

Creating Interesting Characters

Some people think that an exciting plot is all it takes to make a story good, but in order to have an exciting plot, you need interesting, complex characters.

Boring Characters vs. Interesting Characters

Boring Character: Luna lives in Philadelphia.

Interesting Character: 15-year-old Luna just moved from her childhood home in California to Philadelphia. She is having a really hard time making friends at school. Her strange name and the beat-up, psychedelic-colored van her dad drives her to school in every morning have not made it easy on her.

To make matters even worse, the girls are jealous of the attention she gets from guys because of her wild green eyes, dark tan, and cool California accent.

They are also jealous of her shoes.

She has every shoe known to man. Colorful sandals, hip skate shoes, cute high heels, wedges, boots, tennis shoes, running shoes—she wears a new pair each day. Little do they know, she makes them all herself.

Not only are characters with hidden depths and secrets more fun to read about, they're also more fun to write about! Though you'll end up writing about a bunch of different people in your novel next month, all of them will fall into one of three categories: **The protagonist, the supporting characters, and the antagonist.**

The Protagonist

The **protagonist** is the character with the starring role in your book. In most novels, the protagonist is on a journey to get what he or she wants more than anything else in the world, whether it's fame, or revenge, or something as simple as joining the high school football team.

The Supporting Characters

Supporting characters are characters who help the protagonist achieve his or her goal. Many novels have several supporting characters, including your protagonist's family members, friends, neighbors, helpful wise old gurus, you name it. These characters also have dreams of their own, and their adventures will add even more excitement to your novel.



The Antagonist

The antagonist is the character in a novel that is standing in the way of the protagonist achieving his or her goal. That does not mean that all antagonists are evil, scheming monsters. Some antagonists stand in the way simply through jealousy, or misunderstanding, or by having a set of goals that differs from the protagonist's. If Fernando is your protagonist and he wants to take Jill to the dance, but Greg asked her first, this doesn't mean Greg is a "bad guy." He's just another guy who likes the same girl. Then again, there are those antagonists that are just plain evil. It's up to you to decide who's going to stand in your protagonist's way, and how he or she is going to do it.

It's a great idea for you, the author, to try and get to know your characters before you begin writing. We asked a team of scientists, mathematicians, and creative writing gurus from around the world: "What's the easiest way for a writer to get to know their characters?" Hands down, they all agreed the single best way is to **fill out a Character Questionnaire for all your characters.**

Go ahead and fill out the following questionnaire for your protagonist, antagonist, and for as many supporting characters as you'd like.

Character Questionnaire



Section One: All Your Characters

~~Complete Section One for all your characters.~~

Section Two: Questions for Your Supporting Characters

Complete Section Two just for your supporting characters.

Section Three: Questions for Your Antagonist

Complete Section Three just for your antagonist.

Section Four: Bonus Questions!

Complete Section Four if you want to get to know all your characters even better. Remember, the more you know about your characters, the easier it will be to bring them to life on the page!

Section One: Complete this section for all your characters!

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Height:
4. Eye color:
5. Physical appearance:
6. Unique physical attributes:
7. Hobbies/interests:
8. Where does he or she live? What is it like there?
9. Special skills/abilities:
10. Family (describe):
11. Description of his or her house:
12. Description of his or her bedroom:
13. Favorite bands/songs/type of music:
14. Favorite movies:
15. Favorite TV shows:

16. Favorite books:
17. Favorite foods:
18. Favorite sports/sports teams:
19. Political views:
20. Any interesting philosophies on life?
21. Religion:
22. Physical health:
23. Pet peeves:

Section Two: Supporting Character Questions

1. Relationship to the protagonist:
2. Favorite thing about the protagonist:
3. Similarities to protagonist:
4. Differences from protagonist:

Section Three: Antagonist Questions

1. Why is he or she facing off against the protagonist?
2. Any likeable traits?
3. Sure-fire ways to defeat your antagonist:

Section Four: Bonus Questions!

1. Favorite clothing style/outfit:
2. Special gestures/movements (i.e., curling his/her lip when speaking, always keeping his/her eyes on the ground, etc.):
3. Things about his/her appearance he/she would most like to change:
4. Speaking style (fast, talkative, monotone, etc.):

5. Fondest memory:
6. Insecurities:
7. Quirks:
8. Temperament (easygoing, easily angered, etc.):
9. Negative traits:
10. Things that upset him or her:
11. Things that embarrass him or her:
12. This character really cares about:
10. Things that make him or her happy:
11. Deepest, darkest secret:
12. Reason he or she kept this secret for so long:
13. Other people's opinions of this character (What do people like about this character? What do they dislike about this character?):
14. Dream vacation:
15. Any pets?
16. Best thing that has ever happened to this character:
17. Worst thing that has ever happened to this character:
18. Superstitions:
19. Three words to describe this character:
20. If a song played every time this character walked into the room, what song would it be?