

Fact of Story Writing 2:*

Story writing is all about what your character wants.

Motivation: *Thinking about and asking WHY?*

Many of the best stories are about characters who start out thinking they want one thing but learn that they *really* want something else, all as a result of what happens in the story.

Below are a few common ideas for character “wants,” some tips for figuring out what they *really* want, and some other considerations to help you think more deeply about your main character.

Money! Sometimes we think that what our characters (or ourselves!) want is to be rich, to have so much money they don’t know what to do with it. That’s a perfectly normal thing for a character (a good guy or a bad guy) to want, but it doesn’t make for a very interesting story. ***Instead, think about WHY your character wants the money.*** What will your character do with the money when he or she gets it? Pay off her parents’ debts? Pay for his mom’s operation? Buy the town factory so it doesn’t close and throw everyone into poverty? That’s what your character *really* wants, so that’s what you want to write your story about. And who knows? Maybe your character will figure out a way to be successful without needing all that money.

Power! (Mwahahahahah!) Maybe your character wants to be the President of the United States, the CEO of the world’s largest multinational corporation, or the first clown to own his own circus. Maybe your character wants to own an island to rule over. Or maybe she just wants her own bedroom. Ah, power. But just as with money, it’s not the power itself people really want deep down, but rather the power to *do things*. So, if what your character wants is some kind of power, think about ***what your character wants the power for*** and write about that instead.

Love! We all need and want love, so it can be tempting to have a character want that with no further explanation. Maybe, for instance, your character simply wants to marry the prince. Of course she does! He’s handsome and rich—what else is there? Well... the truth is, those things won’t take you, your character, or your reader very far. ***Again, think about why she wants what she wants.*** Yes, it’s natural that she wants love, but why *his* love in particular? Maybe he’s kind to her or selfless or understanding in some unexpected but important way? Maybe he’s a major dog lover, like your character? Is he admirable for some other reason important to her?

Impossible dreams! What if your character wants something that is impossible (except in fiction, of course)? Maybe your character is a little boy who wishes he could turn into a dog. Maybe your character wants to grow up to be nine feet tall so she can be the world’s greatest basketball player. What do you do with this? Again, think about *what the character would do if the dream came true*.

Assignment:

Your character wants one thing more than anything else in the world. It doesn't have to be something big or special that anyone would want. It can be anything. But whatever it is, make it something that will motivate your character to do almost anything to get it. That will help make your story interesting.

Write a brief but detailed paragraph that answers these two questions:

WHAT one thing does your character want more than anything else in the world? WHY does your character want or need it so much?