CHARACTER PROFILER
Created By Ajala Bandele

Character Creator
<u>Creating Compelling Characters</u>

Character Creator is a dynamic writing tool to help you flesh out the characters that inhabit your stories. By thinking about certain essential aspects of a character, you will be able to understand who it is that is telling your story. No matter if your story is short or long, and no matter if your character is the protagonist, antagonist, or even an abstract figure that you never meet, knowing the most essential aspects of who they are will help you to create someone worth remembering.

Characters are complex. They have their own worlds and their own stories. These complex worlds and stories have to fit inside the larger story without distraction. They also must influence the reasons a character chooses to do what they do.

Creating a compelling character can be as difficult as creating a long narrative. Without knowing who a person was, what they are currently trying to do, and who they are becoming, it becomes increasingly difficult to have a character who has cohesion and sensical storyline.

Creating a compelling character is the meat of a story and can be incredibly hard. With Character Creator, you should be able to figure out the essential elements that make up your people so that when you begin to write your main story, you don't have to think of who these people are. By the end you will have created, deep, compelling, and well thought out characters, and that, for me, is everything.

Keep thinking

Ajala Bandele

Using Character Creator...

Not all characters are apparent to you when you begin writing. Some pop up unexpectedly and are more intriguing than you could have imagined. Often times, a character has been sitting on your brain for quite some time and is already a fascinating person. No matter when you begin to discover the importance of this character it helps to start by figuring out who they are.

As a Character Generator

Not all stories are born from an inspired idea for a plot. A lot of time the only idea you can think of is a character. You may meet a person on the street and think "I wonder where that person is going". Maybe while reading a book, or watching a movie, or even looking into a mirror you'll find yourself interested in who a person is. Character Creator allows you to build out these people, and discover what it is that makes them tick. Using Character Creator as a character generator allows you to continually build different characters for use in different stories that may or may not already exist.

As a Reference Profile

When you are writing a story with multiple characters, or even a single character, you can sometimes lose track as to who they are as the story develops. Using Character Creator as a reference profile, you are able to keep track of their most essential aspects whenever you are writing the main story.

As a Story Generator

Since every person has a history and not every writer has an idea for a story, story creator can be used as a story generator. By developing a character and exploring their history, you can find interesting story ideas that may spark a grander story.

As a solution to Writers Block

Often you come to a point in your story where you have no idea where to go. Writers block is the bane of all writers everywhere but the solution can often be simpler than you think. Since your characters drive the story, let them be the ones to guide you through any moments that leave you stuck. Using the Character Creator to help unstick you is a great way to keep your flow going. By looking at who your character is and what their goals are, finding a solution is as easy as asking "What would my character <u>want</u> to do in this situation?".

As a Tool to Review other Characters

Everyone has a story that they want opinions on. When reading other peoples works you are able to look at their characters with greater depth, when using Character Creator. You can look for missing elements, find plot devices, and delve into what makes characters from other stories weak or strong. Knowing why a character works or doesn't work can make all the difference in developing them and the story as a whole. Once you get more familiar with Character Creator, you should be able to easily find the elements that make a strong or weak character.

Writing process
From beginning to end

There are four steps to a writing process. Prewriting>Drafting>Revising>Editing.

1. **Prewriting**: Prewriting consists of <u>Concept Creation, Research, and Outlines.</u>
   A. The point of prewriting is to gain a thorough understanding of the story.
2. **Drafting**: Drafting is creating a first draft of your story focusing on if the structure and ideas are clear.
   A. The point of drafting is just to write the story. Get it all out of your head and onto the page. It doesn't have to be perfect, but it is easier to edit a flawed script than a hypothetical one.
3. **Revising**: Revising is adjusting the writing of your first draft, focusing on clearing up any structural mistakes, plot holes, weak character arcs, and weak dialogue.
   A. The point of revising is to refine and perfect the story so that it achieves the writers intention. Revising produces 2nd, 3rd, 4th etc…drafts of a script. This is also your time to really dig in and make sure your story is accomplishing what you want it to accomplish in a structurally sound manner.
4. **Editing**: Editing is checking for grammar, formatting, spelling, and punctuation after the story and all it's elements are complete.
   A. The point of editing is to polish off your story to look and feel professional, resulting in a final draft.

<u>Character Creator is a part of the Prewriting and Revision Phases.</u>

As you are developing your concept and or outline, you can use Character Creator to flesh out the details in a fully comprehensive profile. This may help you decide what other characters you need to build, and even where the story should go.

After completing your first draft you may discover some minor characters that are more important than you first realized. You can use Character creator to further develop those characters, making the revising process easier.

Creating your Character
Teach me the ways of the dark side

Creating a character isn't as straight forward as making a story is. The initial idea can come from anywhere. You could begin with a woman with long blonde hair who has one green eye and one blue. You could start from a poor boy from a poor family. You could start from the interesting name of Bedungus, and create your character from there. Unlike a main story, a character doesn't need to be built from the ground up.

Finding the spark in your story

The easiest way to start is by looking at the story the Character is going to be in. Taking clues from **what kind of character your story needs** can make it easier to find an idea.

Finding the spark in people

If you don't already have a strong in mind in which to build your character, then taking a person from real life is a good way to start. **Starting with a real someone, anyone, can lead you to new ideas and inspirations.** Friends, family members, strangers etc…can all become inspiration for a character. If there is something about this person that you find interesting, your audience will find them interesting as well.

Finding the spark in media

Entertainment is another way of finding the spark. Books, poems, dances, etc… can all be great sources of inspiration. There could be a type of character that you find interesting, or a concept that gives you an idea. You can even take a character out of one source and place them into a new environment or circumstance. **Immersing yourself in different types of media can trigger new character ideas.**

Finding the spark in yourself

If none of the above tickle your fancy, then drawing from yourself is another great way to go. ***Listing your own traits is a common trick writers use to create characters they already know a lot about.***

Regardless of where your inspiration comes from, whenever you are building your character it is important to **build them as they currently are**. It is also important to note that not everything written here will be revealed in the main story. That does not, however, mean that those qualities are not important. It means that those particular qualities may have a more subtle effect. **When using the Character Creator you may even find that certain characteristics keep resurfacing within the answers to a number of various questions.** That tells you something about the character.

Background
I'm not what you think I am

Everyone came from somewhere. **Each one of these character qualities are out of the characters control. They were either born into or created to have these traits through various circumstances from their backstory.** When thinking about these remember that these are the qualities that they currently have at the beginning of your story. This helps you to understand where your character came from.

Name

This is what the character was called at birth, or at least the first name that was given to them. This also includes any and all other names/titles they may have acquired since then.

Age

This is the physical age of the character.

Sex

This is the sex of the character as they were born, and what they may have developed into up until this point in their lives.

Height

This is the character's current physical measurements.

Body Type

This is the character's current physical type of body as well as what they may have been in the past if it is relevant to their journey.

Nationality

This is the race or nation that the character was born with and identifies with.

Birth Place

This is the location of the characters birth.

Raised

This is the location or locations in which the character has grown up.

Language/s

This is the language and or languages that the character speaks or understands.

Family

This is the immediate relatives and perceived family members of the character. Distant relatives may be included if they are relevant to the character's journey.

Socioeconomic Level as a child

This is the class or financial level the character was born into and raised with.

Education

This is the highest level of schooling, training, or learning that they received.

Current Living Status
I am who I am, and thats all that I am

At this moment in space and time your character is somewhere doing something. At the start of your story this will influence the established norm of your character. Knowing what they are doing now is influenced by their background and can influence all their other traits and backstory.

Current Residence

This is the characters current dwelling.

Current Profession

This is their current job/career or lack thereof

Current Socioeconomic Level

This is their current financial or class status.

Relationship Status
You had me at hello

The relationship status is the romantic nature of the character. This helps you to understand how they handle themselves when presented with opportunities for intimate encounters.

Romantic Beliefs
These are the ideas about love and relationships that your character believes in.

Sexual Orientation
This is the social alignment of sexual attraction your character has to one or more sexes.

Attraction
These are the qualities your character finds attractive in others.

Significant Other
This is the most important or influential romantic relationship the character currently has or has had. There can be multiple.

Unique Traits
Did I do that?

Everyone has something unique about them. A talent, a skill, a goal, something that drives them forwards in life. Sometimes a character has many skills, sometimes none. Regardless of how many unique traits a character has it is important to know what they are as that will influence a characters actions and intentions.

Helpful Hint: Sometimes knowing what your character is good/bad at will help you to know exactly the type of obstacles to throw at them to add more conflict to your story.

Talents/Skills
These are the instinctual talents or learned skills that set these characters apart from others.

Hobbies
These are the things the character would do if life was always normal.

Life Goal
This is what the character works every day to accomplish in order for their life to have meaning.

Personality Traits

Every character has traits that help define who they are internally. These personality traits are more complex that the other qualities of a person as they take all of them into account and can fluctuate depending on the circumstance. These traits are ones that are constantly being tested in their daily interactions. Throughout a story these personality traits may serve as main struggle for the character's arc, as what they once held as a personal belief or way of life **may change by the end of the story.**

Personality Type

The personality type is where they character is an introvert, extrovert or a combination of both.

1. Introvert - a shy or reticent person.
2. Extrovert - an outgoing, overtly expressive person.
3. Introverted Extrovert - A person who is reticent to express themselves but is overtly expressive when they do.
4. Extroverted Introvert - Person who is outgoing but isn't overtly expressive.

Intelligence

This is the level and type of intelligence your character has.

1. Street-Smarts - The ability to adapt to any situation.
2. Book-Smarts - The ability to learn from teachings.
3. Wisdom - The ability to combine book and street-smarts intuitively.

Spirituality

This is what the character believes on an ethereal level. Their belief on religions, after-life, reincarnation, gods, celestial beings, etc… This is what they believe life is about, where it came from, its purpose and how people function in it.

Emotionality

This is the type of emotional person the character is. Are they expressive, inexpressive, in control, out of control, etc., when it comes to their feelings and how they handle them.

Core Values

These are the unshakeable beliefs a character. These are the pillars of all their beliefs and all their actions. Sometimes it's a "code," a way of teaching, or instincts that shape everything about them.

Social Values

These are the unshakeable beliefs that the character believes is how society functions and how they think it should function. These beliefs help dictate how they behave socially.

Greatest Perceived Strength

This is the thing the character believes they have that gives them an advantage over others.

Greatest Actual Strength

This is the thing the character actually has that gives them an advantage over others.

Greatest Perceived Weakness

This is the thing the character believes they have that gives them a disadvantage over others.

Greatest Actual Weakness

This is the thing the character actually has that gives them a disadvantage over others.

Inner Conflict

This is the spiritual, physical, or intellectual dilemma that the character constantly is struggling with.

Alignment

This is the moral and ethical stance that helps to define a characters intentions and actions. There are three moral aspects and three ethical aspects that when combined display how a character behaves towards moral decisions and ethical decisions. Throughout the story both their moral and ethical stances will be tested and only after great trials can they be changed.

1. MORAL ASPECT
   A. Lawful - Complete obedience to rules and laws.
   B. Neutral - Respect for rules but willing to brake them.
   C. Chaotic - Complete disregard for any rules.
2. ETHICAL ASPECT
   A. Good - Believes in the necessity of helping others.
   B. Neutral - Believes in neither helping nor harming others.
   C. Evil - Believes in the necessity of harming others.

The nine possible alignments are:

Lawful Good

A lawful good character always follows the established rules or laws in order to help people.
Example: A by-the-book cop who wants to save lives.

Neutral Good

A neutral good character sometimes follows the established rules or laws unless the rules and laws no longer serve to help others.

Example: A cop who sometimes bends the rules to save lives.

Chaotic Good

A chaotic good character follows no established rules or laws to help others.

Example: A cop who breaks the rules at first chance to save lives.

Lawful Neutral

A lawful neutral character always follows the established rules or laws to achieve their own purpose.

Example: A Lawyer who uses the law, and tells only truths, to convict someone without regard to the person's guilt or innocence.

Neutral Neutral

A Neutral or "true neutral" character sometimes follows established rules or laws unless the rules and laws no longer serve their own purposes.

Example: A lawyer who is willing to disregard the law and the truth in order to convict someone without regard to the person's guilt or innocence.

Chaotic Neutral

A chaotic neutral character follows no established rules or laws to achieve their own purpose.

Example: A lawyer who lies consistently to convict someone without regard to the person's guilt or innocence.

Lawful Evil

A lawful evil character always follows the established rules or laws in order to achieve their goals regardless of the suffering of others.

Example: A judge who uses the law to incarcerate someone despite their innocence.

Neutral Evil

A neutral evil character sometimes follows the established rules or laws unless the rules and laws no longer serve themselves regardless of the suffering of others.

Example: A judge who is willing to manipulate laws and ignore truths to incarcerate an innocent man.

Chaotic Evil

A chaotic evil character follows no established rules or laws to in order to serve themselves regardless of the suffering of others.

Example: A judge who uses lies and falsified evidence to incarcerate an innocent man.

Backstory
It all started a long time ago…

Backstory is the character's history until now. It includes anything that could be potentially useful to the characters future. Use the elements from the earlier parts of Character Creator to write a paragraph or essay detailing the series of past events connected to your character. There should be more detail in the backstory than in previous parts of Character Creator as you should include the **reasons** for why the backstory is the way it is.

Character Notes
Tell me about yourself

This is a list of major moments in a characters life that shape who they are. This list can include events that effect a character's physical, mental, and spiritual history. Any fears, love interests, personal heroes, mentors, gods, anything that seems important belongs in this list. It can be used as a quick reference for what you feel are the most crucial of your character's current state.

Character Arcs
You're not the man I knew

A Character Arc is a personal journey that the character takes within a story. The protagonists character arc is intrinsically tied to the main story arc, one influencing the other. Character arcs are internal stories that are affected by the external world. There are four types of character arcs that can express themselves in different ways, and they each follow the structure of Beginning, Middle, and End.

1. Growth Arc
2. The Change Arc
3. The Fall Arc
4. The Flat Arc

The Growth Arc

The Growth Arc is a character arc in which the character begins their journey as a dark person, is challenged, and becomes a better person. You see this arc when a character believes in doing something to the detriment of themselves and/or others. That path ultimately fails and they are forced to do something to the betterment of themselves and/or others in order to succeed.

Example:

A character who believes that hate is the only way to live is challenged with hate and the only way the character can defeat hate is with love.

The Change Arc

The Change Arc is a character arc in which the character begins their journey as one type of person, is challenged, and becomes a different type of person. You see this arc with characters who have a perceived strength and when they apply that perceived strength they fail. Their only option is to discover their actual strength and to apply that to the situation.

The Fall Arc

The Fall Arc is a character arc in which the character begins their journey as one type of person, is challenged, and becomes a darker person. You see this arc with characters who have a perceived strength or an actual strength and when they apply either, they fail. Their only option is to become the worse version of themselves and apply their strength and or perceived strength to that situation.

Example:

A character who believes that love is the only way to live is challenged with hate and the only way the character can defeat hate is to join it.

The Flat Arc

The Flat Arc is a character arc in which the character begins their journey as one type of person, is challenged, and stays as themselves. You see this arc with characters who have a perceived strength or an actual strength and regardless of how they have begun to be altered (or unaltered) by their journey, they will inevitably finish their story the same person as when they first began. If there is any difference at all it will simply be a stronger belief in the beliefs they already held from the start . A protagonist with a flat arc is usually surrounded by characters with either change, fall, or flat arcs. A Protagonist with a flat arc is also typically the catalyst for change in others.

Example:

A character who believes that love is the only way to live is challenged by hate and the only way the character can defeat hate is with the same love.

Characters are challenged throughout a story either physically, mentally, spiritually, or emotionally. The more complex a character, the more of those 4 human

elements are affected. How they respond to those challenges define what type of Arc they have. With the Flat arc it is important that the character is extremely interesting from the set up since they will not change throughout the story. With the other arcs, their change on their journey will make them interesting.

Compelling Characters
<u>Sugar, Spice, And Everything Nice</u>

As you are creating your character you want to focus on what makes logical and rational sense for them to have gone through. Many qualities may be conflicting, but finding reasons for them to be conflicting will make them believable. The more real the character feels, the better they will be able to add to your main story. The reasons why everything works is the glue to keeping your character cohesive.

Context, Consequences, and Reason

When you are thinking of the arc your character would take it is important to remember the **context** of who they are, who or what they are facing, and the particular circumstances they are in. You also have to remember the **consequences** of the characters actions and the **reasons** for those actions.

BAD EXAMPLE:

Character: Superman - A Superhero with god-like powers who believes killing is wrong, obedience to the law is paramount, and he loves Lois Lane more than anything.

Writers Goal: Superman is going to kill a bad guy in cold blood.

Character Arc: Superman is a stalwart hero who believes he is always in the right becomes a <u>stalwart hero who still believes he is in the right.</u>

Action: After capturing a bad guy who has killed thousands, <u>superman saves Lois Lane</u>, captures the bad guy after an epic fight, <u>then kills him to save two random people.</u>

Result: Superman saves the day, <u>feels a little guilty that he broke his one rule and the law, but ultimately feels justified.</u>

In this example the **context, the consequences and the reasons do not match the character**, and thus the characters arc feels wrong. You have a character who believes killing is wrong, kills a person, then doesn't change in any way. <u>The</u>

context of this character is one of moral and ethical righteousness, so the consequences of his amoral and unethical actions should shake him to his very core. The reason for Superman's killing to save two random people does not have a strong impact, nor does it make sense for him to compromise himself so severely for strangers. **The context of Superman is not taken into account throughout the example, the reasoning isn't strong, thus the consequences feel wrong and the character arc feels weak.**

In this next example, the **arc** and the **action** will change, which will affect the **result**. The context, reasons, and consequences will also represent the character and the writers goal.

GOOD EXAMPLE:
Character: Superman - A Superhero with god-like powers who believes killing is wrong, and obedience to the law is paramount, and he loves Lois Lane more than anything.
Writers Goal: Superman is going to kill a bad guy in cold blood.
Character Arc: Superman is stalwart hero who believes he is always in the right becomes a broken hero who questions if he has lost who he is.
Action: After an intense struggle, A bad guy, who has killed thousands, seemingly murders Lois Lane. Superman, insane with grief, captures the bad guy and, after an epic fight, kills him to avenge the loss of his loved one. He snaps his neck just as Lois Lane steps out of the shadows, too late to stop him.
Result: Superman saves the day, feels hollow and devastated now that has committed a capital crime, and doesn't know if his actions were worth it.

In the Good Example, the **context** of Superman is taken into account, the **consequences** are dire because he is going against what he believes in, he's breaking a law which goes against his morals, he kills which goes against his ethics, because his **reason** is directly linked to the love of his life. Not only does this example fulfill the writers goal, it has a compelling character arc because the **context** the **consequences, and reasons** were in line with the character and the writers goal.

Perspective

When you have a story that you find interesting, it is common for writers to center their story around common archetypical characters. A story about a two kingdoms fighting, for example, typically follows the royal family's or the most fearsome fighters, and most definitely the evil conqueror. Writing from these common perspectives can make an audience member feel as if they've heard the story before, even if they haven't. And even if your take on an archetype is brand new, the similarities may give away major plot points before you intended. The perspective may be to similar.

Writing from uncommon perspectives can give your story a unique feeling. If you want to tell the story about two rival kingdoms, what if you wrote it from the perspective of a squire who can't fight, but works with a famous knight. Or a courtesan who is having a romantic affair with the noble prince's servant. By changing the perspective you can get the same story across, but with a different lens, making the archetypes feel both similar, and unique.

Character Advice

As you are creating your character and you are discovering new exciting traits that they have, feel free to go back throughout Character Creator to change whatever needs to be changed.

You also may find certain aspects more useful to think about than others. If you're writing a story, for example, about a boy falling in love with a girl, his moral/ethical alignment might not be as useful as the relationship beliefs, but they still might influence you.

After you complete your first draft, you may notice that some of your minor characters have an even greater purpose than you at first realized. Use Character Creator to understand them and their motivations better to avoid the common mistake of using a character simply as a plot device (doing and saying whatever mundane dialog and actions progress the story without any consideration for whether or not this specific character would ever actually do or

say those things). Locking in the profile of these characters will challenge you to write a deeper and more honest story. It forces you to ask yourself, what needs to happen in order to make this character go where I want them to go. Complete characters build a more complete story.

- Characters with dynamic traits make for dynamic characters.
- Characters are capable of anything if the circumstances are right.
- Characters who don't struggle within themselves are not as interesting as those who do.
- Perfect heroes are boring, unless they are starting to change.
- Evil for evils sake is boring, unless it means something important to the evil person.
- Characters who have strong opinions make strong characters.
- Watching a character do something that goes against what they believe is amazing…if they have a great reason for it.
- Without reason you have nothing but random acts of story.
- Without context there is only chaos.
- Without consequences there is only a forgettable story.
- The more you know about a character, the more the audience will feel like they know, even if you don't tell them.
- Follow through with the direction your characters is going. Don't fight it.
- If the character is perfect on the outside, make them broken on the inside.
- If the character is broken on the outside, make them strong on the inside.