

Collaborative Character Creation for F#

by R. Hunter Gough

This is a method of structuring character creation for F#. I used it for the first F# game I ran with spectacular results, so now I'm sharing it. It's based on the primary character creation method described in *Spirit of the Century*. It definitely works well for "heroic" sorts of games, but could probably be applied just as well to any other setting where you want to establish a connection between the players' characters before the adventure starts. The major benefits of this method are that it creates strong connections between all of the players' characters before the game even begins, it helps the players flesh out and fill in their characters' backgrounds, and it also gets the players in a creative, story-telling mood right off the bat.

Step 0: Come up with a character concept that fits the game's setting.

The first F# game I ran had a 1920s "pulp action" setting, and one of the players came up with "Dr. Reginald Chi, brilliant chemist and dabbler in the occult". I'll be using Dr. Chi for the examples in this document.

Step 1: Subtract the number of players in your game from six. The remainder is your character's number of "formative aspects".

Dr. Reginald Chi is one of four PCs in a new F# game. He subtracts the number of players (4, including himself) from 6, and ends up with 2 formative aspects.

Step 2: Distribute the number of formative aspects among important events in your character's history, and create aspects for those events.

"Formative aspects" are important things that happened to your character before he became a hero (or villain, or whatever sort of more-concrete character he is today). If there's an important event that has happened during all of the characters' lifetimes that would have had a profound effect on all of them, then it would be a good "defining moment" to include.

This F# game is set in 1921, so The Great War (aka World War I, which ended in 1918) has had a recent and profound aspect on the lives of every living adult. Therefore, the GM tells the players that one of their two formative aspects should reflect their lives before the war, and the other should reflect what they did during the war.

Dr. Chi decides that, before the war, he was the personal doctor to an eccentric British ruler of the Indian colonies who went native and called himself "The Raja". He takes the aspect "Personal Doctor to 'The Raja'". During the war, Dr. Chi decides that he was kidnapped by the Ottoman Empire and forced to work on chemical and biological weapons, and he takes the aspect "The Kaiser's Chemist".

Step 3: Make up an exciting title and a very short plot summary for your character's first "solo adventure", as if it were a dime novel or comic book or movie, and create an aspect based on it.

Whereas the "formative aspects" define the character's backstory, this step is your character's "debut"; the first big adventure that establishes him as a hero.

Dr. Chi calls his solo adventure "*The Spirits of Amon-Tha*". The plot, he explains, finds him in Tibet after escaping eastward from the Ottoman Empire, and helping a group of Tibetan monks hunt down and imprison the scattered fragments of the soul of an ancient demon named Amon-Tha. From this solo adventure, Dr. Chi takes the aspect "Keeper of the Spirits of Amon-Tha".

Step 4: Working with each of the other players in turn, make up an exciting title and plot summary for each of the "collaborative" adventures that your two characters had together. Create aspects based on each of these adventures for both of the two characters involved.

This is the really fun part. "Collaborative" usually means "team-up", but it can also mean a "versus" story (or a "versus" story that turns into a "team-up" in the last act, as versus stories between heroes usually do). Note that these collaborative adventures can be in any chronological order, and can even come before your character's solo adventure.

The other players' characters are:

- Flying ace and mother of five, Hallelujah "Hal" Jhonson
- French mechanical genius Loren Lamont
- Super-spy femme fatale Lucretia Barnswallow

Dr. Chi's team-up adventure with Hal Jhonson is "*Peril Over the Danube*". In it, the two work together during the Great War to smuggle a deadly chemical weapon out of the lab where Dr. Chi is imprisoned so that the British can develop an antidote for it before it's unleashed. His aspect from this story is "Oh, you'll see what I'm working on!", reflecting his aptitude in leading-on his captors while he worked to undermine them. (Hal, meanwhile, creates the aspect "Mom always comes home safe".)

Dr. Chi's team-up with Loren Lamont is "*Gears of the Golem*", in which the two have to join forces to defeat a giant, half-mechanical-half-magical, rampaging automaton. Dr. Chi picks up the aspect "Size doesn't matter". (And Loren picks up a new aspect of his own.)

Finally, Dr. Chi butts heads with Lucretia Barnswallow in "*The Eye of the Kaiser*", picking up the aspect "Never underestimate a beautiful woman". (And, again, Lucretia also gains a new aspect from this adventure.)

Meanwhile, Hal, Loren, and Lucretia have also had their own team-up adventures with each other, and each gained a new aspect from each of them.

At this point, you've filled in all six of your character's starting aspects, and you're ready to start an adventure with tons of backstory and exciting connections to all the other PCs already built-in!