



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Luis Garcia: End Zone Hero

Second Quarter

Characterization

(character's conversations with others)



Memorable Characters Have Quirks

What causes us to remember a character long after we've finished reading the book or viewed the movie? According to researchers, the believability of a character may depend more upon the author's ability to show the human eccentricities of the character, his or her foibles, emotions, habits, and quirks, than whether the character is portrayed as honest or reliable. He or she is unforgettable because he or she sparks an emotional response from the reader.

Authors of books and screenplays are not the only professionals who want to create believable characters. The goal of many artificial intelligence researchers is to build robots that seem more life-like. In the process of trying to find the essential qualities of humans, they explored reasoning, problem solving, concept formation, and other qualities typically thought of as intelligence. Still, the robots lacked the human qualities they were looking for.

The goal of artists, and particularly character animators, is to make their drawings more life-like. They also tried to find the essential qualities of humans, but instead, they looked at different qualities than the artificial intelligence researchers did. Animators studied qualities such as human emotions and behaviors that reveal these emotions. They found that when a quirk, or oddity, is added to a behavior, it attracts people's attention. The viewer finds the character more interesting and more believable. The quirk gives personality to a character, and it is personality that gives the character life.

Personality Traits vs. Personality Disorders

It is important that writers give their characters a quirk, but too many quirks can cause an otherwise compelling character to become too eccentric. Just as in real life, there is no bright line that distinguishes a personality trait from a personality disorder. With the prevalence of personality disorders appearing in about 13 percent of the general population, authors need to make sure that they don't include too many quirky characters or overdo the quirks of a single character if they want their story to be believable.

Keep the Quirks In Balance

Viewers remember the Portokalos family patriarch, Gus, from *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, and his miracle cure, Windex. He claimed that a quick squirt would cure all skin afflictions. Gus's blue bottle appears on-screen seven times for a total of 29.07 seconds and mentioned four additional times throughout the 95-minute movie, yet it was enough to make Gus memorable.

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