

The Eight-Point Arc of the Classic Novel:

Stasis (the base reality, where the novel starts)

Trigger (event beyond hero's/heroine's control which turns the day from average to exceptional)

The Quest (the effect of the trigger is to generate a quest for the protagonist, either to return to before or increase the pleasure)

Surprise (characters must encounter obstacles, unexpected things must happen)

Critical Choice (the difficult decision character makes in the face of obstacles that will change his/her course)

Climax (critical choices character has made come to a head)

Reversal (the consequence of previous events—surprise, critical choices and climaxes--results in change)

Resolution (fresh stasis—a return to a [new] start)

CREATING A CHARACTER

I. Character biographical sketch

1. Is your character male or female?
2. How old is your character?
3. Is your character married, just married, engaged, involved, pursuing someone, divorced, just divorced, separated but not yet divorced, not involved with anyone or interested in anyone special but interested in being interested, just not interested at this moment? If he/she is married, just married, engaged or involved, is he/she happy about the relationship? Is he/she in one of the above situations, but nonetheless on the lookout? Is he/she happy with his/her spouse/fiance/lover but on the lookout nonetheless?
4. Do a quick census of your character's immediate family. (If he/she is an adult and not living with his/her family of origin, do not describe the family of origin here, unless it is his/her primary social relationship.)
5. What education does he/she have?
6. What is your character's occupation?
7. How successful is he/she at it?
8. How happy is he/she at it?
9. How secure is he/she at it?
10. What is your character's financial situation? How responsible with money is he/she? How generous with it?
11. How athletic is your character? How in shape or out of shape? Does he/she work at staying in shape? How does he/she feel about his/her appearance?
12. Name three things your character does with his/her spare time.
13. Of the recreational activities your character has enjoyed in the last year, which was his/her favorite?
14. When was the last time your character had a vacation?
15. What was your character's favorite vacation?
16. What is your character's dream vacation?

17. Discuss your character's social life: Does he/she have many close friends, a few close friends, no close friends but many acquaintances, few acquaintances, no acquaintances? Has he/she just moved to the place in which he/she now lives and desires to have friendships? Does he/she have no desire for friendship?
18. Your character's family of origin: What did the father do, what did the mother do, how would you describe their economic status? Were there brothers and sisters or was your character an only child? Did your character not grow up in his/her family of origin, but with extended family, or with someone else?
18. What ambition did your character's father have for himself? Did he realize that or even approach it, or was he always frustrated?
19. Same questions for the mother.
20. What ambitions did your character's parents have for the character? Did the parents share the same ambition, or were they at odds? Has the character pursued that ambition/those ambitions?
21. Is either parent dead? Was it a death by illness, by accident, by violent crime? How did that death affect the character?
22. Describe the way your character and his/her family might have spent a usual Sunday afternoon. What was the most memorable Friday night your character spent as a child?
23. In school, what kind of student was your character?
24. What was your character's greatest crime as a young person?
25. Name a time in which your character acted heroically.
26. Name a time in which your character was cowardly.
27. Name a time in which your character was forced to confront his/her ethical nature. Which side of your character won out?
28. Name one of your character's greatest regrets.
29. Name one thing your character is most proud of.
30. Name one thing your character is most ashamed of.
31. Name one moment in which your character might have looked up and said, "Man, life doesn't get any better than this."
32. Name one moment in which your character might have felt despair.

33. Name one moment in which your character hurt another person deeply. How did your character respond when confronted with that knowledge?

34. Name one moment in which another character hurt your character. How did your character respond?

35. Name something that angers your character. How do they manifest that anger?

36. Name another trait that you think is important in your character's psyche and cite a moment in which he/she exhibited that trait.

II. Story Evolution

1. Given the above traits, what does your character want most? At this point, your response can be abstract--that is, your response can be that your character desires to be loved, to feel successful, to gain respect, to feel at peace with himself/herself.
2. Given your character's biography, what material or dramatic thing could they achieve that would allow them to realize their inner desire. This can be, winning the love of someone else, scaling Mount Everest, stopping terrorists, confronting an abusive parent/spouse.
3. Given your character's bio, what aspect of his/her self could stand as an inner obstacle to achieving their desire? This could be low self-esteem, the capacity for cowardice, a fear of heights, a tendency to suppress difficult events from the past.
4. Given this, what sort of external obstacle could your character face in trying to achieve the goal?
5. How can you ensure that your character will be the agent of his/her problem and the agent of his/her solution?
6. How can you add urgency to the story? Can you provide a deadline? How could you really complicate your character's dilemma?
7. Have you provided a mechanism by which the audience will identify in some strong way with your character? If not, what can you do to assure that?