

Journalism/Creative Writing Extended Project Fiction Track

Step Seven: In Depth Character Analysis (Major Characters)

Before we start writing, I want you to spend some extended time with these characters. The more thinking you do about them now, the easier and more realistic your writing about them will be. Today you will complete the following questionnaire for each of your major (most important) characters. Bare minimum, this means your protagonist and your antagonist, but you may have additional major character you need to delve into. The work you do today doesn't necessarily need to work its way in to your story; these are just exercises for you as the author so that you have all of the information necessary about your characters. This is supposed to help, not hurt. If you find yourself unable to (or not wanting to) answer a question, just skip it. There's plenty here to work with, you don't necessarily need everything.

Complete the following questionnaire in your journal or on your laptop for each major character (if you really want to challenge yourself, fill it out in each character's "voice", as if they were answering the questions about themselves, not you answering for them):

Basic

- Full name (including first, middle, and last):
- Nicknames:
- Date of birth:
- Age:
- Place of birth:

Physical Appearance

- Height:
- Weight:
- Build/body type:
- Hair color:
- Hair texture:
- Eye color:
- Eye shape:
- Distinguishing facial features:
- Skin color:
- Race/ethnicity:
- Scars:
- Birthmarks:
- Physical handicaps:
- Type of clothes:

Personality

- Archetype:
- Favorite (or overused) phrases:
- Optimist or pessimist:
- Describe their sense of humor:
- How do they display affection?
- How do they see themselves?
- How are they seen by others? How do they want to be seen by others?
- What would they change about themselves and why?
- Strongest character trait:
- Weakest character trait:
- Are they competitive?
- Do they rush to conclusions?
- Do they make quick decisions and act on them? Do they take time out to think about actions and consequences?
- How do they react to praise? To criticism?
- What is their greatest fear?
- What are their biggest secrets?
- When was the last time they cried?
- Do they cry openly/in front of others?
- What haunts them?
- What will they stand up for?
- Are they indoorsy or outdoorsy? Night owl or morning lark?
- What sense do they most rely on?
- How do they treat others?
- What quality do they most value in a friend?
- What do they consider an overrated virtue?
- What are their views on religion? Politics? Sex?
- Under what circumstances would they be able to kill someone?
- Do they prefer routine or spontaneity?
- Describe their pet peeves:
- What is their view of freedom? What is freedom?
- When did they last lie and what's their view of lying?
- When did they last make a promise? Do they keep their promises?

Friends and Family

- How big is their immediate family?
- Who is their family?
- Do they have siblings? Older or younger?
- Do they get along with the parents and siblings?
- How big is their extended family?
- Describe their parents.
- Describe their best friend.
- Describe their attitude towards family.
- Describe their other friends.

- Describe their acquaintances.
- What is their family's history? Think back several generations.
- Do they have pets?

Daily Life

- Describe their house.
- Are they a minimalist or is their house cluttered?
- What are their eating habits?
- Are they allergic to anything?
- What is the first thing they do in the morning?
- What do they do on a Sunday afternoon?
- What do they do on a Friday night?
- Describe their diet:
- Describe their workout routine:

Past and Future

- What was your character like as a child? As a teenager? As a young adult?
- What is their earliest memory?
- What is their best childhood memory?
- What is their worst childhood memory?
- What did they want to be when they grew up?
- Did they grow up rich or poor?
- Did they grow up nurtured or neglected?
- Were they popular growing up?
- What is the most offensive thing they ever said?
- What is the most offensive thing ever said to them?
- What is their greatest achievement?
- Describe their first kiss and romance.
- What is the worst thing they did to someone they loved?
- What is the best thing they did to someone they loved?
- Who had a great influence on them? Who shaped them as a person?
- What are their plans for the future?
- What advice would they give their younger self?
- What smells remind them of their childhood?
- When was the last time they were crushed with disappointment?
- What past act are they most ashamed of? Most proud of?
- Has anyone ever saved their life? Have they ever saved someone else's life?

Love

- Do they believe in love at first sight?
- Are they in a relationship?
- How do they behave in relationships?
- Has your character ever been in love?
- Have they ever broken someone's heart?
- Have they ever had their heart broken?
- What do they look for in a potential lover or partner?
- Do they have their own family? How old are their children?

- What are their views on marriage?

Relationships with Others

- Do they trust other people to protect them? Why? Why?
- Who do they trust the most?
- Who do they love the most?
- Who do they hate the most? Who do they despise?
- Do they tend to take on leadership roles in group situations?
- Do they like being around large groups of people? Why or why not?
- What are their views on social media?
- Have they ever been bullied?
- Have they ever been the bully?
- Who are their enemies and why?

Conflict

- How do they respond to threat or dangerous situations?
- Are they most likely to fight with their fists or their words?
- What is your character's kryptonite?
- How do they perceive strangers?
- Do they have phobias? Of what?
- What do they love to hate?
- What is their weapon of choice?
- Where do they go when they're angry?

Work, Education and Hobbies

- Describe their current job:
- Do they like or dislike their job?
- Describe their hobbies:
- Educational background:
- Work experience/background:

Favorites

- List their favorites of each: color; food; animal; place; person; book:
- List their least favorites of each: color; food; animal; place; person; book
- What place would they love to visit?
- What is the most beautiful thing they've ever seen?
- What is their favorite song?
- Who is their favorite artist?
- What is their favorite work of art?
- What is their favorite day of the week? Why?
- Do they have a favorite saying or proverb? What is it?

Spirituality

- What are their religious views?
- Do they believe in an afterlife?
- What do they think heaven is?
- What do they think hell is?
- Are they superstitious?