Write a Great Antagonist Worksheet

Antagonist Questions

Answer as many of the following questions as you can about your antagonist. If you do not have an answer, move on to the next question. Use this worksheet for brainstorming! If you are just starting to design your villain, put down any possibility that comes to your head and then go back and refine.

Is he a villain as well as an antagonist?

Backstory

Redeemable Traits

Unlikeable Traits

Are there ways the villain is sympathetic? If so, how?

Skills
Does your antagonist fit into an archetype?

How does your antagonist speak? Does he use large words? Does he have a high voice? This question is about considering how his dialogue would manifest itself in the story.

Relationship with protagonist?

Hierarchy with other characters (who does he have power or control over? Who are his equals? Does he have anyone above him?)

How is he a Genuine Threat?
How is he an obstacle to the protagonist?

What is his goal?

What is his motivation for his goal?

Is he a point-of-view character? How does the chosen POV of your story affect the way the reader perceives and gets to know the antagonist?

Flaws (how he gets in his own way)

Is he the face of an abstract antagonist? If so, what is the abstract antagonist?

Does he have proxies, sidekicks, or henchmen?
Antagonist Scenes

This section is designed to help you brainstorm possible scenes with your antagonist. Remember, you really can just brainstorm here. You do not even need to know the order these scenes would go in!

List possible scenes that could show his backstory

List possible scenes in which we could empathize with him

List possible scenes of opposition between the antagonist and either the hero or other characters, who wins in each scene, and what new information the reader learns because of this altercation.

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<th>CHARACTERS INVOLVED</th>
<th>SCENE ACTION</th>
<th>WHO WINS</th>
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ANTAGONIST-DEVELOPING EXERCISES

The following are exercises designed to help you better know your antagonist. These are designed to help you flesh out the character in your own mind; what you write here will very likely not end up in your book verbatim.

Point of View Drills

Choose some scenes from your story or your proposed story and re-write them from the antagonist’s point of view. Consider his emotions, motive, goals, how he speaks, and how he moves. Do this for a conflict scene, a dialogue scene, and a more introspective scene.

Story Outline

Make a general outline of your story from the antagonists’ perspective. You do not need to be as detailed as you might be writing from the protagonist’s perspective, but this will help you consider what the antagonist is doing off-screen when we are following the protagonist around. Even if you only do this exercise for parts of your novel rather than the story in its entirety, it will help you get a handle on the antagonist and how he contributes to the story conflict. Take care as you do this to consider both his actions AND his emotions! You want to make sure there is a character development arc.

Goal Comparison

Compare your antagonist and protagonist’s goals. In each box write what the goal is and what he is willing to do to achieve it. Once you have written out these goals, put them in order of importance for each person. This will help you not only see internal struggles of each of these characters as a single person’s own goals conflict, but it will help you see how the antagonist’s and protagonist’s goals conflict as well.

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Additional Resources

As we discuss in the course, I recommend putting as much time into considering your antagonist as your main character. To that end, I have a number of character courses that I recommend going through if you have not already:

1. **Writing Unforgettable Characters: Crafting a Character Profile** (Start here. This class is about how to choose the foundational traits out of which all other traits grow). Includes a very helpful worksheet.
2. **Character Values & Beliefs: The Foundation of Your Character** (Take this course next. It really pairs with the Character Profile course. This also focuses on foundational traits you will want to sort out that determine why your character does what he/she does. If you want consistent characters, this class will help!)
3. **Character Flaws: Create Depth and Drive the Plot** (Do not neglect this course for antagonists. We tend to think antagonist flaws come easy, but if you are going to make a realistic opponent, you want to be strategic with your flaws.)
4. **Choosing a Character’s Strengths: Likeable but not Perfect** (You want to think about your opponent’s character strengths. Otherwise he will be one-dimensional. While this course is focused on the protagonist, all of it could be used to flesh-out the opponent as well.)
5. **Describing Traits, Actions, and Thoughts: Bring Characters to Life** (This course is focused not on the development or pre-planning of a character, but how to write that character into the story. You want to avoid overused or uninteresting character descriptions and try to write descriptions that strategically push the plot forward and choose the most relevant aspects of your character to share.)
6. **Write Believable Character Relationships** (Also about writing your characters into the story, this course will help you think about juxtaposing your protagonist and antagonist so that you choose the most interesting, dramatic, strategic traits for each.)
7. **Point of View: Compelling Narrative Voices** – Point of view affects a plot substantially. Even if you have already chosen your point of view, I think you will benefit from this course! Topics include:

Make a Difference!

If you enjoy these courses, *please leave a review!* It helps your peers, and it helps me make more courses!!

Please also share the courses with friends using the shareable link on the course page. It makes a BIG difference.
Thank you for your support and kindness! Best of luck with your writing!

Barbara