

## **Mythic Villain's Questionnaire (Frey)**

*Adapted from The Key, by James N. Frey (New York: St.Martin's Griffin, 2000).*

### **Novel Title:**

### ***Your Villain***

The role of the evil one, the villain, is to hatch an evil plot and carry it out. The villain usually provides most of the tests and trials of the hero. Not only does the villain put obstacles in the hero's way, but he is also an evil presence that creates a sense of menace. Myth-based stories are those in which the self-sacrificing hero is at war with the selfish, self-centered villain.

The villain is a pivotal character, one who pushes the action. When no character pushes the action (and more than one can push the action), a story loses its momentum. Both your villain and your hero push the action. The villain usually starts it off, and the hero is forced to do something about it.

Normally, it is the villain who necessitates the call to adventure that will cause the hero to leave the world of the everyday. The villain is, in a sense, the author of the story.

### **Qualities Your Villain Shares with Your Hero**

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A hero of a myth-based work of fiction will always possess the following qualities in addition to being a great dramatic character.

1. Like the hero, the villain may have a big head (be full of hubris). The villain, however, has overweening pride, hubris that brings his downfall.

**How is your villain full of hubris? How can you show this to the reader? How can you show that the villain is blind to his downfall?**

2. Like the hero, the villain may be an outlaw. The villain, however, is not merely unconventional, he's a vicious criminal. He's often not a public criminal, but a moral one, behind the scenes.

**How is your villain an outlaw? Is he a public criminal, or a secret one?**

3. Like the hero, the villain is clever and resourceful

**How is your villain clever and resourceful?**

4. Like the hero, the villain may be wounded. The villain's wound may get him some sympathy, but unfortunately, this is overridden because he uses his wound as an excuse to get back, to do evil.

**What is your villain's wound? What kind of a wound is it? How did he receive it? What kind of person has it caused him to become?**

5. Like the hero, the villain may have a special talent. The villain usually uses this special talent to do evil. If your hero and the villain have the same talent, e.g., swordsmanship, the villain wins most of the contests but loses the last.

**What is your villain's special talent?**

6. Like the hero, the villain may have great sex appeal.

**How is your villain sexy? How can you show this?**

### **Qualities Unique to Your Villain**

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7. Unlike the hero, the villain is motivated by greed, avarice, lust, lust for power or money, perversion, vanity, narcissism, etc. The hero may have such qualities early in the story, but will abandon them for self-sacrificing motives. The villain is always out for himself. He wants to satisfy his own desires, period.

**What is your villain's immoral motivation? Why is he like this? What does it make him do? What is his main story goal?**

8. Unlike the hero, the villain never acts out of idealism. He never at any time operates for the good of others unless they are his own family, or serve his own interests, but this is also self-serving. He is fully committed to enriching only himself, from beginning to end. If he has any idealism, it's self-serving.

**How is your villain totally selfish?**

9. Unlike the hero, the villain is often cruel.

**How is your villain cruel? How can you show this to the reader?**

10. Unlike the hero, the villain may win by luck or coincidence, especially in the beginning and middle of your story. The *obligatory scene* is the scene during which the main story question, a product of the core conflict, is answered (when the detective discovers who the killer is). After the obligatory scene, actions that stem from it follow. After this point in the story, things work against the villain and in the hero's favor.

**How does your villain win by luck in the first 2/3 of your story? When does this change? How?**

11. Unlike the hero, the villain is not forgiving. He may forgive something small, but nothing large. The narcissistic child does not have a forgiving nature.

**How is your villain unforgiving? How does it help lead to evil deeds? To his eventual downfall?**

12. Unlike the hero, the villain might quit, but only at the very end. The hero may quit temporarily because of discouragement, but the villain may quit and run as his doom draws near. This shows inherent cowardliness in the villain, although it may seem perfectly rational to him.

**Does your villain quit and run at the end? Why? How does he rationalize it?**

13. Unlike the hero, the villain may whine and grovel, beg for his life. Wheedle, lie, bribe. A hero will never do this.

**How does your villain whine and grovel?**

14. Unlike the hero, the villain may not be stoic. Villains are self-indulgent and whine under pressure and hardship. Complain a lot. Fume about it.

**Does your villain gripe about his hardship?**

15. Unlike the hero, the villain may not be loyal. He may turn on his friends and followers. Never the hero.

**How is your villain disloyal? Whom does he betray?**

16. Unlike the hero, the villain is usually not physically superior, although his sidekick and henchmen may be. The villain can send his tough minions to do the dirty work.

**Is your villain a weakling? How? How does he compensate for it?**

17. Unlike the hero, the villain has no special birth or destiny, though he may falsely claim one.

**Does your villain claim a false birthright or destiny? How is he deceived?**

18. The hero is usually considered sexually appealing.

**How is your hero sexually appealing? To whom? How can you show this?**