

Creating Fictional Characters

IDENTIFY YOUR CHARACTERS & THEIR ROLES IN THE STORY

- Who is/are the main character(s) in your story?
- What is/are their roles in the story? A single parent with two daughters? A teacher with psychological problem? A girl with rebel attitude?
- How is their relation to other characters?
- How do they develop along the story? Dynamic? Static?
- Are there any minor or even absent character(s) who have significant role in the story?
- How do the characters affect the ending of the story?

GET INSIDE YOUR CHARACTER'S HEAD

- Know your character(s) inside and out.
- Visualize their physical appearance and psychological traits.
- Make an outline about how your characters might react to certain situation.
- Past experience will always be useful insight
- Know what he/she wants to achieve
- Know the motive of his/her actions
- Know how he/she develops throughout the story

RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH!

- It is a hard work, but must be done!
- Research before writing helps you save you the time-sucking distraction of trying to find information mid-sentence or mid-chapter.
- You should research as much as possible for anything you do not have direct experience with.
- Use offline/or online group forum to gather information.
- Research helps you to design convincing characters with their background.
- Particularly historical novels or writing.

STRONG DIALOGUE = STRONGER CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- How a character speaks is influenced by many factors, i.e., nationality, geography, profession, education, belief, religion etc.
- Be consistent.
- Give individual speech trait.
- Some checklists:
 - Is the dialogue consistent to the characters personality traits and behaviors?
 - Is the dialogue distinctive enough that it is easy to distinguish between multiple characters?
 - Does the dialogue stay true to what someone would expect of the character?
 - Is the dialogue realistic for the character I am trying to portray?

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS: THE BASICS

Character's Name?

- How does the character feel about his or her name?
- How did he or she get this name? Was it passed on from a family member, or did the parents read it on the side of a cereal box the day the child was born?
- What is the meaning of the name? What culture did the name originate from? What regions of the world did the name come from?
- What connotations or stereotypes does the name have?

Character Age/Birthday/Zodiac Sign:

- How old is your character?
- What year was he or she born?
- What events were happening locally, nationally and globally the year your character was born?
- What is the zodiac sign? Does his or her zodiac sign have any bearing on their personality traits?
- What Chinese Horoscope year were they born in? How does this influence their personality traits?
- How does your character like to celebrate his or her birthday?

Character's Physical Traits:

- What does your character look like?
- Is your character athletic or overweight? Tall or Short?
- Hair color and length? Eye color?
- Any scars or birth marks?
- Does your character have a physical disability?
- What actress or actor would you have play the role of your character if it was a movie?
- What style of clothes does your character wear? What clothes would he or she wear every day on a casual basis? For a night out on the town? To bed?
- Does he or she wear any special jewellery or accessories? What type of shoes does your character wear?

Character's Home:

- Where does your character live? Is it an Apartment? House? In the backseat of his car?
- How does your character feel about the current living arrangements?
- Does your character live with anyone else? Who are those people?
- How does your character get along with his or her neighbors?
- What is the view outside of your character's window? What items do they keep next to their bed?
- What is your character's most valuable possession?

Career/Job/Profession/Education:

- What does the character do for a living?
- Do they find this work enjoyable?
- What is your character's dream job?
- What is your character's financial situation?
- What does your character spend most of his/her money on?
- What would your character do if he or she won the lottery?
- What is your character's highest level of education?
- What things do they wish were different about their current profession?

Characters Family:

- Who are his or her parents?
- Does he or she have any siblings?
- A spouse or other romantic partner or love interest?
- How about children?
- Other family? Aunts? Uncles? Second Cousins Twice Removed?
- How does your character feel about family functions and events?

Character's Friends:

- Who are your character's closest friends?
- How did your character meet his or her best friend?
- What do they value most in friendship?
- Does your character make friends easily?

Character's Relationships:

- What was your character's first romantic encounter like?
- How does your character display affection?
- What is your character's idea of a perfect romantic date?
- Has your character ever had his or her heart broken?
- What qualities does your character look for in a romantic partner?

Character's Pets:

- Does your character have any pets? What type?
- What are your characters favorite animals?
- How many times has your character visited the zoo?

Even Fictional Characters Have to Eat:

- What are his or her favorite foods to eat?
- Does he or she enjoy to cook?
- Any food allergies or sensitivities? What foods can he or she not stand to be around or eat?

Travel

- Where would your character like to travel? How does he or she want to get there?
- Does your character have preferences on types of lodging?
- How does your character spend a lazy Sunday afternoon?
- What are their favorite places to go when alone? With friends?

TV, Movies, Music, & Books

- What are your characters favorite movies and TV shows? Their favorite actors and actresses?
- How often do they watch movies and/or television? What television shows or movies do you think they would enjoy most?
- What are your character's favorite music, songs, bands? Would your character go to a concert and enjoy it?
- Does your character play any musical instruments?
- What are his or her favorite books?
- What genre of books does your character enjoy reading? Romance Fiction? Non-fiction? Thriller Crime Novels? Historical Fiction? Self-help? Poetry?
- What is your character's favorite quote and why?

CHARACTER PERSONALITY & BEHAVIORAL TRAITS

- How does your character act socially? Is your character an introvert or extrovert?
- What does your character do when meeting someone for the first time?
- How does he or she interact with guests at a party?
- How does your character feel about small talk?
- How does your character feel about being the center of attention?
- Is your character organized or disorganized?
- Does your character tend to be forgetful or easily distracted?
- Is he or she logical and analytical or more of a dreamer?
- What does your character do that might annoy others?
- How does your character deal with feelings of anger? Punch walls? Go on a shopping spree? Walk it off?
- How does your character handle everyday little frustrations?
- What would your character do if stuck in a long line or traffic jam?

Strengths & Weaknesses

- What are your character's greatest strengths?
- How did he or she develop these strengths and skills?
- What are his or her greatest weaknesses?
- What is something your character wishes they could do better?
- Does your character have any obsessions or addictions?
- Does your character neglect any important responsibilities in life?
- What makes your character happy?
- What is your character most thankful for in life?
- If your character had an imaginary peaceful happy place, what would it be like?
- Does your character find happiness from within or look for it from external sources?

GOING DEEPER - EMOTIONAL QUESTIONS

Character's greatest fears in life

- What past events may have influenced your character to have these fears?
- How does your character deal with fear?
- Was there ever a time your character did not feel like life was worth living?
- What does your character do to make themselves feel better when in emotional or physical pain?
- What would your character miss the most if it were to be taken away from them?

Character's hopes, dreams, and goals?

- What profession did he or she dream of having when growing up?
- What is a day in the life of their dream life like?
- How is their “dream life” different from their current life now? What things are the same?
- What goals do they wish to accomplish in their life?
- What are the challenges in reaching these goals?

The character's beliefs of your character

- Do these beliefs differ from the religion of his or her parents or other family?
- Does your character believe in the afterlife?
- Is your character superstitious?
- If your character had a spirit animal, what would it be?
- What is your character's motto or mantra for life?
- If your character's beliefs could be summed up in three words, what would they be?

Character's aspiration

- What causes is your character passionate about?
- Why does your character care about these things?
- What are your character's political beliefs?
- What political issues matter the most to your character and why?
- What is the most influential thing that impacted your character into being who he or she is today?
- Who does your character consider to be role models, and why does he or she look up to these people?

Character's past and memories

- What is your character's greatest regret in life?
- What are the most painful memories they have from childhood?
- What deep dark secrets do they not tell anyone?
- Does your character have a favorite place they would visit as a child?
- What events from your character's life have left an impact?
- What are some of his or her most proudest moments?
- What about most embarrassing moments?
- What was his or her childhood like?
- What types of toys did your character play with as a child?
- Who was an influential person in your character's childhood life?
- Are there any people from the past your character misses? What does he or she miss the most about that person?

Values & Morals

- How does your character feel about honesty? Do they believe in always telling the truth? Or do they believe that little lies won't hurt anyone?
- Does your character keep his or her promises?
- Does your character prefer to do things easily or do them "right"?
- When is a time your character has felt betrayed? Why did they feel this way?
- What is something your character would never do?
- What is something people would be surprised your character WOULD do?
- What makes your character proud? What was one of his or her proudest moments in life?
- How does your character feel about rules and guidelines? Necessary or restrictive?
- Is your character a leader, follower, or lone wolf?

Wants & Needs

- What motivates your character?
- What does your character need in order to be happy?
- What needs does your character have that might left unfulfilled?

ARCHETYPES

- The term "archetype" has its origins in ancient Greek. The root words are *archein*, which means "original or old"; and *typos*, which means "pattern, model or type". The combined meaning is an "original pattern" of which all other similar persons, objects, or concepts are derived, copied, modeled, or emulated.
- The psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung, used the concept of archetype in his theory of the human psyche. He believed that universal, mythic characters—archetypes—reside within the collective unconscious of people the world over. Archetypes represent fundamental human motifs of our experience as we evolved; consequentially, they evoke deep emotions.
- Although there are many different archetypes, Jung defined twelve primary types that symbolize basic human motivations. Each type has its own set of values, meanings and personality traits. Also, the twelve types are divided into three sets of four, namely Ego, Soul and Self. The types in each set share a common driving source, for example types within the Ego set are driven to fulfill ego-defined agendas.
- Most, if not all, people have several archetypes at play in their personality construct; however, one archetype tends to dominate the personality in general. It can be helpful to know which archetypes are at play in oneself and others, especially loved ones, friends and co-workers, in order to gain personal insight into behaviors and motivations.

THE EGO TYPES

The Innocent

- Motto: Free to be you and me
- Core desire: to get to paradise
- Goal: to be happy
- Greatest fear: to be punished for doing something bad or wrong
- Strategy: to do things right
- Weakness: boring for all their naive innocence
- Talent: faith and optimism
- The Innocent is also known as Utopian, traditionalist, naive, mystic, saint, romantic, dreamer.

The Orphan/Regular Guy or Gal

- Motto: All men and women are created equal
- Core Desire: connecting with others
- Goal: to belong
- Greatest fear: to be left out or to stand out from the crowd
- Strategy: develop ordinary solid virtues, be down to earth, the common touch
- Weakness: losing one's own self in an effort to blend in or for the sake of superficial relationships
- Talent: realism, empathy, lack of pretence
- The Regular Person is also known as the good old boy, everyman, the person next door, the realist, the working stiff, the solid citizen, the good neighbor, the silent majority.

The Hero

- Motto: Where there's a will, there's a way
- Core desire: to prove one's worth through courageous acts
- Goal: expert mastery in a way that improves the world
- Greatest fear: weakness, vulnerability, being a "chicken"
- Strategy: to be as strong and competent as possible
- Weakness: arrogance, always needing another battle to fight
- Talent: competence and courage
- The Hero is also known as the warrior, crusader, rescuer, superhero, the soldier, dragon slayer, the winner and the team player.

The Caregiver

- Motto: Love your neighbour as yourself
- Core desire: to protect and care for others
- Goal: to help others
- Greatest fear: selfishness and ingratitude
- Strategy: doing things for others
- Weakness: martyrdom and being exploited
- Talent: compassion, generosity
- The Caregiver is also known as the saint, altruist, parent, helper, supporter.

The Soul Types

The Explorer

- Motto: Don't fence me in
- Core desire: the freedom to find out who you are through exploring the world
- Goal: to experience a better, more authentic, more fulfilling life
- Biggest fear: getting trapped, conformity, and inner emptiness
- Strategy: journey, seeking out and experiencing new things, escape from boredom
- Weakness: aimless wandering, becoming a misfit
- Talent: autonomy, ambition, being true to one's soul
- The explorer is also known as: The seeker, iconoclast, wanderer, individualist, pilgrim.

The Rebel

- Motto: Rules are made to be broken
- Core desire: revenge or revolution
- Goal: to overturn what isn't working
- Greatest fear: to be powerless or ineffectual
- Strategy: disrupt, destroy, or shock
- Weakness: crossing over to the dark side, crime
- Talent: outrageousness, radical freedom
- The Outlaw is also known as the outlaw, revolutionary, wild man, the misfit, or iconoclast.

The Lover

- Motto: You're the only one
- Core desire: intimacy and experience
- Goal: being in a relationship with the people, work and surroundings they love
- Greatest fear: being alone, a wallflower, unwanted, unloved
- Strategy: to become more and more physically and emotionally attractive
- Weakness: outward-directed desire to please others at risk of losing own identity
- Talent: passion, gratitude, appreciation, and commitment
- The Lover is also known as the partner, friend, intimate, enthusiast, sensualist, spouse, team-builder.

The Creator

- Motto: If you can imagine it, it can be done
- Core desire: to create things of enduring value
- Goal: to realize a vision
- Greatest fear: mediocre vision or execution
- Strategy: develop artistic control and skill
- Task: to create culture, express own vision
- Weakness: perfectionism, bad solutions
- Talent: creativity and imagination
- The Creator is also known as the artist, inventor, innovator, musician, writer or dreamer.

THE SELF TYPES

The Jester

- Motto: You only live once
 - Core desire: to live in the moment with full enjoyment
 - Goal: to have a great time and lighten up the world
 - Greatest fear: being bored or boring others
 - Strategy: play, make jokes, be funny
 - Weakness: frivolity, wasting time
 - Talent: joy
- The Jester is also known as the fool, trickster, joker, practical joker or comedian.

The Sage

- Motto: The truth will set you free
- Core desire: to find the truth.
- Goal: to use intelligence and analysis to understand the world.
- Biggest fear: being duped, misled—or ignorance.
- Strategy: seeking out information and knowledge; self-reflection and understanding thought processes.
- Weakness: can study details forever and never act.
- Talent: wisdom, intelligence.
- The Sage is also known as the expert, scholar, detective, advisor, thinker, philosopher, academic, researcher, thinker, planner, professional, mentor, teacher, contemplative.

The Magician

- Motto: I make things happen.
- Core desire: understanding the fundamental laws of the universe
- Goal: to make dreams come true
- Greatest fear: unintended negative consequences
- Strategy: develop a vision and live by it
- Weakness: becoming manipulative
- Talent: finding win-win solutions
- The Magician is also known as the visionary, catalyst, inventor, charismatic leader, shaman, healer, medicine man.

The Ruler

- Motto: Power isn't everything, it's the only thing.
- Core desire: control
- Goal: create a prosperous, successful family or community
- Strategy: exercise power
- Greatest fear: chaos, being overthrown
- Weakness: being authoritarian, unable to delegate
- Talent: responsibility, leadership
- The Ruler is also known as the boss, leader, aristocrat, king, queen, politician, role model, manager or administrator.

