

SCREENWRITINGMASTERCLASS.COM

CRAFT: BRAINSTORMING YOUR CHARACTERS WORKSHEET

As you structure your story outline, think about your characters from as many different angles as possible. Work to understand them completely as human beings. Then mine all those character traits, quirks, as you move forward through you story.

You can discover a lot about your characters while you are writing pages, as they drive plot/story forward. But, a vivid understanding of your characters before you type Fade In: may make all the difference.

BRAINSTORM(1890s def.): A momentary malfunction of the mind, a 'cerebral disturbance'

In 1939, frustrated by employees' inability to develop creative ideas individually, advertising executive Alex F. Osborn began hosting group-thinking sessions for creative problem-solving.

ALEX OSBORN'S RULES OF BRAINSTORMING --

- **No criticism of ideas**
- **Go for large quantities of ideas**
- **Build on ideas**
- **Encourage wild and exaggerated ideas**

Of course, it worked. Osborn discovered a significant improvement in the quality and quantity of staff ideas.

This is not just for groups. One mind is all you need.

KEEP IN MIND

- Stories don't happen to anyone. They happen to specific people for specific reasons at a specific time
- How people relate to situations, conflicts defines their character in life and on-screen
- Events impact characters. Protagonists are rarely "the same person" as the end of film that they were in the opening scenes
- That is why we keep reading or watching

"If there is no possibility for change in a character, we have no interest in him." Flannery O'Connor

- As the main conflict, external plot and subplots move forward, many things are explored through the actions and reactions of the characters
- Those plot turns lead characters into internal conflicts as well. Characters conflict emotionally – experience events from their own unique personal point of view
- Plot jumps and twists between external plot turns and those internal character conflicts that may be constantly rubbing against each other
- Characters may evolve, transform, experience psychological growth, have a great realization – "a mirror moment" – which provides catharsis, a deeper understanding, subtle or large personal transformation

Brainstorm Session

- Set a specific session goal. Try to work on one character at a time
- Give yourself a fixed amount of time and a specific place to work
- Use the topics, categories, questions below in any order that works for you to jam out ideas
- Surf the web, make a Pinterest board of images, clips, characters, use a phone camera, phone app -- Snapchat, etc., draw a mind map
- Probe the recesses of your mind, range around the crevasses of your unconscious. Turn your imagination upside down, inside out, sideways
- Take a break – relax
- Write more

BRAINSTORMING CHARACTERS WORKSHEET

Start with your character's life situation as the story begins....

1. ANGLE OF ENTRY: What is the character's life situation now?

Emotionally

Current situation?

Contented?

Frustrated?

Socially

Ties to people?

Married?

Single?

Friends?

Extended Family?

Professionally

Occupation?

Work status?

Job environment?

Goals set? Accomplished?

2. APPEARANCE -- VISIBLE PHYSICAL QUALITIES

Age?

Gender?

Body type?

Wear and tear?

Personal style?

3. PERSONALITY -- EMOTIONAL QUALITIES

Attitude?

General mood?

Unique character trait?

Universal character trait?

4. WHAT ARE THEIR EMOTIONAL COMPLICATIONS?

Do they have an internal dissonance? Are they managing a contradiction in their personal identity?

Is there hidden disharmony somewhere in their lives?

Are they aware of it?

Are there things they must do in their day to day life which go against their true wishes, true nature or beliefs?

5. WHAT KINDS OF INVOLVEMENTS, RELATIONSHIPS DO THEY HAVE WITH OTHER CHARACTERS

Who do they hang out with? Why?

Who do they love? Why?

Who do they hate? Why?

Who do they fear? Why?

Who do they hold in contempt? Why?

Who do they envy? Why?

6. WHAT ARE THEIR WORST FEARS

What really scares them?

What is the worst thing that could happen to them?

7. WHAT ARE THEIR HOPES AND DREAMS? WHAT IS THEIR STRUGGLE?

What do they want more than anything else?

What is the best thing that could happen to them?

8. WHAT STANDS IN THEIR WAY? WHO OR WHAT ARE THEIR PERSONAL OBSTACLES

Other characters?

Why?

Within themselves - internally?

Why?

What must happen for them to overcome these obstacles?

**9. HOW COULD IT ALL COME TOGETHER FOR THEM?
HOW WILL THEY ACHIEVE UNITY OR HAPPINESS IN THEIR
LIVES?**

What is the best thing that could happen to them?

Do they already know what would be best for them?

If not, how could they discover keys to unity?

**10. BIG AND LITTLE THINGS FROM THE PAST, PRESENT OR
FUTURE– ANY DETAIL YOU THINK OF WHICH RESONATES
WITH YOUR VISION OF THIS CHARACTER.**

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