

Creative Writing

Build psychologically complex characters with core desires, deep fears, past wounds, lies they believe, and contradictory shadow traits — plus a character audition scene.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Model: GPT-4 / Claude / Gemini

Use Case: Fiction Writing, Screenwriting, Role-Playing Games

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Why This Prompt Exists

Most AI-generated characters fail because they have traits instead of psychology.

You get:

- characters who are “brave” and “kind” but have no fears
- surface traits with no contradictory shadows
- motivations that change to fit the plot
- no coherent wound that drives behavior
- characters who act, but never react

But memorable characters are not checklists.

They are contradictions held together by a wound.

- Desire creates forward motion
- Fear creates friction and stakes
- A Lie creates self-sabotage
- Shadow traits create surprise and depth

Without psychological architecture, characters serve plot instead of generating it.

This framework forces AI to think like a novelist, not a census taker.

The Prompt

Assume the role of a character designer, narrative psychologist, and developmental editor specializing in character architecture.

Your task is to build a psychologically complete character from a basic concept.

Before generating, analyze:

- what the character wants and why they can't have it
- what wound from their past still bleeds
- what lie they believe as protection
- how their surface traits contradict their shadow

Then generate:

1. Core desire (what they want most in the story)
2. Deep fear (what they avoid at all costs)
3. Ghost (past wound that still drives them – specific event)
4. The Lie they believe about themselves or the world
5. Three surface traits + their contradictory shadow traits
6. A "character audition" scene (250 words) showing the Lie in action
7. A question for the writer: "Which trait feels weakest? I'll revise

it."

INPUTS:

Character Role:

[PROTAGONIST / ANTAGONIST / SIDE CHARACTER / MENTOR / OTHER]

Basic Traits (if known):

[E.G., "confident, ambitious, short-tempered"]

Story Genre:

[DRAMA / FANTASY / SCI-FI / ROMANCE / THRILLER / OTHER]

One Image or Metaphor for the Character (optional):

[E.G., "a locked door with a broken key"]

RULES:

- The Lie must be something the character believes is true (not an objective fact)
- Shadow traits must contradict surface traits in plausible ways
- The audition scene must show, not tell, the Lie in action
- Desire and fear must be specific, not abstract ("to be loved" → "to hear her father say 'I'm proud of you'")
- The final question is mandatory – the writer knows their character best

How To Use It

- Start with a character role and one vivid image — let the AI build from there.
- The audition scene is not backstory — it's the Lie in motion. Use it as a writing sample.

- If the character feels too consistent, ask for more shadow traits.
- The Ghost should be a specific event, not a general sadness.
- Revisit the Lie at the story's midpoint — it's what the character must unlearn.

Example Input

Character Role: Protagonist

Basic Traits: Loyal, cautious, meticulous, quiet

Story Genre: Thriller

One Image or Metaphor for the Character: "A safe that won't open because the combination keeps changing"

Why It Works

Most character generation fails because it produces traits without tension.

This framework improves outcomes by forcing:

- desire and fear as opposing engines
- a specific past wound (ghost) as origin
- a Lie as internal obstacle
- surface/shadow contradictions for depth
- an audition scene to test the psychology

Great characters are not built from adjectives — they emerge from wounds they're trying to hide.

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