




UPiP

CHARACTER

CHARACTER GIVES WAY TO PLOT —



It's been said—and I agree with it—that the combination of:
what a character thinks
what a character does
what a character says
...creates the plot!

So while you may be thinking
“I need to come up with a plot!”,
trust that your characters will let you know what it is.

SIX TYPES OF TRAITS

Sam Smiley's *Playwriting* describes character traits by breaking them down into six categories:

MOTIVATIONAL

Reasons for doing
what they do

*this is often found in a
character's backstory*

SOCIOLOGICAL

Context of class, education,
geographical location, peer
group, family, etc

PHYSICAL

Age, size, weight, race,
ethnicity, gender, health, etc

DELIBERATIVE

Quality of thought – are
they impulsive? Slow and
methodical? Logic-driven?
emotion-driven?

DISPOSITIONAL

Prevailing mood
or temperament

*tip: this can't change too
much in a play, or else the
character seems unbelievable*

DECISIVE

The choices that the character
makes. Traits that only appear
in moments of decision.

*In a sense—these choices form the
character, and the other traits are sort
of supporting materials that inform
what the choice will likely be.*

*And the series of choices a character
makes = the plot of the play!*

NOW YOU TRY!

Using these traits, we learn about characters BEST through the choices they make.

EXERCISE: TO START, LET'S GET TO KNOW YOUR CHARACTER:

- Name, age
- Describe them
- Friends + Family + pets + etc
- How would someone describe them?
- What do they want more than anything else in the world?
- What do they fear more than anything else in the world?
and if not fear, what keeps them from getting what they want?

Write a line of dialogue or bit of behavior that teaches us as many of these things as possible in ONE moment.