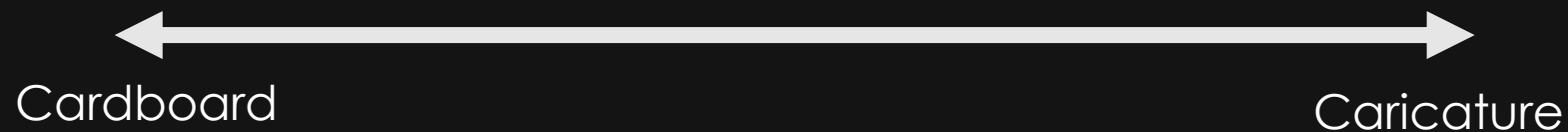


Cardboard Characters?

How to avoid 2D characters and make your world come alive.

The Problem

- You have a protagonist
- You have an investigation
- But everyone else...
 - Side kicks
 - Suspects
 - Witnesses
 - Resources
 - Ex: the officer in charge of the case



The Goal

- Create characters that don't just contribute to the investigation, but to the *story*
- Your characters are the living, breathing part of your world
- Your characters should add intrigue and conflict
- The trick is finding meaningful ways to develop your characters

The Solution

- Your protagonist is the way your reader is going to experience your other characters
- Compare and contrast characters with each other and with your protagonist
- Then translate this information into behaviors

Give your characters opinions
and perspectives and then
showcase them through their
interactions with your
protagonist.

Three Approaches

- How do characters relate to their environment?
- How do characters relate to the events of the story?
- How do characters relate to the other characters in the story?

How do characters relate to their environment?

- Settings aren't just physical, they're *cultural*
- Think about *where* your story takes place
 - You can use the whole setting, or the smaller environments that are central to your story (ex: the police station, the court system)
- How are your characters shaped by the environment they are in? How does their environment shape their perspectives?
- Who are the insiders and outsiders in this environment?
 - Who's trying to get in?
 - Who's trying to get out?
- **How is this similar to or different from your protagonist? How do the characters treat your protagonist in light of this?**

How do characters relate to the events of the story?

- People have different opinions on and perspectives of the same event
- Think about the major events in your story. The crime should be at the top of this list!
 - Which characters were impacted by those events?
 - *How* were they impacted by those events?
 - Which characters know about those events?
 - What do the characters think about the events? Who do they hold responsible?
- **How does this impact *what* your characters tell the protagonist or what they focus on?**

How do the characters relate to other characters in the story?

- People have different, and often strong, opinions about each other
- Think about the different characters in your story
 - What do the other characters think about your protagonist?
 - Who do your characters think is responsible for the crime?
 - What kind of gossip is happening among the suspects, witnesses, or resource characters?
 - What is true? What isn't?
- **When the protagonist comes with questions, what do the other characters have to say about each other?**

Synthesis

- All of these should illuminate the way each character interacts with the protagonist.
- Take the answers you came up with to these questions and then ask yourself: **how does this cause each character to interact with the protagonist?**
 - This is how you make your characters really shine on the page. This information is interesting, but it should promote conflict and intrigue as they uniquely engage your protagonist
- Final questions to ask yourself:
 - How will the characters behave?
 - What does this tell you about the information that individual characters might focus on, or even be willing to share?
 - How do these interactions help or hinder your protagonist's investigation?

For Further Study

- Read or watch *Sharp Objects* (mini series on HBO) or choose your favorite crime novel
- Read or watch it through first for the experience. Then, go back through it with these questions in mind.
- You can find a free downloadable worksheet for your own character development at: www.storycipher.me