

**ANDREA JEN**  
Manga Character  
Creation



## WHY CHARACTERS ARE IMPORTANT AND HOW TO CREATE THEM.

### 1. STORY OR CHARACTERS?

When making manga, creating the CHARACTERS is more important than creating the story.

But FIRST, you need to think of a good IDEA/CONCEPT, since this is the message you'll convey to the reader. This is why it's important to know what ideals to share, and your characters will do the work for you. E.g. Ideals like friendship, or helping selflessly, healthy competition, etc.

Once you have the idea, it's time to think about the theme or genre. Friendship ideals in a sports story, for example. (I recommend working on concepts that you're already familiar with since in the end, personal experiences are the ones that are expressed and understood best on paper.)

Take your time formulating and polishing the concepts, and once you're sure of them, start creating the characters.

The CHARACTERS are the ACTORS that develop in their roles, expressing their EMOTIONS to ENTERTAIN the reader.

Think vaguely or conceptually of an untold story! But remember if you THINK too much, you'll never be able to move the reader. This is work for the FEELINGS and EMOTIONS of the CHARACTERS to do!

Once you have the idea for the story, forget about it and focus on the characters!

**GOODBYE, STORY / HELLO, CHARACTERS!**

Once you have your CHARACTERS, everything else will go smoothly! The Characters will take charge of the STORY.

These are the RULES of some MANGAKAS and JAPANESE EDITORS.

- A. NO STORY** works with **BAD ACTORS**. (Characters.)
- B. BAD STORIES** given to **GOOD ACTORS**, *are entertaining*.
- C. GOOD STORIES** given to **GREAT ACTORS**, is how legends are made!
- D. ALWAYS THINK ABOUT THE CHARACTER FIRST!**

## 2. HOW TO CREATE A CHARACTER?

We already mentioned that characters are your great cast. Animating them on paper, is how you tell stories, starting with creating your protagonist!

To create the MAIN CHARACTER, they should have:

**HERO PROTAGONIST = GOAL + MOTIVATION + WEAKNESS**

The goal needs to seem nearly impossible to reach, with a motivation or reason that lasts for several episodes of the story. It also needs to reflect the weakness of the character to move or convey feelings to the reader through empathy.

An example of a hero protagonist is Hanamichi Sakuragi, the protagonist of Slam Dunk. Hanamichi wants to make the basketball team (GOAL), to impress / win the heart (MOTIVATION) of the girl that he likes. His weakness is that he is very unlucky and impulsive in love, which leads him to get excited very quickly. We see that he tries to impress the girl (and the reader), by playing basketball with funny scenes and foolishness.

Now that you have your character, you can put them to the test and see if you really know them.

### TEST 1:

**What is he or she like?**  
**What does he or she want to achieve?**

Example A:

He is a young basketball player.

He wants to win the heart of the girl that he likes.

Example B:

She is a girl with magical powers.

Collecting cards to avoid a catastrophe.

Who am I talking about?

Once you have good actors, you'll have infinite opportunities to create stories. And for this, you'll need a pilot episode. A pilot episode is a stand-alone story that could be started back up from where it left off...

### 3. PREDOMINANT TRAITS OF PROTAGONISTS AND SECONDARY CHARACTERS

There are many characters that are memorable whether it's because of their way of thinking, or their way of feeling, based on their personality.

- Way of THINKING (Ideology): E.g. Kenshin Himura, protecting the weak. Harry Potter, because of his strong family values, love, friendship, etc.
- Way of FEELING (Emotions): E.g. Hanamichi Sakuragi, energetic, funny and impulsive, making lots of mistakes in basketball.

If your character has an introverted personality, you can always highlight their values or ideals like in Kenshin Himura's case. However, if your character is an extrovert, you just have to show the reaction on their face and body language, based on the situation.

Also remember to show the points mentioned below:

- + Behavior in front of others or in the situation (Emotional reaction and body language).
- + GOAL+MOTIVATION+WEAKNESS.

Another way of differentiating and creating a character, is by filling in the blanks in the following sentence:

#### TEST 2:

**“The most \_\_\_\_\_ in the world.... But \_\_\_\_\_!”**

Example 1: Protagonist because of his good values protecting the weak. (IDEOLOGY)



“THE STRONGEST SAMURAI in the world...”

“But...he has a reverse-blade sword.”

Kenshin, the legendary swordsman samurai from the Meiji era.



*Giving the character contradictory qualities, makes them very interesting.*

Example 2: Protagonist because of his fun personality, entertains the reader.  
(EXPRESSIONS/EMOTIONS.)



“The UNLUCKIEST man in love..”

“But... he has a big heart impressing the girl that he loves.”



*Hanamichi, smitten with his new love, Haruko.*

## 4. OBJECTS OR CHARACTERS?

In manga, just like in comics, it's common to read stories where "the chosen one" uses an object like a hammer, in Thor's case, or in Harry Potter's case, his wand, to fight against evil. But... many artists forget to ask themselves the following question when they create these objects: Why is the main character the chosen one?

You need to understand that the OBJECT CHOOSES its carrier according to certain criteria. And to better understand its nature, you need to imagine that the OBJECT is a CHARACTER.



This is the Excalibur sword.

"Whoso pulleth out this sword from this stone, is right wise King born of all England."

I think of Excalibur as a person, a knight, who wants to find a partner with good values like him, to serve the Kingdom of England.

Arthur, a brave and innocent boy, is chosen by Excalibur.

## 5. I HOPE YOU FOUND THIS LESSON HELPFUL!