



## WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

### Luis Garcia: End Zone Hero

#### Pre-Game Warm Up & First Quarter

*Characterization  
(narration)*



### Getting to Know A Character

"How do you build your characters?" it's a familiar question to those of us who write fiction, and I suspect, one of the most uncomfortable. When someone asks me about "building characters," I'm tempted to remind them that characters are people, not models you put together with an erector set. You don't "build" people; you get to know them. (Patterson, 1989, p. 92)

### Book Illustrators Support Author's Description

Authors create characters through their words on a page. One way characters are developed is by describing their appearance, how they look and what they wear. Book illustrations can support the author's description by providing a visual representation of characters. After reading the book, the book's illustrator interprets and envisions the character's physical appearance and emotional response. Readers may also notice how an illustrator depicts a character's body language to reveal beliefs, attitudes, or relationships to other characters. Sometimes, the illustrator's conceptualization of the character may not be how the reader "sees" that individual, depending on how detailed the author has made the character. Well-defined characters are multidimensional and open to interpretation.

### The Age of the Character – The Age of the Reader

In most cases, the age of the main character helps determine the age of a typical reader. Children like reading about characters their own age or a year or two older. Sometimes, a younger protagonist will have a story that's compelling enough for older readers. The standard age categories are:

Grade Level in School	Age of Reader	Age of Main Character
Middle grades	8 – 12	Up to 13
Upper middle grades	10 – 14	12 – 14
Young Adult (YA)	12 and up	13 and up; often in high school

#### References:

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Giorgis, C., Johnson, N. J., Colbert, C., Conner, A., King, J., & Kulesza, D. (2000). Children's books: Characters. *The Reading Teacher*, 53(6), 518-527.

Patterson, K. (1989). *The Spying heart: More thoughts about reading and writing books for children*. New York: Lodestar.