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HOW TO WRITE A FEMALE VILLAIN

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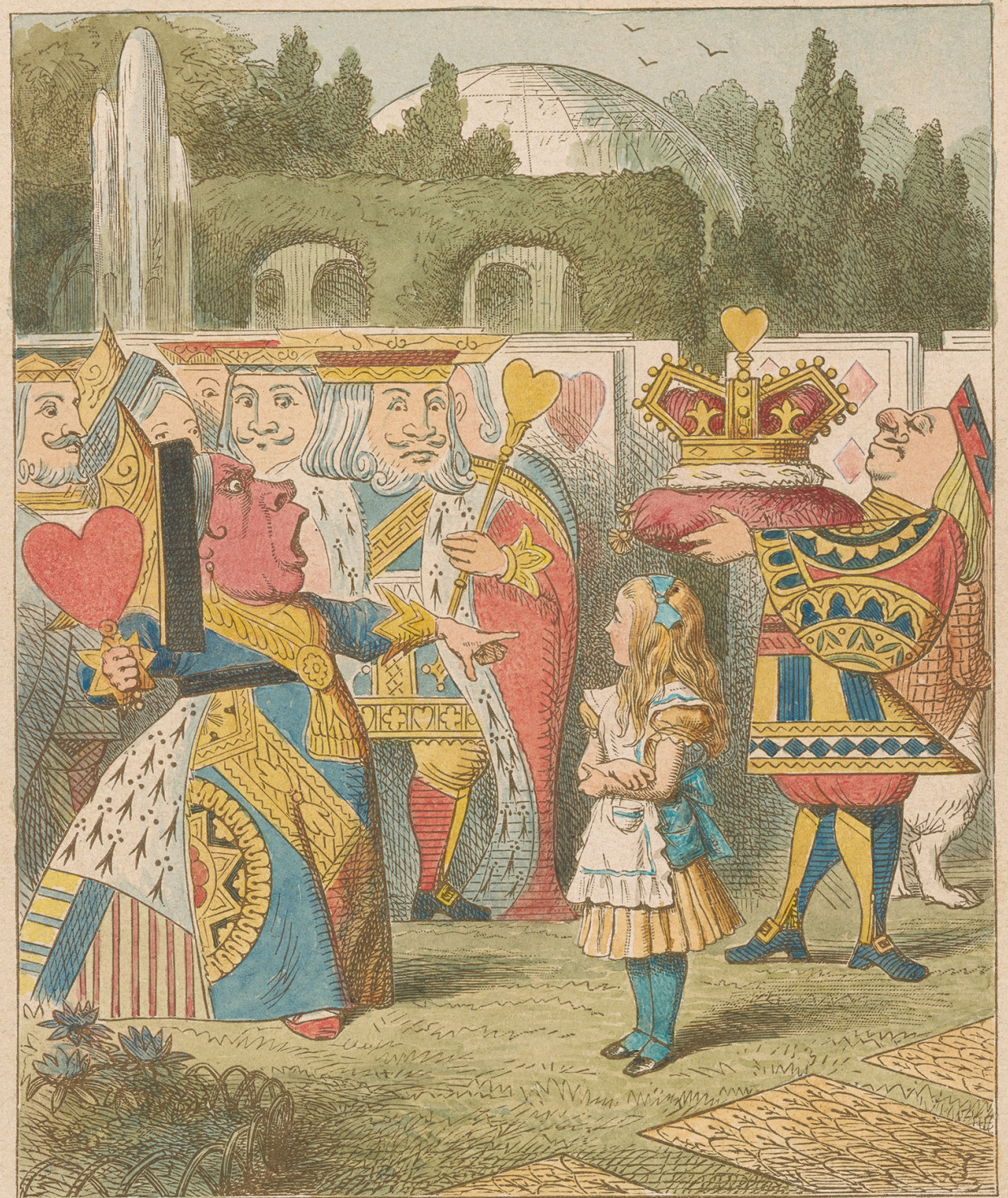
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glare

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16.



WRITING FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

1) EXPERIENCING STORIES

You can take notes here

Before you start writing, read loads of stories that you enjoy. So you can observe what other successful writers do.

2) PLANNING YOUR STORY

Plan what will happen in your story. Stories often follow an arc. What will happen at these moments in the story: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution?

3) WORKING OUT THE DETAIL

What do you know about your fictional characters? What do they look like? Who are their family, friends, enemies? Where do they live? What is their special skill or feature? What strengths and weaknesses do they have?

Female villains in *Harry Potter*

Take **Dolores Umbridge**. What makes her a villain and why is so dangerous? She first appears in the fifth Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Below is an extract describing her arrival at Hogwarts. Harry has met her before and recognises her now.

Then she turned her face slightly to take a sip from her goblet and he saw, with a shock of recognition, a pallid, toadlike face and a pair of prominent, pouchy eyes.

"It's that Umbridge woman!"

"Who?" said Hermione.

"She was at my hearing, she works for Fudge!"

"Nice cardigan," said Ron, smirking."

To find out more about Umbridge let's look at what is said about her in the book. To find occurrences of the word *Umbridge* we can use a computer to help us generate a concordance, as shown on the next page.

You can take notes here

A CONCORDANCE

We highlighted some words and phrases in the context around *Umbridge*. What does this information tell you about this 'villain'. Why are there all these repetitions of *smiling* and *sweetly*? What's the difference between text we highlighted in red and in blue?

'But I disagree,' Hermione continued. Professor	Umbridge	's eyebrows rose a little higher and her gaze became distinctly colder.
'Voldemort killed him and you know it.' Professor	Umbridge	's face was quite blank. For a moment, Harry thought she was going ...
can think of a whole host of things I would rather be doing.'	Umbridge	's face was growing steadily redder ; she looked as though she was being filled with boiling water
It's none of your business who I talk to,' he snarled.	Umbridge	's slack face seemed to tighten . 'Very well,' she said in her most dangerous and falsely sweet voice.
the Dark Arts tests set by a competent teacher.' Professor	Umbridge	's smile vanished as suddenly as a light bulb blowing.
pretended to take a sip, though keeping his mouth tightly closed.	Umbridge	's smile widened . 'Good,' she whispered . 'Very good.
see if you've got the message yet, shall we?' said	Umbridge	's soft voice half an hour later. She moved towards him, stretching out her short ringed fingers
... the weapon,' said Hermione. 'Weapon? Weapon?' said	Umbridge	, and her eyes seemed to pop with excitement.
'Get him, get him!' cried	Umbridge	, but her remaining helper seemed highly reluctant to go within reach of Hagrid's
'Dunno,' said Harry. 'He can't be worse than	Umbridge	, can he?' 'I know someone who's worse than Umbridge
the whole Ministry's looking for him!' shouted	Umbridge	, disappointment etched in every sagging line of her face .
'Hem, hem,' said Professor	Umbridge	, employing the same silly little cough she had used to interrupt Dumbledore
Potter, I think a lifelong ban ought to do the trick,' said	Umbridge	, her smile widening still further as she watched him struggle to comprehend
I think you'll also find,' said	Umbridge	, her voice very cold now , 'that the Ministry looks into the records ...
The Minister for Magic will never employ Harry Potter!' said	Umbridge	, her voice rising furiously .
Are you a Ministry-trained educational expert, Miss Granger?' asked Professor	Umbridge	, in her falsely sweet voice .
'Well, well, well!' said	Umbridge	, looking triumphant . 'Little Miss Question-all is going to give us some answers
I want to know why you are in my office,' said	Umbridge	, shaking the fist clutching his hair so that he staggered.
None at all,' said	Umbridge	, shooting a malevolent look at Harry, Ron and Hermione
'Oh yes,' said Professor	Umbridge	, smiling as widely as before. 'Yes, I think we can
I repeat,' said Professor	Umbridge	, smiling in a very irritating fashion at Dean
Oh, no,' said	Umbridge	, smiling so widely that she looked as though she had just swallowed a particularly juicy fly
You know what to do, Mr Potter,' said	Umbridge	, smiling sweetly at him. Harry picked up the quill and glanced through the window.
and flattened the newspaper to reveal a large photograph of Dolores	Umbridge	, smiling widely and blinking slowly at them from beneath the headline.
He felt several hairs part company with his scalp. 'Liar!' shouted	Umbridge	. She threw him from her and he slammed into the desk .
'How much further?' demanded	Umbridge	angrily from behind him. 'Not far now!' shouted Hermione
May I help, Professor McGonagall?' asked Professor	Umbridge	in her most poisonously sweet voice . Blood rushed into Professor McGonagall's face.
'Sit down,' said	Umbridge	in her soft, silky voice . Mrs. Cattermole stumbled to the single seat
- 'Did you not understand my note, Minerva?' asked Professor	Umbridge	in honeyed tones , quite forgetting to cough . 'Of course I understood it
Professor	Umbridge	raised her eyebrows and Harry knew she was impressed, against her will .
I think, Minister,' said	Umbridge	silently from beside him, ...
No, I don't think so, Mr Potter,' said	Umbridge	sweetly , poking him in the back with it.
There,' said	Umbridge	sweetly , 'we're getting better at controlling our temper already, aren't we?
as long as it takes for the message to sink in,' said	Umbridge	sweetly . 'Off you go.'



Welcome to CLiC. The CLiC web app has been developed as part of the [CLiC Dickens project](#), which demonstrates through corpus stylistics how computer-assisted methods can be used to study literary texts and lead to new insights into how readers perceive fictional characters.

1 to 50 of 68 entries, Rel. Freq. 2568.75 pm, from 1 book, 1 line / 1 book with 2 KWIC matches, 9 lines / 1 book with

Left	Node	Right
ice. ¶ 'Now, I give you fair warning,' shouted the	Queen,	stamping on the ground as she spoke; 'either you
to stay with it as to go after that savage	Queen:	so she waited. ¶ The Gryphon sat up and rubbed
lice, they all stopped and looked at her, and the	Queen	said severely 'Who is this?' She said it to the
¶ 'I won't!' said Alice. ¶ 'Off with her head!' the	Queen	shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved. ¶
r own courage. 'It's no business of MINE.' ¶ The	Queen	turned crimson with fury , and, after glaring at her
es!' shouted Alice. ¶ 'Come on, then!' roared the	Queen,	and Alice joined the procession, wondering very n
the others. ¶ 'Are their heads off?' shouted the	Queen.	¶ 'Their heads are gone, if it please your Majesty!
queen said--' ¶ 'Get to your places!' shouted the	Queen	in a voice of thunder, and people began running a
ers shouted in reply. ¶ 'That's right!' shouted the	Queen.	'Can you play croquet?' ¶ The soldiers were silent
for the hedgehogs; and in a very short time the	Queen	was in a furious passion, and went stamping abou

Hands-on CLiC: Let's do some concordancing to look at the Queen in Alice in Wonderland

1. Go to <https://clic.bham.ac.uk/>
2. On your right-hand side is a menu, click on 'Concordance'.
3. In the top box 'Search the corpora' start typing *alice*. 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' will pop up for you to click on.
4. Leave the box below as it is. In the next box ('Search for terms'), type *queen*.

Your menu will look like this:

Load | Merge | Save | Clear | Help

Concordance

Search the corpora:

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Lewis Carroll)

Only in subsets:

All text

Search for terms:

queen

☒ Whole phrase
☐ Any word

The **KWICGrouper** is a function that allows you to search **additional words** around your search word. With our concordance, we searched for the word *queen*. Now we want to find words that are used together with *queen*.

Enter such words in the box 'Search for types', e.g. *angrily, roared, severely, shouted, stamping, thunder*. If these words don't occur in the text, you won't be able to see them in the drop down list.

These context words occur within five words to the left or right of *queen*. This text is called the **span**. With the **slider** you can focus just on the left or just on the right context of *queen*.



Showing 1 to 50 of 68 entries, Rel. Freq. 2568.75 pm, from 1 book, 2 lines / 1 book with 2 KWIC matches, 6 lines / 1 book with 1 KWIC match

	Left	Node	Right	Book	In bk.
1	said--' ¶ 'Get to your places!' shouted the	Queen	in a voice of thunder , and people began run	alice	
2	¶ 'Now, I give you fair warning,' shouted the	Queen,	stamping on the ground as she spoke; 'eith	alice	
3	they all stopped and looked at her, and the	Queen	said severely 'Who is this?' She said it to t	alice	
4	onsider, my dear: she is only a child!' ¶ The	Queen	turned angrily away from him, and said to t	alice	
5	others. ¶ 'Are their heads off?' shouted the	Queen.	¶ 'Their heads are gone, if it please your M	alice	
6	houted in reply. ¶ 'That's right!' shouted the	Queen.	'Can you play croquet?' ¶ The soldiers were	alice	
7	shouted Alice. ¶ 'Come on, then!' roared the	Queen,	and Alice joined the procession, wondering	alice	
8	won't!' said Alice. ¶ 'Off with her head!' the	Queen	shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody m	alice	
9	ne, 'For the Duchess. An invitation from the	Queen	to play croquet.' The Frog-Footman repeate	alice	

View as:

- ☒ Basic results
- ☐ Full metadata
- ☐ Distribution plot

Filter rows:

e.g. 'hands'

KWICGrouper

Search in span:

Search for types:

angrily × roared × severely ×

shouted × stamping × thunder ×

Tags

Selected rows are part of:

[Manage tag columns...](#)

WRITE LIKE A PRO

Using language effectively

When describing a character, the language you use is important to make the description vivid or to highlight specific features that will become relevant as the story develops. Language is a key tool for story writing. It allows you to create images in the reader's mind and bring characters to life.

Adjectives

Here are some examples of adjectives that are frequently used to describe people, things and places.

<i>huge</i>	<i>giant</i>	<i>funny</i>
<i>strange</i>	<i>tight</i>	<i>careful</i>
<i>tiny</i>	<i>pale</i>	<i>weird</i>
<i>happy</i>	<i>beautiful</i>	<i>perfect</i>
<i>loud</i>	<i>stupid</i>	<i>sweet</i>
<i>angry</i>	<i>silent</i>	<i>fresh</i>
<i>tall</i>	<i>mad</i>	<i>desperate</i>
<i>pretty</i>	<i>cool</i>	<i>horrible</i>

Speech verbs

The way characters speak gives you clues about what they are like. Are they timid and whisper? Or are they loud and shout? The most frequently used speech verb is **said**. But there is a variety of other verbs that you can use to create specific effects.

<i>shouted</i>	<i>added</i>	<i>paused</i>
<i>whispered</i>	<i>sighed</i>	<i>explained</i>
<i>replied</i>	<i>continued</i>	<i>screamed</i>
<i>cried</i>	<i>snapped</i>	<i>hissed</i>
<i>laughed</i>	<i>yelled</i>	<i>exclaimed</i>
<i>wondered</i>	<i>agreed</i>	<i>suggested</i>
<i>muttered</i>	<i>grinned</i>	

Body language

Body language is crucial for the description of fictional people. We sometimes say that the eyes are the mirror to the soul. So the way characters are described when looking at someone or something is an important clue.

Characters can *glance, stare, gaze* etc. with all of these verbs having slightly different meanings. There are also typical behaviours that we find in stories. Here are a few examples of phrases of body language descriptions. As all examples in this section, these phrases are based on real texts. Notice that most of them describe male characters. Do you have an idea why this might be the case?

the corner of his eye
he took a deep breath
he closed his eyes and
he looked up at the
his head in his hands
he held out his hand
the top of his voice
her hands on her hips
his head on one side
he looked as if he
she took a deep breath

he looked down at the
turned to look at him
his eyes fixed on the
he got to his feet
on his hands and knees
made his way to the
he shook his head and
opened his mouth to speak
a hand on his shoulder
his finger to his lips

PLANNING: ESSENTIALS FOR WRITING A GOOD VILLAIN

When writing a story with a villain, think about the following points:

- What is the role of your villain in the story?
- Why is he or she evil? What are his or her motives?
- Is he or she evil from the very beginning of the story?
- Who knows this? Think about other characters in the book but also the reader.
- Is your villain a woman or a man? What difference does it make?
- What do you need to tell the reader?

IMAGINE

Once upon a time, there was a kingdom with a mighty king and a beautiful queen who lived in a magnificent castle. The castle was surrounded by exquisite gardens. The gardener was watering the roses when he noticed a shadow behind the gate. ...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The materials in this booklet were originally developed for the Bournville Bookfest 2019 and our 2019 Story Writing competition. You can read the winning stories here: <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/glareproject/>

The *Harry Potter* examples were retrieved from InterCorp through <https://www.korpus.cz/>

We would also like to thank Oxford University Press for allowing us to access the Oxford Children's corpus (OCC) (<https://www.sketchengine.eu/oxford-childrens-corpus/>)



storyWriting COMPETITION

Can you write a female villain?

**We all like a good baddie...
and women can be as wicked as men!**

Judged by
award-winning
BookFest author
ROBIN STEVENS.

Win signed
copies of
*Murder
Most
Unladylike*

From Cruella De Vil to Snow White's evil stepmother queen; from Bellatrix LeStrange to Narnia's White Witch, stories are full of powerful and interesting female villains.

Our challenge to you is to write a story featuring at least one female villain – she doesn't have to be the main character, she just has to be completely original.

THERE ARE 3 AGE CATEGORIES:

6-8yrs

A maximum of 400 words
& an accompanying
illustration is allowed

9-12yrs

A maximum of
600 words

12-15yrs

A maximum of
1,000 words

**IT'S COMPLETELY
FREE TO ENTER –**

**JUST BRING US YOUR
IMAGINATION
& IDEAS!**



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