**Panster vs Plotter**

Susan M. Baganz

Author and Editor at Pelican Book Group

Panster vs Plotter - a continuum – and anyway that works best for you is good!

**PANSTER –** write by the seat of his/her pants

Positive –

* A fun roller-coaster ride
* Research as you go
* It’s how God wired you – so enjoy it and don’t feel guilty if you do it differently than anyone else.

Negative –

* The Problem of Backstory
  + Solution: Character Interviews
* Writer’s Block
  + Solution: Recognize it as fear and push through!
* Character/Setting/Scene mixups
  + Solution: Editing and revision
  + Keep a timeline separate
* Plot holes
  + Solution – that timeline
* Forget to answer important questions
  + Solution: Writing fast can keep you from forgetting – this is only a problem if you write slow. Again keep notes as you go.

**PLOT VS STRUCTURE**

**PLOTTER –** Planning, researching, and outlining your story

* Pre-Planning
  + Something has to happen
  + Goals must be established
  + Action
  + Determine Genre and Word count
  + Setting (contemporary/historical)
  + Motivation (internal/external)
  + High stakes conflict
  + Denouement takes place
* Tools of a Plotter
  + Character Development Worksheets
  + On paper- notes or detailed charting
  + Plot on your walls (use post it notes!)
  + Scrivener or other story software
  + Other people’s guides and books
    - Classic Plot structure
      * BEGINNING – Inciting incident (Active/motive)
      * MIDDLE – Needs/Goals worked on (Roadblocks/Conflict!)
      * END – Satisfying but not necessarily victorious (Change/Growth!)
    - Randy Ingermanson’s Snowflake Method
    - Freytag’s Pyramid
    - Other models: Clock, Skeleton
  + DIY Outline/synopsis

**WHY PLOT?**

* Elevator pitch
* Character and setting continuity
* To avoid character/setting/scene mix-ups
* To keep the story moving forward
* To save time on research
* To give yourself goals/avoid writer’s block
* To avoid plot holes
* Avoid time frame issues
* Keep stakes high and tight
* Answer the important questions
* Even flow of information in non-fiction that addresses the initial problem/question
* It’s how God wired you! Embrace it!

Resources:

Baty, Chris. *No Plot? No Problem!*

Bell, James Scott. *Plot and Structure*

Mills, DiAnn. *The Dance of Character and Plot*

Smith, Dean Wesley. *Writing in the Dark: How to Write a Novel Without an Outline*

**Character Development Worksheet**

***Photo***

***Full Name*:**

***Meaning of Name*:**

***Nickname:***

**PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

***Age:***

***Birthday*:**

***How old does he/she look*:**

***Hair color*:**

***Hairstyle*:**

***Eye color:***

***Weight*:**

***Height*:**

***Body Build*:**

***Skin tone/ coloring*:**

***Shape of face*:**

***Pet peeves about appearance*:**

***Does this affect the story*:**

***What she likes about appearance*:**

***What people notice first about her*:**

**PERSONALITY TRAITS**

***Mannerisms*:**

***Life verse*:**

***Optimist or pessimist*:**

***Favorite color*:**

***Favorite expression*:**

***Favorite scent or perfume*:**

***Favorite sports*:**

***Regrets*:**

***Ambitions*:**

***Darkest secret*:**

***Person most influenced by*:**

***How*:**

***What is her most prized possession*:**

***Why*:**

***How does she relate to others*:**

***What is her greatest strength*:**

***What is her greatest weakness*:**

***Phobias*:**

***Joys*:**

***Temper*:**

**FAMILY**

***Mother*:**

***Dead or Alive*:**

***Father*:**

***Dead or Alive*:**

***Relationship with mother*:**

***Relationship with father*:**

***Siblings*:**

***Upbringing*:**

**EDUCATION**

***Background*:**

***How well did she do*:**

***Ramifications of education or lack of education*:**

**RELIGIOUS**

***Relationship with the Lord*:**

***When became Christian*:**

***Faithful in church, Bible, fellowship*:**

***Prayer life*:   
  
*Actively seeking God daily or only in crisis*:**

***Share their faith or reserved*:**

***If not interested in faith, why*:**

***What will it take to bring to God*:**

***How perceive God*:**

***Feeling about church and fellowship*:**

***Pivotal issue of faith to draw them to God or closer to him*:**

***How affect relationships with others*:**

***Other “gods” in their life*:**

**FINANCIAL**

***Financial status*:**

***What kind of spender*:**

***Do they budget*:**

**CAREER/ OCCUPATION**

***What is her job*:**

***Dream occupation*:**

***Vehicle driven*:**

**RESIDENCE**

***Native of/ born*:**

***Where do they live now*:**

***Do they like this location and why or why not*:**

***Description of home*:**

**HOBBIES**

***How does she spend free time*:**

***Why these hobbies*:**

***One day to live, how spend it*:**

***Ideal vacation site*:**

***Favorite music*:**

***Favorite food*:**

***Favorite literature*:**

***Like movies & what kind*:**

**TALENTS**

***What is she good at:***

***Athletic*:**

**FRIENDS**

***Name*:**

***Relationship*:**

***Name*:**

***Relationship*:**

***Name*:**

***Relationship*:**

***Name:***

***Relationship:***

***What circle do their friends come from*:**

***How they affect their life*:**

**WARDROBE**

***Favorite style of dress*:**

***Office/ business*:**

***Footwear*:**

***Sleepwear*:**

***Jewelry*:**

**GOALS**

***Personal goals*:**

***Deepest unfulfilled desire*:**

***Most proud of accomplishing*:**

***Least proud of*:**

**LOVE LIFE**

***What kind of love life*:**

***Ever been in love*:**

***How has this affected her life*:**

***What does she want in a romantic relationship*:**

***What is she looking for in a mate*:**

***Does she desire to marry*:**

***Want a family*:**

***Why or why not*:**

**POLITICS**

***What are their political interests*:**

***Involved in current events*:**

***Involved in their surrounding community needs*:**

***Causes involved with*:**

**HEALTH**

***General health*:**

***Ever had a close brush with death*:**

***Does this have bearing on story*:**

**QUIRKS**

***What quirks does she have?***

***Pet peeves:***

***Character flaw:***

***How does character relate to others?***

***How is character perceived by:***

***Strangers?***

***Friends?***

***Significant other?***

***Children?***

***Co-workers?***

***Protagonist?***

***Antagonist?***

***First impression character makes is:***

***What happens to change this perception?***

***What do family and friends like most about the character?***

***What do family and friends like least about character?***

***Redeeming character quality:***

**Character Development Worksheet for a COUPLE**

**HIM** **HER**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name  Nickname?  What do they want?  What will they get?  What gets in the way? |  |  |
| Age  Height  Weight  Eyes  Hair  Any distinguishing facial features?  Build  Health  Voice  Scars (how did they get them)/birthmarks  Clothing |  |  |
| Occupation  Financial situation  Car  Home  Pets |  |  |
| **Personal Characteristics**  Goals  Attitude  Habits/Mannerisms  Distinctive Personality Traits  Self-image  Clothing – how do they dress?  Dreams  What would happiness look like for them?  Fears – biggest- who have they told- or why wouldn’t they tell  Secrets  Sense of humor  -what makes them laugh out loud?  What do they do when they get angry?  Have they been in love? Had a broken heart?  Code of ethics  What do they like?  Pet Peeves  Sports  Hobbies  Talent  Magazines/books  Movies  Music  Motives  Favorite foods  Favorite colors  Ideal spouse |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Background**  Birthplace  Parents  Siblings  Other family?  Friends?  Where do they live now? Where have they lived?  Culture  Faith  Spouse/significant other  Children  Military  Education |  |  |
| **Personal History**  Education  Religion  Early childhood experiences  Profession  Past relationships  Biggest regret  If they could change one thing about themselves…  Who do they admire the most?  Personal motto  Greatest achievement |  |  |
| **Positive traits** |  |  |
| **Negative traits** – fatal flaw or a strength so prominent it becomes a weakness  What do they hate most about themselves? |  |  |
| MISC |  |  |