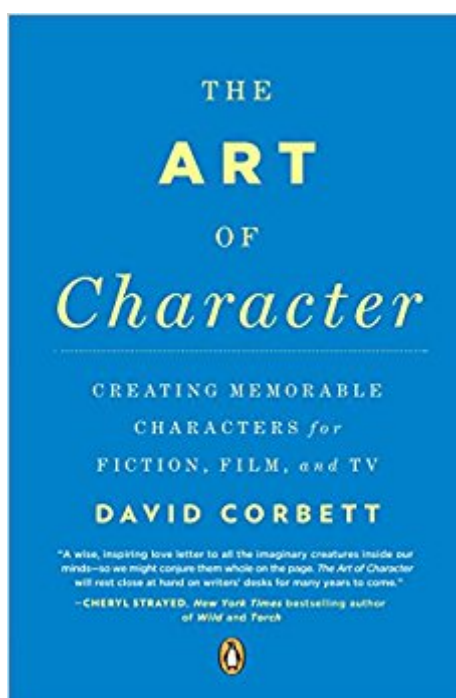


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# The Art Of Character: Creating Memorable Characters For Fiction, Film, And TV



## Synopsis

Former private investigator and New York Times notable author David Corbett offers a unique and indispensable toolkit for creating characters that come vividly to life on the page and linger in memory. Corbett provides an inventive, inspiring, and vastly entertaining blueprint to all the elements of characterization—from initial inspiration to realization—with special insights into the power of secrets and contradictions, the embodiment of roles, managing the "tyranny of motive," and mastering crucial techniques required for memorable dialogue and unforgettable scenes. This is a how-to guide for both aspiring and accomplished writers that renders all other books of its kind obsolete.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Praise for *The Art of Character* "David Corbett has written a wise, inspiring love letter to all the imaginary creatures inside our minds—so we might conjure them whole on the page. I predict that massively underscored copies of *The Art of Character* will rest close at hand on writers' desks for many years to come." —Cheryl Strayed, author of *Wild* and *Torch* "David Corbett has combined his unique talents as a gifted writer and an extraordinary teacher to create a superb resource on character development. Deftly crafted and impeccably researched, *The Art of Character* is a thoughtful and insightful book that is immensely readable and practical. Suitable for beginners to best-selling authors, *The Art of Character* should be on every serious writer's shelf next to Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*, Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*, and Stephen King's *On Writing*. Highly recommended." —Sheldon Siegel, *New*

York Times Best Selling Author of *Perfect Alibi* and *Incriminating Evidence* "I once made the mistake of writing a story with David Corbett. The man smoked me. He can delineate the character and personality of an accordion on three strokes. I didn't even know accordions had character. Imagine what he can do with people. This act of generosity and wisdom from a very good writer will help anyone who is staring at a blank page, any day, any time. Highly recommended."

• Luis Alberto Urrea, author of *Queen of America* and *The Hummingbird's Daughter* "Corbett's *The Art of Character* is no "how to" book or "writing by numbers" manual. It is an artful testament to the writers' credo that a story is only as affecting and meaningful as the characters who tell it that writing, essentially, is character. *The Art of Character* is a writer's bible that will lead to your character's soul. Corbett writes with the grace and authority of a seasoned professional, but offers much more than the usual inventory of method and strategy. With clarity and compassion, he gets to the very thing that lies deep within us, that longing we share to discover that one distinct and authentic voice. *The Art of Character* is itself a work of art, an indispensable resource for writers of any genre, and a pedagogical tool for teachers of writing at any level."

• Elizabeth Brundage, author of *A Stranger Like You* and *The Doctor's Wife*. "Well-delivered character development - an issue that can so easily intimidate a writer - is crucial to the richness of the narrative, because characters are not simply at the heart of the story - they are the story. David Corbett's *The Art of Character* offers a deep inquiry into the creation of character for the novice writer, with valuable nuggets of wisdom for the seasoned storyteller. If you are a writer, it should be on your desk."

• Jacqueline Winspear, New York Times Bestselling Author of *Elegy for Eddie* and *Maisie Dobbs* "Corbett shares his secrets for making characters come to life on the page, from presenting their back stories and motivations to crafting memorable dialogue and great scenes that flesh out characters and move the plot forward at a compelling, tension-fueled pace. Corbett has a clear and elegant style that's easy for would-be writers to absorb."

• The *Writer Magazine*, selected as one of the Top 13 Writing Guides of 2013 "Both inspiring and practical, *The Art of Character* belongs on every writer's shelf. David Corbett brilliantly illustrates those elusive tools writers need to breathe life into their characters with greater confidence and deeper insight."

• Cara Black, bestselling author of *Murder at the Lanterne Rouge* "David Corbett's *The Art of Character* belongs on every writer's shelf beside Elizabeth George's *Write Away* and Stephen King's *On Writing*. An invaluable resource for both the novice and the experienced novelist, it's as much

fun to read as a great novel." — Deborah Crombie, author of *No Mark Upon Her* "David Corbett is a guy who knows his business. Reading this book, I learned things I didn't know and was reminded of ones I did. I recommend *The Art of Character* to every writer, at any level." — S. J. Rozan, award-winning author of *Ghost Hero* — "Indispensable. Few are the writer's guides that are written as beautifully, cogently, and intelligently as a well-wrought novel (or a well-rendered character) itself. This is one of those books." — Megan Abbott, Edgar Award-Winning author of *The End of Everything* and *Dare Me* — "The topic of character development begins and ends with David Corbett's *The Art of Character*. This is the book on the subject, destined to stand among the writings of John Gardner, Joseph Campbell, and the others of that select few whose work is fundamental to understanding the craft of storytelling." — Craig Clevenger, author of *The Contortionist's Handbook* "It is rare to find the deep philosophical questions of literature (and life) met with such straight-forward and inspiring instruction. But David Corbett is that writer, and *The Art of Character* is that book." — Robert Mailer Anderson, author *Boonville* — "David Corbett, himself a master crafter of riveting and remarkable narratives, delivers up in this highly readable guide, a smorgasbord of smart examples of memorable characters from literature and popular culture, to create an addictive and helpful primer on this most central of narrative ingredients." — Clear-headed and confident, Corbett takes us through the steps in a manner that resists formula while at the same time demystifying a process that has likely daunted every writer since Homer. — Robin Hemley, author of *Turning Life into Fiction* — "This fine book is about as thorough an examination of character and what it means in all sorts of imaginative writing as you're likely to find anywhere. A terrific starting place for those who wish to sharpen or enhance their skill at making sharp, believable, meaningful characters, it also has practical uses that go far beyond the ordinary creative writing text. This is an exploration of the phenomenon of character -- in as wide a variety of fiction and drama as there is. It will help any writer create and sustain human beings who make you forget you're reading, who are alive, who are worthy of our attention and sympathy." — Robert Bausch, author of *Out of Season* — "Writers pay attention! *The Art of Character* is a tremendously useful and important book. David Corbett delivers in-depth analysis and practical wisdom on every page." — Sam Barry, author of *Write That Book Already! The Tough Love You Need to Get Published Now* — "Character is the beating heart of fiction and with *The Art of Character* novelist David Corbett has written a clear, in-depth, and highly entertaining exploration of how to create remarkable characters. This an essential guide to students of the

writer's craft at all levels. •Mark Haskell Smith, author of Baked

David Corbett worked as a private investigator for fifteen years before becoming the widely acclaimed author of four novels, with short fiction twice chosen for Best American Mystery Stories. He has taught at the UCLA Extension Writers' Program, 826 Valencia, Chuck Palahniuk's LitReactor, and the San Francisco Writers' Grotto.

Full disclosure: I've read all of Corbett's novels. He's one of my favorite crime writers. I've also taken a writing class with him, which isn't cheap. His help on my book was invaluable. Now for only \$17 or less, you can get a valuable book on writing, like taking a master class. Thing is, it's not about "character," it's about how to create a living person in your work. A living person with drives, wants, and needs, values, an unconscious, with secrets and contradictions, and wounds. A person with heart rather than a "personality type." On and on the book goes from a simple premise, like a philosophical treatise, getting deeper and deeper into the self, the examined life, even marveling at the ultimate fiction of this self. A very rich and profound writing book. The many examples were very helpful. Finally, my epiphany: other characters define the main characters. "We don't know ourselves by ourselves," Corbett writes. For me, this book is a godsend. It helps lift me out of my overbearing subjectivity when I write, and helps me to really create fully realized characters in a "teeming" world. My only negative is that he also used some examples from television, which I didn't know about--but after all, the book is for "fiction, film, and TV."

Corbett's guide is more than just some paint-by-numbers attempt at creating story character, nor does it suggest a number of details or attributes needed to make a fictional character work. The Art of Character is an examination of the process for creating emotionally rich and deeply engaging story people. With meaningful examples from film, television, novels, and plays Corbett shows how the aspects of fictional character development work. A number of helpful exercises are included with each chapter to help further illustrate the process and enlighten the writer. I would definitely recommend this book for any author wanting a better understanding of how character relates to plot and how characters can relate to each other in meaningful ways. This will be the book I turn to again and again for story creation directions.

This widely praised book is definitely worth reading, especially the first 120 pages, and the last 65, which are packed with insights. In the middle is a set of useful annotated lists of the qualities of

good characters. The exercises at the end of each chapter seemed like they'd be helpful (I didn't do them). A book that should be on every writer's reference shelf.-- Bill Adams, author of *Hunter and Hunted* ([bit.ly/Hunter-Hunted](http://bit.ly/Hunter-Hunted)) and *It Wasn't Me* ([bit.ly/Wasnt-Me](http://bit.ly/Wasnt-Me))

Excellent addition to my collection of books on writing. Corbett's take on breathing life into characters is insightful, and his understanding of what makes a character work reflects his deep understanding of what it is to be human, what makes humans work - including the fact that sometimes there's no clear-cut answer, because truth be told, we humans can be messy and unpredictable at times, delightfully endearing at others, and we can surprise, in ways one would never have considered. Definitely worth adding to your collection, great for beginning and advanced writers alike.

This is a wonderful book. I was struggling with my characters, realizing that I had to dig more deeply into the "why" of their actions. This book has excited and reinvigorated me. Yes, I agree with the one star reviewer that Mr. Corbett's writing style can be a bit, er, clumsy. Corbett seems to love fifty cent words and he plunks those words into what I feel are unnecessarily long sentences. The result sometimes ruins the flow of his wonderful and creative advice. I love this book anyway. The exercises are extremely helpful and have really assisted me in polishing my characters. Already they have so much more depth and are so much more interesting. I highly recommend this book, along with Alan Watts' *90 Day Novel*. These two books can be a good start to a great novel.

*The Art of Character* is one of the more unique books I've seen on the market about creating characters, in that it primarily focuses on the "big ideas" that an interesting character should have. Lots of character creation methods tend to focus on the details that surround a character and waffle on what exactly makes a character interesting, but Corbett starts off right away by addressing important concepts like what a character wants, contradictions, secrets and more. There's no chaff or fluff - you learn immediately what makes this character jump off the page. I personally found this essential, because what draws us to characters mainly involve their desires and their inner conflicts. By focusing on that first, Corbett helps establish a strong framework which other details can hang on, as opposed to other methods where the ideas for a character seem to jumble. And countless examples help illustrate how these ideas come into play in other media people love. My main complaint for the book is namely the writing style, but I'll admit it's a personal nitpick. Corbett is less direct than other instructional authors, and for people who crave some step-by-step checklists, you

may need to puzzle it out first. But it's not vague by any means, and I do encourage you to study Corbett's words carefully, because they'll flip around your approach and make it all the better. This book is the 80/20 rule in action - spend 20 percent of the effort for 80 percent of the results. With this book, you'll get results.

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