

The Art of Pre-Writing

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- a. Book/Series planning - go over examples and methods.
 - b. character development - using prewriting for fleshing things out
 - i. character interview
 - ii. character sheets
 - c. character interactions
 - d. using pre-writing to dump writer's block
2. Second hour - writing prompts.
- a. Prompt 1 - Moving the plot along. (10 minutes)
 - b. Prompt 2 – Lists (10 minutes)
 - c. Prompt 3 – Character (10 minutes)
 - d. Prompt 4 – Outline (10 minutes)

BASIC PRE-WRITING IDEAS

OUTLINES- Rough or detailed – you choose! If you're doing series work, keep in mind the overall series plot, or plotlines that carry throughout.

SYNOPSIS – Both short and long.

LISTS – Get the basics down onto paper. Some of us are list makers. Make lists of characters with basic physical characteristics (you can refer to this during actual writing). Make lists of people in certain groups.

MIND MAPS: For visual people -- can be used to show character relationships, plot and subplots, etc... You can make collages.

RESEARCH – Research items on your list that require it. Tip: While writing insert XXX next to things that need research, then when you have research time, find all the XXX's in the MS and do your research, so you can do it all at once.

MAPS – Of the town, house, or setting of your story. Give yourself a visual representation of place.

GENEALOGY – use visual maps of bloodlines.

SNIPPETS/SCENES: - You can easily begin writing bits of prose to show relationships between characters, town politics, how a character feels about something. If sci-fi/fantasy -technology, customs, history, social classes, economic and government systems, manners of dress etc... even though these paragraphs of text may not make it into the novel. Or perhaps they will. If you're not a linear writer – they may.

CHARACTER INTERVIEW – If you don't understand a character's motivations or feelings about something, you can do a character interview. In this instance, pretend you're a reviewer and begin asking your character questions. Write down the responses.

Scene Setting Worksheet

Scene: _____

Where: _____

When: _____

Time: _____

Surroundings: _____

If outside, what does the sky look like? _____

What does the air feel like? _____

What does the air smell like? _____

List the sounds your characters can hear: _____

If inside, describe furnishings, textures, walls, colors, and light quality: _____

Why are your characters here? _____

How do your characters feel while here? _____

Who else is here and why? _____

What is the overall mood and why? _____

Add any additional questions you can think of and your answers here:

Three-Dimensional Character Sheet

General Information:

Name _____
Sex: _____ Age: _____
Birthplace: _____
Nationality: _____
Religion _____
Feelings about Religion: _____

Languages Spoken: _____
Political Affiliations: _____
Social Class: _____ Marital Status: _____

Family:

Father's Name: _____
Profession: _____
Is he living or dead, if dead, how did he die?

Mother's Name: _____
Profession: _____
Is she living or dead, if dead, how did she die?

Are parents happily married or divorced? _____
of Brothers: _____
Names: _____

of Sisters: _____
Names: _____

Description of family escutcheon (coat of arms):

Interesting information regarding family:

Marriage to whom and when:

Number of children ages and names if any:

Type of relationship with family:

Thoughts about family:

Physical Appearance:

Height:_____ Weight:_____ Eyes:_____ Hair:_____

Forehead:_____

Jawline:_____ Lips:_____ Mouth:_____

Eyebrows:_____

Hands:_____ Fingers:_____ Shoulders:_____

Limbs:_____

Complexion:_____ Breasts:_____ Waist:_____

Hips:_____

Neck:_____ Ears:_____ Nose:_____

Teeth:_____

Type of body:

Birthmarks or scars:

Posture:_____

Overall Appearance:_____

Education and Work:

Profession:_____

Guilds:_____

Education:_____

Poorest Subjects:

Favorite Subjects:

Quality of work performed:

Hours worked per week:_____

Income:_____

Reputation with those worked with:

Military Service:

Branch: _____

Enlisted Rank: _____

Highest Rank achieved: _____

Unit or Legion: _____ # of years served: _____

Served under what ruler(s):

Campaigns of note:

Decorations: _____

Weapons trained to use:

Proficiency with weapons used:

Where trained and by who:

Official opinion of character as a soldier:

Traits and Personality:

Major Traits:

Minor Traits:

Outstanding Qualities:

Character Flaws:

Habitual Expressions:

Habitual Mannerisms:

Fears: _____

Psycho-Analysis of Character: _____

Temperment: _____

Emotional Level (i.e. cries at the drop of a hat): _____

Attitude toward life:

Is (s)he a leader, follower, or dropout:

Personal Information:

Hobbies or pastimes:

Favorite books and/or songs:

Favorite colors:

Favorite foods:

Favorite drinks:

Taste in Jewelry:

Taste in clothing:

Favorite entertainment:

Type of women/men attracted to or preferred: _____

What is his/her attitude toward small children:

Attitude toward animals (pets, horses etc...):

City background:

Country background:

Describe furnishings in characters home (colors and materials):

Mode of transportation (i.e. car, ship, plane, wagon, horse, walking etc...):

Additional Questions:

What does he/she value most:

What does (s)he carry with her/him:

What was the worst crime (s)he committed:

What do friends and neighbors really think of him/her?

Who are his/her closest friends?

What does he/she value most in his/her friends?

Who are his/her worst enemies and why?

Other Character Information:

FANTASY/SCI-FI
Generalized World Building Outline Worksheet

GEOGRAPHY

Mountains, plains, desert, woodlands, swamp, etc...

CLIMATE

Distinct seasons, snow, rain, arid, humid, temperatures etc...

PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE

What types of plant life does the geography and climate sustain?

FOOD

What do the animals *and* people eat?

DOMESTICATED ANIMALS

What types of livestock can the climate and geography support? What about pets and companion animals?

WILD ANIMALS

What types of animals does this environment sustain naturally? How do the people and wild animals interact? Are the wild animals herbivores, carnivores, or omnivores? What is the food chain like? If you have wild carnivores, they need other creatures to feed on. If you have herbivores, there must be enough vegetation to sustain them.

CULTURES/SOCIETIES:

Village, town or city? Rural, suburban, inner-city?

GOVERNMENT and LAWS

What kind of government?

How and why did this government come to be?

Who makes the laws and who upholds the laws?

What are the laws and the consequences of breaking the law?

ECONOMICS

Money, coins, credits, gems, barter system?

Trade, import and export, etc... (look at natural resources available to your people based on their geographic location)

How are goods exported and imported? Transportation?

TECHNOLOGY AND MAGIC

What types of technology/magic are present and how do they work?

How does this technology/magic affect transportation?

How has the technology/magic played a role in building or destroying the society that uses it? How does it affect individuals?

What are the consequences (globally, locally, or individually) of this technology/magic?

If the society is advanced – what kind of medical technology and care is available to the people? If the society is pre-industrial do they have herbalists, medicine men, or do they use magic to cure their sick?

What kinds of diseases/illnesses are common?

SOCIETAL STRUCTURE

Social classes – Warrior/Spiritual, Wealthy/Working Class/Poor etc, where do these people live and do the structures in which they live vary from class to class?

Family structure – Who raises and teaches the children, who cooks, who takes care of ill family members, do extended families live together?

Gender roles – Which gender is dominant, or is there no difference? How do educational and societal expectations differ between genders?

Clothing, earthly possessions, jewelry, hairstyles based on class and/or gender?

Food – is there a difference in what and how people eat based on their place in society?

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

Holidays/Celebrations, rites of passage, family traditions.

What behaviors are frowned upon? What behaviors are appropriate?

What phrases or words are only used by people from this particular place?

What are the origins of these phrases or words?

RELIGION

Religious Holidays? One god vs. many gods. No gods. Spiritual philosophy etc... What are their beliefs about birth, death, and the afterlife? Do they prefer burial, cremation or something else? Why? Who is in charge of the place of worship?

WORLD AND LOCAL HISTORY

Wars and Peace Treaties:

Major discoveries, events that altered history:

The history of the interaction between different societies:

Natural disasters that affected or altered history.

Important historical figures.

CHARACTER INTERVIEW:
Some questions to ask your characters.

How are you feeling today?
How do you feel about [insert situation here]?
What is going on in your life that you're struggling with? Why?
What are you angry about? Why?
What are you happy about? Why?
How do you feel about your relationship?
What needs to change for you to be able to move forward?
How do you feel about your archenemy?
How did you and your partner meet?
How did you and your archenemy meet?
What was the final straw in [insert situation here]?
What was your life like as a child and how is it influencing your current situation?
What led you to your current career? (There's always a story here.)
Are there any constant themes in your life that seem to be replaying now?
Where would you like to be in five years? Ten? Twenty?
If you were a character from history – who would you be?
What was the last book you read and how did you feel about it?
Describe your greatest strength: (Would your friends and family agree?)
Describe your biggest weaknesses: (Would your friends and family agree?)
Tell me the story of your greatest life trauma. (Death of a loved one, destruction of home, rape, being attacked, etc...)
How do your past traumas affect the current situation?
When you're stressed, what do you do to calm down?
How do you spend your alone time?
Tell us about your hobbies.
What are your favorite activities to do with friends and family?
Tell me about the first time your heart was broken.
Tell me the story about your first love.
What makes you laugh? Can you share a funny story?
Who is your best friend? How did you meet?
If you don't have close friends, why not? Do you wish you had friends?
What do you want more than anything else in the world and why?

ADD YOUR OWN QUESTIONS HERE:

