The Character Workshop – Designing A Life

written by Holly
December 23, 2009
By Holly Lisle

I've designed this little workshop to help you sneak up on character development. Answer the questions in order, and take your time. Allow yourself as much space as you need to answer each one – some only require one-word answers, but some require a fair amount of page space to be answered completely. A word of warning – this isn't a complete character checklist; it's a workshop designed to break through stubborn preconceptions you might have had about characters you write and character design. Because of that, you will not have a complete character if you only answer the questions I've given you. And some of the questions are a little odd. Answer them anyway . .. at least the first time.

- **Choose a gender.**
- **Choose a place of birth.**
- **Choose a hobby.**
- **Choose a past job.**
- **Choose a present job.**
- **Choose a past love interest.**
- **Choose an enemy.**

- **Choose a pet.**
- **Why is your character not working at the old job?**
- **Why is your character not with the old love interest?**
- **Why does your character not make the hobby a profession?**

- **How did your character make the enemy?**
- **How did the pet once save the character's life?**
- **What is the one thing in the world your character would do anything to avoid? Why? What has he already done to avoid this? What do you see him doing in the future to avoid it?**
- **What is the one thing in the world your character would do anything in the world to have? Why? What has he already done to try to obtain it? What does he hope to try in the future?**
- **What is your character's name? What is your character's age, and physical description.**
- **Write everything else you know about your character, right now.**

And that's it. You should have several handwritten pages of information on your new character, and plenty of ideas about the story he could be in, and the role he could play in it. Good luck with this. I hope you've found it useful.

NOTE: To learn a Shadow Room exercise that invites the right character for your story to show up, do good character interviews that will bring your characters to life while writing them, and master the process of committing the Sins of Characterization *well*, see Holly Lisle's Create a Character Clinic.

Contents © Holly Lisle. https://hollylisle.com All Rights Reserved