

Research Questions for Developing a Persona

What is a Person? It is the fictional person whom you wish to have been, had you lived some time prior to 1600 A.D. Also referred to as your persona story, it involves your created name and the history/background you create. An ideal persona is one that were you dropped back into the time period you are creating, could fit in to society unnoticed.

Many people want to develop a persona but are unsure where to begin. What information does one need to obtain to have a good persona story? Following are a series of questions collected from various sources designed to show what information most people consider necessary to be collected to develop a full fleshed-out persona. These questions are by no means all-inclusive, but hopefully will present at least a good starting point.

1. What is your persona's name?

How did you get your name?

Is there an English translation or equivalent?

2. What year was your persona born?

What period are you from?

How old is your persona?

3. What is your persona's native country?

What is your persona's ethnicity?

What part of the country do you live in?

Are you from a city, a village, a manor, or a farm

In what city/town/barn was your persona born?

What kind of building do you live in?

4. What is your persona's current country?

What city does your persona currently claim as "home"?

What type of building does your persona currently live in?

5. What are the climates of your persona's native and current countries?

6. What are the terrains of your persona's native and current countries?

Can you describe life in general in this place?

What is your capital?

How far is it to the capital city? (In units of measure your persona would have used?)

Have you ever been there?

7. What are/were your persona's parents' names?

What are/were your persona's parents' occupation(s)?

Are your parents alive?

Does your persona have any siblings, and if so, are any still alive?

8. Is your persona married?

What are the marriage customs and typical age of marriage for your persona's culture/time-frame?

9. With whom does your persona live?

10. Are there members of your persona's household that are not related to your persons (servants/retainers, wards/fosterlings, guests, etc.)?

What is the structure of the family/clan/tribe?

Are children raised at home or fostered elsewhere?

How many generations of your family would your persona really have been aware of?

Were pets or animals kept during your persona's culture/time-frame?

If so, what kind, if any, does your persona have?

11. What is your persona's occupation?

How did you learn to do your work?

Who taught you?

Who is your persona's current employer?

What are your daily responsibilities?

How do you get paid?

List your persona's skills and hobbies. For each, write down where your persona learned them.

Does your persona fight?

If so, where did your persona learn to fight?

What type of armor and weapons were used by fighters in your persona's culture/time-frame?

And how were such obtained?

12. What is your station in life?

What "class" is your persona? (I.e., royalty, nobility, merchant, middle, artisan, slave, etc.)

Do you hold a title? (I.e. Knighthood, field commission, etc.)

Do you hold and special awards, letters of marque?

What is your lineage?

Are you high born?

Are you legitimate?

How long do people like your persona tend to live?

Are you wealthy or poor?

Is this likely to change?

13. Did your persona's culture/time-frame have heraldry?

Do you have a family coat of arms?

Do you currently have a personal device?

14. What level of education does your persona have?

Would your persona have been literate in your chosen culture/time-frame?

Can you read or write?

How does your level of education effect your life and prospects?

Where was your persona educated?

What did you study?

What languages does your persona speak?

15. How much do you know of Current events?

How did people of your persona's culture/time-frame tell time?

How did people of your persona's culture/time-frame keep track of days?

What calendar do you use?

What year is it?

What types of wildlife live in your persona's area?

Name your persona's favorite musicians/artists/dances.

What's the most striking scientific achievement of which your persona is aware?

Who is the most significant thinker of your persona's time?

What does your persona know of history/science/medicine/geography?
Does your persona consider the Earth to be flat, round, or hollow?
Does your persona believe that the Earth revolves around the Sun, or vice-versa?
What type of medical aid is available in your persona's culture/time-frame
Does your persona have access to it?
What major events have occurred during your persona's lifetime?
(Natural catastrophes, wars, revolutions, discoveries, etc.?)

16. How widely has your persona traveled?

Where?

What were the circumstances? (I.e., military, sailor, rich person's hobby, etc.)

What is the most distant land you know of?

17. How well versed is your persona in Politics

Who is your persona's current monarch?

Who rules the neighboring peoples?

Who are the enemies/rivals of your people?

How were you involved or affected by warfare?

Do you, personally, fight?

Under what circumstances?

What armor is worn what weapons are used in your time and place?

(Answer this one even if you do not fight)

How do people of your time and place get weapons and armor?

With respect to international relations, does your persona favor colonization, isolationism, conquest/conversion, open trade, etc.?

What political figure/party/movement does your persona support?

What does your persona consider to be the greatest social problem their country?

What does your persona consider to be the causes of criminal behavior?

18. What religion is your persona?

Who is the current Pope during your persona time?

What kind of religious duties would be required of your persona?

Do you practice a covert religious belief system?

19. What kind of legal system do you live in?

How well versed is your persona in current Legal Matters

Who make the laws?

What happens to those who break them?

How does this affect you?

What is the status of women among your persona's culture/time frame?

Can they own property or conduct business?

What trades can they enter?

20. How did people of your persona's culture/time-frame deal with trade?

What units of measure were used by your persona's culture/time-frame?

What type of money did people of your persona's culture/time-frame use?

What is the basic unit of money?

21. How does your persona personally obtain goods (food, drink, clothes, etc.)?

What does your persona eat and drink in a normal day?

How is food prepared and preserved in your persona's culture/time-frame?

How is it served? (Table manners and dining customs)

What spices were available to your persona?

How expensive were they?

What were the eating habits of people of your persona's culture/time-frame?

Does your menu change during the year?

22. What do you wear?

How do you obtain or make your clothing?

How does your everyday garb differ from your court garb?

Do you wear underwear?

What kind?

How do you care for your clothes?

Do you have many clothes?

Are there any laws restricting what you wear? (Sumptuary laws?)

Were they commonly followed?

Would you have been able to bribe your way around those laws?

23. How do you keep clean?

How often do you bathe?

What preparations must be made for your bath?

What are the cleaning/bathing habits of your persona's culture/time-frame?

How did you clean your clothes?

24. What is your persona's outlook on life?

What are your persona's habits? (Are you lazy, industrious, dependable, unpredictable, mean etc.?)

What is your persona's temperament? (Angry, jovial, pious, shy, pompous, etc)

What are your pet peeves?

Did you hate your Parents, instructor, previous Monarch?

What are your persona's mannerisms? (I.e. polite, chivalrous, rude?)

Does your persona swagger, walk with head down or look people in the eye?

Does your persona have an accent? Can you practice it?

What are your persona's likes and dislikes?

What are your persona's personal failures? (What are you bad at?)

Do you have a personal trait that is exclusive to your persona? (I.e. Gesture, saying, phobia?)

Do you have a valued possession? (I.e. Sword, jewelry, favor, book, etc.)

What are you afraid of?

What is most likely to cause your persona's death?

What does your persona think about death?

Are you loyal to a Lord or Lady or Monarch?

How far does your loyalty go? (IE. Life or Death?)

How far would your persona go to improve your status? (Thievery, Murder, etc.)

What does your persona consider to be the true measure of a man?

How does your persona measure up to this ideal?

Who has most influenced your persona's thoughts on these questions?

What do you do for fun?

What entertainment is available to you?

Do you provide entertainment for others?

How?

Who are your heroes (contemporary, historical, or legendary)?

What stories do your people tell?

List at least three of your persona's goals in life.

(IE. Learn to write, become apprenticed to a craftsman, visit the "big city", take over the family business, go to the Holy Land, usurp the crown, etc.)