DEVELOPING YOUR MAIN CHARACTER

These are ideas to help you develop your main character. Not all have to be used.

Characteristic	Examples
Name of Main Character	Does the character have a special name? (e.g., Neve's name means "snow" in *The Whispering Fog*) Why was the name selected? (e.g., Neve is named after a fairy tale) Is the Main Character teased because of their unusual name? Or, the opposite, are there so many other kids named the name thing that they don't feel special? (e.g., Neve likes her name; it means she is tied to her sister)
Home Life / General setting	Where does your character come from? Where does your character call home? Earth/not Earth. In a city, country, or forest? Type of structure inhabited—e.g., Mud shack, treehouse, space station Set in present day, past or future? Parents, siblings, aunts/uncles, best friends
Mental Characteristics	How does your character feel on the inside? Shy/friendly, Introvert/extrovert, anxious/carefree, optimistic/pessimistic
Physical Characteristics	What does your main character look like? Height, face shape, hair color, scar (s) Uses devices—e.g., Eyeglasses, wheelchair, hearing aids Habits—e.g., Running instead of walking, chewing gum, hair twirling
Preferences	What does your main character like? Gets up early or stays up late Daydreamer/worker Does your main character have favorite meals or favorite foods? Hobbies or clothing? Concert t-shirt, space suit, running, drawing, comic books?
Beliefs	Core belief about themselves—I deserve attention and praise/I'm not worthy Core belief about the world—People are generally good/bad
Special Skills	Sports—e.g., Lacrosse, cross-country Academic—e.g., Good at research or memorization Super/magical—e.g., Flying, mind control, teleportation
Aversions	These would be fears or things they don't really like or are afraid of, like spiders or snakes.

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MAIN CHARACTER MUST WANT SOMETHING

Character Goals	Examples
Winning	win a race, competition or contest find something special that was lost
Royal Status	ascend to a throne, overthrow a current leader, become king or queen have a parent to recognize their value, be proud of them
Survival	fit in at a new school Cope with an illness or disability make it through an environmental or catastrophic event (flood, fire, earthquake) escape danger cope with the death of a loved one
Revenge/Justice	prove someone was harmed and how have the secrets of evil-doers revealed get revenge/payback for a horrible act
Financial Gains	achieve wealth find treasure avoid the financial ruin of your family repay a debt
Love	find true friendship find a lifelong partner learn to trust in a new family situation reconcile with an estranged family member
Academic Achievement	be on the honor roll master a new skill make an important discovery
Family/Roots	find where they belong explore biological roots rescue a family member or friend (e.g., Neve must rescue her sister in *The Whispering Fog*)

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AN EVENT CHANGES THE WAY THINGS ARE

AKA Inciting Incident

Characteristics	The Event can't be ignored. Life can't go back to the way it was before the Event occurred. Life is off balance for the Main Character after the Event, they must change what they were doing before. The Event causes the Main Character to go after what they want. The Event causes the Main Character to be at odds with the Opposing Force. The Event can be either coincidental or causal. The Event must occur early in the story. The Event gets the plot moving. ***Events are often genre specific: e.g., an action story starts with a threat of death, a love story starts off with the two parties meeting, a crime story starts with the crime committed.***
Examples	Someone needs the Main Character's help (e.g., Neve's sister Rose is kidnapped in *The Whispering Fog*). A key part of the Main Character's life is taken away or threatened, e.g., parent losing job, family is moving to a new town, death of a grandparent. An unexpected opportunity comes up (e.g., the lead part in a play, the offer to be a team captain). The Main Character transfers to a new school where something evil is going on. The Main Character's family wins the lottery. The Main Character discovers they have a magical ability. The Main Character learns some hidden secret about their life that changes everything. A major catastrophic or environmental event occurs like a flood or hurricane or COVID-19 that affects the Main Character and their family. Someone with a secret that will affect the Main Character moves to town or next door. A threatening villain appears. The Main Character's family moves into a haunted house or house with a secret.

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OPPOSING FORCE WORKS AGAINST MAIN CHARACTER

Categories	Key Questions
Type	Is your opposing force an individual or an inanimate force (like nature as in a hurricane, a blizzard, a flood, or a high-level like a restrictive society)? Have you chosen an Opposing Force that can be working against your Main Character's goals from the very beginning of the story (even if secretly)?
Name	Have you chosen a name that makes sense in the story you're telling? In *The Whispering Fog,* Mrs. Katch made up her own name because she doesn't like to remember her real name and because it illustrates her hobby. In *1984*, Big Brother (a figure that is supposed to be comforting while being actually terrifying) is a secret agency of the government.
Characteristics	Have you created your Opposing Force to the same level of detail as your Main Character? You should know them just as well. Is the Opposing Force similar to the Main Character in some ways? In what ways are the Opposing Force and the Main Character different? The Opposing Force may be someone the Main Character wants to avoid being. The Opposing Force can represent who the Main Character may be if they take the wrong path. Have you given your Opposing Force some goodness? This will make them more interesting than pure evil. How are the powers balanced between the Opposing Force and the Main Character? The Opposing Force should be very hard to beat yet not impossible.
Want	How does the want of the Opposing Force conflict with the want of the Main Character? In many instances, they may want the same thing and are competing to get it. In *The Whispering Fog*, Mrs. Katch wants Rose. Neve wants her older sister too. She wants Rose back home with her. Is the main character keeping the opposing force from getting something?
Conflict Created	How do these opposing wants set them up for conflict throughout the story? How are they set up for the final battle?

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