CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Basic Rules of Character Development

When developing your characters, remember to keep in mind the following steps:

1.   Choose your protagonist and flesh out all their attributes, good and bad. Identify their motivation, their object of desire and their tragic flaw(s), meaning the weaknesses in their character that could stand in the way of their object of desire and contribute to their downfall.

2.   Pit your protagonist/hero against the antagonist or villain. Remember that evil characters are often intelligent, brilliant, seductive, strong, and even likable on some level. Identify their tragic flaw(s) and the elements of their backstory that contribute to them thwarting your hero in his or her journey. Is there a way to reconcile the motivations of your hero and villain and if so, how can you weave that into your story line?

3.   Give your protagonist a side-kick. The side-kick can be a mentor, a friend, a partner, etc.

4.   Use supporting characters.

5.   Don't use superfluous characters (other than extras on set). Every character should contribute to moving the plot and story line along.

Rules of Thumb

1.   Avoid creating cliche characters as you breathe life into them. Even if you have a stereotypical character, choose a few attributes of that character and change them - turn them on their head - something the audience would not expect - so they really come alive as something new and exciting.

2.   Weave the depth of human experience into your characters and reflect that in their behavior, mannerisms, dress, dialogue and voice intonation.

3.   Write from what you know and then do additional research to flesh out your characters and add a new dimension of reality and/or fantasy to them, depending on your genre.

4.   Write, re-write and re-write again, each time eliminating the attributes that make your characters cliche until you have created original characters that we can love or hate.

Yoda in *Star Wars*

The character of Yoda in *Star Wars* is a great case study of original character development. Rather than using a cliche´ old wise man, the creator of Star Wars, George Lucas, chose to use an unlikely character to deliver ancient philosophies and wisdom, namely a green alien elf-like mystic named Yoda.

The character Yoda is anything but cliche. Yoda is a Jedi Master who is aligned with the positive side of the force. His voice and animated movements add to the mysticism surrounding his character. Normally, you would not expect so much power and wisdom to come from such a small character.

In choosing to use a small animated puppet to deliver a giant message, George Lucas effectively changed an entire generation's pattern of thinking and empowered visionaries into action. Yoda's wisdom has weaved itself into the minds and hearts of Western pop culture.

As you watch the videos, notice how masterfully George Lucas tells the story of a mentor's decision to take on a new apprentice. Also notice how the audience is slowly drawn into the world of Yoda and comes to expect only the best from this small alien creature, even when he is facing giant evil forces.

Luke Meets Yoda

In the first Star Wars video, Luke Skywalker meets Yoda but is unaware that he has met the mystic master he is seeking. The powerful Jedi doesn't initially identify himself to Luke but rather provokes and tests his patience by disguising himself as a comical creature. In doing so, he uncovers character flaws in Luke, namely anger and recklessness, which could interfere with his Jedi training. Click the link below or watch on the membership website under Case Studies for this respective blog entry.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2aFjE6MSZ0

Yoda's Cave

In the next video, Yoda continues to try Luke's patience in his tiny cave-like hut. Disappointed with the potential apprentice, Yoda drops the charade and takes both Luke and the audience by surprise as his true identity is revealed. It is brilliant story telling, character development and

foreshadowing of the hero's tragic flaws which could lead him to the dark side. Click the link below or watch on the membership website under Case Studies for this respective blog entry.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3jI3RrMsVI&t=132s

Yoda Teaches Skywalker Telekinesis

In the next video, Yoda's true power and wisdom are revealed as he teaches Luke. The audience is forever drawn into the ancient wisdom of this small but masterful Jedi. Notice how the director chose to convey the immense power of this character using an animated puppet. Yoda's voice and movements as well as the music make this scene very powerful. Click the link below or watch on the membership website under Case Studies for this respective blog entry.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3-CpzZJl8w&t=197s

Yoda Fight Scenes

In the next video, the audience is fully aligned with Yoda's power and the force he yields, irrespective of his size or the power from anyone tapped into the dark force. We naturally expect him to defeat the villain. Click the link below or watch on the membership website under Case Studies for this respective blog entry.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRd9PGmAQUE