

Covenant of the Arc

Tips for Finding Your Character's Arc

The Problem: You're not sure how to create believable growth for your character.

The Essentials: A flawed character who wants something but can't get it. During conflict, this character grows past his flaw and discovers his growth is more important than getting what he wanted.

The Dilemma: Your story HAS all that but it just isn't grabbing your readers

The Solution:

- IDENTIFY not only what your character WANTS but what he NEEDS
- DEVELOP an initial flaw and a strength that emerges which are on a continuum
- CONNECT these elements together

The Result: A strong character-driven plot which is much more believable and identifiable, thus creating an emotional connection your readers can grab onto. THAT is how to find your arc!

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS CONTINUUM			
<small>(information from multiple sources)</small>			
WEAKNESS	CHARACTER FLAW PERCEIVED NEED (WANT)	UNKNOWN INNER NEED	STRENGTH
Manipulative	to be control	to adapt/accept others' roles	Leadership, deals with people and ideas skillfully
Manipulative	to be right	to give value to other ideas	Persuasive
Impetuous or self-involved	control	to consider all options	Decisive
Controlled by circumstances	Fears the unknown	to find balance	Lives in the present, realistic
Unreliable	Doesn't trust own abilities	to recognize own value	Self-reliant
Ruthless	Believes end justifies means	to recognize some costs are too high	Earnest, with convictions and purpose
Ends justify means	to achieve	to accept some achievements aren't worth it	Goal-oriented
Tentative or relentless	Fear of failure	to trust self	Strategist, careful,

			prepared
Bossy, arrogant	Fear of failure	needs to trust others	Competent, in-charge
Judgmental, vengeful, righteous	Justice (own view of)	needs to accept justice has many forms	Power of convictions
Gullible, Unrealistic	Believes he needs no one	accept own fallibility	Self-assured
Egotistical	Believes world can be manipulated	needs to find role within world	Intuitive, understanding of others
Unrealistic	Fears unknown	Needs to trust	Intuitive, trusts inherent human judgment
Uncompromising, resistant to change	Fears chaos	needs to trust	Faithful, steadfast, unflappable
Failure to know oneself	to please others	to recognize own needs/value	Compassionate
Self-involved	Doubts self-worth	needs to recognize self worth	Challenges oneself
Undisciplined, unpredictable	Pursuit of freedom	to find value in order	Spontaneous
Too rigid	order	needs to become flexible	Logical/practical
Defensive	Fears misjudgment		Perfectionist
Decides by feelings	Feels need to please		Optimistic
Reckless	Feels need to take risks		Fearless, intrepid
Won't give up	Result-friven		Persistent, determined
Distrusting	Fears emotional attachment		Independent
Distrusts logic	Fears misjudgment		Intuitive
Fearful	Safety		Cautious
Unreliable, rash	Feels Need for change		Adventuresome, daring
Unemotional	Pursuit of truth		Honest
Unemotional	Fears risk		Balanced
Distrusts intuition, calculating, shrewd, cunning	Relies only on logic		Analytical
Insensitive	Relies on goals, tests		Competitive
Submissive	Connects self-worth to being loved		selfless

Critical	Relies on logic, fears chaos		Analytical
Covers flaws with mask	Believes self to be flawed		Ability to be someone else (wears mask)
Indecisive, obedient	Seeks approval		Adaptable
Hard to please	seeks goals/fears failure		Perfectionist
Pliant, deferential	Fears does not know best		Flexible, diplomatic
Naive	Needs to hope for the best		Optimistic
Unable to take a stand	Fears confrontation		Tolerant
Predatory	Believes own needs surpass everyone else		Resourceful
Naive	Needs to hope for best		Idealistic
Pessimistic, fatalistic	Fears self unredeemable		Fearless, no fear of consequences
Domineering	wants to win/succeed		Confident
Follows others blindly	Believes the best		Faithful, steadfast
Fears emotions	Believes love is conditional		Places no expectations
Gullible	seeks fairness		Free from bias, open-minded
Gullible, unrealistic	wants to be trusted		Loyal
Compulsive, can't let go	Believes to endure is to conquer		Patience
Judgmental			Ethical
inflexible			reliable
dogmatic			Productive
critical			Idealistic
Controlling			Honest
Anxious			Orderly
jealous			Self-disciplined
Martyr-like			Loving
manipulative			Adaptable
possessive			Insightful
Overly accommodating			Enthusiastic

Overly demonstrative			Tuned in to others
narcissistic			Confident
vain			Efficient
superficial			Self-propelled
Overly competitive			Practical
impetuous			decisive
Guilt-ridden			Introspective
moralistic			Expressive
withdrawn			Creative
stubborn			Intuitive
moody			Supportive
Self-absorbed			Refined
Intellectually arrogant			Analytical
stingy			Preserving
stubborn			Sensitive
distant			Wise
Critical of others			Objective
hypervigilant			Loyal
controlling			Likeable
distrustful			Responsible
impulsive			Spontaneous
unfocused			Imaginative
rebellious			productive
undisciplined			Enthusiastic
manic			Confident
restless			Curious
controlling			direct
rebellious			Authoritative
insensitive			Loyal

domineering			energetic
skeptical			protective
aggressive			Self-confident
forgetful			Peaceful
Passive-aggressive			Diplomatic
unassertive			empathetic
Self-righteous, inflexible, Judgmental, critical	To be right, to have integrity and balance, strive higher, improve others, be consistent with ideals, justify self, not be condemned		Accepting, wise, principled, Responsible
Depressed, alienated, hateful, self-indulgent, self- absorbed, temperamental			Life-embracing, introspective, sensitive, creative, individualistic
Overwhelmed, paralyzed, reckless, manic, excessive, self-centered, scattered			Productive, realistic, enthusiastic, anticipating, satisfied, joyful
People-pleasing, Self- important, entitled, Victimized, manipulative			Self-nurturing, loving, Caring, empathic, supportive
Eccentric, escaping into self, provocative, preoccupied			Visionary, focused, innovative, perceptive, observant
Destructive, sociopathic, ruthless, confrontational, dominating			Enterprising, self- confident, leading, strong, heroic, self- reliant
Deceptive, relentless, grandiose, self-promoting, image-conscious			Goal-oriented, adaptable, inner- directed, authentic, self- improving
Self-abasing, paranoid, panicky, unreliable, blaming, defensive			Dutiful, loyal, committed, cooperative, engaging, self-reliant, courageous
Dissociating, neglectful, resigned, appeasing, complacent, disengaged			Agreeable, unselfish, comforting, peaceful, unself-conscious, self- possessed

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Enneagram Strength/Weakness Chart

	One: Reformer or Perfectionist	Two: Helper		
Healthy or High-Functioning Traits (Strengths)	Disciplined Consistent Discerning Ethical Principled Just Fair Reliable Wise Full of integrity Perfectionist Self-disciplined	Conscientious Advocate Logical Tolerant Moral Good Realistic Productive Honest Power of convictions Practical Scrupulous	Compassionate Needed Nurturing Tender Helpful Giving Humble Touching Insightful Thoughtful Intuitive Empathetic	Sympathetic Altruistic Caring Warm Concerned Loving Adaptable Gracious Enthusiastic Dedicated Outgoing Supportive
Average Traits (Strengths or Weaknesses)	Appropriate Orderly Proper Critical Judgmental Idealistic Rigid Opinionated Moralizing Worrier Fastidious	Impersonal Controlling Fixer Purist Anxious Crusader Perfectionistic Impatient Scolding Workaholic Picky	Appreciative Complimentary Generous Catering People-focused Demonstrative Enveloping Self-Important	Indispensable Encouraging Emotional Intimate Indirect Overly-friendly Talkative Meddlesome Overbearing
Unhealthy or Low-Functioning Traits (Weaknesses)	Hard to please Inflexible Non-adaptable Indignant Obstinate Punitive Dogmatic Overly serious Depressed Too rigid	Self-righteous Compulsive Resentful Nit-picking Hypocritical Abrasive Obsessive Jealous Righteous Cruel	Manipulative Possessive Patronizing Effusive Martyr-like Self-Serving Guilt-producer Smothering Food/Med Abuse Seductive	Domineering Manipulator Repressive Flatterer Prideful Victim Hysterical Excessive Bitter Submissive
Drive or Perceived Need/Want (Flaw)	Needs to make the world perfect Needs to live life the right way Needs to improve self & others Needs to avoid anger at self Needs goals Needs order and balance Needs fairness and justice Needs to avoid (fears) failure		Needs to satisfy others' needs Needs to be loved & appreciated Needs to express positive feelings Needs to avoid being seen as needy Needs to please	
Unconscious Need (Arc Point Possibilities)	Needs to accept own flaws Needs to accept imperfect world Needs to release self-directed anger Needs to let go & enjoy Needs to recognize other visions		Needs to recognize own needs Need to accept its ok to ask for help Needs to give without expectations	

	Three: Motivator or Achiever	Four: Individualist or Romantic		
Healthy or High-Functioning Traits (Strengths)	Admired Creative Accomplished Outstanding Motivator Empowering Highly social Optimistic Industrious Authentic Self-assured Determined	Practical Charming Impressive Goal-oriented Self-starter Energetic All together Confident Realistic Decisive Enthusiastic Persuasive	Self-aware Inspired Intuitive Sensitive Personal Cherishes beauty Artistic Compassionate Supportive Helpful Gentle Tactful	Vulnerable Creative Refined Unique Revealing Expressive Warm Introspective Empathetic Introspective Individualistic Humane
Average Traits (Strengths or Weaknesses)	Adaptable Career-focused Achiever Image conscious Seeks success Performer Acquisitive Grandiose Superficial	Pragmatic Opportunistic Ambitious Competitive Efficient Driven Superior Impatient	Self-absorbed Feels different Special Emotional Self-conscious Stubborn Imaginative Moralizing Self-indulgent	Dreamer Enigmatic Moody Romantic Withdrawn Impractical Hypersensitive Disdainful Unproductive
Unhealthy or Low-Functioning Traits (Weaknesses)	Calculating Chameleon Pretentious Seeks admiration Ruthless Self-promoting Overly competitive Opportunistic Pathological Arrogant Delusional Obsessive Hostile	Defensive Arrogant Self-deceptive Deceptive Narcissistic Superficial Vindictive Vain Relentless Unprincipled Insensitive Manipulative Ends justifies means	Self-pitying Melancholic Despairing Tormented Exempt Self-reproachful Avoids ordinariness Overly dramatic Angry Escapist Fantasy-world Substance abuser	Impractical Depressed Alienated Hopeless Fears success Guilt-ridden Moralistic Intractable Ashamed Distrusts logic Delusional
Drive or Perceived Need/Want (Flaw)	Needs success & achievement Needs to be productive/see results Needs to avoid failure Needs goals and tests Needs to feel valuable/affirmed		Needs to be special & unique Needs to understand own feelings Needs to be understood Needs to find meaning of life Needs to avoid being ordinary Fears misjudgment	

Unconscious Need (Arc Point Possibilities)	Need to let others see real you Need to be honest Needs to relax and feel Needs to avoid hiding behind image & achievements	Needs to know own value Needs to see life as full Needs to count blessings Needs to find joy
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	Five: Thinker or Observer	Six: Loyalist or Questioner
Healthy or High-Functioning Traits (Strengths)	Knowledgeable Observant Perceptive Thoughtful Insightful Profound Thorough Wise Loyal Theorist Speculative Original Innovative Analytical Keeps confidences Persevering Sensitive Objective Integrity Curious Foresightful Skillful Independent Calm Artistic Balanced	Upholds authority Practical Responsible Cooperative Warm-hearted Committed Trustworthy Engaging Likeable Endearing Appealing Loyal Caring Warm Compassionate Witty Helpful Loyal Hard-working Self-expressive Dedicated Reliable Organized Stable Earnest Engaging
Average Traits (Strengths or Weaknesses)	Understanding Researcher Concentrated Interprets Self-reliant Intense Non-threatening Distant Private Detached Self-contained Stubborn Critical of others Unassertive Perceptive Conceptualizing Intellectual Preoccupied Studious High strung Abrasive Cynical	Interdependent Ambivalent Seeks permission Cautious Rule follower Obedient Minimizer Faithful True friend Worrier Judgmental Dutiful Structuring Vigilant Passive-aggressive Anxious Unpredictable Insecure Defensive Sarcastic Reactive Belligerent
Unhealthy or Low-Functioning Traits (Weaknesses)	Determined Antagonistic Eccentric Reclusive Self-absorbed Arrogant Fearfully uncertain Alienated Compartmentalizes Nihilist Distorts ideas Negative Isolates from reality Stingy Unavailable Obsessed Phobic Unstable Suicidal Psychotic Deranged Schizophrenic	Overly dependent Paranoid Overly independent Evasive Contradictory Rebellious Projects blame Dare devil Indecisive Testy Controlling Unpredictable Defensive Rigid Substance abuser Gullible Persecuted Fanatical Self-destructive Violent Hysterical Suicidal
Drive or Perceived Need/Want (Flaw)	Needs to figure out life Needs to know & understand universe Needs to be self-sufficient Needs to be left alone Needs to avoid not having answer or looking foolish Fears risk and chaos NOTE: OFTEN INTROVERTS	Needs to be faithful & dependable Needs to receive approval/be trusted Needs to feel taken care of/feel secure Needs to avoid being seen as rebellious NOTE: Phobic sixes are outwardly fearful & seek approval. Counter-phobic sixes confront their fears. Both aspects can appear in same person.
Unconscious Need (Arc Point Possibilities)	Need to accept OK to explore or let loose of emotions Need to not withhold self Need to become involved	Needs to learn to trust Needs to build insight not fear Needs to let go of worry & doubt Needs to have faith, relax, confide

	Seven: Enthusiast	Eight: Leader or Asserter
Healthy or High-Functioning Traits (Strengths)	Spontaneous Extroverted Multi-talented Enthusiastic Versatile Exuberant Full of delight Joyful Futuristic Amusing Networker Playful Free Fun-loving Imaginative Productive Quick Confident Charming Curious Entrepreneurial Adventurous Accomplished Appreciative	Confident Charismatic Inspiring Protective Powerful Decisive Strong Builder Leader Determined Magnanimous Constructive Authoritative Loyal Energetic Self-reliant Courageous Visionary Honorable Unpretentious Strong-willed Fair Straight forward Heroic
Average Traits (Strengths or Weaknesses)	Appreciates things Experiential Gregarious Humorous Loves variety Planner Options open Lively Restless Unfocused Undisciplined Impulsive Acquisitive Materialistic World-wise Sophisticated Uncommitted Self-centered Trendy Uninhibited Superficial Demanding	Takes charge Expansive Fights for fairness Forceful Struggles Fortright Adversarial Domineering Direct Earthy Protective Insensitive Domineering Skeptical Self-centered Independent Pragmatic Bossy Forceful Egocentric Confrontational Risk-taking
Unhealthy or Low-Functioning Traits (Weaknesses)	Hyperactive Excessive Acts out anxiety Escapist Fears depth Superficial More is better Rebellious Narcissistic Possessive Abusive Self-destructive Manic Infantile Debauchery Panic-stricken Depressed Offensive	Power broker Intimidating Confrontational Impulsive Grandiose Controlling Blunt Defiant Destructive Vengeful Explosive Raging Rebellious Aggressive Immoral Conniving Ruthless Renegade Delusional Brutal Murderous Sociopathic
Drive or Perceived Need/Want (Flaw)	Needs to be on the go and have fun Needs to be happy and satisfied Needs to plan fun things Needs freedom and change Needs to contribute to world Needs to avoid suffering & pain	Needs to be strong & in control Needs to be self-reliant, independent Needs to make impact on world Needs to avoid being weak Needs no one
Unconscious Need (Arc Point Possibilities)	Face fears & other negative emotions rather than pretending they don't exist Needs to talk about problems Needs to find balance Need to accept what you have Need to finish tasks	Needs to accept own limits & vulnerability Needs to listen to others Needs to surrender control Needs to find good outlets for anger Needs to use energy Needs to express need for affection

	Nine: Peacemaker		
Healthy or High-Functioning Traits (Strengths)	Un-self-conscious Unpretentious Easygoing Supportive Good natured Self-effacing Pleasant Generous Open-minded Communicator Gentle Serene	Patient Receptive Reassuring Accepting Gracious Guileless Peaceful Diplomatic Empathetic Mediator Tolerant Lives in the present	
Average Traits (Strengths or Weaknesses)	Accommodating Comfortable Minimizer Content Peaceful Unifying Stubborn Agreeable Fatalistic Obstinate	Genuine Appreciative Complacent Protective Resigned Unassertive Absent minded Disengaged Oblivious Inattentive	
Unhealthy or Low-Functioning Traits (Weaknesses)	Non-responsive Self-deprecating Resigned Obstinate Passive-aggressive Spaced-out Obsessive Judgmental Listless Indecisive Catatonic Multiple-personalities	Lazy Repressed Depressed Oblivious Punitive Forgetful Apathetic Ineffectual Neglectful Disoriented Fractured	
Drive or Perceived Need/Want (Flaw)	Needs to bring harmony to world Needs to keep the peace Needs to merge with others Needs to avoid conflict NOTE: Often takes on type 8 qualities. Many personality variations from gentle & mild-mannered to independent & forceful.		
Unconscious Need (Arc Point Possibilities)	Needs to learn to express opinion Needs to accept it's ok to say no Needs to take risks, action Needs to accept & express anger Needs to express desires Needs to face conflict		

Basic Character Grid

Inciting Incident	
Long Range Goal	
Short Range Goal	
Character Flaw	
Relationship Barrier	
Black Moment	
Realization	

Adapted Grid with Strengths/Weaknesses, Wants/Needs

(Example from Escaping Yesterday by Pamela Nowak)

Character	Lottie	Caleb
Inciting Incident	Gets stranded in Denver by boyfriend, contacts friend	Asked to pick her up and bring her to Elitch's
Long Range Goal	wants to earn enough money to support daughter (sell rides to Mary Elitch)	wants to protect Mary Elitch Long and keep Elitch's a place of peace and beauty
Immediate Goal	Get job	Get rid of Lottie
Beginning Adjectives	impulsive, sensual, single-minded	Protective/ distrustful/judgmental, intense/loner, tunnel vision
WANT	Wants to flee from emotional reality and past avoid emotions by losing self in action and excitement	Wants to create perfect seclusion; avoid new people and experiences
NEED	needs to find joy in ordinary, focus, allow deep emotional response (to be satisfied and content). Being not Doing	needs to trust to engage in life and relationships with others
Character Flaw	Avoids anxiety/negative feelings by seeking stimulation in new ideas and activities	Anxious about ability to cope in the world—retreats into self, doubts own ability in larger scope of things
Relationship Barrier	seeks playmates without emotional attachment; does not want to risk deeper ties, fear of pain, won't let anyone too close	afraid to let others influence him, too involved in own world, distrusts others' motives
Crisis	Uncle tries to take daughter	Lottie and daughter in danger
Black Moment	Must face past, emotions, and uncle to be free of him	Must trust Lottie to take care of herself instead of trying to rescue her
Ending Adjectives	enthusiastic, imaginative, driven	Responsible, focused, perceptive/seeing larger picture,
Realization	Facing past & emotions is only way to find true joy in present	Trust and being open to new ideas can lead to new visions of perfect