

EXPLORING THE ART OF CHARACTER

BY

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Advanced Characterization Sketch

Note to Writer: Although this is a guide for characterization, learning about your character through writing scenes will produce more authenticity than laboring over traits and what-if situations. However, the prompts will help the writer understand what is valuable in the story process. If the answers are unclear now, by the end of the story, they should be obvious.

Why do I want to write this story? _____

One sentence describing the story _____

Moral premise of story _____

Story title _____

Genre _____

Time frame _____

Setting _____

<u>Character Name</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Temperament Type</u>
_____	_____	_____

Temperament type and explanation - <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp>

Why this character? _____

What is the character's goal? _____

How is the character's goal unique? _____

Character's Outer Landscape

Age _____ Birth date _____ Nickname _____

Height _____ Weight _____

Complexion _____ Race _____

Nose _____ Ears _____

Eye color and shape _____

Face shape _____ Hair type and color _____

Body type _____

Right-handed or left-handed _____

Positive distinguishing features _____

Imperfections _____

How does character view his/her body? _____

Physical illnesses or afflictions _____

Characteristic gestures/body language _____

Home - where and describe _____

Education and where received _____

Occupation _____ Salary _____

Vocabulary _____

Skills, abilities, and talents _____

Interests/Hobbies _____

How does the character's interests/hobbies stem from his/her personality?

Is the character's interests/hobbies part of the story? _____ How? _____

Social status _____

Sense of humor _____

Joys _____

Pets _____

Favorite meal _____

What does your character have in his/her pocket or purse? _____

Establishing Character Motivation

Family background/birth order/lineage including ethnicity _____

Political views _____

Religious affiliation if any _____

How does faith play into the character's life? _____

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs: physiological, safety, love/belonging/esteem, and self-actualization, what is missing in your character's life?

How is your character filling that need(s)? _____

Character's physical story problem _____

Character's psychological/inner problem _____

What is the character's moral or spiritual turmoil? _____

Type and number of close friends _____

Best friend? _____

How do the character's family and friends view him/her? _____

What about life does the character appreciate? _____

What about life does the character detest? _____

What one phrase shows what the character ultimately wants from life? _____

If the character could be/do anything in life, what would it be? _____

What is the character's ideal vacation? _____

What person(s) does the character admire and why? _____

Things that make the characters uncomfortable or embarrassed _____

Traumas or scars from the past _____

What makes the character angry? _____

How does the character handle anger? _____

What is the character's worst fear that is natural part of the story? _____

How is the worst fear stated above related to the character's inability to handle painful situations? _____

How will the character face his/her worst fear as related to the story? _____

What is the character's most painful experience? (Donald Maass) _____

What lie does your character believe. Can be more than one. See here for ideas: http://theraponiversity.org/lies/lies_menu.html

How will the lie be revealed in the story? _____

What is the character's biggest triumph? _____

What is/are the character's inner strength(s)? _____

What are the character's flaws/weaknesses? _____

How does the character contradict him/herself? _____

What is your character's secret? _____

What is the character's love language? <http://www.5lovelanguages.com/profile/>

_____ Words of Affirmation	Quality Time _____	Receiving Gifts _____
_____ Acts of Service	Physical Touch _____	

Meyers-Briggs Love Languages: <https://personalitygrowth.com/how-each-myers-briggs-type-responds-to-the-love-languages/>

How does the character respond to betrayal?

How does your character view self-preservation? <https://personalitygrowth.com/the-importance-of-self-preservation-for-each-personality-type/>

What promises will the character make to the reader? _____

As a child, was the character popular? Why or why not? _____

When and with whom was the character's first kiss? _____

Is the character a virgin? If not, when and with whom did he/she lose his/her virginity? _____

With what is known about the character, what can go wrong? _____

What is your character's blind spot? _____

With what is known about the character, how are problems processed? _____

What makes the character feel safe? _____

What is in your character's memory box that is good? _____

What is your character's memory box that haunts him/her? _____

How did the character's mother comfort him/her as a child? _____

How did the character's father comfort him/her as child? _____

Why readers care/worry about the character? _____

How do you want the reader to feel/react to the character? _____

How will the character change? _____

According to James Scott Bell, every character faces a type of death physical, psychological, or professional. One is always prominent. What kind of death(s) is the character facing? _____

What crisis or change of events pushes the character into action? _____

What revelations will the character experience? _____

What is the one thing for which the character would most like to be remembered after his/her death? _____

What is the one thing the character wants more than anything? _____

What is the one thing the antagonist wants more than anything? _____

What is lost if the character is unsuccessful? _____

What is the one thing that is stopping the protagonist from getting what he wants? _____

What is the one thing that is stopping the antagonist from getting what he wants? _____

What is the character's greatest regret? _____

What is the most evil thing the character has ever done? _____

Does your character have a criminal record? What did he/she do? _____

If your character knew he/she was going to die in 24 hours, name three things the character would do in the time left? _____

What will be the character's eulogy? _____

How does your character feel about:

Love _____

Death _____

Children _____

Money _____

Home _____

What is life about? _____

How do I live a good life? _____

What is my life's purpose? _____

Backstory - Exercises

The following is an exercise from Donald Maass - *Writing the Breakout Novel* and *Writing the Breakout Novel Workbook*.

1. What happened in your character's life from birth to age 12 that affected who he/she is today— Emotionally, Physically, Mentally, and Spiritually?
2. What happened in your character's life from ages 13 - 20 that affected who he/she is today— Emotionally, Physically, Mentally, and Spiritually?
3. What happened in your character's life from ages 21 - 30 that affected who he/she is today— Emotionally, Physically, Mentally, and Spiritually?
4. What happened in your character's life 1 year before the story opens— Emotionally, Physically, Mentally, and Spiritually?
5. 6 months?
6. 6 weeks?
7. 24 hours?
8. 1 hour?
9. 10 minutes?

Final Thoughts

Who is your character? _____

Are you ready to plot your story? _____

What is your initial story disturbance? _____

What questions are not answered about character? _____

How will you address the above? _____

What research needs to be completed? _____

Characterization - the Key to Great Novel Writing Resource Guide

Online Tools

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

Myers-Briggs Love Languages

<https://personalitygrowth.com/how-each-myers-briggs-type-responds-to-the-love-languages/>

Myers-Briggs Personality Testing

<http://www.humanmetrics.com/>

The Lies We Believe

http://theraponiversity.org/lies/lies_menu.html

Websites and Blogs

Blue Ridge Conference

<https://www.blueridgeconference.com/>

Jane Friedman

<https://www.janefriedman.com/>

Jerry Jenkins

<https://jerryjenkins.com/>

Live, Write, Thrive

<https://www.livewritethrive.com/>

The Write Conversation

<http://thewriteconversation.blogspot.com/>

Helping Writers Become Authors

<https://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com/>

Writer Unboxed

<http://writerunboxed.com/>

Writers Digest Editor Blogs

<http://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs>

Writers Helping Writers

<http://writershelpingwriters.net/author/angela/>

Recommended Writing Books List

<i>The Emotion Thesaurus</i>	Angela Ackerman & Becca Puglisi
<i>The Emotional Wound Thesaurus</i>	Angela Ackerman & Becca Puglisi
<i>Conflict and Suspense</i>	James Scott Bell
<i>Fiction Attack!</i>	James Scott Bell
<i>Plot and Structure</i>	James Scott Bell
<i>The Five Love Languages</i>	Gary Chapman
<i>The Art of Character</i>	David Corbett
<i>Wired for Story</i>	Lisa Chron
<i>On Becoming a Novelist</i>	John Gardner
<i>I know What You are Thinking</i>	Dr. Lillian Glass, Ph.D
<i>Revising Your Novel</i>	Janice Hardy
<i>Dialogue</i>	Gloria Kempton
<i>On Writing</i>	Stephen King
<i>Characters, Emotion & Viewpoint</i>	Nancy Kress
<i>Story Trumps Structure</i>	Steven James
<i>Troubleshooting Your Novel</i>	Steven James
<i>The 12 Pillars of Novel Construction</i>	C.S.Lakin
<i>The Emotional Craft of Fiction</i>	Donald Maass
<i>The Fire in Fiction</i>	Donald Maass
<i>Writing the Breakout Novel</i>	Donald Maass
<i>Writing the Breakout Novel Workbook</i>	Donald Maass
<i>Writing 21st Century Fiction</i>	Donald Maass
<i>Word Painting</i>	Rebecca McClanahan

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<i>Story</i>	Robert McKee
<i>Exploring the Art of Character</i>	DiAnn Mills
<i>Exploring the Art of Plotting</i>	DiAnn Mills
<i>Exploring the Art of Emotion & Dialogue</i>	DiAnn Mills
<i>Writing Cinematically</i>	Deborah Raney
<i>The Power of Body Language</i>	Tonya Reiman
<i>How to Grow a Novel</i>	Sol Stein
<i>Stein on Writing</i>	Sol Stein
<i>Creating Character Arcs</i>	K.M. Weiland
<i>The Moral Premise</i>	Stanley D. Williams