A writing class

Character *Engine*

Desires, *Flaws*, & the Internal Conflict

Why the story happens — not just how it's told.

Creative Writing 2 • 45 minutes · in your writer's notebook

keep one eye on this — it's the engine.

Today.

A 45-minute arc through want, flaw, and the friction between them.

Learning objective

You will establish internal motivators — a core desire and a key flaw — for a character, and draft a scene where internal conflict drives the action.

Essential question

How do a character's desires and flaws create the tension that moves a plot forward?

The arc · 45 min

01 **Do Now · notebook**
5 minutes

02 **Mini-lesson · wants & flaws**
10 minutes

03 **Guided practice · the keycard**
10 minutes

04 **Draft your scene**
15 minutes

05 **Pair-share & exit ticket**
5 minutes

Builds on Week 2: **narrators** told us how — today we ask **why** the story happens.

Notebook entry

A character, *without* a body.

Write a **3-sentence** description of a character. No physical features, no clothing, no age. Focus only on ***something they desperately want*** in this moment — and ***one internal bad habit or fear*** holding them back.

No body | No phone | No age

— only want & one flaw.

Timer

Skip the easy "tall, dark hair, blue eyes" answers. We'll start with what fuels the story — want meeting friction.

***Perspective** tells us how a story is told —*
***internal conflict** tells us **why** it happens.*

01 The Want

Core *desire*

The external goal — or internal status — a character pursues across the story.

freedom | *recognition* | *safety* | *belonging* | *control* | *to be loved*

What keeps them awake at night?

02 The Flaw

Internal *obstacle*

The personality trait, fear, or distorted belief that keeps them from getting the want cleanly.

pride | *insecurity* | *impatience* | *stubbornness* | *fear of failure* | *control*

What do they keep doing that makes it worse?

Maya.

a sixteen-year-old, hoping for first chair

Want + Flaw = engine

Desire

To win first chair in the school orchestra.

— an external goal + a private ache to be recognized.

Flaw

Excessive pride — refuses to ask for help.

— what looks like confidence keeps her from correcting what needs correcting.

The plot engine

Her pride prevents her from correcting a small technique flaw — so a routine audition quietly becomes the highest-stakes moment of her year.

*A student finds a **keycard** that opens every door in the school.*

Option A Social gravity

Desire · Popularity

to be seen, chosen, admired

Flaw · Insecurity

believes they're only worth the room they can fill

Invites classmates into restricted spaces to feel important —
and trades every locked door for a sliver of clout.

Option B Forward motion

Desire · Justice

to fix what they know is unfair

Flaw · Impulsiveness

acts first, calculates the wreckage later

Walks straight to the main office —
keycard out, consequences still forming behind them like a storm.

A *paradoxical* flaw.

Take a trait that's usually a strength —
and push it past the point where it stops being one.

Transformation

deep loyalty

→

blind obedience to a harmful friend

the same devotion, opened too wide.

Transformation

honesty

→

cruelty disguised as truth-telling

the same blade, swung at anyone nearby.

Transformation

courage

→

recklessness that mistakes movement for bravery

the same fire, fed no air to think.

3 *min*

Planning *blueprint*

Set this up in your notebook before drafting.

01 **Desire · the want**

02 **Flaw · the obstacle**

03 **The crucible moment**

What good looks like

a. **Specific.** Not "to be happy" — but a goal your character can chase this week.

b. **Internal.** A trait, fear, or distorted belief — not bad luck.

c. **A decision.** Two roads — the flaw makes one of them louder.

Messy is fine.
You're sketching,
not carving.

A menu, if you want one.

Some writers reach for choices — some prefer to find their own. Both are real craft.

Support — *when you want concrete starting points*

Some desires to choose from

safety | *truth* | *belonging* | *to be heard*

Some flaws to push against

fear of failure | *jealousy* | *stubbornness* | *people-pleasing*

Mix only one desire with one flaw.
That's already enough.

Extension — *when your scene feels too easy*

Try a paradoxical flaw:

a strength pushed past the point where it stops being one.

deep loyalty	→	***blind obedience***
carefulness	→	***paralysis***
optimism	→	***denial***

Same engine. Harder traction.

Now, *draft.*

Let the flaw do its damage. Twelve minutes, no edits, no apologies.

i. Begin with the want

Show what they're reaching for before you show what's holding them back.

— let us feel it pulse first.

ii. Let the flaw interfere

Put the trait between them and the want. Watch what it costs them.

— friction is the engine, not the obstacle.

iii. Arrive at the crucible

End on a decision: two roads, one of them louder, and the flaw leaning in.

— you don't have to resolve it.

— *Phones down. Notebooks open.*

Wrap-up · 5 minutes

Read it out loud.
Read it *to* someone.

a. Pair-share

Exchange notebooks with a partner. Read their scene silently, slowly.

b. Underline one line

Underline one line of dialogue, action, or internal monologue. In the margin, label it:
"this highlights the flaw because..."

c. Exit ticket

At the bottom of your page, two or three sentences.

Exit ticket

*What is your character's **primary desire**, and how will their internal flaw complicate the next scene?*

You began a character in *45 minutes*.

Today you wrote

a blueprint, a scene, and a clear sense of the friction inside them.

Carry this with you

the scene has more to say. The flaw isn't done with them yet.

Trust your character.
They'll do the next part.

Thank you

CREATIVE WRITING 2

Week 03 of Unit 1