

The Following are copies of a couple Blog Posts Coach Banks' wrote on the topic of Character Development. If you would like to read more recent posts please visit <http://old.claybanksstudio.com/blog/>

EFFECTIVE CHARACTER WORK

July 23, 2013 By [Clay Banks](#)

Creating effective CHARACTERS is not necessarily an easy task by any stretch of the imagination. Sure, over the course of your creative life you've most likely experimented with different aspects of yourself. Some of you may even enjoy playing around with your friends with different character types that you've found within yourselves. However, playing around with characterizations and BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE CHARACTER are two completely different things.



role with!

Developing a character for a costume party is not what this is about. It can be a jumping off point; but our goal, by the end of this study, is for you to have at least one very well defined character that you will be able to take into an audition and land a

Don't judge the work as you're doing it. Explore, experiment, take chances, have fun with it. Once we're out the back end of this session on *character*, we can then take a look at just how defined your work has become.

So, let me help you break down some of these mysteries and pull back the curtain on what CHARACTER WORK is all about. (At least as much as possible in this brief article).



WHAT'S WHAT & WHO'S WHO?

CHARACTER:

- The aggregate of features and traits that form the individual nature of some person or thing.

CARICATURE:

- Ludicrously exaggerating the peculiarities or defects of persons or things.

CHARACTERIZATION:

- The creation and convincing representation of fictitious characters.

PERSONALITY:

- When your character has arrived and claimed their territory in the hearts and minds of the world. Or, at least the world *you personally* live in.

Each character that you play, each person that you bring alive, is your 'ART'! Character development is at the core of what we do. We create life! We take

someone who doesn't really exist and we 'exist' them!
The ultimate goal of this process is to keep it REAL –
Keep them REAL and BELIEVABLE!
Don't take this time in your life for granted...it's much
more difficult than you think — however, the payoff is
extraordinary and the dividends endless!

CHARACTER CHOICES

These characters that you're creating
are works of art! They're creations,
they have a past, they have thoughts,
feelings, passions...they're ALIVE!
They're REAL! BELIEVABLE!
TANGIBLE! Think of character work as
a certain altered aspect of yourself.



Use what you already own, what we've been working
on for the past several weeks and what you know
about 'YOU' as a character, then make all the
necessary adjustments to custom fit your 'creation'.
Once again — do not take this lesson for granted. Do
the work! It's your work. It may seem a bit
difficult...and it is! Don't let that intimidate you.
Continue to rolling up your sleeves, cut out your
creative time (don't just try and fit this in somewhere)
and enjoy your exploration! You'll be very glad you
did!

BELIEVABILITY

Keep the love and the life (believability) in your work.

A character without life is called...a monster!
Someone void of life, void of love.



When a fictitious character or caricature can be brought to life, defined, and accepted by a society... the work of that actor most certainly has arrived! Some characters are more believable than others by the mere reality of whether or not they truly exist in our world.

For instance — Herman and Lily Munster do not exist in our world (as they've been created). They're monsters. However, through the brilliant work of Fred Gwynne (Herman), Yvonne DeCarly (Lily) and the rest of the cast, we've come to love and believe in this family as real. If you're not familiar with The Munsters, you owe it to yourself to do a bit of research. They we're as much a part of American (if not the word) culture as Mickey Mouse. (Mickey's a whole different story for another time.)

In dealing with more 'real world characters', when you take a look at Vincent, played brilliantly by Tom Cruise in the feature film Collateral, as over the top a *human being* as Vincent may be, he's still very much a believable character in our world. Where as monsters don't exist, hit men most certainly do.

WHAT'S IT TAKE?

Truth and honesty. No easy task. That's why the greats make the big bucks. Acting is an inside job. The work takes place with inner core believability. *You* have to believe it first. Once you've got that part down, you need to fill your mind with the thoughts of the character (not your own thoughts). Then you begin the building process. Add on a characteristic or two or maybe an effective wardrobe piece. Then try altering a personal dynamic about yourself. Integrate it all and wallah... ! You're creation comes alive!

The following statement is from CBSI Film Reviewer Big M. She comments on Johnny Depp's character work as the character Dillinger in the film *Public Enemies* — *I enjoyed watching him... He doesn't have to say a word... he acts with his eyes. Such expression, you know what he's thinking, how he feels, just by the expression in his eyes.* Remember...acting is an INSIDE JOB!



CONCLUSION

Believe it or not...we will be finishing up our FIFTH week of character work this week! That is if you've been with us from the onset. If not, no worries, this is an ongoing process in the craft of acting. Always learning more, going deeper, becoming more interesting and more believable with each step

of the character development journey.



Congratulations! We're ready to meet your new creations! As you all should be aware – this is the week where you will be bringing your characters, your discoveries, your creations, your friends (or enemies), into the studio! So, as a reminder... your starting point ('IN POINT') will be leaving your home, getting ready for class or leaving your car once in the studio parking lot. You will come into The Studio and check in under your real name but you will continue to hold character throughout the lesson and assignment, (the assignment being your character introducing themselves to the group through your personal monologue or scene). Your end ('OUT POINT') will be the break after everyone has done their work. We will then conduct a short debriefing session and move on into the scene work. There will be a whole lot going on in The Studio this week and a whole lot of interesting energy buzzing about which will make class very fat and full. Be certain to show up on time, in character and ready to go!

A NOTE TO NEW STUDENTS WHO MAY NOT BE PREPARED FOR THIS



If you feel you're ready and you'd like to participate, jump in! If not, just be yourself and mingle with the other students as you normally would in any new situation. It will most certainly be an interesting time for you as there will be much to take in and learn. After about an hour or so, you'll get to meet

your 'real' fellow classmates. I'm just not too sure who'll be more scary!

BONUS

Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight were both nominated for the *Best Actor in the Leading Role* category in 1970 (film released 1969), for their portrayals of Rico *Ratso* Rizzo and Joe Buck. Both their characters were huge and would have been way over the top and non-believable if it weren't for the actor's brilliant execution of character work.

View the Clip here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7EfwBBkqfE>

CHARACTER TYPING – PART 1

August 31, 2015 (revised Sept, 2018) By [Clay Banks](#)

WELCOME TO THE CBSI SPECIALITY TYPING SERIES!

Over the **NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS** we'll be diving into one of the most **POWERFUL** and **BENEFICIAL** teachings I know of! **TYPING & CHARACTER!** Or – knowing your true **CORE TYPE**.

In this series (which you won't want to miss), you'll be exploring parts of *you* that you didn't even know were there! **HOW COOL IS THAT?!** The discovery process is an **AMAZING** and **REVEALING JOURNEY** as well as a **POWERFUL EXPLORATION**.

Why are we making such a **BIG DEAL** out of all of this? Because when you know who you are – and what you can (and can't) do – you become extremely powerful! So much more powerful than you presently are right now



I truly believe when you, the actor, find your specific character type, you become so much **STRONGER** all around – and as a result... you not only grow **MORE KNOWLEDGABLE** and **CONFIDENT**, you're also better positioned to **BOOK MORE WORK!** Knowing your **PRODUCT**, really knowing what you're offering (selling), will also allow you, as a **CREATIVE ARTIST**, to know how to **MARKET YOURSELF** to casting directors, agents, managers, as well as directors.

Check this out:

-IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, OTHERS WON'T EITHER

-IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE CHARACTER YOU'RE PLAYING, OTHERS WON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR CHARACTER IS SAYING

Over the next several weeks, **CBSI STUDENTS** will be taking their characters from **ROCKSTARS** to **IMPERSONATORS!** We'll move from the **OUTSIDE** to the **INSIDE** of your overall **PERSONALITY!** **CBSI ACTORS** will be putting their character into



DIFFICULT SITUATIONS and finding the **UNIQUENESS** of their character(s) through all types of proven exercises. Even taking their created characters into **REAL LIFE SITUATIONS!**

During this typing series, the work becomes **INTENSE!** **CBSI** actors will

be working hard developing these (inner) characters and as a result, filling their **TOOL BOXES** with an arsenal of **CHARACTER POWER!**

“ **THE ACTOR’S FREE-WAY** ” **Free Weekly Acting Exercises (a free way to train)**

UNLEASHING YOUR INNER ROCKSTAR:

It’s been said that deep within all of us is an **INCREDIBLE MUSICIAN** screaming to get out!

So, here’s an excuse to get in touch with *your* **INNER ROCK STAR!** In other words... if the stars lined up differently and *you* were the **LEAD SINGER** of a **ROCK BAND** (or **JAZZ** or **BLUES** or **WHATEVER BAND**), what type of **FRONTMAN/WOMAN**



would you be? **PLAY AROUND** with this. Explore and experiment. Try out different songs. Try on different clothing and work out different looks. Choose music that **INSPIRES YOU**, sounds that **LIGHT YOU UP!** Once you locate at least a starting place and a killer song... **GO FOR IT!** Lock the doors, close the blinds, crank up your chosen song... and **UNLEASH YOUR**

MUSICAL ARTIST! Solo Karaoke at it's best!



Do this a few different times with a few different songs. As you do, you'll discover how **EMPOWERING** this is! You'll also discover how inwardly **STRONG** you become! Continue performing at this level until you've convinced yourself that you might actually be a real-life **ROCKSTAR!**

So go ahead and **PLAY!** And, remember — **YOU'LL GET OUT OF THIS WHAT YOU PUT INTO IT.** Don't slack off! GO FOR IT WITH PASSION!!! *And... some of you will be asked to put your rockstars up in the studio! Good Times!*

To View Some Rockstar Results Read this Blog Post:
<http://www.old.claybanksstudio.com/rock-stars-of-cbsi/>

CHARACTER TYPING – PART 2

September 14, 2015 By [Clay Banks](#)

OK, if you've been following along through this **TEACHING SERIES...** you should be getting much closer to **FINDING OUT** and **KNOWING** so much more about **WHO YOUR CORE CHARACTER IS.**

Character Traits
How is my character as a person?

nice	mean	sad	positive	negative	
bright	angry	anxious	cooperative	uncooperative	
cheerful	bossy	confident	calm	reactive	
caring	cruel	depressed	dependable	undependable	
charming	dark	down	fun	unfun	
considerate	disrespectful	friendly	honest	dishonest	
delightful	evil	glamorous	humble	conceited	
encouraging	harsh	glum	insecure	confident	
friendly	helpful	heartbroken	responsible	irresponsible	
kind	unpatriotic	heavy-hearted	trustworthy	untrustworthy	
lovable	insecure	hopeless			
loving	regret	worried	confident nervous		
pleasant	rude	lonely	assertive	shy	
polite	selfish	lovesome	brave	concerned	
respectful	thoughtless	moody	certain	fearful	
sensitive	unaring	sorrowful	outgoing	bashful	
sweet	unfriendly	unhappy	facile	uncertain	
thoughtful	unpleasant	withdrawn	independent	uneasy	
			sure	unsure	
Does a lot		Does very little		Opposites	
active	bored/tiring	calm	hyperactive		
adventurous	dull	funny	serious		
ambitious	uninterested	gentle	rough		
bold	timid	generous	selfish		
busy	neglectful	shy	loud		
energetic	sluggish	quiet	noisy		
hard-working	uninterested				

Once you've done this work, make a list of **WHO YOU ARE** by using the **CBSI CHARACTER ANALYSIS SHEET** in creating a full write up of **YOUR CHARACTER.**

Once you do this, think about what **SITUATION** would be most appropriate for your character. In other words... when you get a pretty good handle on **CHARACTERISTIC YOU**, what would be an **APPROPRIATE** and **INTERESTING** situation to find yourself in? **WHAT WOULD THE DEFINED YOU DO?**

If some of your **ADJECTIVES** and **CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS** come in as [Sharp, Sophisticated,

Intelligent, Collegiate], it might make sense to have this character in an instructional or business role.

Possibly a Jr. Executive of a start-up company. If your list consists of descriptions like [Dark, Mysterious, Questionable, Suspicious], you may think along the lines of — Secret Agent, Hit Man/Woman, Bad Guy/Gal.



If you look back on your work, you should remember that one of your tasks was to locate your **KNOWN PERSONALITY**, the person in the **PUBLIC EYE** who you most **RESEMBLE** or **COMPARE YOURSELF TO**. When you do this, see if the **CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS** for *them* run parallel to you. If not, make the necessary adjustments to **YOUR LIST** and adapt.

Now keep in mind, this isn't an **EXACT DUPLICATE** nor an **IMPERSONATION**. You're just using the known personality as a guide of sorts as they are most likely already developed and established.

Next, I'd like you to check out some **GOOD CHARACTER** work that you've already seen performed...



work that you already appreciate. Then compare the **CHARACTER WORK** to the **ACTUAL ACTOR EMPOWERING THE CHARACTER**. See where you can draw a comparison between the **ACTOR** and the **CHARACTER**. Also, see where there are **NO NOTICEABLE DIFFERENCES**. This will help free you up to discover more incite to your character without personal judgment.

Hey! In the midst of all of this work... **DON'T GET CAUGHT UP IN THE DETAILS!** Grab hold of a **STRONG ASPACT** of your yourself and build **UPON** and **AROUND** that. Before you know it, you'll have a **STRONG CHARACTER** of your own to add to your **GROWING ARSENAL!**

Enjoy **THE PROCESS!**
Coach Banks

CHARACTER TYPING – PART 3

September 21, 2015 By [Clay Banks](#)



OK! So, you've been diligently following along with this **INTENSE TEACHING**... correct? You've been doing all of the **ASSIGNMENTS**... right? Your understanding of **CHARACTER WORK** has

been growing... right? You're becoming much more **CLEAR** on who you are? **GREAT!** Now, we're going to move forward and *build*, if you will, **YOUR OWN PERSONAL AND UNIQUE CHARACTER**... from the **CORE** on up! But, before we do... let's review:

- You'll be pulling from your **GROWING LIST of ADJECTIVES & CHARACTER TRAITS.**
- You're going to look closely at the **CELEBRITY** you connect with the most to see what it is that's **ATTRACTING YOU** to them.
- What's come from your **ROCK STAR** work? Gain some **INSIGHT** into yourself?
- You should be working on your list of **SELLING FEATURES.** You remember, those little **THINGS** about you that **SINGLE YOU OUT** and make you

UNIQUE... so folks will want to
PURCHASE YOU!



Once you've spent some time with this, as I know many of you have — and I'm proud of you for that, we're going to begin **BUILDING.**

- Write your **ELEVATOR SPEECH.** That's that **20 SECOND TALK** that fully explains **YOU** in the least amount of words as possible.
- Put together an **EXAGGERATED** version of your character. That means, push it and bring out as many **CHARACTER TRAITS** as you can find.
- Answer this question: If I (my character) were in a **SITCOM**, which character would I be? How about a **DRAMA**?
- **PLAY AROUND** with this for a bit. **EXPLORE** and **EXPERIMENT.** See what/who you can **DISCOVER.**
- Create a **40 SECOND SCENE** for your character to **PLAY/LIVE OUT OF.**
- Give your character a **NAME.** And, to go even further... give them as much of what's asked for on the **CHARACTER ANALYSIS SHEET.**

If you've been building along with us through this

series, all of this work should have you in possession of a **STRONG CORE CHARACTER!** If you're still a bit in the weeds with all of this, don't stress it, just do your best and we'll continue to get you sorted out.

Characteristically Yours!
Coach Banks