

# How Do Readers Relate To Characters?

Have you ever read a book that changed your perspective of the world? Chances are, almost every book you've read has done that. It's part of our natural ability to relate things back to ourselves. Authors work hard creating strong characters in order to connect with readers. Through text, authors help readers relate to characters to exhibit a wider perspective of the world.

To start, humans naturally have a need to relate things they see or hear back to their own experiences and knowledge. It is up to each individual to find their own meaning within their experiences. When reading *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli, readers are able to relate to the main character, Simon. This is because many have had a similar high school experience as he had, and understand what it's like to feel out of place. However, with *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, most readers have not had the same experiences as Marjane. Still, it shows the idea of growing up and viewing the world as less than perfect, except through the eyes of childhood innocence. This way of viewing the world suggests a need for a feeling of safety and comfort, even in unfamiliar surroundings. This happens to us multiple times every day, most of the time without us even realizing it. Even during a casual conversation with a friend, the human brain searches for previous experiences that can relate back to what the other person is saying. This shows a sense of security and belonging. When we cannot find a connection, we feel lost and confused. The ability to relate to our surroundings is an important trait for us to feel secure in our places.

Another important factor to connect to stories are well developed characters. Studies have found that when a character reveals much of their personality and characteristics within the first quarter of a book or film, viewers are more likely to empathize with the character and think highly of them. However, in the film *The Breakfast Club* by John Hughes, the five main characters share more private information and thoughts closer towards the end of the

movie, making it seem as though the viewer is right there with them. The viewer feels close enough to the characters that it feels as if a bond has been made with the characters onscreen. In a study of over 400 participants, nearly 20 percent said that the characters stayed with them after completing a book, and would influence their thoughts and even directly seem to speak to them. Many studies have shown that people have a combined personality of their 4 closest friends, however, some people are so connected to a fictional character that they gain traits from them as well. The stronger a character is, the more likely they are to connect with readers.

Another key piece for readers to bond to characters is the writing style of their authors. Authors tend to create characters as likable, well rounded individuals in order for readers to connect to them. To a reader, a well written character is one that has a seemingly free will and the ability to choose their own destiny, even though their fate is entirely controlled by the writer. Most of the time, unless a film is narrated, it is easier to relate to a fictional character in a book than in a movie, due to the fact that books can provide more details without having to work them into dialogue. Readers are best able to connect through texts in the first person, as they are seemingly seeing a more personal side of the character. In *Persepolis*, the story was told through the eyes of Marjane, and it was a true story of her life. However, in *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*, Becky Albertalli created a new character to share. This gave her full control of how Simon was presented and how he acted. Authors put in a lot of thought and effort to make sure that the characters are interesting enough to keep the audience hooked throughout the story.

In conclusion, it takes a lot of hard work on behalf of both the author and the audience to form a bond between a character and an individual. It is up to readers to relate text to themselves and their experiences. It is important for characters to be well developed in order to engage readers in the story. Authors are able to show characters through their own independent writing style. In conclusion, authors work hard to widen our perspectives through characters who can show us a sense of security and comfort.