

Creating a Character

The Cast of Characters, Protagonist and Antagonist

Every story has one or more characters. That's what's called the cast of characters. There is often a protagonist and an antagonist:

The protagonist is the main character in the story. They have to have well-defined personality traits as well as values to defend in order to inspire readers to identify with them. For example: a brave witch who goes on a quest to defeat the demon, the shy boy who can't bring himself to declare his love, or the detective in charge of finding the guilty party.

The antagonist is the protagonist's enemy, their negative. As such, they must also have striking features to spice up the plot. It could be the ruthless demon who is terrorizing the poor villagers, the arrogant love rival or the Machiavellian murderer.

The other characters, who are called minor, or secondary, characters, are generally either the protagonist's allies or adversaries serving the antagonist. Well-written minor characters grant extra depth to the story as a whole, making it more substantial.



Protagonists



Antagonists

Recognizable Characters

The characters in comics should be easily identifiable. Each character has their own look and distinguishing feature that reflects their personality. For example, a friendly, likable hero might wear a straw hat and brightly colored clothes while their rival will wear a skull as a hat and a dark outfit.

Complex, Multidimensional Characters

You can also fiddle with those traits in order to create a character that is more complex than they seem to be at first glance. At the beginning of the story, for instance, the hero might be presented with limited personality traits: he's nice, but kind of dumb. But in the thick of the action, his bravery

and intelligence will be revealed when he successfully overcomes near-impossible obstacles. In a case like that, we say that the character is multidimensional.

Characters with a Past

For a character to seem more substantial, they can have a mysterious past. In other words, they have already had other adventures in the story's world, before the beginning of the story. Those events have taught them things and forged their personality. Their qualities and defects stem, at least in part, from their past.

The Narrative Arc

A good character evolves with their story. The conflicts they have to cope with challenge their personality and force them to change and to grow. That transformation is called the character's narrative arc.

To go back to the previous example, the character was betrayed at some point in their past. So they no longer trust anyone. One might imagine that to experience their transformation, the character will make an important encounter that will allow them to be trusting once again.

Character Profiles

Creating a character profile, the way you do in role-play games, can help you to get a more rounded picture of your character and add to their psychological depth and texture.

You'll generally find their:

- Name.
- Age.
- Gender.
- Nicknames.
- Physical characteristics.
- Profession.
- Qualities and defects.
- What they like/don't like.
- Their past.
- Their goals.
- Their evolution over the course of the story.
- And more.

All those elements help define and shape a character. They make the character recognizable, multidimensional and coherent.

BDnF has a "character profile" step in the "follow the guide" itinerary.