

Character-centric Plot Outline Worksheet

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Character #1

Name:

Age:

Occupation:

Personality:

What is their core wound?

What is their deep fear arising from the wound?

What lies do they tell themselves because of the wound?

What self-sabotaging behaviours do they engage in because of the wound?

Outer motivation (what tangible goal is the character trying to achieve?):

Inner motivation (what emotional need is driving them?):

Outer conflict (what outside forces are getting in their way?):

Inner conflict (what fears / misbeliefs are getting in their way?):

I like:

I hate:

More than anything, I want:

Background (what is their backstory? How did they get to where they are?):

Habits/Mannerisms:

Physical description:

Let's go deeper into their wound

Note: The Emotional Wound Thesaurus by Becca Puglisi and Angela Ackerman is a helpful resource for this).

The wound:

What are the responses and results that occur because of their wound or any fears or misbeliefs arising from it?

How has the wound shaped their personality traits?

What triggers might aggravate their wound?

What opportunities might there be for them to overcome their wound?

What kind of partner would best suit them? What are their traits? Their history? Why does the character fall for them and want to overcome the wound when they haven't done so previously?

Character #2

Name:

Age:

Occupation:

Personality:

What is their core wound?

What is their deep fear arising from the wound?

What lies do they tell themselves because of the wound?

What self-sabotaging behaviours do they engage in because of the wound?

Outer motivation (what tangible goal is the character trying to achieve?):

Inner motivation (what emotional need is driving them?):

Outer conflict (what outside forces are getting in their way?):

Inner conflict (what fears / misbeliefs are getting in their way?):

I like:

I hate:

More than anything, I want:

Background (what is their backstory? How did they get to where they are?):

Habits/Mannerisms:

Physical description:

Let's go deeper into their wound

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What opportunities might there be for them to overcome their wound?

Joint Characterisation Sheet

Reasons why Character #1 likes Character #2:

Reasons why Character #2 likes Character #1:

Similar traits:

Different traits:

Initial Story Brainstorm

Trope(s):

Possible theme:

Meet cute:

Ideas for interesting scenes of plot points:

Character Arc Sheet for Character #1

Part 1: (status quo – set the scene and give a feel for who the character is and lay some hints about what flaws they might have to overcome – should be 10-25% of word count)

Part 2: (they are trying to adjust to a change – perhaps in relation to the other character, stumbling around in the dark, almost making progress but getting it wrong or not quite getting to where they need to go – about 25-30% of word count)

Part 3: (the character is making self-driven progress and things are generally going well more often than not – about 25-30% of word count)

Part 4: (major setback / the back moment. Something goes wrong, triggering the character's wound, fears, and all those self-sabotaging behaviours. Ideally this would be something related to the other character – about 15-25% of word count)

Part 5: (resolution – the character has a breakthrough (perhaps through one of the opportunities to overcome the wound identified earlier) and moves on with their partner – about 10-15% of word count)

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Story Arc – combining the character arcs

The inciting incident (the thing that begins it all):

The decision that sets everything in motion (at least one, preferable both, of the characters should make a decision approximately 10-25% into the book that starts their character growth):

The response (how do the characters interact as they're both stumbling through their new reality?):

Turning point (approximately 50% of the way through the story, something totally unexpected should happen, or the character looks their metaphorical death in the eye):

The reversal (the characters start actively pursuing their goals, change from passive to active):

The attack: (characters are making progress toward where they need to be on their own effort and things are sort-of working and they're more right than wrong)

Cards on the table moment (about the same time as the black moment, no new information should be introduced after this):

The resolution (the characters have all they need to overcome their wound. They could lose everything, but then it all clicks into place, they go through an internal change, and they earn the right to be called a hero):

Tips for turning this outline into chapters:

- Work out how long you want your story to be and approximately how long your typical scenes are.
- Aim for 2-4 scenes per chapter.
- Work out approximately how many chapters you'll need and then mark out where each of the plot points should fall within these.
- Fill in a few sentences about each scene using your character arcs, story arc, and the ideas you brainstormed earlier.
- Try to end each chapter on a small cliffhanger or unanswered question to keep the reader turning the pages.

- There should be something to get excited about in every scene in the outline. If there's a scene that you feel bored or unmotivated thinking about, cut it out.
- Every scene should move the characters forward in some way, even if it's minor.

Resources:

The Emotional Wound Thesaurus by Becca Puglisi and Angela Ackerman

Nail Your Story by Monica Leonelle

Character Arcs by K.M. Weiland