

Lesson 1: Create Your Character

UNIT: Australian Adventures

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi, it's Anne. I love reading adventure stories. One of my favorites is *The Last Mapmaker* by Christina Soontornvat.

It's about a twelve-year-old girl, Sai, who travels on a ship to help make maps of the southern seas. On her journey, she must navigate around dangerous obstacles and get her ship through terrifying storms. I love it because it feels like I know Sai and it feels like I'm going on an adventure with her.

It's so much fun to read adventure stories and it's just as much fun to write them. That's why I'm starting the Adventure Story Club. It's a club for writers who want to be adventure story authors.

You can be a member of the Adventure Story Club, too, and write your own thrilling adventure tale. The Adventure Story Club has a theme this month—Australian Adventures. This incredible country is home to diverse landscapes like the Australian Outback, and the eucalypt forest. In these environments, explorers can go on thrilling adventures alongside many amazing creatures.

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: What ideas do you have for a story about an explorer in Australia?

HOOK 2

Maybe you said there could be a story about helping a baby kangaroo find its mom, swinging on vines, kayaking over a waterfall, or maybe something else.

I'm going to write an adventure story, too. But before I write any story, I start by making a plan.

I'll start my story plan with a character. I think I'll name my explorer Harper. I want my readers to know Harper as if she was a real person. I can imagine what she looks like and what her personality is like. I already know she's adventurous, but I think I could add some more details about who she is as a person.

DISCUSSION 2

Discuss: What could be some other details about Harper's personality? Use your imagination.

HOOK 3

You probably came up with lots of ideas for Harper's personality. Maybe she is really brave and friendly to animals. Not all of her traits have to be helpful on her journey though—maybe she also gets annoyed really easily. These personality traits are a great start.

To get Harper off on her adventure, I'll think of something that she wants. Maybe she wants to get to the top of a mountain because she loves amazing views. Maybe she wants to find a particular crystal because she's a rock collector. Or maybe she wants to get a picture of one of Australia's rarest birds because she has a competition with her friend about who can spot one first.

No matter what Harper's adventure will be, she needs to want something and have a reason why she wants it.

I think Harper wants to get a picture of a rare trilobite fossil, but she needs a reason why she wants that picture.

DISCUSSION 3

Discuss: What could be a reason why Harper wants a picture of a trilobite fossil?

HOOK 4

Maybe Harper works at a natural history museum, and she wants to put the picture in an exhibit for visitors to see. Or maybe her uncle likes to draw detailed sketches of fossils, so she wants to give him a new idea for his artwork. Or maybe she runs an educational social media account where she posts pictures of cool fossils. You might have come up with something else.

So far, Harper is a pretty cool character. She's courageous, kind to animals, and she also gets annoyed easily. She also really wants to get a picture of a rare fossil for her social media page.

When I think about characters and stories that I love, the characters aren't perfect all the time—they are complex. Sometimes they make mistakes, have flaws, and have fears.

To make her a more complex character, I can give Harper a fear. Maybe she's scared of heights, or the dark, or loud noises. I'll choose that one. Giving her a fear can make her story more exciting because she may have to face that fear on her adventure.

I'm really excited to write an adventure story for Harper. I planned lots of details about her and made her complex by giving her both wants and fears.

Now, it's your turn to plan your adventure story and become a member of the Adventure Story Club.

Today, you'll come up with your explorer character and you can imagine lots of things about them that will help them feel real in your story. And later on, you'll make a story map to plan how your story will go.

I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies.

STEP 2

Get your Character Details worksheet. Come up with a name for your explorer and write it here.

STEP 3

Imagine what your character looks like. What are they wearing? What is their hair like?

Add some details to the character drawing to help you imagine what your character looks like. Your teacher will tell you how long you have to draw.

STEP 4

Now that you have an idea of what your character looks like, you can start to imagine their personality.

Find the "Character Traits" box. Choose two or three traits that you want your character to have. You can use the ideas in the box or come up with your own.

STEP 5

Writers add likes and dislikes for their character since real people have all kinds of things that they like and don't like. I imagine that Harper really likes trail mix, cute animals, and her binoculars. She doesn't like having wet socks or feeling rushed.

Find the "Likes" and "Dislikes" box. Use your imagination to add details about what your character likes and dislikes.

STEP 6

Harper really likes trail mix and her binoculars, so she would definitely bring those along on her adventure. She also doesn't like having wet socks, so maybe she brought along an extra pair.

Think of some objects that your character would have with them on an adventure in Australia. You can use the other details about your character to help you decide.

Add two or three items in the backpack that you want your character to have on their adventure. You can use words, pictures, or both.

STEP 7

Imagine what your character wants on this journey. Maybe they want to take a picture of a certain animal, find a rare gemstone, locate buried treasure, or something else. Write what your character wants on the lines here.

STEP 8

Now think about why your character wants the thing you just wrote. Finish this sentence to include why your character wants this.

STEP 9

Real people have all of these qualities: character traits, likes and dislikes, wants, and also fears.

Think of something your character might encounter on their adventure that they would be afraid of. They could have a fear of the dark, heights, or loud noises. You can use one of these or come up with your own.

Write your character's fear in this box.

HOOK 5

Nice job, writers! You have created an explorer character who is complex. They have character traits, likes and dislikes, wants, and a fear. Complex characters are interesting to read about, and they don't always stay the same. Throughout your story, your character might change or learn something new about themselves.

But wait a minute. If our explorers just walked out the door, got what they wanted, and came home, they probably wouldn't learn very much about themselves.

To help characters change and grow, authors plan for events that will happen along the journey and plan for a big, exciting obstacle that the character will have to overcome.

Authors plan the plot for their story on a story map, like this one.

Take my character Harper. She is on a quest to take a picture of a rare fossil for her social media account that is all about fossils. She's on her way to a cave that's supposed to be full of amazing fossils, but she's going to have to journey to that cave, and that's where I can imagine some events along the way.

First, Harper could encounter an animal. Maybe she sees this cassowary. In Harper's character traits, I said she is friendly to animals. So, she keeps her distance and gets a picture of it.

Then, something else blocks Harper's path. What could it be?

DISCUSSION 5

Discuss: Imagine something that could be blocking Harper's path in the adventure story.

HOOK 6

There are lots of things that could be blocking the path for Harper. Maybe an army of ants blocks the way. Maybe quicksand. Or maybe a swaying bridge that hangs above a dangerous river.

In my story, I think Harper will encounter a river that she has to cross. She is able to wade through it, but I wrote on my character plan that she doesn't like having wet socks. She is seriously annoyed about having to cross this river and getting wet along the way.

Finally, she reaches her destination, this cave. Inside, she finds the trilobite fossil and snaps a picture. Harper got what she wanted—that's great! But authors of adventure stories keep their stories exciting. So that's not all.

After she got the picture... surprise! She hears a huge rumbling noise and realizes the cave is collapsing. Dodging falling rocks, she dashes as fast as she can out of the cave and leaps to safety just as the falling rocks seal the cave forever.

Harper returns home and posts the fossil on her social media account. She has the last photo ever taken of that fossil, making it extra special. Through all her adventures and her great escape, she realized that she's a lot braver than she thought she was.

Here's my story map:

- Harper wanted something
- She encountered events along the way
- Then got to her destination and got what she wanted
- Then, surprise! She has to make a thrilling escape
- Through all those experiences, she learned something about herself.

Now it's your turn to decide what events and exciting obstacles you will put in your character's way and what your character learns about themselves. You'll use everything you planned about your character to help you come up with ideas.

Let's get started.

STEP 10

Get these new supplies.

STEP 11

In today's lesson, you'll need someone to share ideas with. This could be a partner or someone you sit near. When everyone knows who their talk partner is, move on to the next step.

STEP 12

We are writing stories in Australia, but your story could take place in the outback—which is like a desert—or in the forest. Decide where you want your explorer to adventure and circle the setting you'd like to use here.

STEP 13

You already decided what your character wants and why. Copy what your character wants into the "Character Want" box on your story map. Be sure to include why they want that thing.

STEP 14

Think about where your character will need to journey to in order to get what they want. Is it located in a huge canyon? The top of a mountain? In a cave?

Write where your character will need to get to on the first line of the "Destination" box.

You can use your Idea Bank to help you come up with ideas.

STEP 15

Find "Event" box "#1."

First, your character will encounter an animal along the way. Check out some of the animals in Australia: koala, kangaroo, quokka, crocodile, cassowary, frilled lizard, platypus.

Choose which animal you would like your character to encounter and write it on this line. If you want, you can use your Idea Bank to help.

STEP 16

Take a look at everything you planned for your character. Imagine how your character would react when seeing the animal you chose.

Take turns sharing with your partner what your character would do in that situation.

STEP 17

Write how your character reacts to the animal on these lines. You can use just a few words so you can remember your ideas.

STEP 18

Next up, your character is going to encounter something that blocks the path. Imagine what it could be. You can use your character's dislikes or fears to really make this obstacle challenging.

In the "Event" box "# 2," write what blocks the path. If you want, you can use your Idea Bank to help.

STEP 19

Your character might try to push past this blockage, find a way around, or solve the problem another way.

Discuss with your partner: What do you think your character would do to deal with what is blocking the path? Then write it on the lines here.

STEP 20

You already planned your character's final destination—where they get what they want. What a great success. But then... surprise! It's the biggest danger of all. Maybe there's a landslide, or a dangerous animal appears, or the water begins to quickly rise.

Discuss with your partner: What is one last surprise that your character could encounter that would make them have to make a daring escape?

Then write your idea on these lines.

STEP 21

Think about what your character would do in this situation. How would they solve the problem? If you need to, you can always add something else to your character's backpack to help them escape.

Starting at the word "Escape," add a few words about how your character will escape the danger.

STEP 22

After all these thrilling adventures, your character returns home.

My character, Harper, wanted the picture for her social media account about fossils. When she returned home, she posted the photo and got a ton of likes from her fossil fans online.

Look back at what your character wanted. Think about what your character would do after returning from their journey.

Complete this sentence to describe what your character does when they get back from their adventures. Remember, it should match the reason why your character went on this adventure in the first place.

STEP 23

Finally, think about what your character learned about themselves from this experience. Maybe they learned how brave they really are. Or maybe they learned not to be afraid of their fear anymore. Or maybe they learned that they can accomplish anything.

You can use one of these or come up with your own. Write what your character learned on these lines.

STEP 24

The papers shown on the screen are V.I.P.s—very important papers. Your teacher will tell you where to put them so you will have them for the next lesson.

WRAP UP

Amazing job, writers! You are officially a member of the Adventure Story Club. You have created a complex character and a thrilling adventure story map.

With all the details you planned about your character, you will be able to make them feel like a real person in your story. Your readers will really feel like they know your character and feel like they're on an adventure, too.

In the next lesson, you'll write the beginning of your story and get your character started on their grand adventure.

The Adventure Story Club is about to come in swinging with all your amazing stories. I'll see you next time.