

TIGHT PLACES FOR YOUR CHARACTERS©

Looking for places where your H/H can't run away from each other? Here's a list of places that might make it necessary for them to talk to each other.

Talking inevitably leads to conflict.

Conflict leads to more conflict--or a resolution or an epiphany that deepens the story and adds breadth to the situation.

When we deepen the story, we find complexities, interrelationships and motivation for the H/H's behavior. Adding breadth gives us insight and understanding through their points of view .

TWENTY-PLUS TIGHT PLACES

Hospital/Vet/Doctor & Dentist's office
Theater/Ballet/Sports event/Movies
Airplane/Train/Bus/Subway/Ship/
Ferry/Car/Stage coach/Spaceship
(Challenge here is add action so that
H/H don't morph into 'talking heads')
Locked room/Closet
(Two favorite places in soap operas &
horror flicks so avoid clichés)
Cemetery
(Another fav in horror flicks and
filled with potential clichés)
Public rest room

MORE TIGHT PLACES FOR YOUR CHARACTERS

Beauty salon
Tree house/Carnival or Amusement park
ride
TV/Radio interview
Graduation
Wedding
Funeral
In line at Starbucks/Movies/Airport
Elevators
(Beware the stalled elevator which
becomes a cliché.)
Police station
Taxi
Church
Restaurant
(Reeks with clichés, so add:
a robbery; dinner with VIP; fellow
diner choking, maybe dying. Make
restaurant a place H/H have saved
and waited to go to for a year; food
is awful).
Formal dinner party
Business meetings
Foxhole/POW camp/Tunnel/Prison/Jail
Deserted island/Mountain top/Desert
(Clichés lurk everywhere in these
places)
Hot air balloon/Submarine/Airplane
cockpit

Exercise: Come up with 2 more tight places. Write a short scene with H/H in one of those places.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Names bring characters alive.

Two of the best examples appear in *Gone with the Wind*.

Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler leap off the page when we meet them.

The meaning of her name is obvious (to native English speakers). His Old English name means "small stream." "Small stream" for a force of nature? Hmmm. You decide.

Names connote animals, places, position, status, ethnicity, and more.

Wolf, Paris, Judge, Yuri.

Names reflect culture, time, power, ambiguity, certainty, subtlety and quirkiness.

Octavia, Charity, Reina, Madison, Moxie
Crimefighter, Eulalia, Audio Science

Names reinforce gender, family, history, religion, values, trends, imagination.

Caesar, Murphy, Napoleon, Lourdes,
Peace, Hannah, Pilot Inspector

More Thoughts about What's in a name?

Deciding on a name for a character - especially for H/H - is like naming a child. Make the name meaningful.

Risa, the heroine in *Prince of Frogs*, means smile in Spanish. A pediatrician, she's never met a kid she didn't like. Her smile is so big and genuine that her patients never cry when she gives them their shots.

Nicknames and pet names can add depth, complexity and insight to a character.

Risa enters the world with a mop of orange-red curls. The maternity nurses tie a big pink bow on top of her head and present her to her mother with a flourish, proclaiming: La Ti Da! From then on she's called La Ti Da because she's so full of life, energy, and joy.

A few of my favorite fictional names:

Elvis Cole	(Robert Crais)
Stephanie Plum	(J. Evanovich)
Spenser	(Robert Parker)
Temptation, OH	(J. Crusie)
Chili Pepper	(E. Leonard)
Scarlett O'Hara	(M. Mitchell)
Sookie Stackhouse	(C. Harris)

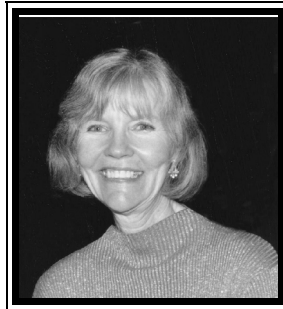
What are your favorite names?

Other Workshops:

"Discover Your Writer's Voice."
"He Said... She Elaborated"
"Mining Sensory Data."

More Writing Tip Sheets:

"Guaranteed Tips to Create Conflict"
"Emotions Rule"
"Beyond the Realm of Spoken Language"



Barbara lives near the exit off the fast lane in Silicon Valley with her husband and two literary mews, T.C. and Jessica, who never cease to inspire her.

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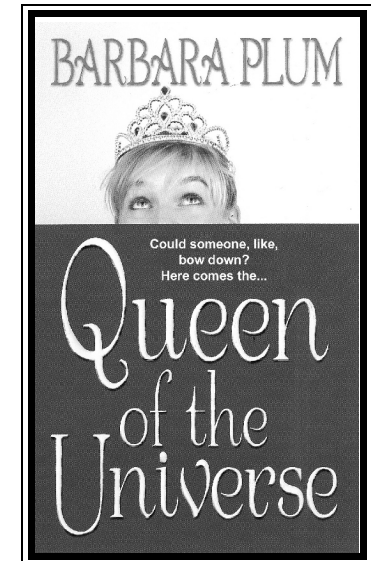
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Conflict in Tight Places With Memorable Characters©

Adapted by Barbara Plum
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"It is sooo not easy being
Queen of the Universe."



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