

Writing a Character Eulogy – (*The character doesn't have to die in the book to do this project.*)

A eulogy is a speech given at memorial services to honor the deceased. It sums up and celebrates his/her life.

Writing a eulogy is a great (and fun) way of getting inside a character's head. It works especially well with villains, forcing you to focus on their entire life and not just the evil parts of their character.

When writing your character eulogy, you don't want to simply focus on the basics of their life. That would defeat the purpose of attempting to delve further into your character's psyche. Make sure to keep it focused on the story and in chronological order of the book. This makes it easier for your "funeral attendees" to follow your speech.

So try killing off your character, just in your head, and writing a eulogy for him/her. What will you find to say about his failings, his greatest virtues, the most important moments of his life? What were his great loves? What did he spend his life fighting against? And if he was a character who seemed exceedingly good or exceedingly bad, what can you tell your audience about what they didn't know about him/her. What was unexpected and or surprising about the character's life?

Speech Outline:

1. Choose a main character.
2. Start with opening remarks (introduce yourself and give your relationship to the deceased.)
3. Talk about the details of the deceased character's life (in order of the book).
4. Mention special relationships the deceased had.
5. Offer words of comfort and a final farewell closing.

Who's giving the eulogy?

Is it a family member, a lover, a friend, the local librarian? Who's delivering the speech can say a lot about the character.

If you really want a challenge, have the protagonist give the speech to honor the antagonist or vice versa. This not only gives you character development for the deceased but also fleshes out the relationship between rivals.

Don't just focus on the large events of their life

Eulogies often have anecdotes, inside jokes, and memories. They're not likely to tout the evil empire your villain ran and aren't likely to focus solely on the millions of people your hero saved. Remember your character wasn't always who they are today. A mother might tell a story of the first time your character fell in love. A rival might talk about how they were best friends with the deceased when they were children.

Think of the entire life, not just the life within the realm of your story.

Think of random things about your character

What was their favorite song? Did they like gardening? Did they have a collection of stamps or rocks or vintage ballerina shoes? Did they take their mother to church on Sundays even though they spent the week stealing precious jewels? Did they love the smell of cherries but couldn't stand eating them?

These things provide layers to your characterization. You won't necessarily use these small details in your writing, but you'll know your character better, and how they would react in situations, because of them.

Your Character Summed Up

Eulogies make you think more deeply about your character, as you're looking at the entire arc of a life instead of the present tastes of your character. They point out the inconsistencies of human nature, the cruel (and happy) twists of fate, and the events that bring us together.

In short, they give your character a life.