

# PLOT DEVELOPMENT STEP BY STEP

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EXERCISES FOR PLANNING YOUR BOOK

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## IS THIS BOOK FOR ME?

**W**elcome to the art of plotting fiction.

Whether this is your first venture into writing or you're already an established author, this workbook is intended to help push your creativity into the realm of true originality.

**Plot Development Step by Step** is a companion to **Plot Development** and expands upon the teaching and principles we share in that step by step guide.

With hundreds of profound questions, exercises, and templates, there's no reason why you can't use **Plot Development Step by Step** as a standalone book if you so prefer. As such, this workbook is an extremely valuable resource in its own right. It will allow you to unleash the unique story that is coursing through your veins and begging to see the light of day.

Should you find yourself in need of understanding how to plot in greater detail, though, it's advisable to read **Plot Development** first. This is where you'll find all the exact explanations that will allow you to internalize the concepts of story structure.

Once you've understood what "makes a story work," you'll come to realize that while we humans have an innate comprehension of fiction, building a novel from scratch requires knowledge at a whole other level.

**Plot Development** gives you the means to complete a novel faster and in a quality that requires a minimum level of editing.

You should also know that we, the authors of this book, are writers just like you. We've written and published more than twenty books, not counting a boatload of short stories. Several of our books have become bestsellers.

We are based on either side of the Atlantic Ocean. Autumn is in the US, while Jesper is in Denmark.

The distance hasn't stopped us from becoming writing partners, though. We've co-written **Plot Development Step by Step**, just as we did **Plot Development**.

It was when writing **Plot Development** that it suddenly dawned on us. A workbook would be a great addition!

While **Plot Development** explains everything that a writer needs to know and makes use of examples throughout, it can be beneficial to have a long list of inspirational questions or similar guidance at hand. And that's what this workbook is.

There are no filler words within these pages. In that sense, this workbook is raw and to the point. It doesn't explain the skeleton of the outline. For that, consult **Plot Development**. What you'll be getting here are the bones that can, when joined together, form a complete framework. In other words, this is a guided approach to come up with story elements in a way that is as fun and uplifting as it is easy.

We hope you'll enjoy **Plot Development Step by Step** and find it immensely helpful.

## HOW TO READ THIS BOOK?

**T**he structure of this workbook follows the exact same layout we used in **Plot Development**.

In our opinion, this was how we could make this companion workbook work the best. Having the chapters follow those of **Plot Development** allows for easy referencing between the two books. At the same time, those who intend to use this workbook on its own will find it a logical flow from start to finish.

However, this is a workbook. Hence, you can easily jump around as you please. In that fashion, it's endlessly adaptable. Dip in and out of the questions, exercises, and templates as you wish.

Should you find parts that don't gel well with your story, just go ahead and skip that section.

We wanted to offer this workbook as both an e-book and a paperback. If you've decided to purchase the e-book version, you can't – for blatantly obvious reasons – write your answers inside the workbook itself. You'll have to equip yourself with a notebook and write out each of your answers there instead.



When coming up with answers, remember to question yourself: Could I come up with a better solution than I just did? Is there a way that I could make this even more exciting?

By the end of the workbook, you'll have all the pieces you need to put together a stellar outline.

Let's not forget, there's yet another use for this workbook ... imagine that you've already put an outline together, but it somehow doesn't feel right. There's some magic juice missing before it will become something readers will enjoy. It needs that something extra, yet you're just unable to define what it is.

Use this workbook as a magnifying glass through which you analyze the strengths and weaknesses of what you've previously created. Again, challenge yourself. Take control and go on to create unique stories that will make readers wish they had discovered your books much sooner.

YOUR NOVEL TITLE

**This is the Outline for:**

**Novel Title:**

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**Novel Sub-Title (if applicable):**

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**Series Name (if applicable):**

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**Book Number in the series:** \_\_\_\_\_

I

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## PILLAR 1

THE CHARACTERS





## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**W**ithout characters, there's no plot. A setting becomes irrelevant without characters. Where plotting and setting might be the anvil, the characters are the hammer that bends everything into the intended shape.

Form gives context, and with context, we begin to experience the tale as if it might as well be real life. We immerse ourselves fully in the story and suspend our disbelief.

Here are five characters that make up the backbone of any story:





## 1. PROTAGONIST

- Is the main driver behind the story. In other words, the protagonist needs to be in trouble.
- Whether the protagonist makes good or bad choices are irrelevant as long as the character is relatable to the reader. This is the person we cheer for.
- The protagonist's inner journey is what defines the theme of your story.

Famous examples:

Harry Potter in Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.

Indiana Jones in Raiders of the Lost Ark.

Katniss Everdeen in The Hunger Games.



## 2. MENTOR

- Is an experienced guide that helps the protagonist.
- Is trustworthy and is always in support of the protagonist.
- Inevitably teaches the protagonist something essential.
- Often dies, or disappears from the story by other means, in order to give the protagonist “space” to grow on his or her own.

Famous examples:

Gandalf in the Lord of the Rings.

Obi-Wan Kenobi in Star Wars.

Mr. Miyagi in The Karate Kid.



### 3. SIDEKICK

- Is a loyal companion to the protagonist.
- Assists the protagonist in reaching his or her goals.
- May question the protagonist from time to time to offer the reader a different perspective.
- The sidekick helps to show off the protagonist's soft side.

Famous examples:

Sam in the Lord of the Rings.

Chewbacca in Star Wars.

Dr. Watson in Sherlock Holmes.





#### 4. ANTAGONIST

- Attempts to stop the protagonist from reaching his or her goals.
- Is a complicated character with a redeeming quality that makes the antagonist relatable.
- Is often smarter and/or stronger (better situated) than the protagonist.
- Has his or her own character arc.

Famous examples:

Voldemort in The Harry Potter series.  
Hannibal Lecter in The Silence of the Lambs.  
The Joker in The Dark Knight.



## 5. LOVE INTEREST

- Is someone with whom the protagonist falls in love.
- Helps to humanize the protagonist.
- Introduces the possibility for additional conflict and suspense to the story.
- Can either support or resist the protagonist.

Famous examples:

Johnny in Dirty Dancing.

Rose in Titanic.

Wendy in Peter Pan.

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All of these five character types will deepen your plot and empower the story. However, every story is different. In some, the Love Interest

might be nothing more than a small subplot, whereas, in others, the romantic aspect is the story.

It's not as important whether these archetypes have a great role to play in your tale or not. The emphasis is to make sure they are each represented.

What follows is a list. Document the initial Cast of Characters for your novel here.

On this list, the five character types we mentioned above should be present, but go ahead and add any other types of characters your story will need. Do some brainstorming, considering your premise, and see where it takes you.

That said: Do make sure to challenge yourself and limit the list to what is really necessary. The more characters you add, the more confusing the story can become for the reader. Less is more. Keep that in mind.

It's quite normal that you realize, as you move ahead through the chapters of this book, how you need yet another character or even several. When that happens, simply return here and add in such characters.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### **Character Type #1:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #2:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #3:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #4:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #5:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #6:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #7:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #8:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #9:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**



**Character Type #10:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #11:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #12:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #13:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #14:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

**Character Type #15:**

(write protagonist, antagonist, etc. here)

**First Name:**

**Last Name:**

**Nickname (if relevant):**

**Gender:**

**Ethnic Background / Race:**

**Age:**

**Height:**

**Weight:**

**Body Type:**

**Eye Color:**

**Hair Color:**

**Hair Style:**

**Facial Hair:**

**Skin Color:**

**Relationships:**

**Other Information:**

## CHOOSING POV CHARACTERS

**T**he decision to give a character a POV (Point of View) in your novel should not be taken lightly!

It's an area where many authors either go overboard, as in adding too many POVs, or simply by not understanding how crucial their choices are going to be for the story.

When one character is given a POV instead of another, it has a greater impact on the novel than you might think. It will affect the tone. It will dictate which scenes will be included. It will also exclude certain narratives altogether, forcing some actions to take place “off camera.”

POV is therefore not a decision that should be taken on a whim!

You've already developed the Cast of Characters in the previous chapter. That's good because that's the list you're going to review now.

Review your cast and ask yourself the six questions below in order to validate who should have a POV. Record your results at the end of

this chapter, where you'll see that the protagonist is already occupying the first slot.



Question #1

Will this character's decisions greatly impact either the protagonist or the antagonist? If no, this is not a POV character.

Question #2

Is this character going to be featured in the next book in the series? If yes, it might be a good choice to give them a POV now and introduce them to the reader. This creates a certain level of continuity across the books.

Question #3

Is this character spending a lot of time together with the main character or with another POV character? If so, he or she is not a good choice as a POV character.

Question #4

Will it have a profound impact on the storytelling if the reader isn't served this character's POV? If the answer is no, then don't make this a POV character.

. . . .

Question #5

Is there something significant at stake for this character? If not, this should not be a POV character.

Question #6

Is this the obvious choice for a POV character? Would it be more interesting to choose another character altogether?

**POV characters** (maximum 6)

1. The Protagonist \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

## CHARACTER BACKSTORY

**A**s most of us can probably agree, our childhood and upbringing have a big part to play in how our personality develops. For this very reason, the creation of character backstory also begins with the character's early life.

The protagonist's backstory is not a necessity for the plotting process, so, as explained in **Plot Development**, this chapter is purely an optional exercise designed for those who find it helpful to know what happened in the protagonist's past. Others prefer to complete the coming chapters first, all the way up to and including the character arc, and then return here to fill in the character's backstory. It's up to you.





In order to avoid the temptation of writing pages upon pages of backstory (which you don't need!), what follows are three segments: Early Life, Adolescence, and Adulthood.

Each of these segments contains several inspirational questions. Pick and choose as you see fit and know that when the terms “family” or “parents” are used it goes further than blood-relations. In some stories, the character might be adopted or an orphan, and in these cases, the term “family” constitutes those who raised the character.

Upon completion of the questions below, you'll have all you need for a character's backstory.

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**Early Life**

- Who were the character’s parents, and how did they meet?

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- Did the parents become a couple because of love, money, power, or something else?

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- How did the character see his or her parents behave towards one another? Did they fight? Were they caring? Faithful? Abusive?

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- Did the character learn a secret about one of the parents which the other parent didn't know? What was it?

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- Did the parents separate? If so, why?

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- Did one of the parents pass away? If so, how did the other parent deal with the situation, and how did that event affect the character?

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- Did both parents pass away? How did this affect the character? Is he or she longing for family or running away from the thought?

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- Does the character have any siblings, and, if so, how is their relationship with one another?

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- Was the character bullied by one or more sibling(s)? Or protected? How did this affect the character growing up?

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- Was the character the eldest or, in some way, responsible for taking care of sibling(s)? Did this affect how the character interacted with parents or sibling(s)?

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- Did the parents place greater duties or expectations on the character than upon the siblings? How did the character feel about that?

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- Is the character close to one specific sibling? If so, who and why?

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- Did the parents have a favorite child? If so, was it the character or a sibling, and did it influence the relationships within the family?

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- Are there any bastard-siblings or step-siblings in the family? If so, how is the character's relationship with them, and why?

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- Does the character have a favorite relative? If so, what role does this person play in the character's life?

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- If the character is adopted or separated from his or her parents, does the character feel haunted by questions about the parents? If so, how is the character seeking to get them answered?

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- What were the parents' professions, and how did it influence the environment in which the character grew up?

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- Does the character have positive or negative feelings about the family trade? If positive, did the character learn any skills? If negative, how did the character try to distance himself or herself from the trade?

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- Were there any complications in growing up where the character did? If so, how did the character deal with it?

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- Was the character's family respected in the community?  
Why or why not?

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- Was the character ever involved in a struggle against someone of a higher or lower social status? If so, what happened, and how does it affect how the character views people of a different social class?

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- Does the character agree with the customs, rituals, and traditions of his or her family?

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- Did the character's parents share the same faith, and did they instruct the character in those teachings? How does it affect the character's view on religion?

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- Were any religious taboos practiced, and does the character maintain or shy away from such practices today?

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**Adolescence**

- Did the character experience any cultural customs in passing from childhood into adolescence? If so, how did the character feel about it?

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- In entering adolescence, did the character gain any privileges and responsibilities? How did the character handle these?

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- Did the character develop a friendship with someone who saved the character at a time of crisis? Or did the character save someone else?

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- Did a friend challenge the character's beliefs and turn him or her away from what was learned growing up? If so, what happened?

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- Is this friend still in the character's life today? If so, how is the relationship?

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- Who was the character's first love, and does the character suffer any emotional scars?

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- Was there mutual admiration for one another, or did the character gaze from afar? What lessons did the character learn from this experience?

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- How long did the experience last? Does the character know where the person is today, and does the character still think about him or her?

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- Did the character court many others after this experience? If so, why or why not?

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## **Adulthood**

- Did the character's past experiences cause him or her to view the world more positively or negatively?

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- How do past experiences still affect the character today?

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- What occasion from adolescence still causes the character pain, and how does the character deal with it today?

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- Is there anyone who still bears a grudge towards the character? If so, why?

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- Is there a person in the character's adult life that the character cherishes or loves? Hates or fears? If so, why?

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- Is there a part of him or herself that the character attempts to hide from the world? If so, why?

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