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Creating Character Depth With Astrological Signs

by
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At first glance this keyword system may appear complicated, but by using only one or two signs it's quite simple. With experience, you may want to add more signs for greater complexity. I usually work with three signs each for the hero and heroine -- Sun, Moon and Ascendant.

Each astrological sign belongs to one of four Element groups: FIRE (pepper)...EARTH (yeast)...AIR (light)...WATER (shadow). Each sign also belongs to one of three Modal groups: CARDINAL (active)... FIXED (fixed)...MUTABLE (flexible). Hence we arrive at 12 combinations, or the 12 signs.

Choose one, two, three, up to six signs (see below) per character. Each zodiacal sign has positive and negative traits. Therefore the hero/heroine show more positives (give some negative flaws), the villain more negatives (enrich with positives). A 'positive' trait, ex. Generosity, can go too far and become negative...just as a 'negative' trait, ex. Anger, may be necessary to protect, or to motivate change. No person will show all of a sign's traits because there are so many tempering factors in every chart. Don't hesitate to vary your character, or his/her physical description, when it feels right.

SUN SIGN

One of the twelve zodiacal signs will form the basis of the characterization, even though it may not be as immediately obvious to the reader as the Ascendant or Moon Sign. All other sign flavors will be colored by the Sun Sign, which is the core, essence, foundation of a character...his/her heart. Be sure any birthday fits!

In addition to the Sun sign, you might add...

MOON SIGN

Choose any zodiacal sign. This sign will describe your character's emotional makeup, instantaneous and gut-level responses, deeply ingrained habits (early programming) and subconscious mind. The Moon indicates how a person was nurtured in childhood, and how s/he will nurture others. Choose positive and/or negative sign characteristics. One can't choose how s/he WAS nurtured, but may choose how to nurture others, using his/her Moon sign as a guide. This could be a reforming factor in the character's development. Challenge its characteristics with those of the Sun Sign for a built-in internal conflict that the character must constantly confront, and learn (because it's not 'natural' to him/her) to integrate for inner harmony and peace.

ASCENDANT SIGN

Choose any sign. Often (not always, it depends on the introduction within the plot) the first expression of personality we see in a new character. More artificial, less natural expression than the signs of planets. The Ascendant Sign describes early life programming regarding societal survival techniques. Think of it as a transparent layer of color over your character's portrait. It's the simplest area to use for conflict between lovers, because it's shallower, making it easier for them to learn to interact positively. Conflicts are more intrinsic when Sun and/or Moon signs are involved.

MERCURY SIGN

Choice of three signs: it must be in same sign as the Sun, or the one preceding or following it. Describes conscious thought, communication. "This is how I think, speak, write."

VENUS SIGN

Choice of five signs: it must be in same sign as the Sun, or one of the two preceding or following it. Describes the love/desire nature and how it's expressed, in relationships as well as in physical (material, including money and possessions) matters. "This is what I value."

MARS SIGN

Choose any sign for the expression of action as influenced by desire. "I want...so I go about getting it this way."

Now, think of the Sun's, Moon's, Ascendant's, or Planet's action described above, and combine it with some of the characteristics of a Sign below.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 12 ZODIACAL (Sun) SIGNS

(Dates given can vary a day or so)