Character Profile – Notes

Name: A name should suit a character, and be appropriate to the background from which he or she comes.

Nickname: This is the name that the character has given to him / herself, or which his or her friends have given to them. This may be a shortened form of their real name, or it may say something about the characters present personality or occupation.

Role: The character’s role in the story, eg. Lead Character, Opposition, Romantic Involvement, Confidante, etc. This will usually define the character’s role in relation to the Lead Character.

Physical Profile:

Age: Should be appropriate for the lead character for your target audience. Readers tend to prefer characters close to their own ages. You might want to note the character’s date of birth here.

Gender: Male, Female, Transgender, Hermaphrodite. Again, this should be appropriate to your chosen genre and audience.

Height: Average, taller than average, shorter than average? People respond to a tall woman in a different way to one of average height. And they respond to a short man in a different way to a tall one. This can have an effect on someone’s personality.

Eye Colour: Make a note of this so that the character’s eyes aren’t blue in chapter three and grey in chapter twenty-three.

Weight: Not vital as such, but you may want to make a note of it early on: the combination of height and weight needs to be right for the physical build you assign to your character: six foot three and eight stone isn’t ‘stocky.’

Body Type / Physical Build: Fat? Skinny? Muscular? Stocky? This can play an important part in someone’s self-image.


Racial Group / Nationality: Ethnic background can have an effect on beliefs and upbringing. If someone has been persecuted as a result of their race or nationality, this will also have an effect on personality. Does this person defy racial or national stereotypes? Do they embrace their heritage, or try to hide it?

Scars, Tattoos, Piercings, Birthmarks or Other Distinguishing Marks: Self-inflicted, these can be fashion statements or an outward sign of personality. Scars can be indications of
past injury, perhaps with associated mental trauma. A disfigured face or hand will usually have some impact on personality and self-image.

**General Health and Fitness:** Strong and healthy, or weak and unfit? A disability of some kind might affect mobility or ability to perform certain tasks. A disease suffered now or in the past may have had an impact on personality. Physical weakness may have an impact on self-confidence. Allergies can blight a life, as can arthritis.

**Style of Clothing and General Appearance:** Does this person give an impression of being neat and taking care of their appearance, or are they scruffy or dishevelled? Clothing is important because, unless it is a uniform we have to wear, it is chosen by us, to reflect the needs of our lifestyle and / or to reflect our tastes and personality. If clothing is unremarkable, then it shouldn’t be described in any detail; only something which is unique to this character should be mentioned, including the fact that clothing chosen may or may not suit them. The colours a person wears, and the textures of the cloth can also be used to say something about them.

**Accessories or Personal Props / Possessions:** As with the things we choose to wear, the things we carry around with us say something about us. A modern, technologically advanced mobile phone or an ancient, scarred one? Or no phone at all? Cigarettes or a pipe? Gold-plated fountain pen or a stub of a pencil? Include here also the kind of car someone drives, its age and state of repair. What are the character’s most treasured possessions? Why are they important to them?

**Physical Mannerisms:** Is there something special in the way this character moves, eats, laughs, or expresses emotion? Is there some unconscious gesture which they keep repeating? How do they use their hands when they speak? Do they smile easily? Or is the smile forced or fake? Do they look you in the eye when speaking to you, or cast their eyes down?

**Vocal Mannerisms / Accent:** A person’s occupation may influence the way they speak: imagine a doctor speaking to a lawyer, or to a car mechanic or a baker. They may use terminology which reflects their occupation, including metaphors. Is the character subdued or outgoing? Do they use polysyllable words or simple ones? Are they trying to impress, like Frasier, or trying to blend in? Pretending to be better educated than they are? Or trying to hide their education behind an adopted ‘working class’ accent? Do they have favourite expressions which they keep using? Do they swear? Use euphemisms? Malapropisms?

**Sociological Profile:**

**Socio-Economic Background / Class:**

**Education:** What sort of education did they have? Comprehensive school? Boarding school? Exam results? Further education? University? Apprenticeship? Did they like school? Did they play truant? Were they the class bully? Or the victim of bullying?

**Occupation:** What does the character do for a living, if anything? Is it a skilled job? Manual? Desk job? Telephonist or computer operator? What kind of organisation do they work for? How do they get on with their colleagues? Their boss? Why are they doing this job? How long have they been doing it? Are they any good at it?
Financial Status: Do they have money in the bank? A mortgage? Or not enough to put food on the table? Do they have problems with money because they spend more than they earn? Do they gamble?

Marital Status: Married? Single? Widowed? Divorced? Was the divorce amicable or hostile?

Spouse / Partner: Name of partner or spouse. How did they meet? How long have they been together? What is the state of their relationship? Are both partners faithful? How many different former lovers has each had? Is this an issue in the relationship? Is their home life harmonious or stressful?

Children: Does the character have any children? Names, ages? What is the relationship with the children? Is the character still living with the other parent? If not, what is their current relationship and their relationship history? How has this affected the children?

Home: Where does the character live? Why have they chosen to live in this neighbourhood? Do they live in a flat or a house? Or on a boat, or somewhere else? What state is the home in internally and externally? Do they live alone? If so, is this a deliberate choice? If they are living with others, who do they live with, what is the nature of the relationship? Why are they living together?

Pets: Is this character a dog person or a cat person? Neither? Perhaps they have a hamster, or something more exotic? Is the pet regarded as a possession or a person? Does the character love this creature because they have no other outlet for their love? Is the pet their only friend? Is the character a reluctant pet-owner, having taken on the pet after a relationship break-up or as a favour to a friend?

Religious Beliefs: Do they belong to a particular religious group? Are they devout a believer? A sceptic? A fundamentalist? Or are they agnostic? Atheist? Have they suffered religious persecution? Or seen the harm that organised religion can sometimes cause? How is their religion – or lack of it – expressed?

Political Views: Are they right wing or left wing? Are their views strongly nationalistic? Do they regard themselves as world citizens? How are their political views expressed? Are they militant? Or have they no political views?

Favourite Activities / Hobbies: What sort of books, films, or music does this person enjoy? Do they prefer to be outdoors? Engaged in physical sports? Do they enjoy food and cooking? Do their leisure activities involve their friends or children, or do they prefer to be alone to relax?

Favourite Foods and Drinks: Do they have a healthy diet? Do they ‘comfort eat’? Is food a substitute for love?

Parents: Who were / are the character’s parents? What sort of relationship did they have, and do they have, with their parents? Names? Was this character an obedient child or a difficult one? Were they closer to their mother or their father? Why? If one or both parents were absent, who raised this child? Was the family nurturing? Were there arguments with the parents or between the parents? Alcohol or other addictions? Abuse – physical, sexual, or mental? What kind of problems or trouble upset the family? Was there a divorce, or death of a family member? Does the character feel that they had a happy childhood? When did they leave home? Why?
Brothers & Sisters: How many? What ages? What was / is their relationship with one another? Who was their father’s favourite? Their mother’s? Who was the oldest / youngest? What form did their sibling rivalry take? Or were they an only child? If so, were they a lonely child?

Place of Birth: Where was the character born and raised? What were the circumstances in which they grew up – poor or affluent? Did they stay in the same neighbourhood and school, or did they move around a lot?

Significant Childhood Events or Trauma: What significant effects – births, marriages, deaths, accidents, abuses, whatever – have made them the person they are today? Did they have many friends or no friends? Were they ever betrayed by a friend? Did they spend a lot of time alone?

Teenage Personality / Events: Did this character get along with their peers? Did they belong to a group, or were they a loner? Did they have sex during their teenage years? Did they fall in love? Or did they need love, but no one was offering it? How did they react to this? Did they take drugs? Did they fit in or rebel? Were they a leader or a follower? In order to belong, did they do things that they did not feel comfortable doing? Did they drink?

Friends: Who is the character’s best friend? How long have they known each other? What sort of things do they do together? How would this friend describe the character? What social circles does the character move in? Do he and his partner have the same friends, or do they socialise separately?

Psychological Profile:

Sex Life: How does this person feel about the opposite sex? Why do they feel this way? What are their views on homosexuality, underage sex, and sex before marriage? How might a lover describe the character? Are they straight or gay? Bisexual? Asexual? Frigid?

Ethics, Values, Moral standards: What does this character value most in the world? What would they never do, no matter what the price?

Drive / Ambition / Goals: What are their dreams? Long term and short term? What are they striving to achieve in their life?

Typical Reaction When Angry / Upset: How does the character react when cornered? Are they able to admit when they are wrong? To apologise?

Positive Traits: Why would someone fall in love with this character? Who or what would this person die to defend? A lead character must have positive traits in order to appeal to the reader: Likeability – they must be someone we want to spend time with; a sense of humour and a modest disposition help here too; they should be kind and considerate, and concerned for the welfare of others. Competence – the lead character should be able to live life and do their job fairly competently, and be able to deal with whatever problems life throws at them; they don’t need to be particularly intelligent or skilful, but they must be capable. Virtue – The main character must be someone who knows right from wrong, and behave accordingly; they make mistakes, but will never choose to do something that is illegal, immoral or unethical without having an appropriate reason. Courage – The character must have an inner strength that will enable them to tackle the obstacles that they will face during the course of the story; it may be a quiet, hidden strength, but it must be there.
Negative Traits: What is this person’s most troublesome or unlikeable characteristic? Does the character have problems getting on with people? Do people have difficulty getting on with them? Why? Are they impetuous, overeager, impatient? Do they rush into things, including dangerous situations or love affairs? Or are they over-hesitant, always afraid to make a move?

Frustrations / Disappointments: What makes them angry? What upsets them? What do they dislike most about their life? What would they change if they could?

Attitude to Work: What does the character’s job mean to them? Do they gain status as a result of it? How far would they go to keep their job? What lengths would they go to to protect their place of work? Are they obsessed with their job?

Attitude to Money: Are they unhappy because they have no money? Do they think money will make them happy? Or do they have money, but find that it cannot buy happiness?

Attitude Towards Life: Is this character’s outlook generally positive? Optimistic or pessimistic? How do they feel about love? How have past relationships shaped their view of romance?

Sense of Humour: What makes them laugh? Dirty jokes? Sexist and racist jokes? Subtle wordplay or toilet humour? Or do they have no sense of humour?

Complexes / Inhibitions / Quirks: What are they afraid of? What phobias do they have?

Bad Habits: Additions? Self-harm? Hygiene issues? Inappropriate behaviour or language?

Self-Image: How does this character feel about themselves? If asked to describe themselves, what would they say? What do they like most about their life?

Extrovert or Introvert: Outgoing or shy? Or shy but overcompensating in an attempt to appear outgoing?

Body Language: What do their movements reveal about their personality? Are they open in their gestures, or do they keep their arms close to their body?

Secrets: What past events would they never want anyone to find out about? What did they do, or have done to them? What ambitions, dreams, or desires would they never share with anyone? What aspect of their own body or their own character are they most ashamed of? What doesn’t this person want the world to see? How do they hide it? How do they compensate for it?

Private Time / Alone: How do they spend their time when non-one else is around?

Proudest Achievement: Their job? Their marriage? Their children? A piece of artwork created? Making their father laugh when they were six years old?