



# With Your Powers Combined!

COHESIVE STORYTELLING THROUGH  
CHARACTER, WORLD, AND PLOT

# Introduction



# Roadmap



- What is Cohesive Storytelling?
- Two Steps to Character Work
- Identifying your Primary Characters
- Designing a Strategy to get your Character from Point A to Point Z
- Selecting Themes and Tropes



# What is Cohesive Storytelling?

# A House



- Interior Design (**Character**)
- Landscaping (**World**)
- Structure (**Plot**)

**CHARACTER**

**PLOT**



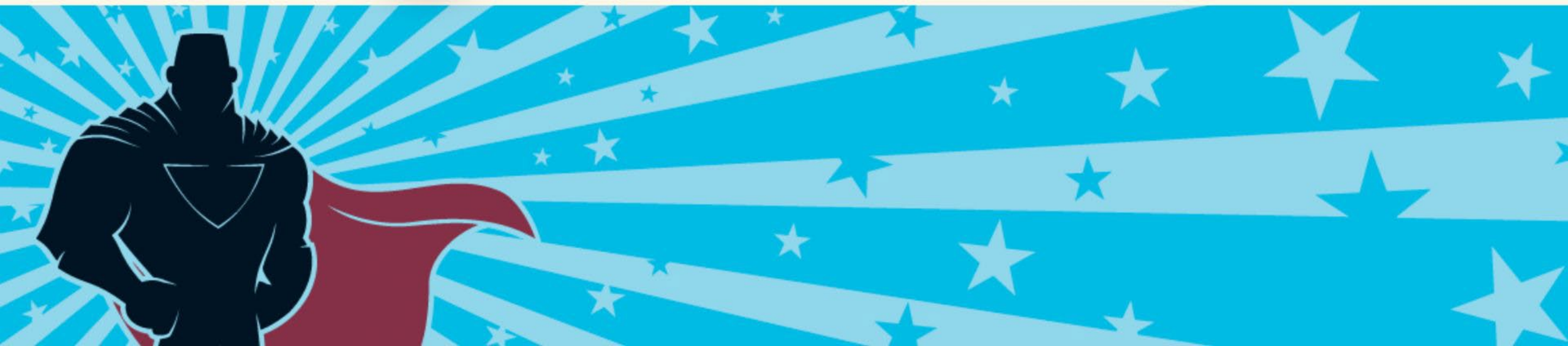
**STORY**



**WORLD**

**PART ONE**

# Character



# Two Steps to Character Work

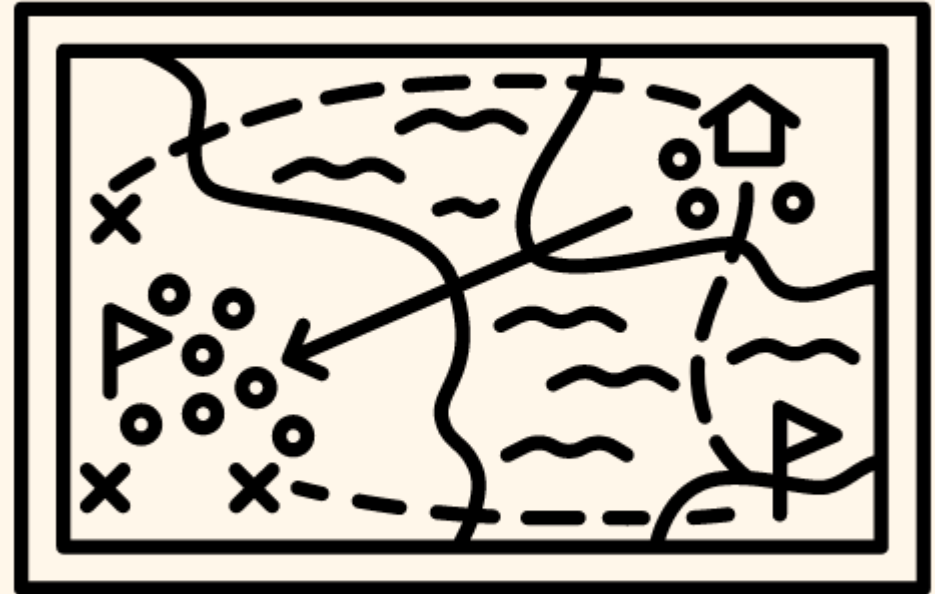


## IDENTITY



Who They Are

## STRATEGY



What They Want

One informs the  
other, but only one  
makes story possible.



# CHARACTER



Character is KING.

The easiest part of the process.

Repeat this process for **BOTH** your Protagonist and your Antagonist

Remember this handy-dandy acronym:

*CHARACTER*



# PC CHILIDOG

**P**ERSONALITY

**I**NTERESTS

**O**BSERVABLES

**C**ONFLICT

**L**ANGUAGE

**G**ROWTH

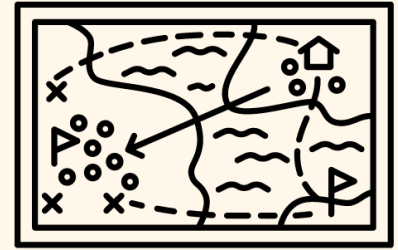
**C**ONTRADICTIONS

**I**NTERNAL DIALOGUE

**H**ISTORY

**D**REAMS

# CHARACTER

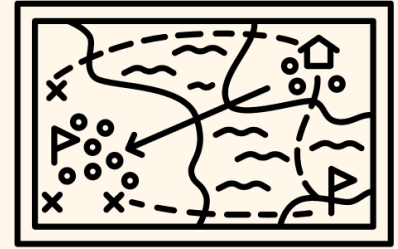


If a character doesn't have an arc, you don't have a story.

Character Arcs can feel overwhelming, but they are a process like any other element of writing craft.

Character Arc terminology varies from expert to expert, so we will establish what terms we're going to use next.

# CHARACTER



## Elements of a Character Arc (A.C. Williams Style)

**Trauma**

**Lie (Ghost/Wound/Hurt)**

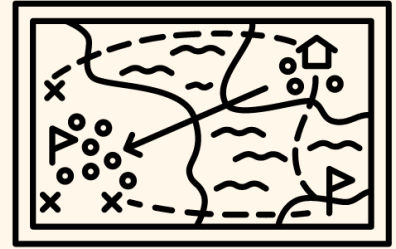
**Flaw/Fear**

**Want (External Goal)**

**Need (Internal Goal)**

# CHARACTER

## Elements of a Character Arc (A.C. Williams Style)

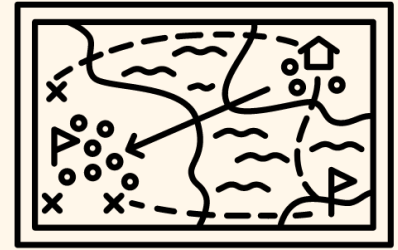


### Trauma or Traumatic Event

An event in the character's past that shapes who he or she is as a person / a defining moment in his or her past that becomes a filter through which they use to interact with the world around them

# CHARACTER

## Elements of a Character Arc (A.C. Williams Style)

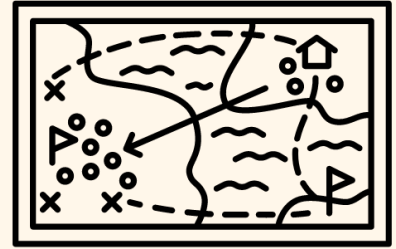


### Lie

Also called Ghost, the Wound, or Hurt. This is the **LASTING DAMAGE** caused by the Traumatic Event. It is the internal hurt from the Trauma that follows your character for the rest of his or her life. It is the **LIE** he or she believes about life.

# CHARACTER

## Elements of a Character Arc (A.C. Williams Style)

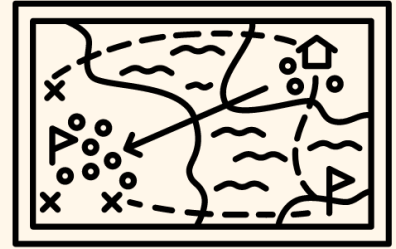


## Flaw or Fear

The Flaw, or Fear, is the personality problems the character develops as a means of self-defense. This is a protective measure to prevent the effects of the LIE that occurred because of the TRAUMA.

# CHARACTER

## Elements of a Character Arc (A.C. Williams Style)

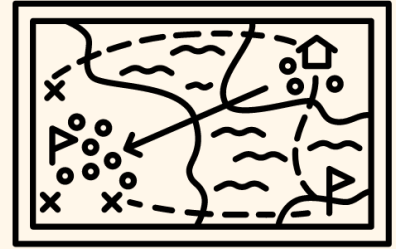


### Want

A character's **WANT** is the **EXTERNAL GOAL** of your story. It is the basic driving element of your **PLOT**. It is what your character **THINKS** he or she needs in order to achieve an external solution to help the pain of the **LIE**.

# CHARACTER

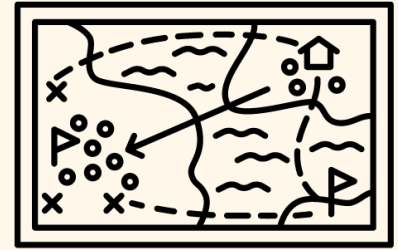
## Elements of a Character Arc (A.C. Williams Style)



## NEED

Also called the Truth. This is the character's **INTERNAL GOAL**, what he or she actually needs in order to solve the problem. Once the character acknowledges the Need, the growth arc for the story is complete.

# CHARACTER



Character Arc

Plot

Trauma

Lie (Ghost/Wound/Hurt)

Flaw/Fear

Want (External Goal)

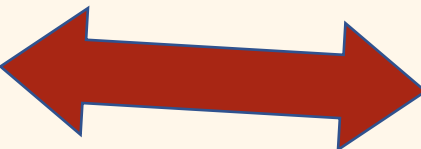
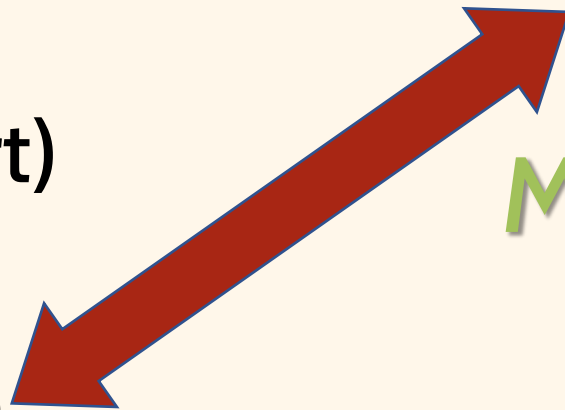
Need (Internal Goal)

Story Goal

Midpoint Goal

Crisis Point

Resolution/Setup



# Identify Your Primary Characters



## Who Is Your Hero?

- ★ Know the qualities of a protagonist
- ★ Know who changes the most in your story
- ★ Have a basic understanding of your **WORLD**
- ★ Have a basic understanding of your **PLOT**

# Identify Your Primary Characters



## Who Is Your Villain?

- ★ Know the qualities of an antagonist
- ★ Know WHY your villain wants to stop your hero
- ★ Have a basic understanding of your **WORLD**
- ★ Have a basic understanding of your **PLOT**

# Identify Your Primary Characters



## Who Are Your Placeholders?

- ★ Decide if you NEED side characters
- ★ Be REASONABLE
- ★ Keep it simple if this is your first attempt
- ★ Don't START with a SERIES

# Design Your Strategy



## What Do You Need?

- ★ Trauma
- ★ A Lie (make it believable) and corresponding Truth
- ★ Flaw/Fear (make it relatable)
- ★ A Goal (make it clear)

## Design Your Strategy



Your story BEGINS when your character has a **BIG PROBLEM** and **DISCOVERS A WANT**

Your story ENDS when your character **ACCEPTS THE TRUTH** and gets **WHAT THEY NEED**

# Design Your Strategy



Use PC CHILIDOG to generate details or motives

Don't forget your VILLAIN!

How are your PLACEHOLDERS involved?

## Basic Strategy Example



The **PROTAGONIST** believes the **LIE** because **TRAUMA** and pursues **WANT** to fix it. But **FLAW** makes trouble. The **PROTAGONIST** must overcome the **FLAW** through the **TRUTH** until he/she accepts **NEED**.

# Select Themes/Tropes



## What Is Your Theme?

- ★ Some themes are UNIVERSAL
- ★ Choose a theme that fits your AUDIENCE
- ★ Choose a theme that fits your GENRE
- ★ Choose a theme that suits your TROPE

# Select Themes/Tropes



## Why Are Tropes Important?

- ★ Marketing and Categorization
- ★ Comp Titles
- ★ Audience engagement
- ★ Some formulas are time-tested and true

# A Note About Genre

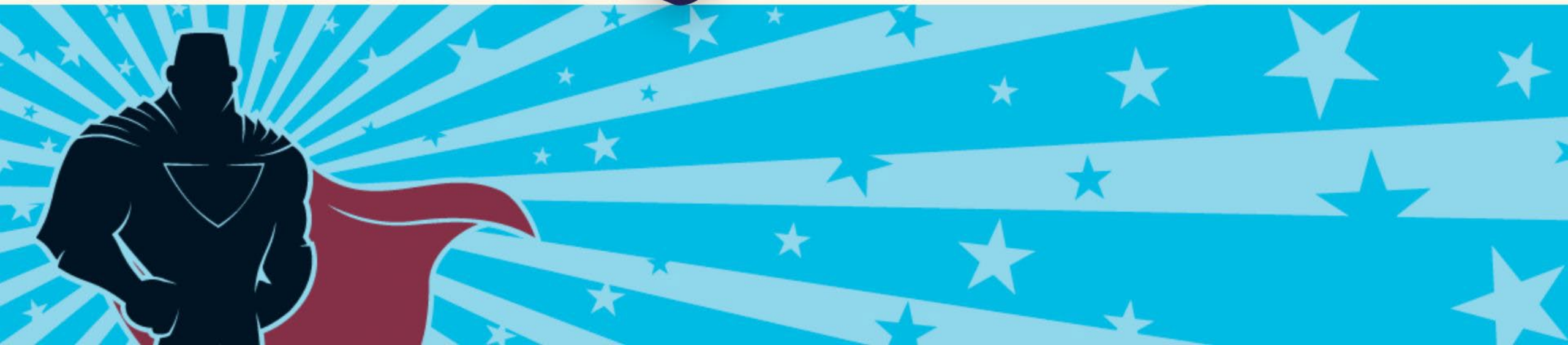


## Genre Matters, Y'all

- ★ Many genres within speculative fiction
- ★ But ALL need engaging characters with believable growth arcs (even epic fantasy)
- ★ Genre expectations affect your WORLD
- ★ Genre expectations affect your PLOT

PART TWO

World





Questions?

# Thank you!

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