



SI Leeds Literary Prize Workshops: Week 1 - Beginning Fiction

The waking up exercise:

First ask yourself: what six objects does your character have on their bedside table?

Now, write a scene where your character is waking up. Think in detail about what you do when you wake up, now, by contrast, what would your character do? What things will they encounter? Try and pick specific details which reveal your character's age, social class, and desires through the DETAILS of their morning routine.

Ask yourself: On waking: what would he/she feel under foot? Hear? Bin men outside, or the tune on their mobile? What would be the taste in their mouths? What would they smell? The take-away downstairs? Or a freshly brewed cup of coffee their maid has left on the bedside table?

Think about: Do they roll over, snooze for five minutes, plan the day ahead, or spring out of bed with a spring in their step? Do they leap or arthritically creak out of bed? When they put a hand out to turn off the alarm clock is an old-fashioned thing with bells, or an iPhone 5? Do they have quilts or blankets? Do they wake up in a palatial bed-chamber, or a run-down bedsit? What is the floor covering – deep shag-pile carpet, or bare floorboards?

This is a way of making your characters distinct, not just lazy stereotypes.

For a good example of a 'waking up' scene used to introduce the main characters see the first page of Mr Chartwell by Rebecca Hunt:

http://www.penguin.co.uk/static/cs/uk/0/downloadextracts/PT_Mr_Chartwell.pdf