

Author * & * Illustrator ACADEMY



DEREK LANDY: MAKE CHARACTERS FEEL REAL

NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS



WRITE CHARACTER RECIPES! BEFORE WATCHING THE VIDEO OR READING THE EXTRACT:

Think of one of your favourite characters in a book or film. How is this character brought to life or made to feel 'real'? Write down a list of ingredients – a 'character recipe' – for creating relatable, interesting and believable characters. Q: why is it important that a character has just as many weaknesses as they have strengths?

DISCUSS THE EXTRACT! TAKEN FROM PAGES 1–5 OF *SKULDUGGERY PLEASANT: APOCALYPSE KINGS*

1. What do you learn about Adedayo on page 1?
2. How would you describe Adedayo's bond with his grandmother?
3. What do you think is the significance of the 'polished wooden box'?

FIND INSPIRATION

AFTER WATCHING THE VIDEO, DEVELOP DEREK'S IDEAS

INSPIRATION 1: CREATING 3D CHARACTERS

Derek explains that when we write, the temptation is to create a character who we aspire to be. What we should aim to do instead is try to create a real person. This would result in a three-dimensional character.

- Creating 3D characters means showing all of the different layers (good and bad!) of a character. In pairs, read out the extract from the book where we are introduced to Adedayo for the first time. What layers of Adedayo's character can you see already?
- Create a Character Wall made of bricks to show Adedayo's character so far. In the bricks at the top of the wall, you might include how Adedayo presents himself (i.e. his surface level traits). In the bricks below, you might include his deeper emotions, his fears and his motivations.

INSPIRATION 2: INCLUDE A LITTLE BIT OF YOURSELF

Derek talks about giving characters emotional depth in order to make them feel more real. He suggests that a good starting point is to put in a little piece of yourself – how would you feel and react in the same situation?

- Imagine that you, like Adedayo, have just realised that you are capable of magic. Consider how you would feel about this. How would you react? What would be your best thoughts and ideas, and what would be your worst? In pairs, carry out interviews where you show your reactions and feelings.
- Write a biography for a character based on yourself. Include your backstory, your qualities and your flaws. Focus in particular on this section of the biography: how can flaws become interesting starting points for stories?

CREATIVE CHALLENGE FROM DEREK LANDY!

Write a description of a character from a science-fiction, fantasy or horror setting. Within this description, have the character share a piece of your life or backstory – to make him or her feel more real!