

Character Web

A Character Web is a tool for fleshing out different characters in your story. When you write about a particular person, as an author you should want to allow each person in your story to be uniquely engaging and alive for your reader. That affect can only come about through psychological profiling and mapping. So, take some time to process each character. As you brainstorm a new detail, add a branch to the web and copy it down where you think it appropriate. Consider the following:

Name. While a rose by any other name might smell as sweet, when it comes to creating a narrative, a character's name can have some influence on their story arc. Every name has some meaning and including some sort of connection for the character in your story can add depth for your audience. It can be simple like naming a baker after a kind of bread or a superhero after their powers. If you want to get even deeper, you can hide some secret about a character's future in their name like "Darth Father" or describe their mode of operations like "Darth Insidious". All of these tactics are fair game.

Education. Any background information on your character may be pertinent to how they think and act in your story, especially when it comes to education. If you're reading a book from the 19th century and it mentions that this person studied in Paris, they will probably discuss socialism, revolution, and art. Your character may have had no education at all. How would that affect their speech? Would they understand or use longer words? Would they feel self-conscious in upper class spaces? Education gives context and perspective that helps authors discuss deeper philosophies and ideas and then pit them against each other.

Occupation. People need food, water, and shelter to live and in order to have any of these things, they need a job. Moreover, people need to belong somewhere in society. What role do they fill? What contribution do they make to society? How does that affect their demeanor? A blacksmith would be sooty and strong with calloused hands whereas a dairy maid would be clean, neat, and delicate. A CEO would have quite a different personality than a bus boy.

Motivations. What matters to this character? Why do they do what they do? It's important to realize that not everyone acts according to their logical philosophies, but also to their gut urges and sometimes their debased human natures. An Ebenezer Scrooge can throw a caroller out into the cold and the next moment take pity on poor Tiny Tim. Severus Snape can be ruthless to the son of his school bully and then completely change when he remembers the kindness of the mother. Try to be succinct in your markings.

Strengths/Weaknesses. Every character must have strengths and weaknesses. Without character strengths, everyone loses. Without character flaws, nobody wins. More importantly, no one can grow from constant success and stories without struggles stink. You can't have Superman without Kryptonite or Achilles without his heel. Allow your characters to wrestle with themselves as well as with their world.

