CHARACTER PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE

Want to get to know your character better? Reflect on the questions below, which are designed to get you thinking about who your character is, what he shares about himself, what he hides, what motivates him, and what he really needs. Answer the questions that will best help you build your character, making him dynamic, memorable, and unique!

BASIC INFORMATION:
What is the character's age, sex, ethnicity? Describe his physical appearance (hair and eye color; body build; skin tone; height and weight; unique features such as glasses, scars, dimples, etc.). How does he dress? What about his clothing speaks to the kind of person he is? What one thing does he carry around with him? What item can he not live without and why?

VOICE:
Does the character speak quickly or slowly? Does he overuse any verbal tics, like um, uh, or ah? Are his sentences short and choppy or does he ramble on? How would you describe the tone? Quality? Volume? Is it pitched high or low? How does emotion come through in his voice when he is angry or nervous or happy? How does his level of education or world experience dictate his speech? If you walked blindfolded into a room where your character's voice was one of many, which element would allow you to identify your hero's from the rest? Is there something about the voice that others find particularly appealing or annoying?

EDUCATION AND FINANCES:
How educated is the character? Is he naturally intelligent, clever, witty, or perceptive? Is he book smart, self-taught, or widely experienced in a specific area? Has he earned any accolades or recognition for his knowledge? Does his education translate to a job where he barely scrapes by, or does it allow him to live a comfortable lifestyle? Does he have more than one job? Is his work personally satisfying or only a means to an end?

SPECIAL SKILLS AND TALENTS:
What skills does your character rely on day-to-day? Does he have a knack for computers, a green thumb, or the ability to inherently see how mechanical items work? What special talents does he have? Name one unique talent the character has that no one knows about, and one talent that he openly shares. Are any of his talents or skills a source of pride or embarrassment? Which and why?

FAMILY:
What are the character's family dynamics? Is he single or married? Does he have kids? If he's a child or teen, what are his parents and siblings like? Does he have close or distant relationships with them? What family values and beliefs does he hold dear? What parental "fumblings" did he experience firsthand growing up that he refuses to repeat with his own family? What parental teachings helped him become a better person?

INTERESTS:
What interests and hobbies does he have? Do other people know about these hobbies, or does he keep them to himself? If there was one thing the character could do without anyone knowing, what would it be? Does he like to do these things with others, or alone? Why is that? What activity is the character's "stress outlet"? What activities does he find entertaining? In what way does he show his creative side? What interest or hobby would he like to pursue but doesn't feel qualified to do so?

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY:
How close is your character to the people around him? Does he know his neighbors, interact with them at the mailbox, join them for barbecues—or does he not even know their names? Does he volunteer? If there was a

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fire or flood or disaster that affected his community, would he stay to help others or get out? If he needed help, would he ask for it, and if so, who would he ask?

MORALS AND ETHICS:
Does your character see things in black and white or shades of gray? Does he champion any causes? What issues does he feel strongly about? How does he react when those beliefs are challenged? Why are these issues so important to him? Was there a specific person or event who strongly influenced him to believe the way he does about his important issues? Which of his beliefs, opinions, or ideals does he hide from others, and why? Which moral beliefs will he hold to, no matter what?

IDENTITY VS. PERSONA:
What five words would your character use to describe himself? What five words would his best friend use? What about a co-worker, an acquaintance, and a stranger? How does the character's view of himself differ from the ways others see him? Of all the words used to describe your character, which ones are true, and which ones are not? Are other people making assumptions about your character based on how he looks and acts? Does the character intend for this to happen, or is he unaware that he is sending out these messages about himself? What is one thing that surprises him about how others view him? Does this make him upset or happy?

RELATIONSHIPS:
Who is closest to your character and why? Who would your character like to be closer to? Is he the type of person to make the first move and greet others, or does he wait for someone else to do it? Is he slow to trust, or does he open up quickly because he has a good sense about people? What type of person is he attracted to? Is he satisfied with his current relationships, or is there something he feels is lacking? What person is your character vulnerable with, or is there anyone he can show his sensitive side to? Who does your character avoid and why? What type of person turns him off? If someone from his past were to reappear in his life, who would he most want it to be and why? Who would he least want it to be?

SECRETS:
What is your character's biggest secret and who would he least like to discover it? Why is this secret so important? Does he think about it often or hardly at all? Is the secret a source of pain, humiliation, joy, or something in between? Is he a secret keeper for anyone else? What secrets does he know about the people around him that he doesn't share? Do they know he is privy to their secrets, or did they confide in him in the first place? Do people trust him with their private thoughts or is he incapable of keeping information to himself? If he can't keep a secret, why does he end up sharing the information with others?

FEARS:
What is your character afraid of that is quirky or surprising, considering the type of person he is? Does this fear cause embarrassment, or is it completely irrational? Is it a fear he is trying to overcome? Did a past event cause this fear? Regarding deeper fears—ones that he does not want to admit to—which affects him the most? How does he hide this fear from others? Does he fake it, pretending that it's not a problem for him? What persona does he show the world to keep people at a distance, so they won't discover his fear?

BACKSTORY AND WOUND:
Thinking about that deeper fear, the one the character does not want to reflect on or admit to...what event in his past caused the very thing he fears to come to pass? How did this event send his life on a new path? As a result, who or what did he discard from his life, what did he lose, and what joy did he give up? How does this fear make the character feel unworthy and flawed? How can this wound be introduced into the character's present story? How can you make the character face a similar situation and wound again, yet this time overcome it?

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WANTS, NEEDS, AND DESIRES:
What surface wants does your character have at the start of the story—to get a new job, to be recognized for his hard work, to pull off a surprise party for his wife? What does he think will make him happy? Then, going deeper: what is lacking in the character's life? What needs are not being met? What are his hopes and dreams, the very things he dare not wish for, the things that seem too big or too hard to pursue? If he could wave a magic wand and make one thing appear, what would he pick for himself? What would build his self-esteem, make him feel whole, and allow him to face any hardship or challenge life could throw his way? What are his life goals?

FLAW-CENTRIC:
Thinking on the character's wants and needs and his biggest wish and desire: what flaws would be detrimental to achieving his goal? What flaws mask his insecurities about himself, yet also make it hard for him to reach his goal? What flaws get in the way of his relationships, causing friction? What flaws reinforce the character's belief that he doesn't need to change, or that change is too hard, so why bother? What flaws surface when he suffers a failure or setback, or he becomes stressed or upset?

ATTRIBUTE-CENTRIC:
Again, thinking on your character's deepest need and the goal that will make him feel complete, confident, and happy: what strengths will help him achieve success? What strengths must he develop in order to overcome his flaws? Which strength seems like a weakness— something undesirable—but turns out to be the key to achieving his goal?

STRESS AND PRESSURE:
How does your character handle challenges? Does he embrace them, or avoid them? If he's under pressure, does he rise to the moment or falter, making mistakes and showing poor judgment? Does emotional strain cause him to lash out or show anger and frustration? Does he snap when stressed, or does he take a deep breath and do what needs to be done? What is your character's breaking point? What failures is he sensitive to? What kind of ticking clock scenario might make him emotionally reactive?

EMOTIONAL RANGE:
How expressive is your character? Does he use big gestures to show his feelings, or does he show them through small shifts in body language and action? Is your character outwardly emotional, or does he hide what he feels? If he's stoic, how does emotion leak out despite his best efforts? What would it take for your character to show his anger? His desire? Happiness or anxiety? When he lies or is upset, does a specific tic give his emotions away?

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER:
Having deep, intimate knowledge of your hero is what leads to successful character creation. Brainstorming the answers to some of these questions should help you get a better handle on your character so he can behave according to who he is. Not everything you discover should end up in the story but knowing for yourself gives you the confidence to write the character in a compelling and realistic way.

Need help understanding how all these questions will help you build an authentic, compelling character?

Dig into the ***Positive and Negative Trait Thesaurus volumes***, or head over to **One Stop for Writers** and try out the game-changing **Character Builder** tool.

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