JACK TRELAWNY'S 'MY STORY HOUSE'

WHO ROOM

SEVEN COMMON CHARACTER TYPES FOR STORY DETECTIVES TO FIND

Story Detectives try to recognise which types of characters are in stories. This makes reading the story more enjoyable and helps them write better stories.

The PROTAGONIST is the main character in story. There can be more than one protagonist: Tizzie and Louis, the brother and sister in my *Kernowland* series, are both protagonists.

The ANTAGONIST is the main character or force that causes trouble or problems for the protagonist. In the *Kernowland* series, Evile the Emperor is the 'arch-villain'; the ultimate source of trouble and problems for Tizzie and Louis, as well as everyone else in Erthwurld.

Below is a list of seven common character types for story detectives to find. Can you think of more examples from the *Kernowland* series or other stories you have read?

1. CONFIDANTE CHARACTER
The protagonist 'confides' in the confidante. This means the main character tells the confidante things to show the main character's personality, thoughts, and intentions. The confidante is not always a person.

Example: In the *Shrek* story, the ogre's confidante for a lot of the time is Donkey.

Example: In the *Kernowland* series, although Melanchol Drym isn't the main character, he has an unwilling confidante in his slave-dog, Dribble. Drym tells Dribble all the nasty things he's going to do to children so that the reader can know what he's planning. The writer could just say, 'Drym made a plan to kidnap the children and sell them as slaves', but it's much more interesting and exciting if he tells Dribble his nasty plans in his hissing voice so that the little dog (and the reader of the story) can be more involved in worrying about what will happen to the children.

2. DYNAMIC (DEVELOPING) CHARACTER
A dynamic character changes as the story unfolds. The change in outlook or character is permanent. Sometimes a dynamic character is called a 'developing' character.

Example: Ebenezer Scrooge, in *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, was very mean with his money. He worked his employees very hard for very little pay. After his experiences with the ghosts that visited him, he changed his ways, paying his employees a more than fair wage, providing days off work and actually giving gifts.

3. FLAT CHARACTER
A flat character only shows one or two personality traits in a story . The trait(s) do not change.

Example: In the *Kernowland* series, Gurt is a giant pirate character who cannot speak. He is predictable and simply does what he is told without question.

4. FOIL CHARACTER
A foil is a character that is used to show one character 's strengths by contrasting them with the weaknesses of the foil character.

Example: In the *Kernowland* series, Jack - the loyal teenage-hero apprentice Red Wizard - is shown in contrast to Violothan, the disloyal Violet Wizard, so we can see just how bad he is.

Example: In the *Cinderella* story, the young girl's grace and beauty are shown up better because these characteristics are seen in contrast to her nasty, self-centred, stepsisters.

5. ROUNDED CHARACTER
A rounded character is a well-developed character who has varied and sometimes contradictory traits. Rounded characters are usually also dynamic characters because they change in some way through the story.

Example: In the Kernowland series, the pirate leader, Captain Pigleg, is horrible to children and animals most of the time. But he loves his girlfriend and is loyal to his crew and keeps to the Pirate Code. This makes him a rounded character.

6. STATIC CHARACTER
A static character remains mostly the same throughout a story. Events in the story do not alter a static character's outlook, personality, motivation, perception, or habits.

Example: In the *Kernowland* series, Clevercloggs is a very knowledgeable and experienced wise old gnome. He has 500 years of travel and learning behind him. He can therefore deal with situations in a balanced way and come up with sensible solutions to problems as he has 'seen it all before'.

7. STOCK CHARACTER
A stock character is a special kind of flat character who is instantly recognizable to most readers. A stock character is not the focus of the story and is not developed in the story.

Example: Big and strong but rather stupid bully.

Example: Slimy and plotting adviser to the ruler.

Can you think of any more examples of stock characters?

NOTES:
   Although the character types are listed separately, characters are often a combination of the seven types. For example, a foil character could also be a rounded, flat, or stock character.
   Most protagonists (main characters) in stories are dynamic and rounded. But they don't have to be, especially if the story is more about plot (what happens) than the characters.
   Some character types are too much opposites to be mixed together. For example, you probably couldn't have a character that is both flat and rounded, or a character that is both static and dynamic.
   The seven character types are useful for understanding characters and how they fit into the story. If story writers understand character types that other story writers have used, it should hopefully help them create interesting and exciting characters for their own stories.