EXTRACT USED IN 'BUILDING A NEW CHARACTER'

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Start Writing Fiction

Extract used in 'Building a new character'

Josip Novakovich – *Fiction Writer's Workshop*

Working with character

To work with a character, you might need to sketch it in several ways. You could start with this questionnaire (or make one up for yourself): Name? Age? Place of birth? Residence? Occupation? Appearance? Dress? Strengths? Weakness? Obsessions? Ambition? Work habits? Hobbies? Illness? Family? Parents? Kids? Siblings? Friends? Pets? Politics? Tics? Diet? Drugs? Favorite kinds of coffee, cigarettes, alcohol? Erotic history? Favorite books, movies, music? Desires? Fears? Most traumatic event? Most wonderful experience? The major struggle, past and present?

If you give quick, spontaneous answers, you might surprise yourself with the character that emerges. Don't worry if this works like a Rorschach blot, if it reveals something about you. You might do it in a silly way, have fun, and still get an idea for a character. And you might do it quite thoughtfully, in relation to your plot, if you've chosen one. (Let's say, your plot involves a son who gambles away his patrimony, until he becomes a father, and then works so hard to leave his son with a patrimony that he spend any time with him, and his son disowns him. You must devise character traits that would make him plausible.) If you don't have a plot yet, some of the answers to these questions, particularly the last one – the character's major struggle – might give you ideas.

Once you know almost enough – you hardly ever know enough – about the character, test her out. Portray her.

Novakovich, J. (1995) *Fiction Writer's Workshop*, Cincinnati, Ohio: Story Press, pp.54–55.