

# THE GUIDE TO WRITING EPIC, EVIL VILLAINS

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# IF YOU WANT AN EPIC STORY YOU NEED TO CREATE AN EPIC VILLAIN

Your villain is one of the most important characters in your story—and one of the hardest to write well.

Too many writers don't take enough time to get to know their villains and just skim over them when it comes to character development. I get it. I mean, who wants to hang out with the bad guy? Getting into the head of a wicked character isn't the most fun place to be.

But it is so essential to making your story epic.

You need to give your hero a worthy opponent. A strong villain raises the stakes, increases the tension, and challenges the hero. A weak villain will only weaken your story.

Villains are actually fascinating characters and can be some of the most fun to write! In this e-book we will cover:

- the different degrees of evilness in villains
- exploring your villain's past
- how to humanize your villain
- how to make readers hate and fear him
- figuring out his desire and motive
- and more!

By the time you've reached the end of the e-book my hope is that you will have learned not only how to develop epic villains, but also how to love them.

# Who am I?



Well hey there! It's lovely to meet you! My name is Kaitlin, and I'm a story addict (Wow, that totally sounded like one of those addiction recovery meeting introductions).

But seriously, I'm in love with story. It's my passion, and it's something I enjoy sharing with others.

Which is why I've created this e-book just for you!

I've been studying and practicing the art of writing for years, and I've learned loads about what works in a story and what doesn't. Especially when it comes to writing villains. You should have seen some of my first villains—they were definitely cringe worthy!

I'm going to give you the details on how to write epic, evil villains that will inspire fear and loathing in your readers. The kinds of villains that twist your stomach, give you chills, and make you lie awake at night.

Ooh, such fun!

Are you ready to get started? Let's do this.

## HOW EVIL IS YOUR VILLAIN?

One of the first things you will need to decide is just how evil is your villain anyway? Is he pure evil, or does he have more grey areas? Was he born this way or did something happen to mold him into a villain?

For example, consider Joffrey from *Game of Thrones*. He was raised the same way as his siblings, but he is incredibly cruel and takes delight in it. Yet his brother and sister are sweet. So what happened? There was just something in Joffrey's personality that he was born with that no one could change. It was just who he was.

"Are people born wicked or do they have wickedness thrust upon them?"  
-Gregory Maguire

When done right, this sort of villain can be terrifying. However, many readers also like more grey villains who have good *and* evil qualities. Yet another type of villain you could use is one who is mentally unstable, psychotic, or a sociopath.

Consider what genre you are writing. If you are writing fantasy or a fairytale, it is more traditionally accepted in those genres for the villain to be pure evil (though he definitely doesn't have to be!). If you're writing something contemporary or historical, the expectations lean more towards having more shades of grey and a reason for why your villain is evil.

Any of these villains can work well, you just have to choose the right one for your story!

# WHAT IS IN YOUR VILLAIN'S PAST?

People don't wake up one morning and decide to be evil—villains act the way they do for a reason. In every story there is a moment when the hero decides to become a hero. What was the moment when your villain decided to become a villain?

It's important to explore your villain's past and learn as much as you can about him. What was his upbringing like? Did he have friends, family, or a lover? Did he suffer a loss or traumatic event? Was he a victim of injustice? Was he abused, abandoned, or betrayed?

Something had to happen to make your villain the way he is now. For example, in Disney's *Malificent*, we find out that Malificent turns evil because she was betrayed by the man she loved.

Also, consider what your villain was like *before* he became evil. In *Star Wars*, Anakin was a loyal and talented Jedi with a loving wife before he became Darth Vader. Has your villain always been susceptible or drawn to evil, or was he once respectable and honorable? What caused his downfall?

Our past shapes who we become. Take the time to learn as much about your villain's past as you can in order to understand him, even if you don't include all of the information in your novel.

"The evil queens are the princesses who were never saved."

## VILLAINS ARE PEOPLE TOO

Villains are human, just like your hero. Sometimes we tend to forget that because a villain's terrible actions can make him seem inhuman. Some villains are ruthless and cold-hearted and will kill and torture without the slightest twinge of guilt.

But other villains may be more complex, and their despicable deeds may be motivated by something they experienced in their past. In *Harry Potter*, Snape was rotten to Harry, but we find out this is because Harry's father teased him in school. Snape was also in love with Harry's mother. So Harry is both a bitter reminder to Snape but also a memory of the woman he loved. Remember your villain is a human, not a robot, and therefore not immune to emotion.

It's important to humanize your villain by giving him hopes, dreams, fears, weaknesses, and even positive traits or a sympathetic quality. People are a mix of good and bad, and writing a villain this way makes him more realistic and frightening because he could be anyone—even us!

You should develop your villain with as much depth as you give your hero. You should know everything about him—his childhood, his regrets, his best memories, his family, his talents, what he loves, what he hates, how he views himself, his perception of the world, what made him become a villain...don't be afraid to dig deep!

You may not include all of this information about your villain in your story, but getting to know him will help you to write him with confidence. It will also bring him to life for the reader. And when he feels real that makes him frightening—no one is afraid of a cookie-cutter, cardboard villain!



# WHAT DOES YOUR VILLAIN WANT?

Everyone wants something, whether it's a new phone, to recover from an illness, to graduate college, or to get the job. Do you know what it is your villain wants? What is his specific goal that is driving his actions? Does he want power? A girl? Money? Revenge?

Your villain shouldn't just be hanging around making the hero's life miserable for no reason! He's not some playground bully who's picking on your hero just because he can. Your hero will try to stop the villain from getting what he wants, and that's something your villain cannot have. He will do everything in his power to get what he wants—and that is where he comes into conflict with your hero.

You will also need to consider *why* your villain wants what he wants. What is his motivation? Why is he willing to go to such lengths and commit such atrocities? Your villain needs a reason that he thinks is a good one—even if it's really a terrible justification.

For example, consider Anakin Skywalker in *Star Wars*. He wanted more power than the Jedi could give him, so he turned to the dark side. But why? People just don't turn evil without reason. His motivation was his love for Padme—he was trying to gain enough power to save her from dying as he had seen in his vision. Even though he had good intentions, he went about it the wrong way.

Another example is Harry Osborne in the original *Spider-Man* films. He wanted to kill Spider-Man. Why? He was motivated by revenge—he believed Spider-Man murdered his father. Whatever cause you give your villain to fight for, make sure he has a personal stake in it!

# MAKE US FEAR AND LOATHE YOUR VILLAIN

Your villain should give readers the chills and fill them with loathing. We should be afraid of what he's capable of and what he might do to the hero. But how do you make your villain scary and despicable? Well, there are better ways than to have him going around laughing maniacally and kicking puppies.

One way to induce fear is by making your villain really skilled at whatever he does—and don't be afraid to make him stronger than the hero! You know how Voldemort was super powerful and way more skilled than a teenage wizard? Talk about intimidating. Other tactics are to create a villain who doesn't flinch at inflicting pain (and maybe even enjoys it), abuses whatever power he holds over the hero (for example, blackmail or threatening loved ones), and insanity (insane people are unpredictable; think of the Joker, or Ramsay in *Game of Thrones*).

All of those things will make readers hate as well as fear your villain, but there are a couple more techniques you can use to make readers hate him even more. Consider creating a villain who is a hypocrite—you know, the kind of baddie who does all their dirty deeds in secret but wears a halo in public and pretends to be righteous and innocent (for example, Dolores Umbridge in *Harry Potter*). You could also make your villain a traitor like Hans in *Frozen*. Seeing a character we thought was a good guy turn on the hero we love makes us furious. Why? Because we too feel betrayed: "We believed in you! We were rooting for you! How could you?" Now it's personal. We demand to see their butt kicked.

Finally, any time your villain harms (physically or emotionally) your hero or kills a beloved character, this will also increase your reader's fear and hatred toward him.



# BACK UP YOUR VILLAIN'S THREATS

You know what kind of villain isn't scary? The one who goes around talking big and threatening the hero but never actually acts on these threats and can't seem to put a scratch on him. And we're supposed to be afraid of his guy? The last thing you want is to make your villain seem like a push over!

You can't just *tell* us that your villain is evil—you need to *show* us! We need to see him actually doing evil things, not just hearing him or other characters talk about it. You know how they say seeing is believing? Yeah. We need to witness what he's capable of.

You know what this means? You hero can't always win. He needs to lose some battles. He can't save everyone and everything from the villain—in order for us to fear the villain we need to see that he is capable of succeeding in his plans. If your villain makes a threat he needs to follow through on it! If he says he's going to burn a city, have him burn the city. If he says he's going to kill someone, have him kill them. If he says he's going to make the hero pay, make the hero pay.

Your villain needs to back up his reputation with his actions. Think of Voldemort in *Harry Potter*. You know why he was so scary? Because if he said he was going to do something awful, he did it. We knew Voldemort meant business—he didn't make idle threats!

Don't let your hero always escape unscathed by the villain. Every time your hero encounters your villain there should be consequence for your hero, whether it's physical or emotional. Your reader will wonder how in the world your hero can defeat your villain, and they'll stick around to find out!

## MAKE YOUR VILLAIN SMART

One of the best ways to make your villain scary and intimidating is to make him clever. After all, he has to be pretty cunning to have gotten to the position of power he's in now! Smart villains don't make careless mistakes or blunders. Their every move is calculated, and they watch the hero's every move as well.

Your villain has to have a plan...and a good one. Do you know what it is? What is he after, and how is he going to achieve it? How will he counter the hero's moves against him? How will he outthink the hero and in order to stay one step ahead? What tricks, lies, traps, and schemes will he use? Start thinking like a villain!

"The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist." -Jim Moriarty

In *Defiance* by C.J. Redwine the Commander is a formidable antagonist because he's incredibly smart. He always seems to be one step ahead of the heroine. Just when you think the heroine is about to succeed, you discover the Commander knew about her plans all along and has his own in place to thwart her. You learn not to underestimate him!

Also consider Jim Moriarty from the BBC series *Sherlock*. Moriarty is Sherlock's greatest adversary because he is intelligent enough to match—and even outmatch—Sherlock's incredible mind. These types of villains do two things: 1) Create a fear of the villain in the reader, and 2) Increase tension by making readers wonder if the hero will be able to defeat him. Smart villains make for a more interesting story!

# TREAT YOUR VILLAIN LIKE A HERO

Your villain is the hero of his own story...so treat him like one! I know this is hard. You don't like your villain, you want your hero to win. But you need to make sure that your villain has a life of his own and isn't just there to beat up on the hero. What is he doing "off stage" when your hero isn't around?

No, seriously. Think about it. What is he up to? If he only exists in your mind when the hero is around, you have a problem. Give him a life of his own! Don't let him become a plot tool.

To write an awesome villain, you need to be able to see things from his perspective. I highly recommend writing out some of these "off stage" scenes even if you don't include them in your story. It will make the villain feel more real to you. He won't just be sitting by idly in your mind waiting for your hero to drag him back onstage.

Additionally, I recommend writing scenes with your hero and villain together from the villain's perspective. "Oh no," you whisper, shaking your head with a shiver. Oh yes. Your villain's head is a scary, unpleasant place and I know you don't want to go there, but you need to. How does your hero look from your villain's eyes? How is he getting in the way? Figure out what your villain needs to do to reach his goal and get what he wants!

"Every villain is a hero in his own mind."

-Tom Hiddleston

# THANK YOU FOR READING!

If you enjoyed this e-book and are looking for other ways to make your story even more epic, wander on over to [Ink and Quills](#) for additional advice, techniques, and resources.

You can also get in touch with me on [Twitter](#) (@ink\_and\_quills), [Facebook](#), and [Pinterest](#). I love making new writer friends (I swear I don't bite! I just nibble sometimes...kidding, kidding!), and I'm always happy to help with your writing questions! (Seriously, ask me anything!)

And lastly, if you enjoyed this e-book or my site, would you please help Ink and Quills grow by sharing it with others? I love sharing writing tips and advice, but I need people to share it with! I would deeply appreciate your support, and you would be the most fantabulous writer friend ever!

Thank you again for taking the time to read this e-book, and I wish you the best with all of your story endeavors!

