

Persona Poems

Good stories are all about great characters. Here's a fun writing task to find out how well you know yours. Pick a character from your current manuscript and write a persona poem. To those of you who never did this in eighth-grade English, persona poems are structured 8-line poems that are biographical in nature. They follow the format below:

Line 1: first name/nickname of the person in the poem

Line 2: 4 adjectives which describe the person

Line 3: X of Y formula, describing an important relationship to the person

Line 4: 3 things s/he loves

Line 5: 3 things that scare her/him

Line 6: 3 things s/he wants to see

Line 7: resident of...+ place/time/concept

Line 8: last name of the person in the poem

YA Sample from the main character in my May, 2012 debut, *WELCOME, CALLER, THIS IS CHLOE* from Amulet Books/Abrams

Chloe

Outgoing, sharp-witted, big-hearted, dramatic

Queen of late night radio

Who loves the spotlight, Twizzlers, vintage shoes

Who fears blood, Brie Sonderby's lies, being alone

Who wants to see a passing JISP, adoring radio fans, Duncan's smile

Resident of a lonely junior year of high school

Camden

Romantic Suspense sample from Daphne Du Maurier Winner, *THE BROKEN*, published April 2014 from Grand Central Forever

Kate

Ambitious, curious, on-the-run, scarred

Target of a serial killer

Who loves the dark, motorcycle rides, old movies

Who fears public places, mirrors, relationships

Who wants to see the serial killer jailed, the road whirring beneath her feet, happily ever after

Resident of Smokey Joe's spare bedroom

Johnson

Twenty Questions

These take the getting-to-know-the-characters interview just a step beyond the usual "Tell me your name, birthplace, job, parents, etc."

1. If you had a free day with no responsibilities and your only mission was to enjoy yourself, what would you do?
2. What impression do you make on people when they first meet you? How about after they've known you for a while?
3. What's your idea of a good marriage? Do you think that'll happen in your life?
4. What are you most proud of about your life? (*If they answer with something other than a personal statement, like a business achievement, ask "What about on a personal level?"*)
5. What are you most ashamed of in your life? (*Again, if necessary ask "What about on a personal level?"*)
6. If you could spend the day with someone you admire (living or dead or imaginary), who would you pick?
7. Do you think you've turned out the way your parents expected?
8. What do you believe about God? (*If they believe in God, ask "What do you suppose God thinks of you?"*)
9. Is there anything you've always wanted to do but haven't done? What would happen if you did it?
10. What's the worst thing that's happened in your life? What did you learn from it?
11. Tell me about your best friend. (*If you think it might be interesting, ask "How did you meet? What do you like about this person? What do they like about you?"*)
12. What's the worst thing you've ever done to someone? Why? (*"Why" is usually a good follow-up question to any response!*)
13. What would you like it to say on your tombstone?
14. Describe your ideal mate.
15. What are you most afraid of?
16. What's the most important thing in your life? What do you value most?
17. What do you like best about yourself? Least?
18. What do you like best about [the other character]? Least?
19. How do you feel about your life right now? What, if anything, would you like to change?
20. Are you lying to yourself about something? What is it?

Character Name

Age:

Physical

Body:

Eyes:

Hair:

Clothing preference:

Jewelry:

Perfume:

Personality

Dominant character trait:

Likes:

Dislikes:

Contrasting character flaw:

Attitudes:

Emotional Needs:

Chief Disappointment:

Hobbies:

Musical tastes:

Mannerisms:

Personal habits or routines:

Background

Early Childhood:

Education:

Men/Women Relationships:

Career:

Influential People:

Influential Events:

Home:

Friends & Associates: