

Creating Animal Characters in Adult Fiction

Questions

General

- 1) Is your character the protagonist, antagonist, or companion?
- 2) Is the character based on a real animal, mythical, extinct, hybrid or fantasy?
- 3) What is their primary goal?
- 4) What is the scale of the animal compared to what they are based on eg miniature made large, fragment(s), megafauna?
- 5) Does the character live with the other characters or only appears occasionally?
- 6) Is the character's relationship with other main characters lifelong or for a single purpose?
- 7) How does the character originally meet the other main characters?

Behaviour

- 8) What, if any, culture does the animal have – law, lore?
- 9) What beliefs does the character have – religion, spiritual, nature?
- 10) What lines will the character not cross? What would force it to cross that line?
- 11) What deep needs does the character have? What is it prepared to do to get that?
- 12) What deep fears does the character have? What will it do to avoid or do away with that?
- 13) How strong is instinct in the characters? Is that natural for the species?
- 14) Is the character able to work out logical solutions or does it rely on habit, teachings, instinct?
- 15) Is the character cold or warm blooded?
- 16) Is the character diurnal or nocturnal? How does it cope at the opposite time of day?
- 17) What is the natural environment for your character? Is it an extreme environment?
- 18) Is this where the character is living in the story?
- 19) What adaptations does the character have for its environment. Can it change these?
- 20) How will the character cope out of its environment? Are its adaptations a hindrance?
- 21) What type of home (if any) does the character usually inhabit – den, cave, tree?
- 22) Does the character live alone or in a group? Is this natural for the species?
- 23) What forms of communication does the character use? Are these forms different to the other main characters?
- 24) Can the character understand speech? Does it use dialogue in the story?

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- 25) What different vocalisations does the character emit in times of distress, joy, warning etc?
- 26) Does the character employ and enjoy music?
- 27) What grooming does the character need? Is this mutual with others of its species?
- 28) How does the character interact in relaxed times with other main characters?
- 29) How does this differ when the character interacts with other main characters in times of stress?
- 30) Does the character have a territory? If so, how does it delineate and defend this?
- 31) What is the general nature of the character's relationship with other species – passive, aggressive, avoids contacts, welcomes interaction?
- 32) What is the specific nature of the character's symbiotic relationships – commensalism, mutualism, neutralism, competition, parasitic, herbivory, carnivory, sympatric?
- 33) What features denotes the nature of the character eg eyes, ears?
- 34) How does the character procreate? Is it responsible for the young?
- 35) How able are the young of the character's species? What age/state of development is the character?
- 36) What is the character's first reaction to danger eg fight or flight?
- 37) When is the character vulnerable? What can it do to mitigate these risks?
- 38) What role does the character have among others of its species eg leader, warrior, food provider?
- 39) What gender is the character? Does s/he live with the same gender only or mixed genders?
- 40) Does the character's species generally mate for life? Does the character have a (potential) mate?
- 41) Does the character have young? Does the character care about its young?

Biology

- 42) Is the character a vertebrate or invertebrate?
- 43) Does the character have a distinct shape? Is this normal for its species?
- 44) How large is the character? Is this normal for its species?
- 45) Does the character have special adaptations from others of its species?
- 46) What appendages does the character have? What are these used for?
- 47) What type of covering (fur, scales, feathers) does the character have? Is there anything special about this?

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- 48) Can the character bioluminesce or does it have other special features? What for?
- 49) What natural weapons does the character have (claws, teeth, horns, speed, hide)?
- 50) Can the character use other weapons eg tools, other animals?
- 51) What competition exists within the character's species? Will it kill/eat others of its kind?
- 52) What defence mechanisms does the character have? How are these used?
- 53) Can/does the character metamorphose at will, or at any time in its life?
- 54) Is the character positively or adversely affected by the seasons or moon? Is this normal for its species?
- 55) Which primary sense predominates in the character – sight, smell, taste, touch, hearing?
- 56) What other senses are utilised and how?
- 57) How does the character navigate? Is this normal for its species?
- 58) What food does the character usually eat? What are its preferences?
- 59) How does the character find food? Can it go for a long time without food or water?
- 60) What sense of spatial awareness does the character have? Does it have a small or large sense of personal space?
- 61) What type of blood does the character have? Is there anything special about its blood?
- 62) What organs does the character have? Is there anything special about its organs?
- 63) Does the character need to breathe? How? What extremes can it take?
- 64) What challenges does the character's species naturally have? Does the character share these challenges eg dying after reproduction?

Summary

- 65) How did your character come to be like they are?
- 66) What adaptations can you give your character to make it more interesting?
- 67) Is the character believable?
- 68) Will readers care about the character?