

Your character goes to the Post Office

Scenario

Your character has to go to the Post Office to mail something. It has to be mailed today. The line is really long.

Questions

Write the answer to these questions. You don't have to use complete sentences. If possible, write the answers as part of a scene that may be in your finished story. As you write these snippets, always consider why your character makes these choices. What compels her to make this choice, as opposed to another? What is going on in her life or her past history that drives her to make these choices or take these actions? What colors her interpretation of the events?

What has to be mailed?

- Is it a package?
- What's in it?
- Is it a letter?
- What's it about?
- Who is it going to?
- Is it hers or someone else's?

How does she feel about having to run this errand?

What is the weather doing?

- Is it nice or really bad?
- Sunny, raining, snowing, sleeting? Be specific.

If the weather is really bad, why does she have to go out in it?

Is this in her home town, home state, home country?

- Far from home?
- Different country?

Where is the Post Office located?

- In a good neighborhood or a bad one?
- What does the area look like?
- Are the streets full of litter? Is it clean?

Does the character walk or drive?

- If she drives, is it hard to find parking? If so, where does she park?
- Is there a long walk from where she parked to the Post Office?

- Does she feel comfortable or uncomfortable walking there? Why?
- Does it bring anything up for her? Bad memories? Good memories? What *specific* memory?

Does making this particular trip make her feel a certain way?

- Remember things?
- Bring up something she doesn't normally think about?

Why does she have to go to the Post Office in the first place?

Why this particular Post Office?

If it's not her usual Post Office, why not?

Does she choose to leave? Why?

Does she choose to stand in line? Why?

- Is it because the package absolutely has to be mailed today? Why?

Why does she have to go to the Post Office now? Why not later? Why not earlier?

How does she feel about making this trip?

- Is she angry that she has to do it today of all days? Why?
- Is she running late and doesn't have time for it and resents having to do it? Why?
- Did she agree to do this for a friend, forgot and now has to do it today? Why did she forget? Does she resent doing the errand?
- Does she love having an excuse to get out of the office or the house? Why?

What does the Post Office look like?

How would she view the Post Office and the surrounding neighborhood if she was in a different mood?

What do the other people standing in line look like?

- Are they dressed similarly to her? Differently? Why?
- Is this a better neighborhood than the one she lives in? Worse?
- Same or different economic level?
- Same or different racial makeup?

What does she think about the other people standing in line?

- Does she even notice them?
- If she notices them, how does she feel about them?

Is she concentrating on what she has to do so much that she doesn't really notice the line or the other people?

- If so, have something or someone break her concentration.
- What happens?
- How does she feel about the interruption?
- How does she deal with it?
- Does she go back to what she was doing?
- Is the whole place disrupted?
- Does it get in the way of her mailing the package or letter?

What's the inside of the Post Office like?

- Nice? Dingy? Clean? Sparking? Dirty?
- In what way? Be specific.

Does it reflect the neighborhood it's in?

- Is it new?
- Old? *Really* old? Historical?
- Beautiful?
- An ugly Soviet type concrete block?
- What does she think about it?
- How does it make her feel?
- Does she have any memories of it from earlier visits?
- What about from her childhood?
- Any emotional connection to this Post Office?

Are there enough postal people staffing the counter?

- Not nearly enough?
- How are they working?
- Hard and fast? How fast?
- Slowly? How slowly?
- Does she mind?
- Do they make your character want to scream?
- Does she go with the flow and make use of the time?

How does she react to the wait?

- Does the wait make her nuts?

Does she react to other events or situations in your story like this? If differently? Why?

What is her mood like when she gets to the front of the line?

- What is going through her mind?
- How does she greet the Postal worker at the counter?
- Does her greeting match her mood?
- If she's angry or upset, does she make an effort to be pleasant?
- Or doesn't she bother?

Postal employee

Describe this person. How does he feel about himself?

What mood is he in today? Why?

How does he feel about the long line of customers?

Does he like his job? Why?

How does this affect the way he interacts with his fellow employees and customers?

Has he waited on your character before at this Post Office?

- If he has, how does he feel about her?
- Is it "oh good, she's so nice" or "Oh God, not her again."
- Something in between? Why?

What does he see when he looks at her?

How does this affect the way he interacts with her?

How does he interact with her?

How does she feel about him? Why?

Does she hate having to go to his window? Why?

Does she enjoy going to his window? Why?

Does the package or letter get mailed all right?

- Are there any glitches?
- Anything unexpected come up?

Choices

Your character always has choices. What choices does she make at each junction and why?

Finally

What does this experience bring up for your character? Any *specific* memory or emotion? Does it change anything for your character?

Choices

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Think of your current story

How can you use this in your story?

Next

Do this exercise for the each of your characters.