

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Writing Prompt: Your Favorite Character

Charity Hume · Wednesday, January 8th, 2014

In this original Cultural Weekly column, Charity Hume shares a writing prompt each week to provide a bit of help and a little nudge to all the writers out there who could use just that ounce of boost in their work.

Think of all the books you've really treasured, and write down a list of characters that you most related to at different times in your life. Think of the books you couldn't help re-reading as a guilty pleasure, knowing you were just having the same old experience, but were unable to resist. When you have a few of these characters in mind, try assuming the identity and point of view of the character you've chosen from your reading, and explore some of the exercises suggested below. If you're more of a movie buff, choose a character from a film, or if you love art, choose a person from a portrait in a museum, and imagine your way into the world the character awakens within you. Margaret Atwood tells the story of *The Odyssey* from Penelope's point of view in *The Penelopiad*; in the poem, "Musee de Beaux Arts," W. H. Auden famously captures the marginal disaster of Icarus's plunge into the ocean in the context of Breugl's masterpiece, *The Fall of Icarus*.

Once you have identified your character, try one of the following exercises. The characters we love can reveal the qualities we treasure. By writing, you will find the unexpected wisdom and insight they hold in store.

- Write a poem, (or a series of poems!) based on the experiences of your character.
- Write a first person monologue in the voice and point of view of your character.
- Write a missing chapter that explains this character's life more fully.
- Write a screenplay of your favorite scene in this book.
- Research art connected to your character or the world described in the novel. For each image you find, write a commentary that explores the connection you see between the story and the art.



Claude Monet Reading, (1872), by Jean August Renoir, courtesy of Wikipaintings

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