

## CREATING THE CHARACTER BIO

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Assignment: Character Biography: Create a biography for your main characters. You must know both your protagonist and opponent deeply, and as you now know, you can't get there in one or two drafts. However, over the course of several revisions, you will start to know your characters intimately. As you dig deeper, the characters will talk to you and guide you in unexpected directions. This is when your characters – and your story -- really starts to live and breathe on its own, becoming its own powerful entity.

You can write in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person. The goal is to immerse yourself in the inner and outer worlds of your main characters. Create a voice, a dialect if you like; include everything we need to know about this character before page one of the script.

Much of this will never be read or experienced in the script. But you, the screenwriter, the master of your characters' fate, will know it, and, in turn, your character will have a much better shot at coming to life, of being real and believable — not to mention irresistible to an actor, crucial if you want to get our screenplay made into a film.

- Identify the character's physical world: even the mundane, but these details will serve as visual metaphor, illuminating the theme: What does he/she eat? What kind of music does he/she play? How does he/she decorate his/her environment? Home/Office? Music? Books? Cultural artifacts. Find visual "correlatives" that work as metaphors for the character's struggles, obsessions, memories, longings.
- Identify the character's "ghost." What person(s)/experiences haunt him/her?
- What is he/she ashamed of? What is the "Hall of Shame" moment in his/her life?
- What makes him/her laugh and cry? What about family relationships? Past romance? Heartbreaks? Unrequited love? Is he/she the heartbreaker or the heartbroken? Why? A winner or loser at relationships? Why?
- Identify his/her inadequacies, insecurities, neuroses. Obsessions? Dreams?
- What is his/her desire vs. need? What does he/she want for himself/ herself? From life? What drives him/her, consciously and unconsciously? From the moment we meet him/her in the story? And how does their need and desire change as he/she faces, overcomes, and conquers the crisis of the story?
- What does he/she wrongly think he/she needs to do to achieve his/her goal?
- What does the character think he/she needs to change about his/her life and himself/herself? How can you the screenwriter dramatize that arc through the course of the story. (That's where our next assignment – revised beat outline – comes in.)