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The Ultimate Book Development Template

Use this template to take your story from a vague book idea to an impactful first draft.

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Part 1 – Concept Development

A great story is built on a great premise. This exercise is meant to help you develop a strong foundation for your story.

This story follows _____ , *[brief character bio]*.
Their life changes/story begins when _____ *[inciting incident]*. This causes _____ *[problem]*. They wish to *[goal]* but are held back by _____ *[antagonistic forces]*.

1.1. THE CHARACTER

This story follows _____ , *[brief character bio]*.

Brief description of character *(occupation, skills, lifestyle, etc.):*

_____

_____

_____

_____

Emotional trait or problem:

_____

_____

_____

_____

1.2. PLOT

When _____ *[inciting incident]*, this causes _____ *[problem]*.

Inciting incident:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Problem:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

1.3. GOAL

They wish to _____ *[goal]*.

Goal:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

1.4. ANTAGONIST

Held back by _____ *[antagonistic forces]*.

Internal antagonist:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

External antagonist:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part 2 – Developing the Protagonist

Now that you've got the premise of your story down, it's time to zoom in on your protagonist. This exercise will help you sketch out the fundamentals of your MC.

5 (possibly) positive qualities:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

5 (possibly) negative qualities:

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____

Personality type:

_____

_____

Aspirations and goals:

_____

_____

_____

Belief system (written as 'I believe…' statements):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Significant life events & backstory:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Skills:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appearance:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Mannerisms, body language, speaking style:

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is the MC's character arc in the story? How do they change and grow?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

PRO TIP

Download the Ultimate Character Profile Template

Use our template to develop character traits and mannerisms that can drive your plot forward.

Download the template
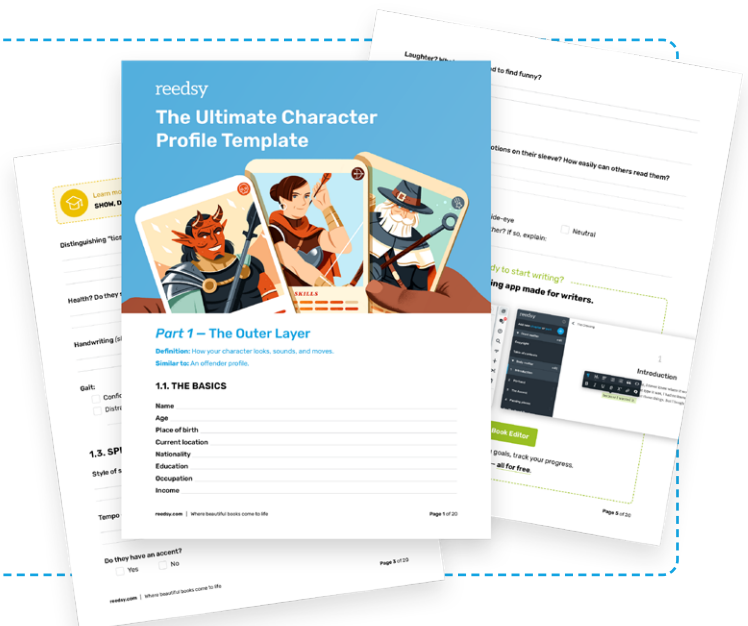
Part 3 — Developing the Cast

Behind every strong MC is a strong supporting cast. This exercise will help you flesh out the key relationships in your protagonist's life.

What important relationships were a part of the MC's past?

→ **Who were they?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ **Their influences on the protagonist?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ **What happened to the relationship(s)?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

What important relationships are a part of the MC's life now?

→ **Who are they?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ Their influences on the protagonist?

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ What will happen to the relationship(s)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Select at least one and at most three important relationships to focus on developing. What are their progressions?

→ Relationship #1:

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ Relationship #2:

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ Relationship #3:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part 4 – Developing the World

An impactful setting should put pressure on the character to grow. This exercise will help you identify how your setting can accomplish this.

Where and when is the story set?

What other settings will we visit in the story? List them here.

What does the main setting look like?

⟶ **What is the climate and weather like?**

⟶ **Imagery associated with the setting?**

→ What are the people like?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What does a day-to-day for this place look like? Describe it in a few sentences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

What challenges does this setting present? What opportunities?

→ Challenges:

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ Opportunities:

_____

_____

_____

_____

How long as the MC been here? How do they feel about it?

_____

_____

_____

_____

PRO TIP To further develop key elements of your setting:
DOWNLOAD REEDSY'S WORLDBUILDING TEMPLATE

Download

Part 5 — Developing the Plot

This exercise helps you define your plot using the popular three-act structure method.

ACT ONE	**ACT TWO**	**ACT THREE**
The setup	*The rising action*	*The resolution*

Inciting incident　　　　　　　　**Midpoint**　　　　　　　　**Climax**

Plot point #1　　　　　　　　Plot point #2

Identify the 5 key points on the timeline:

→ **Inciting incident:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ **Plot point #1:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ **Midpoint:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ **Plot point #2:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ **Climax:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

🎓 Shore up your structure with Reedsy Learning:
HOW TO PLOT A NOVEL USING THREE-ACT STORY STRUCTURE _(Free 10-day course)_

Enroll now

Part 6 — Form, Style, and Voice

If a book's structure is its walls, its voice and style is the interior design that makes the book truly unique. This is an exercise to help you nail down how this particular book will be told.

6.1. DEVELOPING THE BOOK'S FORM

POV _____

Tense _____

Narrator _____

Voice and tone _____

Emotional core:

→ **What are the primary emotions in this piece?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

→ **Atmosphere and mood?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

6.2. DEVELOPING YOUR VOICE

Identify three books whose style or voice is similar to what you want:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Read a few pages from each and describe what they do specifically:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Write a scene from your character's voice. How close is it to hitting the mark? What do you wish it did differently?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part 7 — The Writing Plan

This exercise will help you determine the logistics of your writing process, so that you can finish your first draft.

What's your project timeline?

Set a deadline for finishing your first draft.

To complete your book, how many words do you need to write per:

→ **Week:**

→ **Month:**

Congratulations! You've got a rock-solid book concept. **Now it's time to write your first draft.**

Once it's done, we have expert book editors who can help you take your story to the next level. At Reedsy, we help **over 10,000 authors get published — every single year.** We can't wait to see yours on the list!

Meet your future editor