

Notes compiled in part from "The Plot Thickens, 8 ways to bring fiction to life" by Noah Lukeman (St. Martin's Press)

- I. Characterization: the Outer Life: defining character from the outside in
 - a. A. Appearance: face, body, legs, etc, who does this character resemble physically (ex. a crowded room: how would you explain this person to someone on a blind date?)
 - b. style: clothing, shoes, accessories, walk, grooming, voice, lifestyle
 - c. self-perception: what does the character think about his/her A. + B.? (ex. if a doctor took a medical history of your character, how would the character answer the questions? or if asked to describe himself in a personals ad? or asked to describe himself to his therapist?
 - d. family background: parents? upbringing? siblings? formative experiences? formative relationships?
 - e. Employment?
 - f. Education?
 - g. Police record?
 - h. Economics (what does the bank account look like? spending patterns?)
 - i. Possessions (are they important? if so, what are some prized possessions?)
 - j. Romantic History? fulfillments, losses, heartbreaks, etc.
 - k. Residence: where does this person live (apartment, house, boat?, and in what city, town, state, country, etc) and why?
 - l. habits: messy or neat? alcoholic? etc.
 - m. Hobbies, passions?
 - n. Pets?
- II. Characterization: the Inner Life
 - a. Inherent Abilities
 - b. Spirituality
 - c. Identity
 - d. Beliefs
 - e. Programs (sense of self-worth, things to overcome from childhood or parents?)
 - f. Ethics
 - g. Sex
 - h. Motivation (what drives this person? dreams? hopes? goals?)
 - i. Friendships
 - j. Conversational Focus
 - k. Self-Awareness
 - l. Values
 - m. A typical weekday for the character
 - n. a typical weekend for the character
 - o. Heroes
 - p. Politics/Ideologies
 - q. Relationship to Authority
 - r. Vices
 - s. Relationship to food
- III. Applied Characterization: the relationship of character to plot
 - a. Major or minor character has to do with impact, not frequency of appearance
 - b. Frequency of appearance- a key figure does not have to be in every scene.
 - c. Entrances + exits- a character can appear late in a work, or be removed early
 - d. Perception + reaction – how do two characters react differently to the same situation?
 - e. The Narrator's voice: what is the character of the narrator? Is it distinct from the characters that appear in the piece? Does the voice challenge what we see/read, or support it? This voice is expressed through all aspects of your craft.
 - f. Group characterization: collective chemistry (almost a separate entity, greater than the sum of its parts)
 - g. Group behavior: How do others affect your character's behavior?
 - h. Multidimensionality: not everything adds up tidily; characters have some degree of unexplained complexity

And as much as possible, SHOW, don't tell.