

# TEXT EDUCATION

By: Celeste D'Luna

**O**h, hello my darlings. Welcome again to my fabulous home. I just need a moment to finish this checklist for my staff..

1. Instruct butler to affix faux spider web to entry chandelier.
2. Tell maid to buy more candles.
3. Call adorable handyman to replace doorbell with electronic maniacal laughter.
4. Ask beautiful tan gardener to install golden mums, white pumpkins and purple Kale on the veranda.

There now my darlings you have my full attention. Sit down and make yourselves comfortable. All Hallows Eve will soon be here. What a wonderful time to be an artist with a creative imagination. As I am sure you can relate my dears, my desk is covered with beautiful orange and black envelopes containing social invitations for this season. Let's see, I have in my stack right now an invitation to a Gala Ball, a Haunted Hay Ride, and of course the Dungeon Masters annual Torture Tryst. These gatherings, my dears, of which a costume is often required, offer brilliant opportunities to develop a character. Each October, children become superheroes, teens become pop stars and adults can become that from which fantasies are made (or maid that is, as in "French maid"). Use these events to become someone else and help you practice character development.

As writers, we often struggle with creating characters with depth. Often, especially in longer works, it becomes difficult to provide deep enough knowing for the reader to tell one character from the rest. There are questions we should ask ourselves when creating a character that may never show up in print but are needed to lend authenticity and roundness to this person, animal or thing that we are creating. (I am sure there are cute little back stories about "Cujo" before he became the rabid beast, which we as readers will never know. I'll be sure to ask Mr. King about that at the Haunted Hay Ride.)

Ask yourself questions about your character to help fill him or her out in your mind. Where does he live? How did he grow up? Did he go to an inner city school, boarding school or was he home schooled? How old is she? How does she handle conflict or change? Who is her best friend? Some of these elements may never come out in your story but they will help flesh out just who your character is for you. He or she will be more real for your readers if you know that character intimately. Oooh Sunday, September 21, 2008, well, maybe not "intimately" but you know what I mean.

I've decided Celeste should become a beauty queen for the Gala Ball. I'll need a gown with sash, shoes and of course a tiara. But, before I can select my fabulous apparel, I'll need to decide who this beauty queen is. If I'm from Georgia, I'll need a flowing chiffon number with an impossibly high up 'do (that's a hairstyle, boys) and a southern accent. If I'm from New York, I'll need a slinky little black dress and a sleek hairstyle along with a completely different accent. When creating a character with a unique dialect or accent, it's important to try it out in real conversation to see how it flows. It's easy to get carried away and over do it when just a few hints of an accent can sometimes do the trick. Over doing an accent or dialect though, can work in a humor piece to make a caricature (think *Young Frankenstein*, 1974.)

Now, darlings, a setting for your character is important too. You see if I arrive at the Haunted Hay Ride as a beauty queen, my evening could go very differently. First of all, tractors and chiffon do not go together. Secondly, it's likely I could end up being chased through the woods by a man in a hockey mask and a chain saw. Lastly, just imagine open toed pumps on a hay wagon. That thought alone makes me shudder. Of course, a beauty queen is just entirely inappropriate for the Dungeon Masters annual Torture Tryst. Besides, everyone knows Celeste always arrives there in a leather bustier and knee boots.

So, I challenge you my darlings to take advantage of the season. Even if you don't have a ridiculous number of social engagements such as I do with the opportunity to become someone different in public, try this. Choose a character from something you are working on now and daydream. For just a little while, become that person in your mind. Ask questions and figure out who he or she is and then re-write a draft to see if your character comes more alive.

“LIFE! DO YOU HEAR ME? GIVE MY CREATION... LIFE!”

~Dr. Frederick Frankenstein, *Young Frankenstein*: 20th Century Fox (1974)