Want to write a great book? Use these ten questions to get ideas for any kind of story, whether a spy thriller, a romance novel, or a memoir of your personal life. Let’s see where your story leads you!

1. **DOES YOUR CHARACTER HAVE SCARS?** We all have scars. To be a writer, Stephen King says, “the only requirement is the ability to remember every scar.” Tap into your own scars to unlock the scars in your characters.

2. **DOES YOUR STORY INVOLVE DEATH?** Good writers don’t turn away from death, which is, after all, the universal human experience. Instead, they look it directly into its dark face and describe what they see on the page.

3. **IS YOUR MAIN CHARACTER AN ORPHAN?** Think for a moment about all great stories about orphans in literature and film. Orphans are uniquely vulnerable and thus have the most potential for growth.

4. **ARE THERE GHOSTS?** What do Edgar Allen Poe, Ron Weasley, King Saul from the Bible, Odysseus, and Ebeneezer Scrooge have in common? They all saw ghosts! Everyone wonders about the afterlife. Have fun with it!

5. **DOES SOMETHING END?** “In life every ending is just a new beginning,” says Dakota Fanning’s character in Uptown Girls. Go end something.

6. **WHAT IS YOUR CHARACTER AFRAID OF?** Your character’s biggest fear is your story’s secret weapon. Don’t run from it, write about it.

7. **DOES YOUR CHARACTER COME INTO AN UNEXPECTED FORTUNE?** Not all fortunes are good. Sometimes discovering a fortune will destroy you.

8. **DOES YOUR CHARACTER BUMP INTO HIS OR HER SOULMATE?** Literally, bump into. In film, this is called the “meet cute,” when the hero bumps into the heroine in the hallway, knocking her books to the floor, and forcing them into conversation.

9. **IS YOUR CHARACTER ON A JOURNEY?** Is that journey interrupted by disaster? Who hasn’t been longing to get to a destination only to be delayed by something unexpected? This is the plot of Gravity, The Odyssey, and even Lord of the Rings.

10. **DOES YOUR CHARACTER RUN INTO THE PATH OF A MONSTER?** Monsters, whether people who do monstrous things or scaly beasts or natural disasters, always reveal what’s inside a person. Let your character fall into the path of a monster and see how they handle themselves.

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