

Character Arc Themes Worksheet

Before getting too far with a novel's first draft, it's a good idea to understand what themes your novel will explore. One method of identifying literary themes in your work is by studying your protagonist's character arc. If you're not sure where to begin, use this Character Arc Themes Worksheet as your guide.

The Character Arc Themes Worksheet is comprised of the brainstorming activities suggested in my DIY MFA article "Developing Themes In Your Stories: Part 1 – The Character Arc." As possible story or character ideas come to you, use the following exercise to determine your protagonist's **false beliefs**, the **reversal** of those beliefs that cause the protagonist to change, **themes** resulting from that reversal, and **triggers** that catalyze your protagonist's arc.

NOTE: You may want to read the DIY MFA article [here](#) before using this worksheet.

Instructions:

1. Free-write for 30 minutes about your protagonist. Explore angles of her past (childhood, traumatic experiences), present (positive attributes, flaws, perceptions), and future (goals, desires).

If you need a starting point, check out these suggestions from [Writer's Digest](#) and [Writer Unboxed](#) as well as this [character traits and flaws online thesaurus](#) at Writers Helping Writers.

2. Print out these instructions and the table on the next page. Then, in the table's "False Belief" column, write down at least one false belief your character has about herself or the world. You can refer to your free-writing results from Step #1 for this.
3. For each false belief, write down its reversal in the "Reversal / Character Arc" column and possible themes in the "Themes / Lessons Learned" column. If you struggle with finding themes, ask yourself what you might learn if you experienced the same situation.
4. Using your results from Steps #2 and #3, brainstorm possible triggers that can jump-start your character's arc and write them down in the "Possible Trigger(s)" column. Then, decide which thread of false beliefs, reversals, themes, and triggers you want to explore.

Now you're ready to write your novel!

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Possible Title: _____

Genre: _____

Target Audience (MG,
YA, A): _____

False Belief(s)	Reversal / Character Arc	Themes / Lessons Learned	Possible Trigger(s)