

Developing Characters in Songwriting - Character Worksheet

Every song contains a character, even deeply personal or introspective songs. The goal of this worksheet is to help you better understand the emotional perspective, voice, worldview, and personality behind the song you are writing.

Answer the following questions about the narrator or character in your song. Use the worksheet as a tool for exploration rather than a rigid formula. You may discover details that never appear directly in the lyric, but still help shape the language, imagery, melody, groove, and emotional communication of the song.

Core of the Character

1. Who is speaking?
2. Who are they speaking to?
3. What do they want?
4. What emotional state are they in?
5. What happened immediately before this moment?
6. What are they avoiding saying directly?
7. What does this character notice?
8. What kind of language would they use?
9. What accent do they have?
10. What things matter to them?
11. What are they afraid of?
12. What do they regret?
13. What do they hope will happen next?

Perspective & Voice

14. How does the character speak rhythmically?
15. Are they direct or indirect?
16. Are they poetic or plainspoken?
17. Are they reserved or expressive?
18. Are they bitter or hopeful?
19. Are they educated or rough-edged?
20. Are they fast talking or hesitant?
21. What metaphors would they naturally use?
22. What words would they never use?

Musical Questions

23. What groove fits this character?
24. What melodic shape fits their emotional state?
25. Would the arrangement be sparse or overcrowded?
26. Does the rhythm feel confident or uncertain?
27. What instrument best represents this voice?

Introspective Character Questions**Narrative questions**

28. Where does the song take place?
29. What time period does it take place in?
30. What is the central conflict or situation?
31. What changed during the song?
32. What image would best represent the song?
33. What image best represents the story?
34. What is left unresolved?

35. Is this emotion current or remembered?
36. Is the narrator reliable?
37. What part of yourself is speaking?
38. What truth is difficult to admit?
39. What emotion is underneath the obvious one?
40. Is the song trying to heal, confess, justify, mourn, celebrate or understand?