



NEW WRITING
NORTH
YOUNG WRITERS



Creating a Character

You'll need:

Something to write with

Something to write on

Resource sheets: Character Clothing, Star Signs, Character Questions (found at the end of this PDF)

Warm Up:

Before we start it's good to get the mind warmed up without the pressure of writing something 'good'. To do this, we're going to try some free writing.

The idea is, that once you start writing, you don't stop. It doesn't matter what you write and if you get stuck you can just write, 'I'm stuck, I don't have anything to write' etc until something new pops into your head. The main thing is to keep going! Set a timer on your phone or watch, or make sure you're near a clock so you can see the time. You're going to write – without stopping- for 3 minutes.

Because we're going to be working on character today, I'd like you to use your three minutes of free writing to write about someone you know well. How might you describe their personality? What do they look like? How did you meet them? But remember, this is just a warm-up so it doesn't matter what you write. Ready? Go!

When you've finished, shake out your hand, and have a look back over what you've written. Chances are, a lot of it won't make sense but see if there's any phrases or words you like, anything that surprised you and maybe underline them in case you want to come back to them later.

Get Inspired:

Resource: Character Clothing

Have a look at the Character Clothing sheet and pick an item of clothing you find the most interesting. Got one? Now look at it closely, see what you notice about it. Start to think about who you imagine wearing it. Write a few notes about who this person might be – anything that comes to mind.

Resource: Star Signs

Now have a look at the Star Signs sheet and pick one for your character.

Give it a Try:

Now we've got a rough idea of our character we're going to start thinking about them in a bit more detail.

Resource: Character Questions

Using your item of clothing and star sign as a starting point, go through the *Character Questions* sheet, and answer as many as you can about your character, adding in as much detail as possible. Don't think too much about your answers, just go with your first instinct. If there's any questions that feel too hard or not relevant to your character then just skip these and you can always come back to them later.

Finished?

When you've answered all the questions you can, in as much detail as you can, go back and read them all through. This time, challenge your 'first instinct' response and see if there's any answers you want to change to make the character more interesting or surprising.

For example, I might have created a character called Edna, who is 75 and likes watching quiz shows. But she sounds like a lot of people's Grans so to make her more interesting I might say that she likes listening to Heavy Metal or that if she won the lottery she would spend it on a new Playstation because she's a secret gamer...

When you've worked out what the surprising or interesting thing is about your character, and you're happy that you have a good idea of who they are I want you to answer three big questions about them.

- 1) What secret are they hiding?
- 2) What do they want? (In life or in this moment, it's up to you)
- 3) What do they need? (In life or in this moment, it's up to you)

For example, I might say that Edna's secret is that she hasn't told her family about a giant dragon tattoo on her back, or that she is living a double life as a secret agent or she is actually bald and wears a wig....

She might want some cake or want to run away and live abroad or want to win the lottery or want her next-door neighbour's new conservatory to collapse...

She might need confidence or to know that she is loved or need to realise that her neighbour is actually a very lonely man without many friends, that she should be nicer to...

Challenge Yourself:

If you've enjoyed this exercise, there's lots of things you could do next:

- * Write a monologue for your character. That is a section of speech that they might say. It could be an inner monologue which explains their thoughts and feelings (think of it like a diary entry), or an external monologue which is what they might say to someone out loud, how they wish the world to see them.
- * Write your character's social media profile. How might they describe themselves on facebook/twitter etc? Try doing it with a strict word limit.
- * Have a go at drawing your character to see if you can clearly visualise what they look like.
- * Try writing a scene in which they talk to someone you've mentioned in your character profile. It might be a conversation with a family member they do or don't like, a phone call between them and their best friend, a meeting with their boss etc.
- * Pick another item of clothing and do the exercise again. You could then write a scene between your two characters – in the queue for the bus, bumping into one another in the street, as next-door neighbours etc.
- * Have a go at the follow-on workshops: Writing a Scene and Using Dialogue, Plot and Structure and Exploring a Theme. You can build on the character(s) you've created here and with these additional workshops gain the skills to think about writing your own short play.

This workshop was devised by Becci Sharrock for New Writing North Young Writers.



Becci is a writer, theatre maker and creative producer. She's toured theatre shows across the UK and been the writer in residence at Beamish Museum. Her work has been commissioned by Tidy Carnage, Made in Corby and Queen's Hall Arts, amongst others. Her site specific piece Night Trade, commissioned by Alphabetti Theatre, was joint winner of the North East Theatre Guide's Best New Writing.

She is currently working on a an adaption of The Secret Garden, an interactive theatre piece set in the Mariana Trench and a play about a conflict journalist.

New Writing North Young Writers is a programme for young people aged 12-19. We run creative writing groups, masterclasses and programmes in schools across the North East. We support young people to express their ideas, to work with professional writers and artists, to create and share new work, and to meet other young writers.

We would love to read your writing! Share it with us on social media using #writingfromhome or by emailing youngwriters@newwritingnorth.com. Search for New Writing North Young Writers on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter, where we will also be sharing regular writing prompts. Each week we will select a Young Writer of the Week whose work will be shared on our channels.

Find other writing workshops and much more on our website www.newwritingnorth.com

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Character Questions

- 1) What's their name? Think about first name, any middle names and a surname
- 2) How old are they?
- 3) What's their gender?
- 4) Do they go to school or have a job?
- 5) If they go to school, what are their favourite classes?
- 6) If they have a job, what is it?
- 7) Where do they live?
- 8) What type of house do they live in? (Flat, bungalow, cottage etc. Is it well-looked after or run-down?)
- 9) What family do they have?
- 10) How do they feel about their family? Do they get on?
- 11) How much money do they have?
- 12) Who's their best friend?
- 13) What do they do when they spend time together?
- 14) Have they ever fallen out and if so, what about?
- 15) How would their best friend describe them?
- 16) What's your character's favourite meal?
- 17) What type of music do they like listening to?
- 18) What sort of books do they read?
- 19) What's their favourite film or TV show?
- 20) What makes them laugh?
- 21) What makes them cry?
- 22) When was the last time they cried and why?
- 23) What's the best present they've ever been given and who was it from?
- 24) If they won £100 on the lottery, what would they do with it?
- 25) What's the last text/DM/Whatsapp they received and who was it from?



Star Signs

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

Aries loves to be number one, so it's no surprise that these audacious rams are the first sign of the zodiac. Bold and ambitious, Aries dives headfirst into even the most challenging situations.

Strengths - courageous, determined, confident, enthusiastic, optimistic, honest

Weaknesses - impatient, moody, short-tempered, impulsive, aggressive

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

Taurus is an earth sign represented by the bull. Like their celestial spirit animal, Taureans enjoy relaxing in serene, countryside environments surrounded by soft sounds, soothing aromas, and succulent flavours.

Strengths - reliable, patient, practical, devoted, responsible, stable

Weaknesses - stubborn, possessive, uncompromising

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Have you ever been so busy that you wished you could clone yourself just to get everything done? That's the Gemini experience in a nutshell. Appropriately symbolized by the celestial twins, this air sign was interested in so many pursuits that it had to double itself.

Strengths - gentle, affectionate, curious, adaptable, ability to learn quickly and exchange ideas

Weaknesses - nervous, inconsistent, indecisive

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

Cancer is a cardinal water sign. Represented by the crab, this crustacean seamlessly weaves between the sea and shore representing Cancer's ability to exist in both emotional and material realms. Cancers are highly intuitive and their psychic abilities manifest in tangible spaces: For instance, Cancers can effortlessly pick up the energies in a room.

Strengths - tenacious, highly imaginative, loyal, emotional, sympathetic, persuasive

Weaknesses - moody, pessimistic, suspicious, manipulative, insecure

Leo (July 23 - August 22)

Roll out the red carpet because Leo has arrived. Leo is represented by the lion and these spirited fire signs are the kings and queens of the celestial jungle. They're delighted to embrace their royal status: Vivacious, theatrical, and passionate, Leos love to bask in the spotlight and celebrate themselves.

Strengths - creative, generous, loving, warm-hearted, cheerful, humorous

Weaknesses - arrogant, stubborn, self-centered, lazy, inflexible

Virgo (August 23 - September 22)

Virgo is an earth sign historically represented by the goddess of wheat and agriculture, an association that speaks to Virgo's deep-rooted presence in the material world. Virgos are logical, practical, and systematic in their approach to life. This earth sign is a perfectionist at heart and isn't afraid to improve skills through diligent and consistent practice.

Strengths - loyal, analytical, kind, hardworking, practical

Weaknesses - shyness, worry, overly critical of self and others, all work and no play

Libra (September 23 - October 22)

Libra is an air sign represented by the scales (interestingly, the only inanimate object of the zodiac), an association that reflects Libra's fixation on balance and harmony. Libra is obsessed with symmetry and strives to create equilibrium in all areas of life.

Strengths - cooperative, diplomatic, gracious, fair-minded, social

Weaknesses - indecisive, avoids confrontations, will carry a grudge, self-pity

Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)

Scorpio is one of the most misunderstood signs of the zodiac. Because of its incredible passion and power, Scorpio is often mistaken for a fire sign. In fact, Scorpio is a water sign that derives its strength from the psychic, emotional realm.

Strengths - resourceful, brave, passionate, stubborn, a true friend

Weaknesses - distrusting, jealous, secretive, violent

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)

Represented by the archer, Sagittarians are always on a quest for knowledge. The last fire sign of the zodiac, Sagittarius launches its many pursuits like blazing arrows, chasing after geographical, intellectual, and spiritual adventures.

Strengths - generous, idealistic, great sense of humour

Weaknesses - promises more than can deliver, very impatient, will say anything no matter how undiplomatic

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)

The last earth sign of the zodiac, Capricorn is represented by the sea goat, a mythological creature with the body of a goat and tail of a fish. Accordingly, Capricorns are skilled at navigating both the material and emotional realms.

Strengths - responsible, disciplined, self-control, good managers

Weaknesses - know-it-all, unforgiving, expecting the worst

Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

Despite the "aqua" in its name, Aquarius is actually the last air sign of the zodiac. Aquarius is represented by the water bearer, the mystical healer who bestows water, or life, upon the land. Accordingly, Aquarius is the most humanitarian astrological sign.

Strengths - Progressive, original, independent, humanitarian

Weaknesses - Runs from emotional expression, temperamental, uncompromising, aloof

Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

Pisces, a water sign, is the last constellation of the zodiac. It's symbolized by two fish swimming in opposite directions, representing the constant division of Pisces' attention between fantasy and reality. As the final sign, Pisces has absorbed every lesson — the joys and the pain, the hopes and the fears — learned by all of the other signs.

Strengths - Compassionate, artistic, intuitive, gentle, wise, musical

Weaknesses - Fearful, overly trusting, sad, desire to escape reality, can be a victim or a martyr