

Assignment in narrative design

1 – Character



Art credit: Stephanie Wootha Richard

For this task, please imagine this character is playable in an online 'hero shooter' game like Overwatch or Dirty Bomb. Feel free to set the character in whatever game you choose, or invent a new setting if you find this limiting. (Please explain the pertinent details though!)

- ▣ *Name the character*
- ▣ *Write a backstory (300 words)*
- ▣ *Describe your reasoning (200 words)*

Note: English isn't my first language.

Name: Aina Pekkonen

Backstory: Finland, the 1910s. Aina Pekkonen is a woman in her 60s. She lives in the village of Vammala with her son and his family, which consists of a wife and two children. She had a daughter, but she died of cholera. When that happened, Aina picked up smoking, to decrease the anxiety of losing her son

as well. Though she has that feeling inside of her, she does her best to hide it behind her dark glasses and tough attitude. Hard work permeates her lifestyle, as she knows survival of the fittest applies to this society. Especially with the political turmoil brewing due to World War I. Things escalate and finally a civil war breaks out. On one side we have the Red Guards, fighting for a socialist republic, with support from the Russian Bolsheviks. And fighting them are the conservative White Guards, aided by the Germans. One day, when Aina is in a nearby forest picking lingonberries by herself, the Reds invade and burn down half the village. When she returns, she finds her family dead. Seeing the church still standing, she heads to it and finds out who did this. The priest says they will defend the remainder of the village and fight for the White Guards. Having nowhere else to go, Aina joins, though she was never the religious type. But, if anything can change people, it is war. In a talk about survival, the priest says anything can be sacrificed – even dogmas of holy books. The sixth commandment, or an eye for an eye - Aina knows her stance. She is set to cleanse Vammala of these infidels. With her entire life erased, she has a solid reason to not believe in God. However, she will take his hand if he will help her get her vengeance.

Reasoning: When I saw the artwork of the character, there were two things which struck me – the sinister, bitter look on her face, and the religious clothing, which felt like a discrepancy - a mask covering an inner struggle. It sparked an idea in me to create an ambivalent character, who fights for something with sheer determination, yet deep down is weighed down by sorrow. As I have a great interest in history, I wanted to put the character in a setting of an actual event. The World War I era was a real game changer, where conservatives and revolutionary forces fought for the future. With mostly men deciding the outcome in these deadly battles, I wanted to shed some light on the women who participated. In Finland, women had a great role, often arming themselves when the men yielded. These historical tidbits serve perfectly for my character.

2 – Dialogue

*Use the same world you previously chose for this next task.
Please write 5-10 character barks each for the following actions:*

- ▣ *Character selection screen*
- ▣ *Entry to the playing field*
- ▣ *Attacking*
- ▣ *Failed attack*
- ▣ *Requiring aid*

*Please highlight your favorite five barks. Why do these best fit your character?
(200 words)*

Character selection screen:

- **"I can't run, but I can hide."**

- "Silmä silmästä!" (Finnish for "eye for an eye")
- "Tooth for a tooth."
- "Suomi Perkele!" (roughly translates to "Finnish devil", a typical expression in Finland)
- "Vengeance is my middle name!"
- "For my family!"
- "I have faith... in my revenge!"
- "Out of the shadows, into the light."
- "Vain Jumala voi tuomita minut" ("Only God can judge me" in Finnish)
- "A good commie is a dead commie!"

Entry to the playing field:

- **"If you're Red - you're dead!"**
- "This will be a blast!"
- "Kill or be killed... The choice is obvious!"
- "It's time to dyna meet your fate!"
- "Sixth commandment? Tsss!"
- "I won't rest until they're all dead!"
- "Let's clean up Vammala!"
- "Death before dishonor!"
- "Don't blow it – that's my job!"
- "Oh... look at the calendar – it's Judgement Day!"

Attacking:

- "Say your prayers!"
- "See you in Hell!"
- "It's gonna blow!"
- "Death is your doom!"
- "Now, just stay still..."
- "It's YOU who will die!"
- "Time to meet your maker!"
- "God, be on my side!"
- "Here's a message from God!"
- **"One for my son!"**

Failed attack:

- **"Paska!"** (Finnish for "crap")
- "You fiend!"
- "God is on your side... for now."
- "Saatana!" (Finnish for "Satan" /Captain Obvious)
- "Dammit!"
- "Ugh... not again!"
- "I need bigger dynamites!"
- "Next time, for sure!"
- "Your luck won't last forever!"
- "I'll have my revenge another time!"

Requiring aid (note: written mostly as if needing aid, not asking for it):

- "My god!"
- **"My fuse is running short!"**
- "I need a cig!"
- "Jumala!" (Finnish for "God")
- "Is God failing me?"
- "I need divine intervention!"
- "I'll see heaven soon..."
- "Help an old lady, will ya?"
- "Not long 'til I blow..."
- "I'm bleeding!"

Five favourite barks

I picked these five barks to cover several bases, such as backstory, gameplay and traits. They make a stronger character where every design decision is incorporated into the writing. Also, the tone in several of them is bitter, just like the character herself.

1. "I can't run, but I can hide."

A variation of a well known saying, which makes it familiar. But the variation is tied to the character's ability, The Shadow Cloak and (lack of) physique.

2. "If you're Red - you're dead!"

It refers to her opponents and has a cheesy rhyme, which adds some impact to what is being said. When talking about defeating your opponents, the character feels determined to accomplish her mission.

3. "One for my son!"

It refers to her backstory, which is about getting revenge for her killed family. A character speaking about her motivation feels stronger, bringing a purpose to her actions.

4. "Perkele!"

Short and simple – less is more! A common Finnish profanity which suits the character perfectly, being a Finnish citizen involved with church.

5. "My fuse is running short!"

As Aina uses dynamites as her weapon, this line gets a double meaning. But as she says "**my** fuse", it indicates she is going to die soon.

3 – Lore, items and collectibles

Use the same world you previously chose for this next task:

- ▣ Give the character a primary weapon and item description (100 words)

▣ *Give the character a primary ability and description of that ability (100 words)*

Weapon: Dynamite

The dynamite is Aina's ideal weapon. Being an older lady with impaired vision and tremor in her hands, she can't aim very well. Thanks to the big blast radius of the dynamite, she can still hit her enemies. Aina hides in the shadows and lights the fuse with her cigarette. Then she throws it towards her enemies and sees them blow up to smithereens. It can also be used to destroy bridges, walls etc., either to prevent the enemies from coming to her, or to find their hideouts respectively.

Ability: Shadow Cloak

When I saw the clothing on the portrait, I thought her habit could be used as an ability. It acts as The Shadow Cloak and brings invisibility. But it has a catch – it only works in the shadows. Still, it is well suited for Aina since she can't escape danger as fast as a younger character. Clever level design can let her sneak from shadow to shadow, bringing a risk and reward system. She can discreetly put a dynamite among enemies lurking in the shadows, then move away and see them explode - a great combination of her weapon and ability.

Imagine this character is yet to be introduced to the world of your game. The game designer decides he'd like to embed a little teaser for the players to encounter in their gaming sessions. He hopes this will then be talked about online:

▣ *This character is to be put on a poster which players might see in-game. What is the style of the poster? What does it say? How does it fit the character? (100 words)*

▣ *This character will be teased in a recordable snippet found in-game by pressing play on a tape recorder. Please write a script transcript of this recording. (200 words)*

Poster

The poster is hand-painted. The main background colour is in a brownish/yellowish tone. The artwork is framed, with white edges around it. Aina stands against a wall, with all but her head in shadows. Her shaded part is "invisible". She lights a fuse with the cigarette in her mouth. The poster says "On September Xth... it's gonna BLOW!" in white and blue letters. The artistic style is the same as the era of Aina. The poster has a double meaning in it, showing Aina halfway into the light. It also hints on her ability and shows her weapon.

Snippet

Note: tape recorders didn't exist in the 1910s (and neither did invisibility cloaks, ahem), so the setting is an "alternate history".

Two Red Guards are hiding together. One of them records a status report. "7th squad reporting. We..."

A huge explosion is heard, a stone's throw away. Then the same Red Guard

speaks again.

"Oh no - it must be her!"

"Who?"

"We call her White Death. She's a nun - with explosives!"

"Tsss... That old hag? I'll send her off to retirement!"

"She killed two entire squads last week!"

"A clean-out is just what we needed."

"If you're not careful, it might be your turn next!"

"Don't make me laugh! How hard can it be to hit a crone?"

"That's the thing! We've barely even seen her!"

"Then I'll take a look around. Jeez, this is getting ridiculous..."

"Wait!"

Footsteps are heard, then slowly fade out. A moment later, the leaving Guard shouts in the distance.

"Shit!"

An explosion goes off. And then the waiting Red Guard speaks again:

"This is Juha Koskinen of the 7th Squad reporting. We just lost our best man!"

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