

Naming Characters by Wen Spencer

Someone asked for help to name their heroine.

This is how I answered them.

I hate naming characters. Luckily main character names usually just "come" to me. Secondary characters, however, are a huge fight.

Usually if I have other characters already named, the first thing I do is look to see what letters of the alphabet have been used already. If I have Ann, Bob, Candy, and Don, then I don't want the new character be Amanda, Betty, Clarisa, or Dawn. Sure if I LOVE one of those names, they're far apart enough to be used, but I'm at a blank screen, why not eliminate all confusion from the get go.

Once I have a list of letters free -- say I, J, K and L -- I start generating names I feel are like that personality. Each of us carry some gut level toward certain names. Julia, for me, will always represent a certain person I know in real life. Jackie calls to mind the famous first lady. Kate is a strong woman.

Consider what you want for your character -- strong, bold, quiet, meek -- and a name that call that spirit to mind.

You list creative (painter), independent and a little shy, blue collar worker, somewhat small. (You don't indicate religion or ethnic origin, which would change choices dramatically.)

For me, names that would match that would be Beth (Elizabeth), Esther, and Hannah. These are names that have "quiet strength" attached to them. This might not be the case for you. Dig around in your subconscious for a while. Also maybe you weren't going for "quiet" but instead wanted "creative." Creative names for me are Star, Skye, Moon, Indigo, Chayse. Of course, most of those names require either hippie parents or a name change at 18!