



# Questioning Your Character's Motive

A checklist to help you find the Root of All Needs

For each of the main turning point scenes of your story, ask these questions to identify the motivation for why your main character acts they way they do. What really drives them?

**Identifying the External Desire:** The external desire usually changes several times throughout the story as progress is made. This is what outsiders see, and the MC announces to the world.

- What does your MC want to accomplish externally? (escape the prison, solve a mystery)
- How would a secondary character in the story respond if you asked them this same question about the MC?

**Identifying the Underlying Need:** This is the first layer of need that the protagonist can identify quite easily. This also usually changes throughout the story. This underlying need is often the first layer that shifts the motive internal to an emotional level.

- **Why** does your MC want to \_\_\_\_\_ (external desire)?
- What are they hoping to accomplish by \_\_\_\_\_ (external desire)?

**Identifying the Deeper Need:** This is a deeper need that is buried below the Underlying Need. Sometimes this changes in a story, sometimes not. The protagonist might struggle to recognize this need, but it drives them anyway. Always an internal, emotional need.

- **Why** does your MC need \_\_\_\_\_ (underlying need)?
- **Why** will \_\_\_\_\_ (underlying need) help them progress?

**Identifying the Root of All Needs:** This is the deepest need that resonates through everything the MC desires. This is the same throughout the story, although the protagonist doesn't always discover it for themselves. Sometimes this need is met, sometimes not. Regardless, it's a huge driving force.

- **Why** does your MC need \_\_\_\_\_ (deeper need)?
- **Why** will \_\_\_\_\_ (deeper need) help them progress?

Identifying the four levels of motive for your turning point scenes will help guide you as you weave an authentic motive into all the decisions your protagonist makes.