



RAIDER WRITING MONTH 2012

Workshops and Write-Ins
Oakton Community College

WORKSHOP #3: CRUISING FOR CHARACTERS

Tu 10/23: 1:30 to 2:15 PM, Oakton Community College Library Classroom 2418

This workshop takes a spin on a chapter from Chris Baty's book, *No Plot, No Problem!*. Take this opportunity to think about your characters and take them out for a test drive?

ONLY ONE MORE PRE-NAO WORKSHOP LEFT!

I'm so happy that you're planning to join the RaiderWriMos this year. We have just over a week left to prepare ourselves for the frenzy!!!!

- Plan to join us next week for **Workshop #4: Panning for Plots**
 - Tu 10/30: 1:30-2:15, Oakton Community College Library Classroom 2418

FOR MORE INFORMATION . . .

OCC's NaNo Guide: <http://researchguides.oakton.edu/nanowrimo>

Lori Oster's RaiderWriMo page:

<http://www.oakton.edu/user/0/loster/RaiderWriMo.html>

Contact: Robin Dillow (rdillow@oakton.edu) Ruth Whitney (rwhitney@oakton.edu)

Lori Oster (loster@oakton.edu)

GENERAL TIP

Create characters with whom you'd love to spend a lot of time. You will be spending a lot of time with them, of course! How would you feel stuck on a cruise ship with each character? Even the villains should be interesting enough that you wouldn't mind bumping into them at the dinner buffet.

GET THE DEETS

1. How old are they?
2. Gender?
3. Occupation?
4. Friends, family, and love interests?
5. What is their living space like?
6. What are their hobbies?
7. What were they doing a year ago? Five years ago?
8. What are their values and politics?
9. Phobias? Quirks?
10. What makes them tick?

BECOME A COLLECTOR

My favorite part about living in the writing frame of mind is the way it changes my experience of the world. When I'm *cruising for characters*, everyone I meet and see suddenly becomes very interesting. The ornery lady in the grocery store inspires a new plotline in my story. My colleague's strange habit of wearing unmatched colored socks becomes my main character's quirk.

Put yourself in the position to observe the people around you, and let their oddities, their words, their expressions seep into your characters. Oakton is a great place to observe people. So is any sort of public transportation, or any waiting room. I like to look into passing cars (when I'm the passenger, of course!) and make up stories about the people in neighboring sedans. If real people aren't your thing, you could always spend time looking at images in magazines, or on the walls of a portrait gallery.

But do mind the small stuff, that's often where your characters become real.

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, CONSULT THE INTERNET

There are so many websites that will generate characters for you. I know our very own Robin Dillow amuses herself on such websites every now and then. They can be great comic relief, and great inspiration. Check out the "You Might Need This!" tab in our Oakton Library research guide for links.

DON'T FORGET THE REAL CHARACTERS IN YOUR LIFE

Chances are you know some interesting people in real life. Feel free to use them as inspiration, too. I think it was Anne Lamott who shared this handy tool for avoiding lawsuits when using real people in books: She gives each a terribly embarrassing trait that makes it impossible for anyone to ever want to fess up to being the real-life inspiration for the character. ☺