

8 Elements of Character

Physical description: Anything that you can see about her that gives us clues to who she is. Please remember that authors create characters and choose these physical attributes as part of the character.

- *What does the person looks like?*
- *What do they dress like?*
- *How does the person carry herself?*
- *How do they sit, walk and move?*

Background: This is her past experience that shapes who she becomes.

- *Who is this person?*
- *Where was she raised?*
- *What does she know how to do?*
- *What special skills does she have?*
- *What education does she have?*
- *What kind of jobs has she held?*

Personality: This includes demeanor, temperament, etc. Find actions that illustrate this or characters saying it. Examples include: shy, outgoing, angry, impulsive, fearful, etc. Note that this may change according to the circumstances, but a person's personality usually guides how they respond to situations.

- *What kind of person is she?*
- *What evidence shows the characters personality?*

Relationships: The interaction with all other characters.

- *How does she get along with people?*
- *Does she have a lot of friends, or only a few close friends?*
- *Does she hate everyone?*
- *Does she get along with her family? Why or why not?*
- *Does she fall in love too quickly? Have an ongoing rivalry with her sister?*

Words and Actions: Not EVERYTHING someone says tells us about him or her. If you ask me a question and I give you a direct answer, then that's not revealing. If I answer every question with, "Who wants to know?" that could be revealing). Watch for topics the person talks about a lot, or words that are repeated. If the word is repeated, it's probably important (be sure to choose words that tell you *something about the character*).

- *What does the person say and do?*
- *What do other characters say about your character?*
- *Do they talk differently about her behind her back?*
- *What does this tell you?*

Motivation: Motivations include money, fear, desire for fame, need to prove parents wrong, need to prove parents right, etc. Motivation may be what they want, such as money, or it could be what they are trying to get away from, such as fear. The goal may or may not clear from the motivation. Put what they want in your description, too.

- *What is the character trying to achieve or accomplish?*
- *Why does your character do what she is trying to do?*
- *What do they like and dislike?*

Conflict: External and internal. Sometimes we can be in conflict with ourselves. Look at this carefully: it usually drives the plot (or, the sequence of events in the story).

- *What is standing in the way of your character getting what he or she wants?*
- *Is there conflict within the character?*
- *How is this shown in the novel?*

Change: Don't just tell me whether she changes over the course of the story. Tell me how she does. *Not all characters change.* James Bond never gets to the end of an adventure and says, "All these fast cars, women, and martinis are so shallow. I should join the Peace Corps and do something important with my life."

- *How has the character changed throughout the novel?*
- *Have they learned a lesson?*
- *Is she is nicer, or more considerate?*
- *How do they think, feel or act differently?*