

enneagram monthly

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Issue 192

Enneagram in Literature — to the Rescue Story-Telling & Types Believable Characters



Sheela Word

Enneagram type descriptions are abundant and various, but they tend to have one thing in common: they tell a story. They describe a character, the challenges that the character faces, and possible outcomes that may result if the character chooses one course of action over another. The tone of the story depends on the perspective of the author writing the description, but the story is always there.

As a writer, I also find that the type descriptions are a great jumping-off point for developing fictional characters and situations. About three years ago, I drafted a story called

The Melancholy Princess, with the intent of creating a modern fairy tale for children, and found that I had actually created a realistic romance story for adults, with an Enneagram Type Four heroine. I went on to develop eight more tales, based on the other eight types. These tales, also, subtly reflect fairy-tale themes and motifs.

Fairy tales are easy to plumb for Enneagram-related content. The character of the “unhappy princess” or “princess who cannot smile” shouts out Type Four, as do tales about outcasts (*The Little Mermaid*, *The Ugly Duckling*, etc.), and tales about haughty or extremely refined princesses (*The Frog Princess* and *The Princess and the Pea*, for example). The various feckless, but lucky, Jacks that appear in so many tales seem like Sevens, and the cannibalistic giants seem like Eights gone wrong. (*The Three Billy Goats Gruff* is the only fairy tale I can think of in which an Eight is portrayed positively: the biggest billy goat meets the bullying troll with appropriate and fully effective force.)

A common, and very One-ish, fairy tale theme is that vows must be kept and bargains must be honored. This crops up in such diverse tales as *Beauty and the Beast*, *Rapunzel*, *Rumpelstiltskin*, and, especially, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, in which failure to honor an agreement costs a town its children. *Chicken Little* is strikingly Six-ish, but *Red Riding Hood*, *The Three Bears*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *Snow White* also are cautionary tales about the dangers of venturing too far from home and giving one’s trust too easily.

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Laurie Schnebly

Every writer wants the same thing. Or maybe several of the same things, like a spot on the New York Times best-seller list or a front-aisle display in the neighborhood bookstore or fan letters saying “you changed my life,” but every writer shares one special goal.

Memorable characters.

Think about the characters you remember. They were probably the people responsible for your favorite book. Most of us writers have a few dozen best-loved books, and in almost every case they’re favorites because of the characters.

So of course we want to create people our readers will remember. Maybe not fondly, not if they’re someone like Hannibal Lecter or Inspector Javert, but our characters don’t need to be loved.

Just remembered.

How can we make that happen?

Psychological Tools

Psychological tools bring to mind visions of the ink-blot test, or Pavlov’s dogs salivating at the sound of a bell. Those aren’t the kind of tools writers need.

What we need are the tools used by counselors and human resources people to determine what someone is really like.

Then, unlike the counselors and human resources people, we get to use our knowledge of these people to — well, to ruin their lives.

Or at least put them in serious trouble. Like watching the love of their life marry some insipid cousin before heading off to the Civil War. The chance to achieve a dream, but at the cost of breaking a vow. Their sworn enemy given the power to confiscate the land they love. Something that anyone would agree means a difficult time ahead.

Because without that risk of failure, there’s not going to be much of a book. If everything around them stays rosy, these

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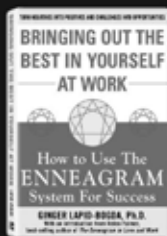


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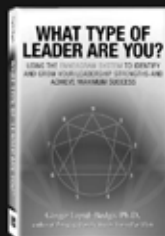
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From the Editor

Once upon a time (well, actually, time and again), knowledge is shared in the form of stories. Stories are the containers that organize and personalize concepts into digestible bites, making them easy to remember. Traditionally, most human experience was transmitted orally by telling stories, poetry, and song. With the invention of writing, stories could be preserved for all time

and memorization became less vital, but it did not change the need to apply a level of craft to writing that would make the contents come alive, be pithy, meaningful and appealing.

Songs, poems, fables or prose can convey feelings and moods in a way that theoretical reports cannot, which is why they have so much evocative power. Crafting a story that flows smoothly is a real art, because it requires us not only to master the skills of narrative storytelling but to create characters that both are believable and memorable. Without such characters, the story lacks conviction. As a number of enneagram authors have demonstrated by discussing the enneagram types associated with memorable characters in stories, films, and plays (e.g., Judith Searle in *The Literary Enneagram*, Tom Condon in *The Enneagram Movie and Video Guide*, and Susan Rhodes in *Archetypes of the Enneagram*), the enneagram can be a valuable guide for creating characters that really "work."

In this issue:

In this issue, the lead two articles focus on storytelling using the enneagram as a jumping-off point.

Sheela Word is "Story-Telling With Types" and *The Melancholy Princess* is this month's example. Sheela captures the Type Four personality traits in fullness beyond the standard bromides and more than that, transports the reader by the choice of language into a gentler era when words meant things and stories had not yet become breathless "action" sequences. This story evoked many sweet memories of a time when the feelings and moral dilemmas of protagonists took center stage and the events served as frames to that picture. Come to think of it, reading this story I felt melancholy creeping in when mercifully Sheela pulled me back from the brink with a satisfactory ending. Pheww... now I too can live happily ever after.

Laurie Schnebly knows that every writer's dream is to create "Believable Characters" in their stories. Good writing requires a deep understanding of human nature and what better tool can we have than a thorough understanding of enneagram types. Well, putting on Shakespearian tights, rearranging our work space, retiring into a cabin in peaceful nature and experiencing absolutely no computer glitches can't hurt either, but making our characters believable takes the prize. Writing is a mix of science and art so a writer must feel comfortable in both areas. Laurie has an impish sense of humor and uses it to make learning a fun experience. After a short general introduction listing all the facets that need to be considered when creating a believable character, she picked the type Five to demonstrate how it's done.

Susan Rhodes has been writing about and pondering connections between the Enneagram and Ken Wilber's writing on Integral theory for a few years, and just before the recent presidential election, she was inspired to pen an article posted at Integral World (and reproduced here) looking at how people taking (a) different Integral quadrant points of view, (b) different enneagram points of view, or (c) different political points of view might fill in the blank in the following statement: "The World Would be Okay If People Would Just _____: *Integral*

ERRATUM

In last month's issue (#191) front page article "My Inheritance Journey" by **Diane Fromme** a typo, appeared mysteriously in the author's byline. It's Fromme not Frommel.

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For subscription and advertising rates see back cover.

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Politics in a Less-than-Integral Age. Her purpose was to demonstrate that there are a lot of valid ways of filling in that blank (and that no person, perspective, or party has a monopoly on truth). How would you fill in that blank? And what do you think your particular response adds to the collective wisdom about how we can make the world a better place to live?

Jennifer Schneider has worn two hats in recent years: the hat of a medical practitioner and that of an author working with **Ron Corn** on a book/research project involving "The Enneagram and Couple Relationships." They both provide a sample of comments from several Five and Seven couples illustrating some of the core issues that these types tend to encounter. Jennifer and Ron's comments are woven in and reflect their insights gained from working with them. But in order to complete the book, they need your help. What are the challenges that you have encountered in your relationships? They would really appreciate it if you could go online and take their anonymous survey. (see details on Page 6)

Wendy Appel introduces us to her new book about the enneagram from a business perspective, "InsideOut Enneagram -- *The Game-Changing Guide for Leaders*" a book about how leaders in business and elsewhere can use the enneagram to work with people more effectively and mindful of the needs and potential of everyone involved. In this book, the dynamic of interactions rather than the individual is in the foreground. That is not due to a callous disregard of the individual, but from a point of recognition how dynamics happen in larger groups involving many individuals. The foreword by **Lynne Sedgmore** includes a case study describing a Two who is perfectly competent by herself but had enormous difficulties to find a way of shifting her attitude and what it took to find a better way of blending in. •



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