

# CHARACTER ARCS

**ARC:** An arc is the internal change the hero goes through in a story. It can be positive change of character — a happy ending - or a negative or no change — which gives us a tragedy.

**All characters expand or shrink. If they expand it's a happy ending. If they shrink it's a tragedy.**

**IN A SHORT STORY/FILM** - the arc is small and the character grows by changing their point of view or they uncover a very important clue about their trauma, their past, or see a red flag about someone they admired or wanted which makes them change their mind. If a character refuses to change their mind or do something about their problem and go to denial then it's a short tragedy.

**EXPANSION:** - **Characters who are willing to leave their past to live in the present in a new possibility.**

The way you show a character growing is by showing their willingness to trust others and to ask for help. Also their willingness to revisit a scenario/experience where they were traumatized by it, and to confront it with a new attitude or willingness to understand or feel or try again. A willingness to see that they made a false interpretation, they made a mistake but they are not “wrong.” They come to the same experience where they failed, but this time they do not carry the shame anymore.

The other way you show a character expanding is through a relationship. Their willingness to open their heart and trust someone so they can give and get love again.

In a story they will be tested to see if they are willing to risk getting hurt again or failing again to get love or a new possibility.

**SHRINKING: - Characters stuck in the past who can not let go and overcome it.**

Characters in tragedies stop trusting and loving and isolate themselves and have an addiction such as alcoholism, hoarding, etc. They refuse to try new things or to take risks or to love again. They are enslaved by fear and anger and hate and they make choices that seal their fate to die alone.

In a story they will be tested to see if they want to be left alone, a person/child/magical or spiritual being will present them with a possibility that will make them consider to ask for help or to let people in or to let the light in or to allow God to come in. If they refuse the help then they will implode or die, whether it is a physical or a spiritual death, it's a type of death of the spirit.

In a regular story with a happy ending - At the beginning characters resist seeing the truth of their past.

Then they are forced to look at it in some way and still resist it until they finally accept it and begin to question the way they interpreted the past. They discover they were innocent. They forgive themselves or come clean or acknowledge the unconscious and unacknowledged. They have to make a choice whether to live in the past or the present.

In a tragedy - the character just keeps denying the past and refuses to see another interpretation of the past. Even though they are being given grace - the opportunity to free themselves from the guilt, fear, hate, whatever is keeping them in the past, but the character refuses the help and continues to be right and continues to suffer.