
DIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire was created to help you ensure your story is diverse without resorting to tokenism or filling a perceived quota. You might find the answers to some questions uncomfortable. All this means is that you've uncovered internalized bigotry. This is not a reflection on you, but on the culture and society in which you've been raised. Knowledge is the first step to overcoming this perceived default state.

Big Picture Questions

1. How many minorities are represented in your story? List all your minority characters and their roles.
2. Of those characters and their roles, which are stereotypical? (If you are uncertain, please research common stereotypes). List optional roles that break stereotypes, which fit within your story and plot.
3. If your list from question #1 revealed only a few minorities or none at all, list all your characters and their roles.
4. Look at your list from #3 and pick which characters could be cast as a minority. In a large cast it is best to pick more than three to be cast as minorities, to avoid tokenism. For smaller casts of characters (7 or less) pick at least two characters, but be careful to avoid using stereotypes to characterize them. If you feel this wouldn't suit your story and plot remember; we are not here to force diversity, but to show its natural occurrence.

Character Specifics

When looking at your cast of characters and working to add diversity it is good to remember a few points.

- You are writing people.
- Before writing diversity into a modern setting, be sure to research the area in which your story is set. A small village on the eastern coast of the United States is going to have a very different cultural diversity than a small village on the coast of Sierra Leone.

- While a certain characteristic might mean a person is included in a minority, that trait doesn't define their whole existence.
- Be wary of generalizing or attributing perceived traits of a minority group to an individual. The opposite is also true.
- It is alright to give a minority character flaws. They are still people.
- Be careful about falling into the trap of making a statement about a minority with your theme, as this can come across as preachy and othering if you yourself are not of that minority. Be aware of appropriating experiences.
- It is best to have at least three people belonging to the same minority before giving one of them an overtly negative characterization.

Often the first thing that comes to our mind when writing minorities will be a stereotype. We are constantly bombarded with poor representations of minority groups and will need to actively work to refute those depictions. These questions will help you start to overcome any ingrained stereotypes or implicit associations.

Pick one of your existing minority characters to answer the following questions.

- What role does this person play in the story? Is the role the first one that came to mind? Is it a stereotype or does it reflect negatively on the minority (even so called positive stereotypes can be damaging by creating unrealistic expectations) as a group? If so, what changes can you make so that it is not a derogatory or unrealistic characterization of the minority?
- What is their backstory? Is this backstory something you feel people of this minority share? What lead you to this conclusion? What other possibilities might exist?
- What job do they currently hold? Why did you pick this particular occupation for them? Is it something you think many people from this minority do for work? If so, why do you feel this way? What other jobs might this person have within the framework of your story?

Exercises

Pick two of your minor characters for this exercise. This is for illustrative purposes, and doesn't mean you're obligated to change anything in your story unless you feel it fits. The orientations and gender identities mentioned are examples only, and not recommendations. The goal is to have you think more broadly about other orientations and identities available to your character.

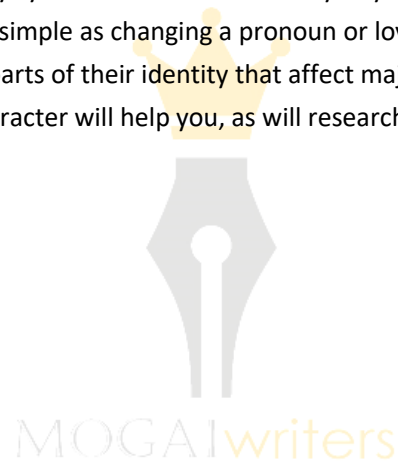
CHARACTER ONE

- What is their current orientation?
- If they are currently straight, how would it change things for them if they were bisexual?
- What challenges/opportunities would they now face?
- How could this bring extra levels of tension and conflict to the story?

CHARACTER TWO

- What is their current gender identity?
- What would change for them if they were transgender?
- What challenges/opportunities would they now face?
- How could this bring extra levels of tension and conflict to the story?

Now that you've looked at some ways you can add more diversity to your story, it is time to develop your character. Adding diversity is not as simple as changing a pronoun or love interest. A person's gender identity and sexual orientation are integral parts of their identity that affect major parts of their lives and background. The worksheet *Developing Your Character* will help you, as will researching your character's identity or orientation.



“We are all different, which is great because we are all unique. Without diversity life would be very boring.”

— Catherine Pulsifer

