

Theatr
Iolo

Topic Two

Character



Character

A play is about somebody's story and that somebody (or group of people/animals) has to be a character that we can **understand**.

We have to be able to put ourselves in their shoes, even if they are very different to us in terms of personality and situation.

If the audience don't care about the characters, then they won't care about what happens to them.

Most plays have a **main character**. This could be a person, an animal or even a cartoon character.

Two Important things!

- A character should always **want or need something**
- A character needs to **be interesting**

If your character doesn't want or need anything, then nothing will happen, nothing will change and you won't have any drama in your story.

If there is nothing interesting about your character, then the audience will not care about them or care about their story.

How do you find interesting characters?

- It could be someone you know or you could make yourself the main character.
- Perhaps the world, theme or idea that you want to write about, will help you find a main character.

If you are finding it hard to decide on your character, try some of the following ideas...





Idea One Objects



Objects

Choose **two** things from this list:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Matchbox | Feather Boa |
| Babygro | Empty Photo Frame |
| Old handkerchief | Green and yellow rugby shirt |
| 2025 Diary | Lipstick called Coral Dawn |
| Old Teddy | Yellow Sun Top |
| Brass Bell | Pair of spectacles in a case |
| Duster | Packet of Seeds |
| School Report | Photograph of a snowy hill |
| Half eaten sandwich | Google maps printout of a Rhondda town |
| Pair of muddy laces | Napkin with a X scrawled on it |
| Small black notebook | Train ticket to Bristol |

Don't necessarily choose things that go together.

These two things will be important to the character you are creating.



TOP TIP: Remember that your character should be interesting and they should need or want something.

Choose two items that help them to make a change in their life, show how interesting they are or help them to achieve what they needed or wanted.

Next imagine where these two things are:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| In a pocket | In a bag |
| On a shelf | In a dark corner |
| In a cave | In a hand |
| In a cupboard | Under a bed |
| Under the ground | On a mantelpiece |
| Down the side of a sofa | Locked up in a safe place |
| Somewhere else you choose | |

Think about why these two things might be important to this character. It might be because it reminds them of someone or something, or it gives them instructions to go on a journey or on a mission.

What other reasons can you think of?



Idea Two
Give your character personality

Give your Character Personality

Write down as many adjectives (**describing words**) as you can

For example:

Happy	Lazy	Busy	Practical	Thoughtful
Angry	Messy	Curious	Loving	Childish
Smiley	Creative	Bored	Polite	Adventurous
Bossy	Selfish	Clumsy	Scared	Energetic

Once you've made a nice long list, choose two adjectives to be paired together.

Try pairing **two things that are interesting together.**

For example:

What about Loving and Selfish?

Bossy and Clumsy? or Curious and Scared?



Try as many interesting pairings as you can

These pairings show how people are made up of lots of different qualities and these different bits of us don't always get on.

They often **conflict or crash** into each other. This conflict is a good thing to have in a play, because it makes things **difficult** for the character.

It is good for things to be difficult because that's when characters have to **do** things.

If a character is perfectly happy sitting in the garden eating biscuits, then there is no story, no journey and no change and they aren't very interesting.

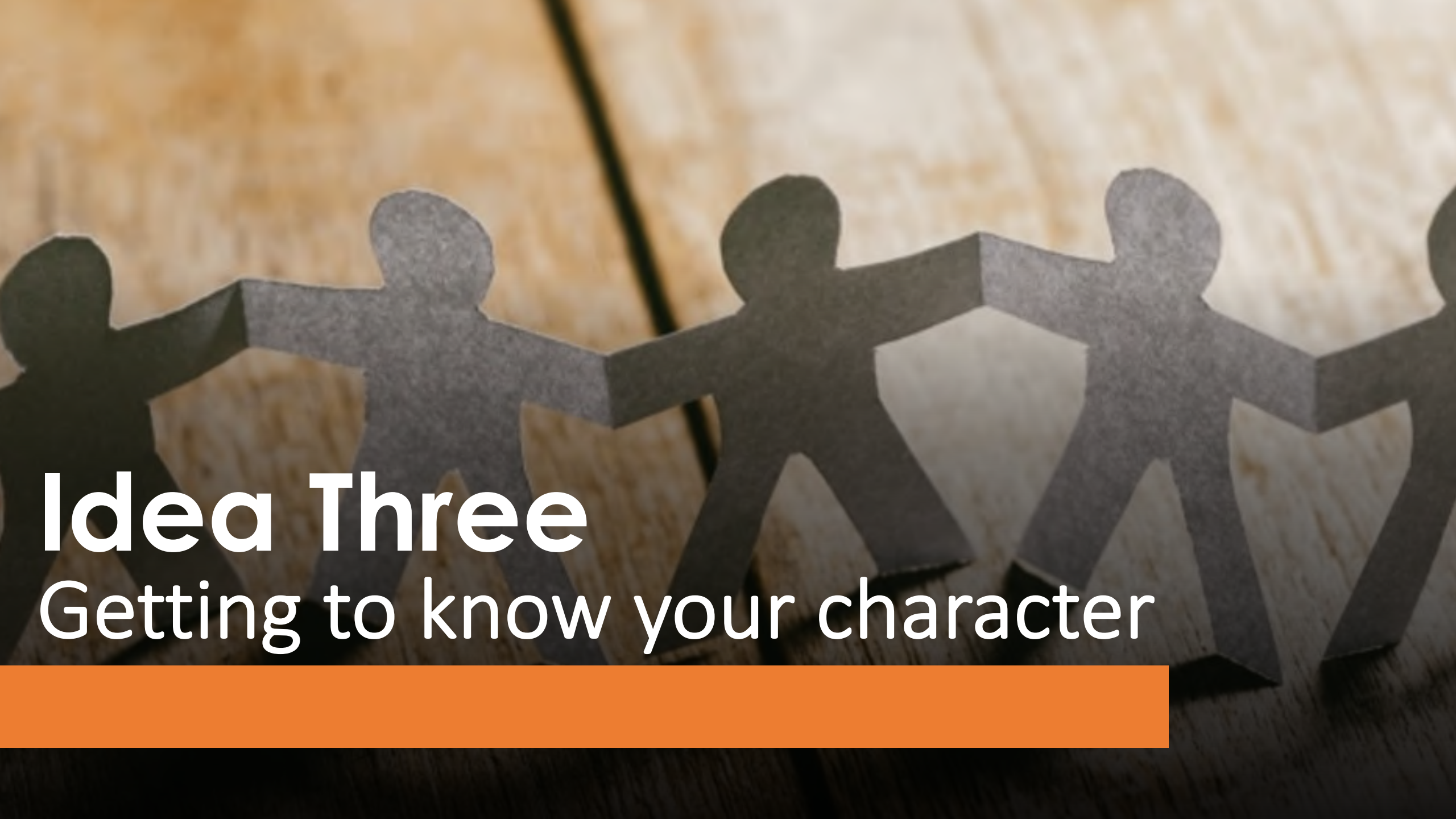
Choose your favourite pairing

Put the character in a position in your story that brings out the different qualities that they have.

For example:

If your character is a greedy but polite girl, what would she do when she is at her best friend's birthday party and there is lots of food on a table for all the partygoers to help themselves? Would she eat it all? Or would she just take her share? What if she went to the party really hungry? Ask yourself what would be the most interesting thing to happen.

**TOP TIP: Don't make things too easy for your character!
If you make it more difficult for them, it will make for a better story.**



Idea Three

Getting to know your character



Getting to know your Character

The most important thing that you can do when developing story and characters is **Ask Questions!**

Who, How What, When and maybe most important is Why? Get to know your character better by pretending to be your character in the play and answering the following questions.

This can be quite fun as your character might lie, choose not to answer, be cheeky or scary.

1. Are you male or female or neither?
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you at the moment? (location)
4. Where were you born?
5. Where do you live? What's your favourite item of clothing?
6. What are your most worn pair of shoes?
7. What do you believe in (as a fact, or the truth)
8. What is your favourite food?
9. What is your favourite colour?
10. What do you hope to become?
11. What's your secret?
12. What was/is your favourite subject at school? Why?
13. Where do you go to think?
14. What's your secret?
15. Who's your best friend?
16. What is your favourite memory?
18. What is your biggest regret?
19. What is something that you want very much?
20. When was the last time that you belly-laughed?
21. What is your secret?
22. Have you got a scar? How did that happen?
23. What's the best feeling in the world?
24. Do you have brothers and sisters? What are they like, if you do?
25. What's the most important thing you've ever done?
26. What do you think of baking?
27. Who would play you in a film?
28. Are you a liar?
29. What was your favourite holiday?
30. What have you realised about yourself recently?
31. Do you like football or rugby?
32. When were you most scared?
33. What's your favourite season of the year?
34. Where and when would you live if you could?

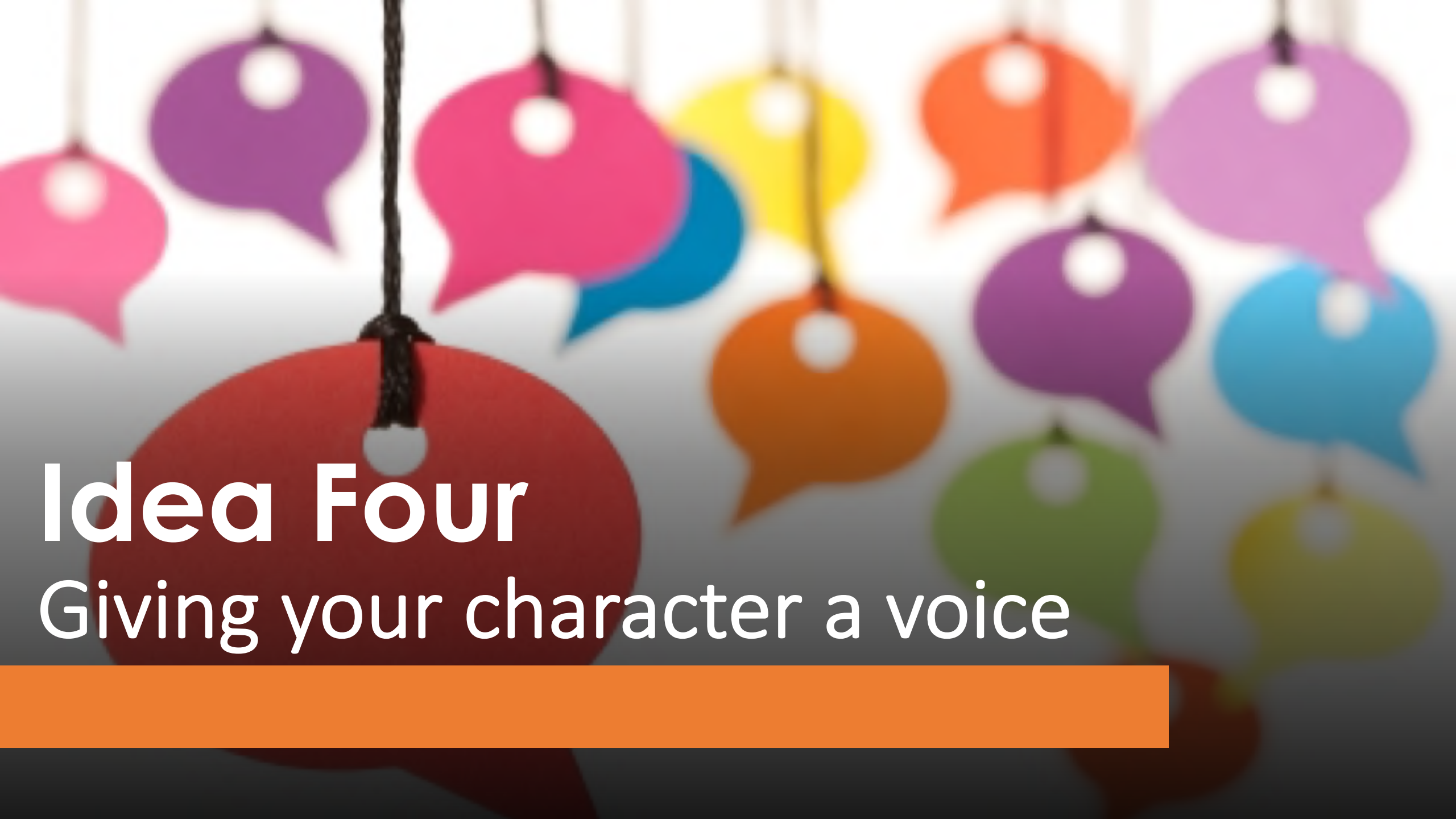
Write down all of the answers and choose the most important things that you have found out about them. Hopefully they will have **surprised** you in some way.

If there are any other questions and answers you would like to add for your character, about their family or hobbies, do that now. Once you have all these answers, give your character a name. Think about why that name suits them or why they have an unusual name.

TOP TIP: Don't try to make everything fit together.

Remember that characters have lots of different qualities.





Idea Four

Giving your character a voice



Giving your character a Voice

Imagine your character in a **particular special place**. Where do they go when they need to think things through, or make a choice or decision?

Is it their bedroom, or a shed in the garden? Maybe it's a den, or a magic space that only they know.

Maybe it's under the kitchen table, or the gym in school. Or the park. Or up a tree.

Choose their special place and choose whether they have an object or someone with them. If someone is with them they must not be able to hear what your character says.

Imagine that your character has a problem or something to sort out in their head, maybe they have a difficult decision or choice to make.

For example:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| To go to the magic land or not | To tell a grown up that they are being bullied |
| To choose science or music at school | To save the world even if it means being at risk |
| To try out for the school team | To tell a grown up about something that they saw |
| To say sorry to someone | To admit that they are feeling lonely or scared |
| To ask someone out | |

Choose one of these choices and write down the chat that they have with themselves trying to decide what to do.

Write it down in the same way that you think the character would say it.

You don't need to explain the problem as you are writing, so not every word has to make sense to someone listening in.

Make sure the character changes their mind during the chat that they have with themselves.

TOP TIP: Make it hard for your character to reach a decision, so they have to think about their decision.

Use your character's language and not your own.



A surreal landscape featuring a vibrant rainbow arching across the sky. A path of stepping stones leads from the foreground towards a large, ornate castle or cathedral perched atop a thick layer of white clouds. A person with a backpack stands on a rock in the foreground, looking towards the path. The scene is filled with soft, ethereal light and a dreamlike atmosphere.

Idea Five

Character Wants and Needs

Character Wants and Needs

Write down everything that you have learnt about what your character wants.

Remember that wanting something badly gives the character the push that they need to do stuff and move the story forward.

So here are some examples of wants – in this case I have thought particularly of the wants of a young person and am writing them in the first person (I want)

For example:

I want it to be Christmas every day

I want to be a dancer

I want my parents to be rich

I want to never have to go to school

I want to be clever

I want my baby sister to disappear

I want to be a fashion designer

I want to tell a grown up about things that are happening at school

I want an ice cream

I want to be able to fly like a bird

I want my mum or dad to be happy

I want everyone to like me

I want a new bike

I want to be able to swim

I want my Bampy to come alive



Write down a list of interesting wants for your character.

Then think of the obstacles that they have to overcome in order to get what they want.

Character Wants and Needs

Imagine if your character wanted an ice-cream? What things could stand in their way to stop them getting that ice-cream?

For example

- They have been grounded
- The character isn't allowed because they've been naughty.
- Your home is very far away from anywhere
- The ice cream van has broken down
- All the factories have stopped making ice cream
- The shops are all closed
- There's no money

All of these reasons are very different, but they do give the character a real problem.

If they really, really want that ice-cream, then they might be willing to do something extreme to beat the obstacle.

For example

- They could sneak out of the window and run to the village
- They could lie and tell their parents that it was their brother/friend that did the bad thing, not them
- They could try to mend the ice cream van or raise money for it to be mended

What other examples can you think of?

Think of something your own character wants or needs and something that will stand in their way.

Then you can think of a series of things they are willing to do to get what they want.

TOP TIP: Don't worry if when writing about wants and needs and in overcoming the obstacles, it makes your character look like a bad or selfish person.

No-one is perfect. Quite often in plays, the thing that the character thought they wanted, isn't actually what they wanted at all.



To sum up:

It's really important that a character is interesting and has lots of different qualities

A character needs to want something, otherwise they can't make anything happen

A character should change during a drama and realise something

A character doesn't have to always do the right thing

It's important that we understand why a character feels as they do even if we don't like them

