non-apology: Write an exchange that begins with, "I'm sorry, but..." Have the other character answer and then in the ensuing back and forth reveal the circumstances that got them into this situation.

Write dialogue alternating: he says/ she says.

Character Experiment

Pair Up. Decide on a conflict that would arise between two characters. The more at stake the better. Each write a monologue in the point of view of one or the other of the characters. Let the character speak freely in the monologue, passionately setting forth his or her point of view.

Read the monologues to each other.

Set the monologues aside and each write a scene containing both characters in a situation that brings out the conflict between them.

Character Experiment - Part 1

Groups of three. Each member should brainstorm a list of character names: first and last, even nicknames if you want. One or two of the names may be blatantly symbolic, but most should be evocative: compelling but plausible, ordinary, but suggestive. Everyone should come up with 6-8 names.

Character Experiment - Part 2

Now switch lists. Pick a name from this new list and let it help you imagine a character. Write out some basic information about the character (age, race, religion, education, class, marital status, profession) and add a few interesting details about the character (hobbies, bad habits, fears, personality quirks, desires, aspirations, past experiences). Do this for 3-4 of the character names and see if you can use one of these character to start a story.

Character Experiment

Write a scene in which two characters are in a confined space. What pressure does the setting create on the character development?

Character Experiment: Eccentricity

Write a fragment of a story in which the first-person narrator is mistaken for someone else by a stranger. The narrator, for whatever reasons you choose, decided to become this person she has been mistaken for. Don't spend too much time setting up the scene; just move right into it. Extend the moments of mistaken identity as long as you plausibly can. Something else you might want to look into or explore in this exercise is the ability to control competing emotions - embarrassment and pride in pulling the stunt off and perhaps the moral queasiness created by the effort to be someone else.

Character Development: All in the Family

Write a scene set in a family space. Use dialogue and description to convey familial tensions.

Write about a moment when a family event turns into a world event.

Write about a black sheep in a family. What makes the character different from the rest?

**Next Week: Saleema
Nawaz + Collaborative
Projects Due**

Character Development

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handout