Historical Female Character Outline

Basic Guide

Individual Information

- **Name** - It seems obvious, but it may be worth it to make sure that the character is given a period-related name.
- **Period/Year** – Actually, this one should be the first to be determined.

  When you choose to write your book in a specific time in the past, you need to take into consideration significant events that may have impacted the character's life. Some examples: the land changes ownership, a battle may kill the king, a drought may bring famine, economic depression may lead to losing one's fortune, and so on.
- **Region/Place of Birth** – Continent, province, city…

  For example, some countries, like Italy or Germany, unified only in the second part of the 19th century. In these cases, we will speak about places like Florence and Siena, Bavaria and Hamburg, etc.
- **Age at the time of the story** – The life of heroin will change dramatically as she goes through different stages of her life.
- **Social Status** – The life of a noble will be very different from a servant's life. A merchant's wife may do business herself, but she won't be as respected as her husband. From cloth to education and appearances, it all depends on the social status. But it becomes a little less relevant as we step into contemporary history.

- **Marital Status** – This is very important for making solid alliances and/or strengthening family ties.
- **Religion** – The religion the character is practicing determines part of her behavior in society, her personal beliefs, and her community integration.
- **Profession/Occupation** – Some occupations offer women a certain degree of independence, others are reserved only for females, and some professions are despised but tolerated.
- **Family** – Parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins – The family was the most important thing in someone's life for many centuries. Not only the close family but the extended family played a significant role. For example, a daughter without a parent will fall under her uncle's tutelage.
- **Distant Family** – This is important when claiming inheritance, things of importance like land, political rights, and wealth.
- **Children** – Being a mother isn't quite the same today as, say, 300 years ago. Many differences start from the very cradle.

Cultural Information

- **Customs and traditions** - This is a crucial section and needs to be placed very precisely in time and space because it accounts for:
    - house style (according to the social status)
    - clothing
    - food
    - social behavior
    - architecture style
- **Education** – is nonexistent for some classes.
- **Health** – some illnesses are time and place related; others have been eradicated, others weren't understood, etc.

- **Life expectancy** – It is a known fact that the far back we go in history, the shorter life expectancy is. Women dying in childbirth were ordinary facts; children not surviving to adulthood were common, and so on.
- **Sexual behavior** – For romance writers, this is the most important historical point they can make because, in the past, people had as many sexual taboos as liberties. Those sexual behaviors also varied by time and place, gender, social status, and profession.

Geographical Information

- **City** – The particular space that the heroine moves through
- **Markets** – Beneficial for specific settings; must match the zone and century.
- **Farms/Land** – Accounting for travel, inheritance, social status, wealth, and occupation.
- **Geographical Landmarks (rivers, mountains**) – It is crucial to describe places (say Mont Blanc should be correctly placed on the French-Italian border, but it would be Mont Blanc for French people and Monte Bianco for Italians.
- **Castles and Palaces** – The devil is in details, as they say. Description, architectural style, how old they are, are they habituated? Abandoned? Who's the lord? And so on.
- **Famous Battlefields** – Accounting for heroic acts, used as a reference for family ties, etc.

Political Information

- **Political entity** – The place of your book could be a country, a province, a national state, or maybe a democratic city, or a tribe.
- **Ruler** – Is there a king, emperor, prince, president, clan chief, tribe elder, maybe a family like the Medici? Or is the Pries the supreme leader as well?

- **Law makers** – In the past, the lord of the land made the rules and laws, but others participated and/or approved it. Take England with its Parliament or Italian City-States entities with their numerous "uffici."
- **Lords** – Usually, they play a significant role in the lives of the lower classes. They have the land, the rules, and the power.
- **Nobles** – This social category is relevant when the heroine is from among them. They play an important political role in the making of kings, marriages, alliances, war, etc.
- **Parties** – Important only in political situations and even then, only regional.
- **Courts** – important when the heroin is a member of the nobility.