Create a Colorful Hero

Any Genre

Character Name: _____

Novel's Working Title: _____

Interview Date: _____

Introduction

A Hero is also known as the male Protagonist. Your story doesn't need to incorporate a male and a female protagonist**. However, this worksheet was based on the premise that men are often socialized differently than women; therefore, men tend to think and act differently than women. The purpose of this worksheet is to help you create a complex, compelling, and memorable male Protagonist who will "ring true" to your male readers.

The Hero may have strongly characterized sidekicks, who are major secondary characters; however, the story should clearly focus on the Hero as he struggles to achieve his ultimate goal.

If you have an ensemble cast (for example, you're writing the next *Lord of the Rings),* each Hero much be fully fleshed out. At times, one Hero may serve as an Antagonist (or Anti-Hero), interfering with the goals of the other Protagonist.

While the Protagonists' stories may overlap at times, each character must have his own goals, motivations, and conflicts. Since you are writing a category novel (Mystery, Fantasy, Thriller, Western, etc.), each Protagonist must triumph in the end.

***** The exception to this rule is Romance. For help with that genre, see the special "Create Colorful Characters" templates dedicated to Romance.***

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Instructions

Allow at least 40 minutes of uninterrupted time to complete this worksheet.

Before you begin writing, decide (if appropriate) which Protagonist this exercise will focus upon. Then review the First Impressions section, as well as all of the Interview Questions.

Next, find a place where you can sit without distractions. Close your eyes, and breathe deeply to relax your body. When your mind is at peace, begin to daydream (or visualize) that you are walking into the Hero's Sanctum. He greets you and invites you to sit down, so you can learn about him.

During your visualization, pay careful attention to his physical features, his mannerisms, speech patterns, attire, and the furnishings of the room. Make this visualization as vivid as you can: create a 3-dimensional movie scene by utilizing your five senses (just as you would while writing fiction). As he talks to you, imagine he is a real man, who is behaving in a "real way" with a stranger (you).

When you have completed the visualization, open your eyes and begin to answer the questions on this worksheet. Use a "stream of consciousness" writing approach. In other words, write everything that pops into your mind, without worrying about its logic, punctuation, grammar, etc. Trust the process. Try not to get bogged down in "reasoning out" answers. If one of the questions doesn't immediately pop into your head, skip it and go to the next one. That way, you won't break the flow.

Stream-of-consciousness writing is an intuitive process. It's a wonderful exercise for accessing your subconscious mind – or Muse. Each time you practice stream-of-consciousness writing, your Muse will speak more strongly through you, and you'll receive all kinds of wonderful story ideas for your novel.

Remember: you can always go back to the worksheet later to add information. But for now, plow through to the end, writing as much as you can without stopping.

The First Impressions section begins on the next page . . .

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First Impressions

Even though you are a complete stranger, the Hero has agreed to let you interview him. He has allowed you to meet him in a place where he feels the most relaxed and at ease. . . So where are you? How is his inner sanctum furnished?

In as much detail as you can, describe this man. Age, hair style & color, eye color, shape of nose, facial hair, skin tone, teeth/smile/breath (does he smoke?), sound of his laughter, hands, cologne, height, build, personal hygiene (Manicured fingernails? Dusty boots? Tossled hair?); sense of humor; quirks; imperfections (scars, wrinkles, harelip, moles, space between front teeth, etc.)

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First Impressions (cont.)

Is the Hero "dressed to impress" for this special occasion, or is he careless about the impression he makes? Describe his attire, choosing detail to convey his attitude: Untucked shirt? Tight breeches? Rolled sleeves? Bare feet? Tie/cravat? Smoking jacket? Jeans? Evening wear? Etc.

Pay close attention to your Hero's communication style: his tone of voice; the speed at which he talks; his facial expressions; gestures; posture; dialect; exclamations; oaths, etc. Describe these now.

Describe his posture. (Example: does he sprawl in his chair with his legs flung wide or does he cross them in a sophisticated pose? Does he remain standing, pace the room; prop his shoulder against the wall or his foot on the hearth, fold his arms across his chest, etc. Each of these poses subtly conveys something different about his mood.) Does he appear to be comfortable talking about himself to a stranger?

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First Impressions (cont.)

As the Hero answers your questions, is he charming or irascible? Is he patient or overbearing? Does he give you his complete attention? Is he easily distracted? Does he deliberately occupy himself with other things: tying his cravat, pumping iron, riffling through correspondence, sharpening his sword, etc. Describe.

How does he physically emphasize his words? (Examples: drums his fingers; fold his hands across his abdomen; fiddles with his tie, taps a pencil; runs his hand through his hair; bangs his fist on the table; toys with his riding crop; paces the room; folds his arms across his chest; strikes a match; wags his forefinger, slaps his forehead, etc.)

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Instructions

Imagine you are asking the Hero the following Interview Questions. Allow him to answer through you, using the stream-of-consciousness writing approach.

Interview Questions: Part I
What Makes Him Tick?

What do you consider to be your best physical characteristics?

What do you consider to be your greatest talents and skills? Describe at least 3 that may impact your story goal and/or your relationship with the Antagonist (Villain).

What person has had the greatest influence on your life? Why?

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What Makes Him Tick? (cont.)

Let's talk about your birth family. (Note: if the Hero's relatives are important catalysts to the story, be sure to make them as three-dimensional as possible in your story. Develop them by working through the "Secondary Character Interview.") Describe your relationship with your:

Mother:

Father:

Siblings (who are important to the story):

Extended Family (who are important to the story):

Are each of your parents and siblings alive?

If not, how did they die? How did their death impact you?

(Note: If family members are important to your story, complete the "Family History Chart," which follows the Interview Questions.)

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What Makes Him Tick? (cont.)

Where did you grow up? What was the general atmosphere in your home? Were you wealthy, healthy, and well-fed? Did your mother and father have a warm, loving relationship? Were you the man of the house? Were you a parental favorite? Did you have to babysit your siblings? etc.

Do you behave differently with your family than with your friends? If so, why?

Describe your relationship with your children and/or pets. (If children and/or pets are important catalysts to the story, be sure to make them as three-dimensional as possible in your storyline. You can develop them more fully with the "Build a Sidekick" template.)

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What Makes Him Tick? (cont.)

What major memories from your past have shaped your opinion about women, relationships, and marriage? Are you jaded about love and romance?

When you ask for advice, do you usually accept it? Why?

If a casual acquaintance were to describe your personality, what would he/she say? Is this description accurate? If not, what's the truth?

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What Makes Him Tick? (cont.)

How would your rival (or enemy) describe you?

What is your profession? Are you good at it? How did you train for it? Do you work for money and acclaim, or are you the altruistic, world-saving type?

How does your work impact your relationship with the Antagonist (Villain)?

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What Makes Him Tick? (cont.)

What books, art, and music do you prefer? What hobbies do you enjoy? Do your hobbies create additional friction between you and the Antagonist (Villain)?

What is your relationship with a Divine Power? Are you a church-going man? How do your morals and/or religious viewpoints affect your relationship with the Antagonist?

Are you a rule-abiding man? If so, what must occur before you'll consider breaking a rule? If you break rules frequently, which one(s) do you break?

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What Makes Him Tick? (cont.)

What are your major commitments and/or responsibilities? How do they impact your story goals?

What is your greatest treasure? Where do you keep it? Who else knows about it?

How are you most likely to behave when you're:

Angry:

Jealous:

Frustrated:

Hurt:

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What Makes Him Tick? (cont.)

What is your favorite:

Main Course:

Weapon:

Alcohol:

Gadget/Plaything:

Dessert:

Getaway:

Romantic Gesture:

Fashion Accessory:

Social Outing:

Transportation (color/breed):

Saying (or Philosophy on Life):

Childhood Memory:

Residence (describe:)

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Interview Questions: Part II
Secrets and Dreams

What do you secretly love about yourself?

What are your weaknesses and/or personality flaws?

Do you make friends easily? In what social situations are you uncomfortable?

Do you trust easily? How do you decide when to trust someone? (First impression? Prior experience? Secret tests?)

Name a time when someone destroyed your trust. How did your hurt impact your outlook on life? How did it affect your perception of people?

When are you most afraid? How do you behave in situations when you don't feel safe? What do you do to protect yourself?

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Secrets and Dreams (cont.)

Are you comfortable with emotional intimacy? Where do you draw the line?

Are you comfortable with physical intimacy? Are you burdened by guilt or shame when you experience lust? If so, why?

What secret are you keeping from the rest of the world? What are you lying about if only to protect yourself?

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Secrets and Dreams (cont.)

What does the Antagonist (Villain) know about you that no one else does? What kind of power does this give the Antagonist?

If you had 10 minutes to re-live some period of your life, what experience would you choose and why? Would you do anything differently? If so, what?

In what situation are you most likely to doubt yourself? Explain.

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Secrets and Dreams (cont.)

In what situation(s) are you brave? Explain.

Interview Questions: Part III
The Quest

What do you want to achieve, obtain, or become by the end of the book? Why?

What in the outside world (external obstacle) is keeping you from accomplishing this "story goal?"

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The Quest (cont.)

What beliefs, self-judgments, fears, prejudices, or other value conflicts are the internal obstacles that keep you from your "story goal?"

What must happen before you can overcome these obstacles and achieve your "story goal?"

Interview Questions: Part IV
World View

Do you judge the world primarily through your senses (example: kinesthetic touch or vision), or do you rely upon your gut instinct to form impressions of a situation?

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The Quest (cont.)

Do you see the world as a set of problems to be solved? Do you need to conquer and control everything in your path? Or do you adopt an attitude of live-and-let-live, everything-happens-for-a-reason, let's-wait-and-see?

When you walk into a party, what do you notice first? (Examples: the people, an alternate escape route, the "vibe," the decorating, your own jitters, etc.)

Do you think you know everything, or are you fond of learning new things? Explain how you reached this perspective on life.

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World View (cont.)

Assuming that you deliberately set out to learn more about the Antagonist (Villain), how did you satisfy your curiosity? Did you gather information through observation? Participation in an outing? Inquiries of colleagues or friends? Direct questions to the Antagonist? Intuition/gut instinct or deep thought/meditation?

Would you normally use the methods that you described above to gather information about a person – or was the Antagonist a special case? Why did you approach him/her differently?

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Interview Questions: Part V
Planning for Chapter One

(Note: these questions can help you develop scene conflicts.)

It has been said, "Life happens when you're making other plans." When was the last time your best-laid plans got sidetracked? Did this disappointment have something to do with meeting the Hero for the first time? Describe.

What were you doing 5-10 minutes before you appear "on scene" for the first time in the book?

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Planning for Chapter One (cont.)

Where were you? Describe.

Who were you with? Describe.

What were you thinking about? Describe.

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Planning for Chapter One (cont.)

What was your mood? Describe.

How does meeting the Antagonist change your scene goal or alter your mood?

What do you first notice about the Antagonist? Describe.

What fascinates you about the Antagonist?

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Planning for Chapter One (cont.)

What annoys you about the Antagonist?

What is your general impression of / relationship with the Antagonist when the scene ends?

How does the Antagonist (or your feelings for the Antagonist) thwart your professional and/or personal goals?

The Family History Chart follows.

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Interview Questions: Part VI
Family History Chart

Mother:

Name

Ethnic Origin

Distinguishing Characteristics

Attitude toward Pertinent Characters

Profession

Education

Social/Economic Status

Religious Viewpoint/Ethics

Marital Relationship(s)

Hobbies

Age & Health Status (or Cause of Death)

Other Pertinent Story Details

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Family History Chart (cont.)

Father:

Name

Ethnic Origin

Distinguishing Characteristics

Attitude toward Pertinent Characters

Profession

Education

Social/Economic Status

Religious Viewpoint/Ethics

Marital Relationship(s)

Hobbies

Age & Health Status (or Cause of Death)

Other Pertinent Story Details

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Family History Chart (cont.)

Siblings/Close Relatives

Name

Age (or Cause of Death)

Relationship to other Characters

Ethnic Origin

Distinguishing Characteristics

Attitude toward Pertinent Characters

Profession

Education

Social/Economic Status

Religious Viewpoint/Ethics

Marital Relationship(s)

Hobbies

Other Pertinent Story Details

Feel free to make copies for additional relatives, as needed.

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