

SECONDARY CHARACTERS: The Good, The Bad, and the Quirky

Points To Keep In Mind
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The DOs and DON'Ts of developing secondary characters:

DON'Ts

- Don't make the character one dimensional or stereotypical
- Don't sprinkle them in randomly either on a whim or to 'pad' your story
- Don't use two secondary characters where one will suffice
- Don't let your secondary character(s) upstage your main characters

DOs

- Do give the character believable motivation and goals
- Do give the character a purpose to serve in furthering/enhancing the plot, theme and/or character development of the storyline (see list below)

Supporting Cast - Some Roles/Functions They Perform in Relation to Primary Characters

- Mentor
- Confidante/Sidekick
- Comic Relief
- A Symbolic Mirror to
Compare/Contrast Values
- Competitor
- Expendable victim
- Catalyst for action/decision
- Obstacle to achieving goal
- Red-herring in a
mystery/suspense
- Dependent/ protégé
- Beyond The 'Usual Suspects'

Secondary Characters aren't limited to people. They can also be:

- Animals— Examples: Toto in *The Wizard of Oz*, the whale in *Moby Dick*, the shark in *Jaws*, the crocodile in *Peter Pan*
- Inanimate Objects— Examples: The ring in *Lord Of The Rings*, the coin in *Pirates Of The Caribbean*, the magic mirror in *Sleeping Beauty*
- Setting/Environment— Examples: The island in *Lost*, the ship in *Titanic*, New Orleans in *The Big Easy*, Manderley in *Rebecca*

What To Do When Secondary Characters Threaten To “Steal The Show”

You have three options:

- Rein him/her in
- Evaluate whether or not you have the right protagonist
- Set the secondary character up for his/her own story in another book

Beth Cornelison has won numerous awards for her books including the coveted Golden Heart and a Romantic Times TOP PICK for IN PROTECTIVE CUSTODY. Her current releases include UNDER FIRE from Samhain Publishing and DUTY TO PROTECT from Silhouette Romantic Suspense. RANCHER'S REDEMPTION, book 2 in the Coltons: Family First continuity, will be available October 2008.

Winnie Griggs is a multi-published romance author who has had five book published by Dorchester's Leisure Books line and is currently contracted for two upcoming novels to be published by Steeple Hill's Love Inspired Historical line in 2009. Her writing has garnered enthusiastic reviews and numerous awards, among them the Colorado Gold Editor's Choice Award for Romance.