



CHARACTER CREATION MADE EASY

A SIMPLE FOUR-STEP GUIDE TO
CRAFTING COMPLEX CHARACTERS

www.well-storied.com



CHARACTER IS THE BACKBONE OF STORY.

Have you ever read a novel that felt boring or contrived?

Maybe you struggled to care what happened next because you didn't connect with any of the characters. Maybe you never gained a clear understanding of who the characters were because they repeatedly acted *out of character* to meet the plot's demands. Or maybe the characters simply failed to break free of common stereotypes and tropes.

Whatever the case, it's plain to see that well-developed characters are integral to a story's success. But crafting characters that feel as real as the people around us can be an intimidating task.

Many lengthy character questionnaires only add to this overwhelm, prompting us to determine hundreds of largely inconsequential details like our characters' favorite colors or fast food meals — all while failing to strike at the heart of what makes characters come to life on the page. No more, writer.

In this quick-and-easy guide to character creation, I'll help you develop fully-realized characters in four simple steps, determining who your characters are, how they experience the world, the ways in which their lives have impacted the people they've become, and where their lives will take them as you tell their stories. Ready to get started?

Note: You may find it helpful to use this workbook in tandem with the articles available at www.well-storied.com/characters.



STEP 1: ESTABLISH YOUR CHARACTER'S IDENTITY

At its core, characterization is the process of crafting a fictional identity. Some aspects of a character's identity, such as their ethnic background, will remain constant throughout their story, while other aspects will evolve as they experience new events and circumstances. Use the prompts in Step 1 to determine who your character is when readers first meet them on the page.

Q1: What common demographic markers define your character's identity?

Consider your character's age, gender, race, ethnic and cultural background, sexuality, religion, social class, education, and other common social markers.

Q2: What roles does your character play in life?

Consider your character's job or career, hobbies, relationships, and other identities they might assume given their interests, circumstances, and position in society.

Q3: What are some of your character's defining beliefs?

Consider your character's religious, political, and social views, as well as what they believe about themselves.

Q4: How does your character's identity impact their appearance (and vice versa)?

Consider your character's build and coloring, as well as how they carry themselves & care for their appearance.

STEP 2: DETERMINE YOUR CHARACTER'S PERSONALITY

With your character's core identity in place, it's time to consider the ways in which their identity impacts how they experience and engage with the world around them. Use the prompts in Step 2 to determine your character's most notable traits, as well as their worldview and emotional landscape.

Q1: What positive and negative traits define your character's personality?

Consider the characteristics that determine how your character thinks, acts, and interacts with others.

Q2: What does your character believe about their world?

Consider your character's personality, experiences, moral code, and internal narrative. (Note: You may find it helpful to return to this question after completing Step 3.)

Q3: How does your character experience common emotions?

What prompts your character to experience emotions such as fear, anger, embarrassment, and satisfaction, and how do they express these emotions? Consider your character's physical, verbal, and internal response.

STEP 3: DEFINE YOUR CHARACTER'S BACKSTORY

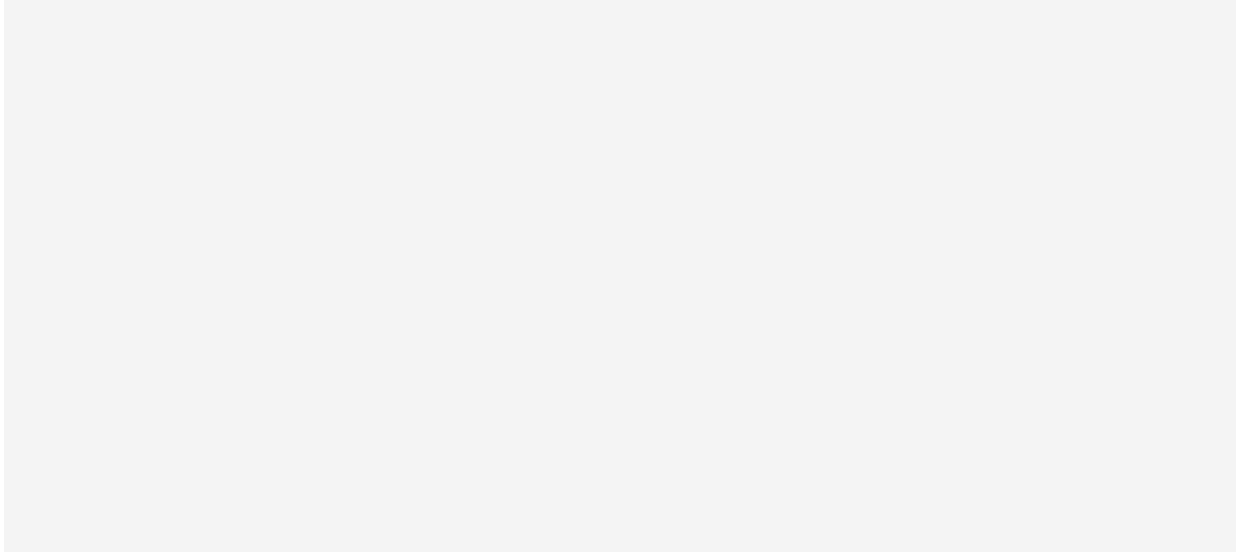
Fully-realized characters don't just exist in the present; they have histories that extend beyond the confines of the page. Histories that also impact who they are and how they experience the world, as well as how effectively readers understand and sympathize with their stories. Use the prompts in Step 3 to determine the history that will serve as your character's backstory.

Q1: What general events comprise your character's history?

Write a short biography for your character in the space below.

Q2: What events or experiences had the biggest impact on your character's life?

How did these experiences impact your character's identity, personality, worldview, and emotional landscape? Consider events with both positive and negative consequences.

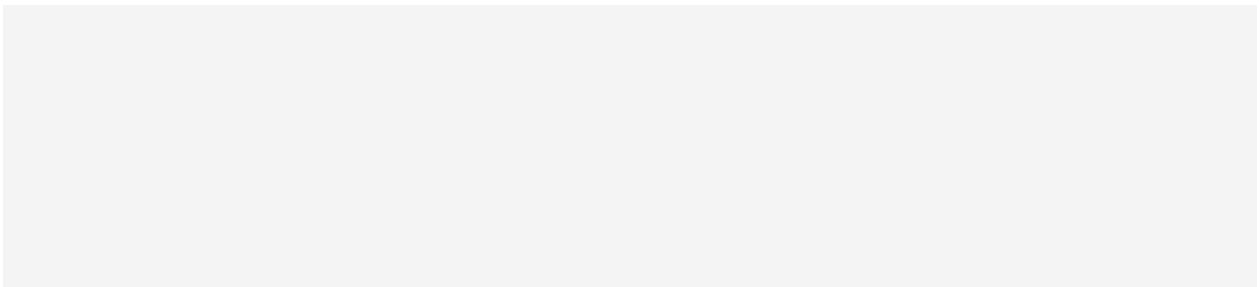


STEP 4: CONSIDER YOUR CHARACTER'S STORY

A character is more than just who they are, how they act, and what they've experienced. They're also the foundation upon which authors craft sensational stories. Considering the character you've developed thus far, use the prompts in Step 4 to determine the role your character will play in the story you're developing.

Q1: In what way is your character dissatisfied when their story begins?

What does your character believe is wrong with and/or missing from their life (e.g. love, security, adventure)?



Q2: What does your character believe will resolve their dissatisfaction?

What course of action (or lack thereof) will your character take in an effort to achieve this goal?

Q3: Why is your character determined to attain this goal?

What does your character stand to lose (or *believe* they stand to lose) if they fail to achieve their mission?

Q4: What obstacles might arise as your character works to fulfill their mission?

Consider both the internal and external roadblocks they might encounter throughout their journey.

Q5: If your character achieves their goal, will they truly find the satisfaction they desire?

If not, what does your character need to attain or realize to secure a happier future?