

4. Come up with a **theme for your character**.

5. **Determine the character's relationship to the story, world, or main character.** Why is this character important to your book or novel? If you're writing a character sketch about someone it generally means they are vital to your story, since minor characters rarely require a character sketch. What is their relationship to the protagonist? How do they get involved in the story? How do you see them contributing to the novel?
6. **Develop your character's backstory.** Where did they grow up? What were their parents like? How did the character get to where they are when the story begins?
7. **Find your character's overarching motivation.** What does your character want above all else? What guides them or pushes them to act? This can be their principles, their goals, their fears, or their duty. The best characters have agency. That means they take steps to get what they want instead of simply reacting to the world around them.
8. **Fill in any other details that pop into your head.**
9. **Distill your character's personality into one or two sentences.**

**Jay Gatsby** (*The Great Gatsby*): A self-made millionaire who earned his fortune in order to win the love of his childhood sweetheart, over whom he obsesses.

## Using Your Character Sketches

1. The reader doesn't need to know everything about a character to understand them.
2. **Illuminate your character through actions whenever possible.**

Find an interesting, unique way to illuminate your character's inner life instead of just saying it.

3. **Use the first time you see a character to introduce their overall impact.**

For example, if a character is normally sweet and kind, don't show her screaming at someone because she is having a bad day.

4. **Discover the character's voice.** -Great writers have a way of embodying the character so that their speech patterns make the characters' backgrounds come alive.

5. **Write a "representative incident" story about your character.**
6. **Ask yourself why the character behaves like they do.**

# Wake up and smell the geraniums

Following the global spread of the coronavirus for over a week, and getting cross-eyed from switching from one TV channel to another, I finally decided to switch off altogether. The TV channels are doing a great job, but I found I couldn't take any more the constant stream of depressing news, and the helplessness and inability of the world's leaders and scientists to be able to do anything to stop the virus.

The President of the US urges everyone to use masks, but then adds that he won't be using one himself. The President of Brazil throws scorn on the epidemic and everyone who tries to control it, and then hurriedly orders a lockdown. One President threatens to shoot violators of the curfew; another threatens to imprison those who acknowledge its existence. Unity in disunity! Hopefully, the virus will get bored with the whole thing and go away of its own accord.

This is a very intelligent virus, by all accounts. It has succeeded on altering human behaviour in a number of ways. We don't shake hands any more. We don't hug each other. Sadly, we don't kiss. And if kissing were to disappear altogether, the world would be a grim sort of place.

Even as I write, the words of an old song — a very old song — run through my memory:

I kiss your little hand, madame...  
I long to kiss your lips!  
I remember kisses from the past  
— loving kisses, sometimes passionate kisses — and I hope there will be a few more before I depart this planet.

\*\*\*

Finding it difficult to read or write, I turn to my little plant room, a sunny glassed-in balcony where I have managed to get geraniums to flower all through the Mussoorie winter. Outside, the grass on the hillside is still yellow, and the horse-chestnut trees are just coming into new leaf. But my geraniums grow rampant. Red, white, cerise, and a deep, thoughtful pink.

I get on well with most plants; I can spend hours in their company, even writing the occasional verse or haiku in their praise.

*'Bright red geranium,  
Gleaming against the sunlit floor...  
Memory, hold the door!'*

Yes, flowers bring memories and also hope for the future. For if plants can survive, so can humans. And if that spider on the wall can survive, so can you and I.

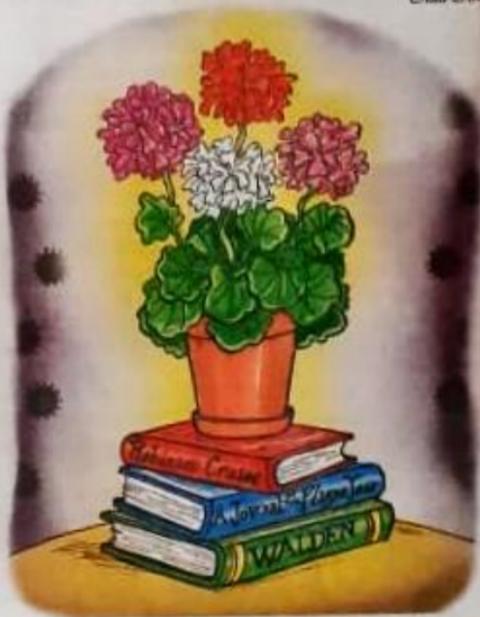
Whether by accident or design, we are here. Let's make the most of it, my friend. Make happiness our pursuit; spread a little sunshine here and there. Enjoy the flowers, the breeze; rivers, sea and sky. Mountains and tall waving trees. Greet the children passing by. Talk to the old folk. Be kind, my friend. Hold on, in times of pain and strife. Until death comes, all is life!



A young reader asked me what books she should read during the lockdown, and naturally I recommended Robinson Crusoe, that classic of involuntary self-isolation. Crusoe was based on a real-life shipwrecked sailor, Alexander Selkirk, who survived on a desert island for several years, even enjoying fried eggs for breakfast, these being turtle or seagull eggs. (Perhaps I'd just carry on with tomatoes). In the book, Crusoe is joined by an islander called Man Friday, and together they have a whale of a time before being rescued.

Defoe, the author of Robinson Crusoe, also wrote the Journal of the Plague Year in which he records the horrors of the plague that swept through London in the

Chad Crowe



17th century, in much the same way that the coronavirus is spreading today.

A more cheerful book is Thoreau's Walden, in which a writer voluntarily seeks self-isolation, having had enough of human company. He takes to living in a shack near Walden pond (a small lake), communes with Nature, and writes his classic, which is readable in parts.

Pepys, the great diarist, also described the London plague, which ended only when the Great Fire swept through London.

Perhaps that's what we need today. Something really hot — a long hot summer — something that will fry this virus to a crisp and send it screaming back to the hell it came from.

### His Awards and Recognition



① King of Afghanistan was so fascinated with his music



that an auditorium was named after him

② Film Director Vijay Bhatt, so impressed on hearing him that he named a film after instrument Gunj Uthi Shehnai

③ First Indian to ~~be invited~~ <sup>perform</sup> at the prestigious Lincoln Centre Hall in the USA

④ National Awards like the Padam Shri, the Padam Bhushan, the Padam Vibhushan & in 2001 the highest civilian

award, the Bharat Ratna



Despite travelling to many countries was exceedingly fond of Benaras & Dumraon



<sup>at</sup> Because of the love for his country and these two places, he even refused a position in America



saying he cannot find the Ganga there



Brought Shehnai to an international level



considered auspicious



indispensable component of any North Indian Wedding



Bringing instrument on to the classical stage goes to Ustad Bismillah Khan

1. Free-write about your character for 10-15 minutes to get started.

2. Confirm the basic physical description of the character.

- Age
- Gender
- Height and weight
- General ethnic background (ie. "tall, blonde Scandinavian-type")
- Defining physical characteristics (hair, beauty, glasses, typical clothing, etc.)

3. Think about your character's overall emotions and feelings. Complex characters display a wide range of emotions, but almost all people and characters can be simplified to 1-2 base feelings. Overall, how does your character view life: optimistic, greedy, humorous, angry, oblivious, thoughtful, timid, creative, analytical?

4. Come up with a **name for your character**.

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Date / /  
Bismillah Khan

↓  
Born 21 March 1916.

↓  
family of musicians

↓  
Lived in Bihar

↓  
Rasool Bux - GF } great  
↓ } shehnai  
Paighambar Bux } player.

↓  
When 5 years old played  
gilli danda near a pond  
of Dumraon - Bihar

↓  
Sang Bhojpuri (lang. spoken  
in Bihar) called

CHAITA

Reward - A big ladder

Ali Bux - his mama/maternal  
Date / /  
uncle

lived in Benaras

↓  
was employed in the Vishnu  
temple of Benaras

↓  
Bismillah started learning  
shehnai from him.

↓  
Temples of Balaji and Mangala  
Maiya + Banks of the  
Ganga were his favourite places

↓  
When 14, accompanied his  
uncle to the Allahabad  
Music Conference

↓  
1938, Selected for the All  
India Radio, Lucknow

↓  
first Indian to greet freedom  
with shehnai on 15 August 1947

Which was followed by Mahindra  
Prime Minister Pt. Nehru's famous speech  
Trust with destiny  
Construction Equipment