

6 days ago

The Observant Writer: How to Write Characters That Truly Feel Human



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When I first started writing novels, I was all about the research. I made copious notes on setting, architecture, and historical data. I dug deep into the external world of my story. Then I'd make character worksheets—what my characters liked to eat, what kind of clothing they wore, what town they were born in.

And that kind of research is important.
But eventually, I realized something was missing.

🧠 The Interior Landscape Matters More

Good fiction relies on research.

Great fiction lets the reader live inside the character's mind.

If you want to write stories that resonate deeply, you must learn to observe not just the outer world, but the **inner world**—what I call *the interior landscape*.

These are the thoughts your characters don't say aloud.
The fleeting ideas. The awkward or impolite truths.
The things we've been taught to keep to ourselves in polite society.

And yet—these are the very things that humanize your character.
They're what make a reader stop mid-page and think, *"I've felt that, too."*

✍️ How to Capture What's Real

So how do you gather this kind of humanizing material?

You practice. First, you **observe others**—the way people speak, gesture, avoid, interrupt, or deflect. Then you **observe yourself**: your reactions, stray thoughts, silent

fears. You'll be surprised by how much richness lives just beneath the surface.

✨ **Keep a journal.** Not a perfectly written one, but a raw one. Practice recording your observations of life—and your internal reactions to it.

Then, once you start capturing these authentic thoughts, resist the urge to simply list them in your fiction.

I do this in early drafts—setting loose thoughts into the story like uncut stones. But great fiction requires the next step:

Shaping those thoughts artfully into the story, so they feel natural, even invisible, inside your character's inner monologue.

Good Takes Time

You can rush an ordinary novel.

You can't rush a great one.

Aim to write stories that are intimate—where the reader doesn't just see what the character does, but **feels what the character thinks**.

Invite your reader into the character's worries, tensions, repressed desires, and fleeting thoughts—the ones that seem like nothing but, in the end, carry emotional weight.

These are the details that set your story apart.

Final Thought

When we as writers learn to truly notice—to observe life, and ourselves, with intention—we unlock the interior world that brings fiction to life.

Train yourself to see what others overlook.

Then write it so beautifully, your reader feels like the thoughts were their own.

That's when you'll know:

You're not just writing a character—you're writing a connection.

Over to You

Have you noticed something ordinary lately that might belong in a story?

Or have you captured an awkward thought from your own interior landscape and used it in your fiction? I'd love to hear how you observe and translate life into character.

Leave a comment below—or start your own journal page today.

Posted 6 days ago by [Patty](#)



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