CHARACTER ENGINE

What does this character want, need, fear, and ultimately have to confront?

A character can have a great backstory and still feel flat. The real engine of a character is what they want, what they're missing, what scares them, and what they're forced to face.



01. THE BASICS

Character name:

Age

Role in the story:

What is the first thing we should understand about this character?

02. WHAT DO THEY WANT?

What does this character actively want?

Why do they want it so badly?

What are they willing to do to get it?



03. WHAT DO THEY NEED?

Want and need aren't always the same.

What does this character actually need?

What are they missing emotionally?

What truth do they need to understand?

04. WHAT DO THEY FEAR?

What is this character most afraid of?

What are they afraid people will discover about them?

What would completely break them?



05. THE WOUND

What happened to them that shaped who they are today?

What belief did they develop because of it?

How does that belief affect their choices now?

06. THE CONTRADICTION

Real people rarely make perfect sense.

What is something contradictory about this character?

What do they say they want vs. what their actions reveal they want?

They say:

But they actually:



07. THE CONFRONTATION

What will this character eventually have to face?

What truth are they trying to avoid?

What happens if they refuse to change?

08. THE CHARACTER ARC

At the beginning

They believe:

They want:

They fear:

By the end

They understand:

They become:

They choose:



THE CHARACTER ENGINE

Fill in the blanks:

My character wants

because

but they fear

so they

until they are forced to confront

and ultimately must learn

QUICK CHECK

- [ ] They want something
- [ ] Something is stopping them
- [ ] They have something to lose
- [ ] Their fear affects their choices
- [ ] Their past influences their present
- [ ] They have a contradiction
- [ ] They are forced to confront something
- [ ] They change because of what happens

REMEMBER

Plot is what happens to your character. Character is what makes them decide what to do about it.