

CONFLICT BRAINSTORMING EXERCISE

The purpose of this exercise is to brainstorm potential conflicts for the main character, keeping in mind that conflict can be internal or external, a minor obstacle or a life-changing event, and can come from a friend or a foe. The conflicts can be used to plot before writing, or thrown into a flagging novel while writing.

1. BRAINSTORM RAW MATERIAL

Write six lists of six items each on index cards. This is brainstorming, so write down any idea or impulse, even if it seems stupid or weird. Take three minutes per list. If you think of more than six items, cross out the ones you like the least when the three minutes are up. The lists are:

- Six important facts or traits of the protagonist.
- Six people in the protagonist's life, such as friends, family, coworkers, or sidekicks.
- Six important facts or traits of the antagonist.
- Six people in the antagonist's life, such as friends, family, coworkers, or minions.
- Six important facts or traits of the setting.
- Six important things that happened in the past, before the story starts.

Make sure the lists are numbered.

2. NUMBER

Pass the index cards to the person on your left, unless you are doing this alone. They will shuffle the cards face down, and number them one through six.

3. ROLL DICE.

Roll 2d6. That is, two six-sided dice. The first die rolled is the number of an index card. The second die rolled is the number of a list item on the card.

4. MAKE TROUBLE

Answer the following question: How can [list item you rolled] cause trouble for my protagonist? Write down four possibilities in four minutes. Roll again, and repeat. Do this several times.

5. CHOOSE TROUBLE

Were there any list items that you hoped you would roll that didn't? Anything that seemed like it could be interesting, fun, or cause trouble? Repeat the brainstorming exercise with those items: write down four possibilities for trouble in four minutes.