

Build-A-Book Worksheets

To keep things simple and clear, I've phrased the questions for a romance novel between a man and a woman. If you're not writing a romance, ignore the romance-specific and second character questions. If you're not writing about a man and a woman, substitute the word "protagonist" for hero and heroine.

Also, I've written questions for both the hero and the heroine, but if your characters are on a journey together—meaning, they share an antagonist—then you obviously don't need to answer some of these questions twice.

Goal, Motivation, and Conflict

Goal:

1. What is your hero's external goal, the one he'll pursue from the first plot point until the climax?
2. What is your hero's internal goal?
3. What is your heroine's external goal, the one she'll pursue from the first plot point until the climax?
4. What is your heroine's internal goal?
5. What is your antagonist's external goal?
6. What is your antagonist's internal goal?

Motivation:

Hero's motivation:

1. Deep down, on a subconscious level, what does he need?
2. What does he long for but is taking no action to achieve?
3. How does he get a glimpse of the person he could be if only he had the courage to go after it?
4. What is his wound?
5. What fear did that wound create?
6. What false belief about how the world works did that wound lead him to adopt?
7. What persona did he assume to protect himself from the pain of his wound?

8. If his spirit were still intact, who would he really be?

Heroine's motivation:

1. Deep down, on a subconscious level, what does she need?
2. What does she long for but is taking no action to achieve?
3. How does she get a glimpse of the person she could be if only she had the courage to go after it?
4. What's her wound?
5. What fear did that wound create?
6. What false belief about how the world works did that wound lead her to adopt?

7. What persona did she assume to shield herself from the pain of her wound?

8. If her spirit were still intact, who would she really be?

Conflict:

1. Who's blocking the hero's external goal?
2. What are three escalating ways the antagonist can block the hero's goal?
3. What's blocking the hero's internal goal?
4. Who's blocking the heroine's external goal?
5. What are three escalating ways the antagonist can block the heroine's goals?
6. What's blocking the heroine's internal goal?
7. Who's blocking the antagonist's external goal?

8. What's blocking the antagonist's internal goal?

Crucible

1. What's the crucible tying the hero to the external conflict?
2. What's the crucible tying the heroine to the external conflict?
3. What's the crucible in the romance conflict?

Emotional Values

1. How do you want your readers to feel when they close the book?
2. What's the driving emotion of your hero through the book?
3. What's the driving emotion of your heroine through the book?

Character Arc

Aerial View:

1. My hero's arc shifts 180 degrees from _____ to _____
2. My heroine's arc shifts 180 degrees from _____ to _____

Arc:

Opening scene:

1. In his ordinary world, what is missing from your hero's life?
2. What is your hero's persona?
3. In her ordinary world, what is missing from your heroine's life?
4. What is my heroine's persona?

Inciting incident:

1. What event gets my hero to take the first step out of his comfort zone?
2. What event gets my heroine to take the first step out of her comfort zone?

Plot Point I:

1. What happens that forces your hero to form an urgent and visible goal?
2. How does committing to this story goal force your hero to do something he's never done before?
3. What happens that forces your heroine to form an urgent and visible goal?
4. How does committing to this story goal force your heroine to do something she's never done before?

Midpoint:

1. What is your hero's mirror moment?

2. What is your heroine's mirror moment?

3. What action or choice forces your hero to burn the bridge connecting him to the man he was at the start of the story?

4. What action or choice forces your heroine to burn the bridge connecting her to the woman she was at the start of the story?

5. What line of intimacy does your couple cross from which there's no turning back?

Crisis:

1. What is the deep fear your hero faces that makes him run back into his persona?

2. What is the deep fear your heroine faces that makes her run back into her persona?

Epiphany:

1. What happens to make your hero understand his wound and be free of it?

2. What happens to make your heroine understand her wound and be free of it?

Climax:

1. How does your hero take down the antagonist?
2. How can you show that he's now living his authentic life?
3. How does your heroine take down the antagonist?
4. How can you show she's now living her authentic life?

Plot Map

Ordinary World:

1. Describe the life your hero's living at the start of the story:
2. What does he long for that he doesn't have the courage to go after?
3. What glimpse can you give your hero of the life he could have if only he had the courage to face his demons and vanquish them?
4. Describe the life your heroine's living at the start of the story:
5. What does she long for that she doesn't have the courage to go after?
6. What glimpse can you give your heroine of the life she could have if only she had the courage to face her demons and vanquish them?

Inciting incident:

1. What disrupts your hero's ordinary world that forces him to step out of his comfort zone?

2. What disrupts your heroine's ordinary world that forces her to step out of her comfort zone?

Adjusting to the New World:

1. List some of the challenges your hero will face as he acclimates to this new situation:

2. List some of the challenges your heroine will face as she acclimates to this new situation:

3. What are some ways you can push harder on your hero to drive him to the first plot point, where he's forced to do something he's never done before?

4. What are some ways you can push harder on your heroine to drive her to the first plot point, where she's forced to do something she's never done before?

5. Why can't your hero be with the heroine?

6. Why can't your heroine be with the hero?

Plot Point I:

1. What event forces your hero to commit to his goal of the book?

2. What event forces your heroine to commit to her goal of the book?

3. What is your hero's overall goal of the book?

4. What is your heroine's overall goal of the book?

React:

1. List some ways to show that your hero is out of his element:

2. List some ways his antagonist can put him in turmoil:

3. List some ways to show that your heroine is out of her element:

4. List some ways her antagonist can put her in turmoil:

5. List some ways to show the progression of the romance:

Pinch Point I:

1. What reminds your hero the antagonist is out there and is not going to make it easy on him?

2. What reminds your heroine the antagonist is out there and is not going to make it easy on her?

3. What reminds your hero that a relationship with the heroine has the potential to hurt?

4. What reminds your heroine that a relationship with the hero has the potential to hurt?

Midpoint:

1. What event takes place that forces your hero to take an irrevocable step out of his persona and move closer to his authentic self?

2. What event takes place that forces your heroine to take an irrevocable step out of her persona and move closer to her authentic self?

3. What happens between the hero/heroine to push the relationship forward in a way they can't take back?

Determined Action:

1. List some actions your hero might take to combat the antagonist:

2. List some actions your heroine might take to combat the antagonist:

3. List some ways to show the deepening relationship between your hero and heroine:

Pinch Point II:

1. What event pulls the rug out from under your hero to remind him that the antagonist is a very real threat who might just win?
2. What event pulls the rug out from under your heroine to remind her that the antagonist is a very real threat who might just win?
3. What reminder can you give the hero that his future with the heroine is in jeopardy?
4. What reminder can you give the heroine that her future with the hero is in jeopardy?

Crisis:

1. What causes your hero to face his deepest fear?
2. What causes your heroine to face her deepest fear?

3. What does your hero believe he's irrevocably lost?

4. What does your heroine believe she's irrevocably lost?

Aftermath:

1. Where does your hero go to lick his wounds?

2. Where does your heroine go to lick her wounds?

3. How can you show that your hero no longer fits in the ordinary world and in his persona?

4. How can you show that your heroine no longer fits in the ordinary world and in her persona?

Epiphany:

1. What event causes your hero to clearly see his wound and be free of it for good?

2. What event causes your heroine to clearly see her wound and be free of it for good?

Climax:

1. How will your hero beat the antagonist?

2. How will your heroine beat the antagonist?

3. Which character will deliver the romantic gesture?

4. How can the romantic gesture prove the character is fully his or her authentic self?

5. How can it heal the relationship?

Resolution:

1. What is the best setting to show the new world they've created together?
2. What does the snapshot of their future together look like?
3. Can you create a symbol of your hero or heroine's longing and bring it into this scene as proof that he's finally earned what he's worked so hard to achieve?