

# Character Worksheet

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Compiled, slightly expanded, and edited by J.T. Evans

This worksheet exists to assist you, the writer, in keeping your characters true to themselves. A great deal of detail can go into a great character, and we feel this worksheet can help you capture information necessary to avoiding two-dimension, cookie-cutter style characters.

While not all of the questions and blanks provided in this worksheet may be applicable to every character, do your characters, and readers, the favor of considering the answers to each prompt, and documenting those answers.

## Dominant Impression

Two word combination (adjective + noun) to describe the character. Use a powerful adjective and a strong noun to give the start of the character's description a precise and important meaning.

## Character Headline

Write 1-3 sentences summarizing the basics of the character. It is fine to be vague at the moment as greater details will be done later. Capture the essence of the character in these sentences.

## Character Basics

Full name

Meaning of name

Nickname (with reason for nickname)

Tag words about character

Birth date

Astrological sign and details

Birth place

Age

Apparent age

Race

Hair color

Hair style

Shape and features of face

Eye color

Glasses or contacts

Skin tone

Any scars, tattoos, or distinguishing marks (Note other peoples' reactions to these marks)

Typical clothing styles

Build or body type

Height

Weight

Looks like a famous person?

## **Family and Childhood**

Mother

Father

Parents' occupations

Parents' marital status

Social status

Brothers

Sisters

Other close family

Current status of family members

Noteworthy ancestors

Best friend

Other friends

Worst enemy

Other enemies

Lovers

Childhood role models

Pets

Family finances

Home life during childhood

Any sports or clubs

Schooling

Favorite subject

Popular or loner

First memory

Important experiences or events

Health problems

Culture

Religion

## **Your Character's Character**

Bad habits

Peculiar habits

Strong points

Weaknesses

Temperament

Attitude

Fears

Secrets

Regrets

Pet peeves

Conflicts

Talents

Best skills

Worst skills

Motivation

Greatest desire/wish

Daydreams about....

Does too much of...

Does too little of...

Priorities

Philosophy

Sexuality

Exercise routine

Speech

Gestures

Expressions

Explicatives

Worst thing that can happen is:

Most relaxing thing is:

Feels vulnerability when

Day or night person

Introvert or extrovert

Optimist or pessimist

Daring or cautious

Physical disabilities

Psychological disabilities

## **Likes and Styles**

Music

Books

Foods

Drinks

Animals

Sports

Social issues

Color

Clothing

Jewelry

Games

TV shows

Movies

Holiday

Cars

## **Dislikes**

Music

Books

Food

Drinks

Animals

Sports

Social issues

Color

Clothing

Jewelry

Games

TV shows

Movies

Holiday

Cars

## **Your Character's Life... Before Your Story**

Past careers

Past lovers

Past enemies

Past mentors

Biggest mistakes

Biggest achievements

## **Where and How Does Your Character Live Now**

Home

Household furnishings

Favorite possession

Neighborhood

Town or city name

Details of town or city

Marital status

Children

Relationship with family

Best friend

Other friends

Worst enemy

Other enemies

Pets

Mode of transportation

Prized possession

Career

Dream career

Dream life

Dream living location

Hobbies

Musical instrument(s)

Sports or clubs

Finances

Culture

Religion

Physical disabilities

Psychological disabilities

## **Darkest Secret**

What is it?

- Does anyone else know?
  - If yes, what is the character going to do about it?
  - If yes, did the character tell them?
    - If no, how did the other person find out find out?

## **Self Perception**

One word to describe self

One paragraph to describe self

Best physical attribute? Is this realistic? Explain.

Worst physical attribute? Is this realistic? Explain.

Best psychological/mental attribute? Is this realistic? Explain.

Worst psychological/mental attribute? Is this realistic? Explain.

How the character thinks others perceive him/her.

Four things character would like to change most about themselves.

Four things character hopes never changes.

## **Relationships**

Ever cheated on a significant other?

How loyal to friends is the character?

How does the character view others?

What is the most common first impression of the character?

How do strangers view the character?

How do friends view the character?

How does the character's wife/husband/lover view the character?

How does the protagonist of the story view the character?

How does the antagonist of the story view the character?

What do family/friends like most about the character?

What do family/friends like least about the character?

How does the character view the protagonist?

How does the character view the antagonist?

## **Goals**

Immediate goals

Long range goals

How does the character plan to accomplish these goals?

How will other characters be affected?

What are the most obvious obstacles to accomplishing these goals that the character knows of?

What are the most obvious obstacles to accomplishing these goals that the character does not know of?

## **Crisis Moments**

Reflexive reaction

Intelligent reaction

Common crisis faced

How does character react to new problems?

How character needs to change how they react to crisis:

## **Miscellaneous**

Person character secretly admires. Why?

Person character was most influenced by. Why?

Most important person in character's life before story starts. Why?

How does the character spend the week before the story starts?

## **Chinese Mirror**

What kind of animal would your character be?

What kind of plant would your character be?

If the character were a body of water, what would (s)he be?

What does your character think happiness smells like?

What sound does your character associate with despair?

What does your character think hopelessness looks like?

What concept is most important to the character?

What does family mean to the character?

Where does the character look for love?

What does the character think the nature of friendship is?

What is most important to the character?

If your character could have only one possession with him/her for an eternity of solitude, what would it be?

What does honor mean to the character?

## **The Character Interview: Lotsa Questions**

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### **REQUIREMENTS-- YOU IN THE PLOT:**

1. What does the plot require you to be? (i.e., six years old, an archaeologist, a New Yorker) How does this requirement limit you?
2. What physical attributes does the plot require of you? (i.e., tree-climbing ability, a birthmarked thigh, an expressive face)
3. What talent or skill will you need to have to survive this plot? (an incisive mind, sharpshooting, charm, auto mechanics) How did you acquire this? How do you use it?
4. What is your quest? What do you hope to accomplish, find, or become during the course of this book? Why? What outside obstacle might prevent this?

What inside yourself will get in the way? What will have to happen for you to overcome these obstacles? What will happen if you can't?

## **PERCEPTION-- YOU IN YOUR MIND:**

5. How do you learn best? Observation? Participation? Trial and error? Rumination and cogitation? Consulting experts? Writing?
6. How open are you to new ideas and information? Do you change your mind frequently, based on what people have told you? Are you a traditionalist, deciding on the basis of "what's always been"? If someone is arguing with you, are you more likely to change your mind or dig in your heels? What if the arguer is right?
7. When you walk into a party, what do you notice first? The mood? The people? The decorating? The things needing to be fixed? The background music? The food on the buffet table? Whether you fit in?
8. Is one sense more highly developed than another? For instance, do you tend to take in the world primarily through vision? "I'll believe that when I see it!" Or are you more audial? Do you determine if a person is lying by the tone of voice? Do you love to talk on the phone? Don't forget the sixth sense-- intuition. (This aspect can give you all sorts of plot leads-- a visual person might need to learn that appearances can be deceiving; an audial person might learn about a murder because she's been eavesdropping. Remember also that an artist's narration of a scene will use very different terms than a musician's will.)
9. Do you usually notice problems around you? What is your response? Do you write an angry letter to the editor? shrug and move on? analyze what's wrong and how to fix it? take it as evidence that the world is falling apart? What about problems within yourself?
10. Would you say you were an optimist or a pessimist? Would your friends agree? How would you react if your life suddenly took a turn for the worse? Are you prepared for that? Do you notice when your life is going well? Does that make you happy?
11. Are you more interested in the past or the future, or do you live in the now? Are you one to keep holiday traditions? Do you reminisce about days gone by? Are you sentimental about objects, like your mother's handmirror or your first baseball glove? How hard would it be to move from your present home? How long would you keep in touch with your friends back in the old town? How long would it take you to make new friends?
12. How do you decide if you can trust someone? Experience with others? with this person? First impressions? Intuition? Do you test the person somehow? Or are you just generally disposed to trust or not to trust?

## **SELF-CONCEPT-- YOU IN YOURSELF:**

13. A casual acquaintance describes your personality. How would the description be wrong? Why? What if your mother was doing the describing? Your spouse?
14. How well do you know yourself? How well do you want to know yourself? Do you like to analyze yourself? Do you usually know what motivates you to do things? What do you do that you consider "out of character" for you? When you do that, what do you think of yourself?
15. In what situation is your self-esteem most at risk? When is it most enhanced? For example, does asking for help make you feel like a beggar? Does giving help make you feel like an angel? When someone insults you, what do you do?
16. In what situation are you most afraid? Most brave? When are you likely to behave in a way you would describe as cowardly? How would you deal with thinking yourself a coward? In what situation would you behave with reckless disregard for your own safety?
17. What are you keeping secret? Who is it secret from? Yourself? How long has it been a secret? What do you think will happen if it becomes known? What really will happen if it becomes known?
18. What are you lying about, if only to yourself? Are you good at deception? How about self-deception? Why are you lying? Who doesn't fall for it? What will happen if the truth gets out?
19. What is your special power? It doesn't have to be supernatural. What ability/skill/talent/sensitivity/value/belief sets you apart from everyone else? What do you do with this power? How does it get you into trouble? How does it get you out of trouble?

## **CONJUNCTIONS-- YOU IN THE WORLD:**

20. Do you live in the right world? I mean, are you at home in your boarding school/big city/16th C Italian village? If you fit in, what would you do if something happened to make you leave, or to make you unfit? If you don't fit in, why do you stay? Is there a right world for you, or do you think you will always be an outsider? How necessary are you to your world? What would you do if you couldn't leave? What would you have to change, in the world or in yourself, to fit?
21. Is this the right time for you? Or were you born too late or too soon? Can you keep up with the pace of the time you live in? Are the things valued in this time of value to you? Are you satisfied with your world's level of technology and knowledge? Do you read history or science fiction? If a time-travel journey was offered to you, would you take it? Where/when?

22. What is your role in this setting? Native? Alien? Saint? Loser? Secret rebel? Mover and shaker? Nobody? Do you want your role to change? Is it easy to change roles in this world? What happens then?
23. What characteristic action or attitude always gets you in trouble? Why do you keep doing it then? What do you do to get out of trouble?
24. What personal value is at odds with the society's values? Are you open about it? (For example, an Amish person wears the plain clothes.) How does that get you in trouble? If you keep it hidden, does your conscience bother you? How much longer can you hide it? What will you do if you must choose between this value and your life in this society?

## **CONNECTIONS-- YOU IN OTHERS:**

25. Are you easy to get to know? Do you want to be? Do others think you're easy to know? Are you likely to let people get to know you? Are you easy to understand?
26. What's your initial reaction to a stranger? Potential friend? Potential enemy? Rival? Someone to charm? To deceive?
27. How are you different when you're with your family? What role do you play in the family? Does it still fit? What would happen if you stopped?
28. Did you have a happy childhood? How has that affected your adulthood?
29. Were you anyone's favorite when you were a child? Why or why not? What happened because of this?
30. Did you turn out the way you expected? The way your parents predicted?
31. Do you love easily? Why or why not? How does that mess up your life? Do you fall in love, or is it a gradual process? Do you notice it's happening? Do you try to stop it?
32. Are you easy to love? Why or why not? How does that mess up your life? When someone falls in love with you, what do you do?
33. What's your blind spot? What person, idea, institution, do you delude yourself about? How does this endanger you?
34. Do you trust most people? Or do you reserve judgment until they pass some test? When were you wrong about whether someone was trustworthy?
35. Whom have you betrayed lately? Did you mean to? What happened? Did you try to make amends?
36. Who has betrayed you lately? Did you expect it? What did it do to you? Is anyone likely to betray you in the future? What will you do to prevent it?