**Creating Well-Developed Characters**

Most people think that an intriguing plot is what makes a great story, but the truth is that exciting plots are made up of original and well-developed characters.

**Flat Characters vs. Original Characters**

**Flat Character:** Steve was a good kid. He got good grades and was never late to class.

**Original, well-developed character:** Steve Johnson was a good kid. He got good grades and was never late to class. Little did everyone know that he spent his nights working as an internet hacker for an anonymous employer that he met in an online gaming chat room.

Steve didn’t need much sleep. As long as he had his caffeine, he was fine with a mere two hours of sleep a night. He spent most of his nights stealing identities, wiring funds, and making more money than both his parents combined. Initially, he was working and saving in order to go to an out-of-state college, but the thrill and excitement of his secret life of crime was steadily eroding his interest in an Ivy League education.

Not only are characters with hidden depth and secrets more fun to read about, they are also more fun to write about. You want to develop all of the characters in your story so that they are interesting and well-rounded figures in your narrative. Your story should have **a protagonist, supporting characters, and an antagonist.**

The **protagonist** is the character with the lead role in your story—your main character.

**Supporting characters** are characters in a story that have an important role in your protagonist’s life, but they are not the main character of the story. Supporting characters can be friends, family, love interests, classmates, teachers, etc. These characters help propel the plot through their relationship to the main character, conflict, or world.

The **antagonist** is the person or force that works against your protagonist as they try to obtain their goals and objectives in the story. There are two type of antagonist: **A physical antagonist**and **an abstract antagonist.** A physical antagonist is a living, breathing character in the story that is standing in the way of the protagonist achieving his or her goal. An abstract antagonist is a force of some kind that is not a person/animal/or physical being. An abstract antagonist might be illness, grief, poverty, natural environment, or other hardships that the character may face.

**Character Questionnaire**

**In your notebook, in the writing workshop section, fill out these questionnaires about your characters. There are four different sets of questions.**

**Section One: Questions for all of your Characters**

Complete Section One for every character in your story. If you have an abstract antagonist, try to answer as many questions as you can from this section for them then move on to Section Four.

**Section Two: Questions for your Supporting Characters**

Complete Section Two just for your supporting characters—everyone but the main protagonists.

**Section Three: Questions for a Physical Antagonist**

Complete Section Three if you have a physical antagonist

**OR**

**Section Four: Questions for an Abstract Protagonist**

Complete Section Four if you have an abstract protagonist.

**Section One: Complete this section for all of your characters!**

Name:

Age:

Height:

Eye color:

Physical appearance:

Strange or unique physical attributes:

Favorite clothing style/outfit:

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

Defining gestures/movements (curling his or her lip when he or she speaks, always keeping his or her eyes on the ground, biting his or her fingernails when he or she are nervous, etc.):

Speaking style (fast, slow, monotone, talkative, quiet, etc.):

Temperament (easy going, easily angered, etc.):

Negative Traits:

Things that embarrass him or her:

Things that upset him or her:

Family (describe):

Deepest, darkest secret:

Reason for why he or she has kept this secret for so long:

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

Favorite color:

Three descriptive words to describe this character:

**Section Two: Supporting Character Questions**

Relationship to the protagonist:

Similarities to the protagonist:

Differences from the protagonist:

History with the protagonist:

**Section Three: Antagonist Questions**

Why is he or she facing off against the protagonist?

Does this person have any likable traits?

What is this characters weakness?

Why is the character making the decisions that he or she is?

**Section Four: Abstract Antagonist**

What is the abstract antagonist? Is it a disease or illness like cancer, a social issue like poverty, or something larger than life like grief or depression?

How is this antagonist affecting the protagonist?

Do other characters know about this antagonist? How does the antagonist affect the other characters in your story?