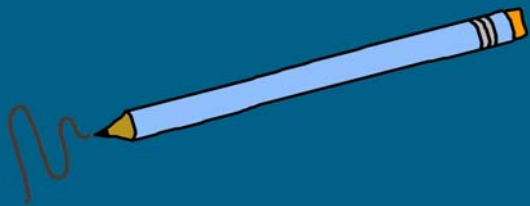


A STEWART FERRIS WRITER'S GUIDE

Unusual  
Character  
Names  
for Writers



Stewart Ferris

Summersdale Productions  
PO Box 151  
Hayling Island  
PO11 1GA

This edition first published as an eBook by  
Summersdale Productions in 2010

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Written by Stewart Ferris

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FORTHCOMING TITLES IN THIS SERIES:



# Introduction

A work of fiction can be enriched and enlivened by the use of unusual and interesting character names. Meanings behind names that are symbolic of a character's situation or personality can add depth to the text. Names that are rarely used in literature, film and other media can help to make your work stand out by making it seem fresh, original and memorable. Each of the names in this book has been carefully researched and selected for its originality, rarity, beauty, poetry, meaning, symbolism, humour, or for its downright weirdness.

When a celebrity's first name is sufficient for everyone to know who it is, that's the sign of an unusual name. Ringo doesn't need 'Starr'. Elvis didn't need 'Presley'. If you create a fictional character so successful that its first name has the same effect then you know you've done well.

In deciding what constitutes an 'unusual' name (in the context of English-speaking countries), it would have

been easy simply to raid the phone books of exotic lands and fill this tome with Chinese, African and Inuit names. Whilst there are inevitably many names that are of foreign origin in this collection, what I have attempted to do is to restrict the listings to those names which have some degree of familiarity due to their relevance to the culture and history of English-speaking lands.

There are many wonderful names that are familiar to us from the works of Shakespeare yet which rarely see the light of day in the modern world. There are historic people – from the Romans to the Victorians – whose names trip off the tongue in a delightful way when rediscovered. There are Biblical names that are wonderfully evocative and poetic. Additionally, there is a new category of unusual names spawned by celebrities who seem to have a knack for finding (or coining) bizarre and interesting names for their children.

‘Unusual’ in this book therefore doesn’t exclusively mean names you won’t have heard before. The hope

## INTRODUCTION

is that most of the names are ones that are rarely encountered in daily life and which will trigger a pleasant reminder of something long forgotten.

# Unusual Names for Males

## Abraham

### **Origin and meaning**

Hebrew origin, meaning ‘father of many nations’.

The descendants of the Biblical Abraham are said to include both the Arab and the Israeli nations.

Abraham Lincoln, President, and Abraham Simpson, cartoon character, are the best known American examples of the name.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Abe, Ham, Hamster.

## Adolf

### **Origin and meaning**

German origin, meaning ‘noble wolf’.

The name is now tainted by its association with Hitler, making it an extremely unusual name for anyone born since 1945.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Führer, Hitler, One-ball.

## Agamemnon

### **Origin and meaning**

Greek origin, meaning ‘resolute’.

In Greek mythology Agamemnon is a hero, and appears as a character in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Aggie.

## Aladdin

### **Origin and meaning**

Arabic origin, meaning ‘nobility of faith’.

*Aladdin* is one of the ancient stories told in the collection known as *The Arabian Nights*, and is now best known as a Disney animated film and a popular pantomime theme.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Al, Laddie.

## Alonso

### **Origin and meaning**

German origin, meaning ‘noble and ready for war’.

The name is associated with a character from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Al, Lonny.

## Aloysius

### **Origin and meaning**

German origin, meaning ‘famous soldier’.

Also the name of a teddy bear that features in Evelyn Waugh’s 1945 novel *Brideshead Revisited*.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Louis, Delicious.

## Alvin

**Origin and meaning**

Old English origin, meaning 'friend of elves'. Other than Alvin Stardust, the name is best remembered for its association with animated chipmunks.

**Potential nickname alert**

Al, Vino, Vinny, Chipmunk.

## Apollo

**Origin and meaning**

Greek origin, referring to the Greek and Roman god of music, medicine and enlightenment.

The Apollo space programme succeeded in landing twelve men on the moon and bringing them safely home.

**Potential nickname alert**

Polo, Pillow.

## Aramis

**Origin and meaning**

French origin, first coined by Alexandre Dumas in his novel *The Three Musketeers* as the name of one of the protagonists in that book.

Also the name of a brand of fragrance.

**Potential nickname alert**

Miss, Ari.

## Archibald

### **Origin and meaning**

German/French origin, meaning 'faithful' or 'brave'.  
The actor Archibald Alexander Leach is better known by his stage name, Cary Grant.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Archie, Baldy.

## Aristotle

### **Origin and meaning**

Greek origin, meaning 'best of all'.  
Aristotle was a philosopher in ancient Greece, and Aristotle Onassis was a 20th-century shipping magnate who married the widow of John F. Kennedy.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Ari, Totty, Tootle.

## Aston

### **Origin and meaning**

Old English origin, meaning 'town in the east'.  
The name is associated with a football team when combined with Villa and with a luxury sports car brand when combined with Martin.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Villa, DB5.

## Atticus

**Origin and meaning**

Latin origin, meaning ‘from Athens’.

A common ancient Greek name, it was also given to the wise Atticus Finch character in Harper Lee’s novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

**Potential nickname alert**

Attic, Lofty.

## Attila

**Origin and meaning**

Hungarian origin, meaning ‘father-like’, but with overtones of cruelty and viciousness due to its association with the 5th-century German king Attila the Hun.

**Potential nickname alert**

Hun, Atty.

## Audio Science

**Origin and meaning**

Name coined by US actress and star of *A Knight’s Tale* Shannyn Sossamon for her baby boy, born in 2003.

**Potential nickname alert**

Oddie, Hi Fi.

## Augustus

### **Origin and meaning**

Latin origin, meaning ‘revered’.

Augustus was an honorary name given to Roman emperors, and Augustus Gloop is a character in Roald Dahl’s novel and the film *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Gus, Gusto, Gloop.

## Balthazar

### **Origin and meaning**

Phoenician origin, meaning ‘God protects the King’.

The name was liked so much by Shakespeare that he used it in his plays *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Comedy of Errors*.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Bizarre, Zar.

## Bamber

### **Origin and meaning**

English origin, relating to the location of Bamber Bridge in northern England.

Best known for the television presenter and *University Challenge* host Bamber Gascoigne.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Bambi, Baz.

## Bartholomew

### **Origin and meaning**

Hebrew origin, meaning ‘son of ploughed land’. The Biblical Bartholomew was one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus, and Bartholomew Simpson is a cartoon character better known as ‘Bart’.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Bart.

## Basil

### **Origin and meaning**

Greek origin, meaning ‘royal’, also said to have Arabic origin meaning ‘brave’.

As well as being a popular herb, it’s the name given by John Cleese to his hotel manager character in the sitcom *Fawlty Towers*.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Baz, Fawlty.

## Benvolio

### **Origin and meaning**

Italian origin, meaning ‘kindly’ or ‘benevolent’.

Used by Shakespeare as the name of Romeo’s cousin in *Romeo and Juliet*.

### **Potential nickname alert**

Ben, Benny.