

CHARACTER

Bringing a character to life for your reader is a complicated business. It's also one of the most important aspects of storytelling – some would say it's *the* most important aspect. Of course different types of fiction require different techniques. Over a long novel, you could build a complicated and detailed personality for your main character; in a flash fiction, you have to create an impressionistic snapshot with just a few well-chosen words.



Charles Dickens created many flat, but memorable characters. Readers often 'see' these characters more vividly than they do his rounded, complex individuals.

Some characters are **rounded** – which means the writer has put a lot of effort into developing them as people. Rounded characters are complicated people. Often their complex personalities are what **drive the plot**.

Some characters are **flat** – these characters might be interesting and dramatic, but they have mainly exterior characteristics; we know about their behaviour, and maybe their appearance, rather than their interior life. Often, their simple personalities are used to **serve the plot**.

Both types of character are important in fiction. Often, the **protagonist** will be the most rounded character, and there will be a supporting cast of flat (or less rounded) people. If writers had to round out every single character, nothing would happen in the story!

Flat characters can be useful for moving the plot forward, for creating comedy, and for developing the relationships between other, more rounded characters. As with everything in creative writing, it's not just either/or. In most fictions, you will find some characters are very rounded, some characters are very flat