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CHARACTER DEVELOPS WITH REVISION. Take a character you're

not satisfied with in a nearly finished story or chapter from a novel. This could
be a minor or major character. Think about this character out of the context
of the story. Make a list of the stupid things he's said over the years that still
make him wince and slap his forehead. Now take a short scene that is the
most important one for this character, in which he is defined for us abso-
lutely. Change the character significantly, and remember that every change you
make may force you to make changes before and after this scene. But so what?
Use the *find* function under *edit*. Search for the name of your character through-
out the story or novel, and examine what needs updating about him after you've
moved the hump on his shoulder from the right to the left side, for instance.
800 words

THIS IS ANOTHER deceptively simply exercise. Writers often leave the more
dramatic character building of certain key characters for later drafts (or
writers realize that they need to face the problems of this character only after
months and years of laboring over the story). If we're rushing through a set
of scenes because we want to get the important details down on paper, we
are perfectly willing to leave some cleanup work for the last minute. Or some-
times a slight change in an event on page 206 will have repercussions for
character X on page 66 and forward. I've quoted him before, but I'll do it
again—Milan Kundera, or his main character in *The Unbearable Lightness of
Being*, says, "Characters are not born, like people, of woman; they are born

of a situation, a sentence, a metaphor, containing in a nutshell a basic human
possibility." This is true enough of the inspiration for characters, but rich,
round, complex characters develop slowly, over time, in fits and starts. Some
of my favorite characters in my own fiction were once two separate charac-
ters. With a gentle twist of the lever on my character atomizer, two became
one, and I discovered a richer, more meaningfully contradictory single voice
and way of seeing.