

## **Lynda Barry's "Character Zine" Exercise**

This is a longer sustained exercise that is best done in one sitting. You will need a pen, a timer, and 4 sheets of 8.5 x 11 inch paper folded in half to make an 8-page booklet. This exercise will work for fictional or non-fictional characters, and will take about 2 hours to complete.

Using a sketchbook page or separate piece of paper from your booklet:

1. Start by making a list of people you knew when you were younger (take 90 seconds)
2. Choose one – maybe someone you haven't thought of in a while or seen lately.
3. Picture the two of you in a scene from early on in your relationship.

Draw an X across a page in your sketchbook or a separate piece of paper. Using the PDF of Page 145, write the answers to the 'X' page questions anywhere on your piece of paper.

### **Chapter 1**

Now using your 8-page "zine" booklet, and the notes from the 'X' page exercise, do the following:

4. Draw a frame that takes up about half of the front of your zine booklet and write "Chapter One" beneath it. Spend 4 minutes writing up this scene. You can continue on the back side of the page but no further.
5. Draw the two of you together in this scene. Make sure to include whole bodies and an indication of setting (take 4 minutes)
6. On the next page, draw another picture frame and beneath it write "Chapter 2"

We will repeat this format for all 8 chapters, beginning each chapter on the right hand page, writing on the front and back of the page.

Although you may be writing about a real person, this exercise requires you to make up some parts that you may not know, so let that happen. Keep your pen in motion.

### **Chapter 2**

Write a brief story about something that happened to your character when they were little (take 3 minutes). Then, draw a scene from the story in the chapter 2 box (take 4 minutes). Including whole bodies and setting will give you more information about your story.

### **Chapter 3**

Draw an object you associate with this person (about 3 minutes). Write about it (3 minutes).

### **Chapter 4**

Write some dialogue – something someone said about this person to you or to someone else. (3 minutes) Draw your character eating their typical lunch. Make sure we can tell where they are and what is around them.

### **Chapter 5**

Draw a scene with your character doing something alone that gives us some idea of their disposition toward the world. (3 minutes) Begin with your character's name and write up this scene. What's going on? (3 minutes)

### **Chapter 6**

Write a scene that takes place in present day where you encounter something that brings this character to mind. You can begin with something like "I thought of (name) yesterday when..." (3 minutes) Draw the scene (3 minutes)

### **Chapter 7**

Write a short scene in which you imagine them on a trip somewhere. At some point in the story they say something (3 minutes). Draw a scene from the trip. What are they wearing? What are they doing? What will they say? (3 minutes)

### **Chapter 8**

Write a short scene that is a sort of snap-shot of one of the last times you saw each other. Include the setting. (4 minutes) Draw it! (4 minutes)

### **The Covers**

Create a cover and back cover by folding another sheet of paper in half. Draw a big frame. The title of your "zine" is the name of your character. Draw a full-body picture of your character and hand-letter the title (5 minutes). On the back cover draw a little something related to the story.

Slip the cover on and DIG IT!