

Creating characters

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Here is a description of the general process of creating my characters for the Clockmaker and Solitaire Cruise projects.

It describes what special attention was paid to when writing the Character Specifications and how the work with artists was carried out in the process of drawing.

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How to create a character?

Function

A new character should always not only perform specific narrative tasks but also complement an existing set. Diversity in cultural, racial, professional, age, gender and other aspects solves important tasks:

- makes the character set interesting;
- allows the player to associate himself with the character and increases involvement in the story and in the game as a whole;
- gives the narrator inspiration for new conflicts and plots;

Therefore, it is always important to understand what functions a character will perform: a representation of specific gender? engaging a new audience? creating conflicts or comical situations? The more functions one character performs, the more expedient it is to spend resources on its creation.

Nurse Helen solves the representation of a black woman and the medical profession, Freddie – a representative of the working class at the maximum age category + represents a person with additional needs, but without negativity or pity.



Uniqueness

You can't just create a new character without thinking about how he will differ from the others. Otherwise, you will get a set of cardboard dummies which will confuse the player and he will lose interest. It is important not to forget about its function to generate new conflicts, as well as to highlight his personality in front of the others. Each new character should surprise the player, and the appearance of the favorite ones should bring joy.

Captain Drake was created as a quarrelsome old man, the main foul-mouthed and grumpy among all the characters, to add pepper to the set of exceptionally good-natured and sweet townspeople.

At the same time, Inspector Stapple was created as a "gray" character - he should not be either unambiguously good or unambiguously bad, in order to put the player in a moral dilemma and increase the emotional intensity with his equanimity and impartiality.



Speech Characteristics

Not only the visual image but also its speech should reflect the personality of the character. Theoretically, the player should understand which character is talking at the moment even without a picture. Therefore, there is always a separate paragraph that prescribes the speech characteristics.



Director of the radio station, producer:

Ben is a writer, a star! Haven't you heard of such a masterpiece as "Red Marigolds"? Although, frankly speaking, where would he be without my radio? Yes, he owes his fame to me, Ralph Hardison. I made a name for him. And I took a modest, believe me, man, a very modest royalty for it.



Inspector Stapple:

speaks in a terrible clerical way, a huge amount of passive voice (not "I will write you a fine", but "you will be issued a fine")

Example:

Margaret: This, Sir Inspector, is a cream cheese Danish. The finest flour, cream, salt, and sugar to taste...

Stapple: Did you say to taste? It should be to dietary standards instead! That's bad, very bad...

Margaret: But nobody has ever complained! I even won a culinary contest with them!

Stapple: That will be taken under control too. Next. These bags of flour must be sorted by grind, and the fudge should be sorted by consistency!

Margaret: But that's so inconvenient!

Stapple: It's not convenience that matters, it's the rules! Or do you want your bakery to be closed? No? Then start sorting immediately!



**Since Irish slang can be difficult even for native speakers, you can build jokes on it*

Woody Woodini: a juggler, an Irishman, a typical kidult. Since the target audience of the project is the USA, we make a specific vocabulary of Irish slang:

Speech characteristics: actively uses slang and abbreviated words: instead of "want" we use "wanna", instead of "you" we use "ya", we shorten the endings -ing to -in' (Do ya wanna swimmin'? = Do you want swimming?)

- Feels like a job, y'know...
- It didn't work 'cause I found out that...

Typical Irish slang and vocabulary:

- **C'mere to me** (= Come here to me)
- **That's gas!** (= That's fun!)
- **What's the craic?** (= What's up?)
- **Grand** (= ok)
- **I will yeah** (= Don't count on it)
- **Fair play!** (= Well done)
- **G'wan** (= Go on!)
- **Haven't a badly notion** (= Don't know)

Example:

Woody: C'mere to me. I just wanna say to ya, boss: the jalopy is banjaxed!

Miraldina: How awful! The cotton candy didn't just engulf Woody from the outside—it stopped up his mouth too. I can't understand a word!

Goober Sparkles: Nonsense, Miraldina! Woody just has his own, unique, ONE-OF-A-KIND manner of speaking. You should try talking to him more often!

Goober Sparkles: To be honest, I don't always understand him either. Maybe we can give Woody the runes Miraldina uses? Then he can make key words!

Woody: Y'see, I've done your biddin', boss. Came here t'ask ya about my own show. I've earned it, don't you know?

Woody: But ya really broke my heart, boss. Told me it'd never happen, sent me packing...

Goober Sparkles: My "bidding"? I haven't given you any orders! Woody, what are you up to?

Woody: Well, y'know... Gonna... Ronna... Donna...

Miraldina: More of this incomprehensible slang!

Woody: No, this time I really did have cotton candy in my mouth... Got anything to drink?

Character's name

The character's name should be a charactonym so that the player immediately understands his role, and does not keep a catalog of characters in his mind. As a rule, it may contain a reference to a well-known person in pop culture.



Gloria Armano, fashion designer;

- has an Italian surname with a reference to the best fashion houses in Europe;
- the name is from the word "glory", which means "fame" and speaks about her status;
- a direct reference to the fashion designer Giorgio Armani, so that the subconscious always catches the vibes of high fashion.



Mike Billinberg, IT businessman

- direct reference to Mark Zuckerberg, founder of the IT giant Facebook;
- "Billinberg" is similar to "billing" - the process of data collection in the IT-sector;
- name "Mike" talks about his cheerful and open personality (like Mike from the TMNT)

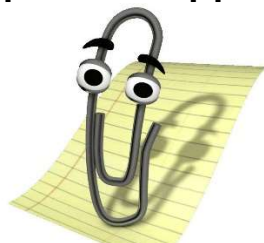


William Drake, Captain

- a reference to Francis Drake (English captain and sailor) and other sailors Williams: Kidd/Bligh/Moore;



Inspector Stapple, the bureaucrat:



Character's appearance

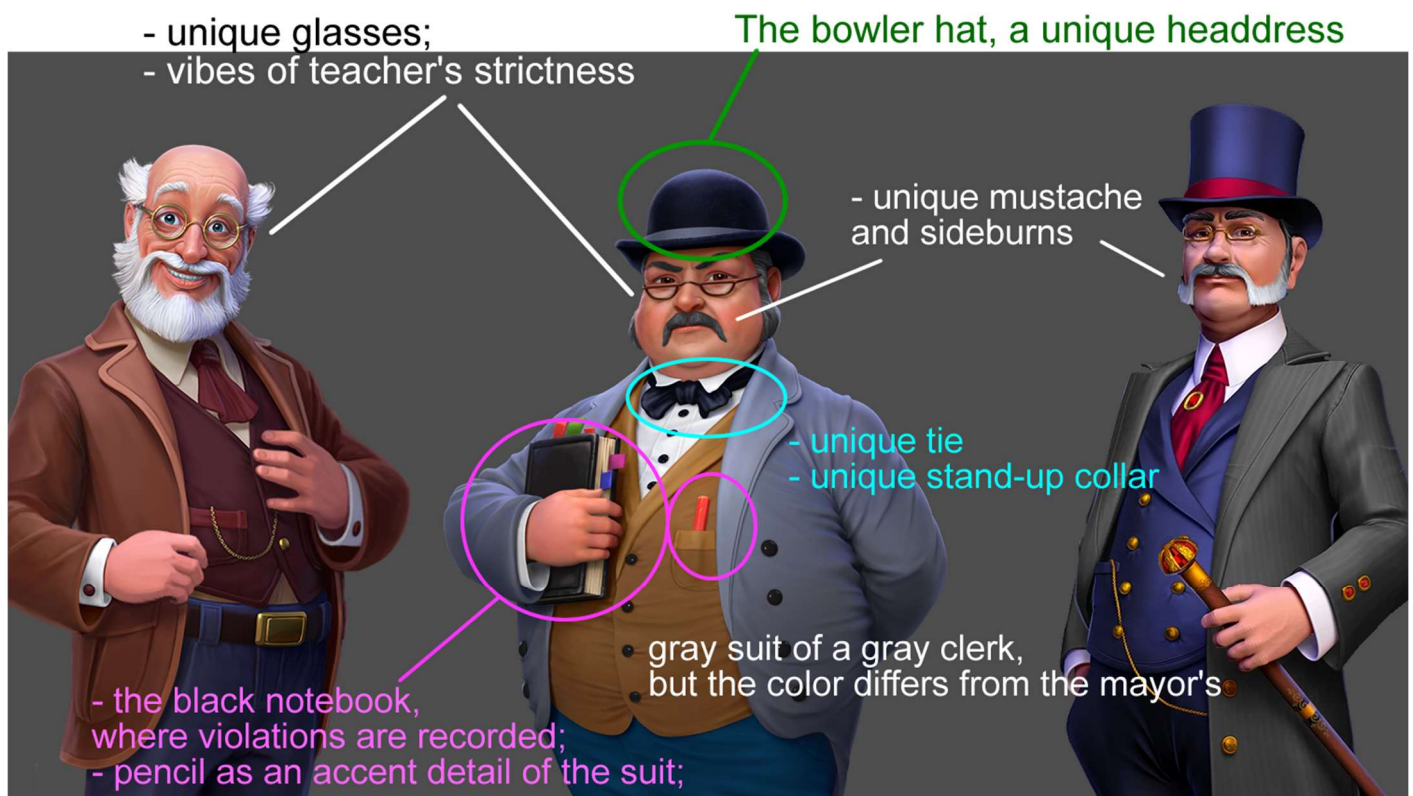
Specification for the Art Team

The character's appearance fulfill the full range of narrative tasks:

- reveals the function of the character (profession, gender, gender, etc.)
- emphasizes the uniqueness of the personality and its difference from the others;
- visualizes character traits of personality.

But unlike other narrative tools, the character's appearance immediately catches the eye. This is not a dialogue that needs to be read or can even be skipped. Therefore, the Specification for the appearance should be approached as carefully as possible.

Inspector Stapple:



A more rounded figure (like a balloon)
to differ from other fat characters + to add comicality

Working with the Art Team

The key point of creating a character is the narrative support of the drawing process.

The first sketches of Captain Drake – not enough accent details:



Added hooks, compass, binoculars. We understand that the character turns out to be too noble and does not reveal his key function – a quarrelsome old man and a grumpy.



We give artists comments:

« It is necessary to make the captain less heroic, reduce the nobility and shift the visual style towards his grumpy personality. There are the following suggestions:

- make him lower,
- add a patch,
- make a grumpy and dissatisfied face, perhaps try a potato nose and make a more disheveled beard - not so accurate and noble.
- perhaps a less pretentious captain, add hooks to it. I'm not sure that it will work out well, here you need to look. »

We get new sketches. Have a look...



No. 2 - here we have the captain (not a fisherman) and a grumpy old man (not the noble captain of the Titanic). We give it to modeling and finish it.



Freddie

In the first sketch, we ask artists to make a kinder face and a more vintage mechanical hand: you need to be careful with mechanisms for the target audience and constantly think about how to make them attractive:



- the color scheme should not repeat the existing character in a blue shirt, but at the same time – doesn't look dirty;
- however, the color scheme "red shirt + blue jumpsuit" should be preserved – we are trying to get the classic worker;
- it is necessary to change two clips for five fingers, so as not to frighten the target audience;
- there are also questions about Goggles. Maybe a cap is better?

We ask for a few sketches to choose:



Take №3 because:

« 1. jumpsuit is not gray, not "dirty";
2. we already have a cap, but no goggles yet. And here we emphasize that Freddie is literally bald, which distinguishes him from other characters;
3. Copper/brass is closer to both steampunk and gold. It will look more themed and strikes the target audience better.
If everyone liked the cap - you can try, but we need to add goggles anyway. But it seems to me that it will be more interesting to shine a bald spot for diversity. »



That's better! Check the vintage patterns – very good for the target audience.

But it's too monotonous. We ask artists to add "cold" metal to his hand, and "gold" to the tools in his pocket. Here we are!



Adaptation and stylization

Sometimes we need to add a thematic charm to the familiar characters within the key holidays. Or just change the image for a new event.

Here is a stylization of the Clockmaker as "Guy Fawkes" for the event "Gunpowder Plot", in which the villain disguises himself as an unremarkable citizen. The story is not a reproduction of a historical event but contains many references to real events, and the Clockmaker's costume and wig are the literal embodiment of Guy Fawkes' image.



No less interesting is the change of Louise's image - she decided to remember her Celtic roots in honor of the Beltane holiday:



...or change into more comfortable clothes for bowling! While maintaining the color scheme of the main character image, hairstyle and clothing design radically change the tone and set the right mood for the bowling event.