

Archaea Character History

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According to Gary Alan Fine, “Fantasy games consist of players and referees collectively constructing history and biography for their society and characters. These ‘experiences’ can then be meaningfully referred to by members of the group...When a gaming group exists over several weeks or months, this shared culture can become quite extensive and meaningful for group members” (2). In a limited way, our class is about exploring, creating, and analyzing the “shared culture” and experiences of costume play and larping. To do so, you will be asked to create a character for the *Archaea Live-Action Role-Playing and Wargaming* system and to reflect on your own (and others’) personas and play.

Goal and Outcomes

The creating of any role-playing game character is rarely a simple and linear process. But one way to start is to imagine and detail the who, what, where, why, and how of a character. For this assignment, you will develop a brief, 2-page character history for your in-game persona. Histories develop backstory for your character, outline important formative events, reveal likes and dislikes, and provide insight into the character's personality, motivations, behaviors, fears, politics, and ambitions. Furthermore, histories can help shape how you build your character, their skills and abilities, and their dress and presentation on the field of play (and vice versa). After all, to quote Fine again, “Gaming fantasy combines the expressive freedom of fantasy with the structure characteristic of games” (3).

Read over the *Archaea* rulebook, paying particular attention to the chapters on larping, character creation, skills and abilities, and the game world. As you develop your character, consider the following (taken from Chapter 2 of the rulebook):

- The first step to creating a character is to come up with a concept and some background: What kind of character do you want to play? A fighter? A healer? A pickpocket? A knight? A bard? An assassin? A mage? A scholar? What kind of weapon would the character likely use? What kind of clothing would the character wear? Would the character use armor or a shield?
- Using the descriptions of the Realm as a guide: Where and when was the character born? Does the character live in the city or in the wilderness? What city does the character live in or near?
- The character history should answer many different questions: What were the significant events in the character's life? Does the character have any family? Does the character have any friends? Enemies? Loves? What are the character's political views? Does the character support the current Crown?
- More things to consider: What are the likes and dislikes of the character? What are the character's fears? Superstitions? What makes the character angry? Or happy? What are the character's goals in life?
- Other things to think about: What are the character's views on fighting? What does the character think about warriors? Mages? Healers? Thieves? Knights? What organizations would the character join or avoid? What provinces or groups of people would the character care for or dislike?

You need not answer or address all of the above for your character history. But the questions are guidelines to help you develop a three-dimensional personality. The more detailed the character, the more “real” the playing of the character will be adding to the overall success of the game. The character's history will help determine (or may be determined by) the character's discipline, affiliations, skills, and abilities.

For game play, players are encouraged to type up the character history and submit it to the Elder of the Realm to be used as additional material in the development of adventures. The Elder can take certain aspects of the character history and incorporate those items into an adventure. The Elder of the Realm may choose to award

players with submitted character histories with bonus Experience Points. Lastly, if the player intends for the character to join an organization, a character history is a vital part of the petition process to enter an in-game group.

Guidelines and Due Dates

Format: Semi-formal, semi-creative paper, use the following memo format:

<p>Character Name: Player Name: Character's Province: Character's Discipline: Brief Physical Description: Pronouns:</p> <p>Character History:</p>
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Use 12-point Times Roman, 1" margins, standard double-spacing for the body, include page numbers, use single-sided printing, neatly stapled together
MLA citations and bibliography, if necessary

Due: Thursday, April 21, at the start of class