

Writing Strong Characters

"Most people think that an intriguing plot is what makes a story good, but the truth is that exciting plots are made up of original and well-developed characters. Not only are characters with hidden depths and secrets more fun to read about, they're also more fun to write about.

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 writers to get to know their characters?" Hands down, the experts all agreed the single best way is to fill out our 46-Question Character Questionnaire":

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Height:
4. Eye color:
5. Physical appearance:

6. Strange or unique physical attributes:

7. Favorite clothing style/outfit:

8. Where does he or she live? What is it like there?

9. Defining gestures/movements (i.e., curling his or her lip when he or she speaks, always keeping his or her eyes on the ground, etc.):

10. Things about his or her appearance he or she would most like to change:

11. Speaking style (fast, talkative, monotone, etc.):

12. Pet peeves:

13. Fondest memory:

14. Hobbies/interests:

15. Special skills/abilities:

16. Insecurities:

17. Quirks/eccentricities:

18. Temperament (easygoing, easily angered, etc.):

19. Negative traits:

20. Things that upset him or her:

21. Things that embarrass him or her:

22. This character is highly opinionated about:

23. Any phobias?

24. Things that make him or her happy:

25. Family (describe):

26. Deepest, darkest secret:

27. Reason he or she kept this secret for so long:

28. Other people's opinions of this character (What do people like about this character? What do they dislike about this character?):

29. Favorite bands/songs/type of music:

30. Favorite movies:

31. Favorite TV shows:

32. Favorite books:

33. Favorite foods:

34. Favorite sports/sports teams:

35. Political views:

36. Religion/philosophy of life:

37. Physical health:

38. Dream vacation:

39. Description of his or her house:

40. Description of his or her bedroom:

41. Any pets?

42. Best thing that has ever happened to this character:

43. Worst thing that has ever happened to this character:

44. Superstitions:

45. Three words to describe this character:

46. If a song is played every time this character walked into the room, what song would it be?