



# The Art of Character: Creating Memorable Characters for Fiction, Film, and TV

By David Corbett



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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.



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

##### 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*

#### About the Author

**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.

#### Users Review

##### From reader reviews:

##### **Brandy Hagaman:**

This The Art of Character: Creating Memorable Characters for Fiction, Film, and TV book is not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book is actually information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get information which is getting deeper an individual read a lot of information you will get. That The Art of Character: Creating Memorable Characters for Fiction, Film, and TV without we know teach the one who reading it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't be worry The Art of Character: Creating Memorable Characters for Fiction, Film, and TV can bring any time you are and not make your bag space or bookshelves' turn into full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even cellphone. This The Art of Character: Creating Memorable Characters for Fiction, Film, and TV having very good arrangement in word in addition to layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

##### **Carol Ratliff:**

Nowadays reading books become more than want or need but also work as a life style. This reading addiction give you lot of advantages. The advantages you got of course the knowledge the actual information inside the book in which improve your knowledge and information. The details you get based on what kind of publication you read, if you want send more knowledge just go with training books but if you want feel happy read one using theme for entertaining like comic or novel. The particular The Art of Character: Creating Memorable Characters for Fiction, Film, and TV is kind of guide which is giving the reader unstable experience.

**Phillis Ries:**

In this era which is the greater person or who has ability in doing something more are more valuable than other. Do you want to become one among it? It is just simple strategy to have that. What you are related is just spending your time very little but quite enough to experience a look at some books. One of many books in the top collection in your reading list is usually The Art of Character: Creating Memorable Characters for Fiction, Film, and TV. This book that is certainly qualified as The Hungry Slopes can get you closer in becoming precious person. By looking upwards and review this guide you can get many advantages.

**Kirk Mathews:**

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