

What's in a Name?

One of the fun parts of world creating is giving characters names that fit their roles. A perfect example is “Perry Mason”. He will “parry” the thrusts of the prosecutor while building the solid wall of his case one brick at a time. The most famous is the computer “HAL 2000” from the movie “2001, a Space Odyssey.” Go up one letter each in the alphabet from “HAL” and you get “IBM”

[*The Fourth Awakening*](#) is sprinkled with interesting names; some obvious, some not. For example, what else would you call an editor other than “Mark Hatchet”? An editor’s sole purpose in life is to “mark” up perfectly good copy and take a “hatchet” to a writer’s prose. Here are some of the others.

Penelope Drayton Spence. For her first name I wanted something traditional which conveyed a sense of class. Brittany, Desiree or Candi with an “I” were immediately discarded. I quickly decided on “Penelope” the long suffering but amazingly loyal wife of Odysseus. Next was her maiden name. I wanted to use two famous Charleston family names in my book. [Middleton Place](#) and [Drayton Hall](#) are pre-Revolutionary War plantations sitting side by side on the Ashley River a few miles north of Charleston. In the early draft Penelope’s maiden name was Middleton instead of Drayton. Next was her last name. I went with “Spence” because it was close to “suspense”. That’s where the problem popped up.

Penelope Middletown Spence is a great name, but it would clearly never work. I really couldn’t see how the female protagonist could have the initials of “PMS”. Penelope Drayton Spence it is.

Michael Walker. The male lead got his first name from the Archangel “Michael”. Michael is traditionally viewed by Christians, Jews and Muslims as the field commander of the Army of God. “Walker” came from my wanting to convey that he “walks among us.”

Hermes Project. This one was a no brainer. In Greek mythology Hermes was the messenger of the Gods and the guide to the afterlife. He was the patron of boundaries and of those who cross them. Hermes was only one of a small handful who could enter and leave the “underworld” at will.

Josephine Antoinette Middleton Rickman. Like Penelope, I wanted her wingman to have a traditional name. I also needed a first name which could have a cutesy nickname for this book while she weathered her midlife crisis before reverting back to her more formal preference in later books. “Joey”/“Josephine” was perfect. She inherited “Middleton” by default which gave me an opportunity to have some fun. By making her middle name “Antoinette” she would have the same initials – JAM – as my co-author, Jeffery A. Martin. Alan Rickman (Professor Snape in the Harry Potter movies and the hilarious villain in the first “Die Hard” movie) is one of my favorite actors so her married name was a tribute to him

Noah Shepherd. Like the biblical “Noah” this character helps build the “ark” that carries the ship of state. His job is to “shepherd” the people on board without too much of a fuss.

Marcus Wolfe. This character is a warrior in the ancient Roman Centurion mode – wince the name of Marcus. Plus Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, suckled on a wolf. Like a wolf, he is most effective when he runs in a pack. He and his team are highly efficient.

Robert A. Smith. I wanted the grayest name possible for this character. He is one of a multitude of faceless bureaucrats who populate Washington.

Senator Clayton Horn. Remember the old “Looney Tunes” character of the loud roster with the Southern accent, “Foghorn Leghorn”? Senator Clay Horn.

Amy Kindle. This character carries around in her memory banks information from thousands of books which she can instantly recall. Almost like an Amazon “Kindle”.

Dr. Carl Altman. He is the brains behind the “Hermes Project” who has come up with a device which can alter man’s concept of spiritual development.

James Steerforth. The few who got this joke rolled on the floor laughing. Steerforth plays the role of the Vegas magician much like mega-star illusionist David Copperfield. In the Dickens version, James Steerforth was David Copperfield’s best friend.

Stu Levy. While, like Penelope, I have daughters named “Carrie” and “Kelly”, Stu is the only “real” person in the book. He is an old friend from high school and college. Among his many talents, he is a gifted and talent photographer and has a studio in Portland, OR.

There are a few more fun names sprinkled in the book that astute reader might catch. I don’t want to give them all away; what fun would that be?

In my new series A Family Reunion I’ve even gone so far as to offer \$100 to anyone who can figure out what I did in this book. A month after publication, no one has even come close.

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