

The Forces That Shaped You

 If you want to know about something, you have to go back to its beginning.

Learn its origin. Figure out where it came from. And how it got that way. The same applies to YOU – there is a backstory to who you are. Biographies of famous people are built on this principle – revealing the early influences and forces that shaped someone before they came into the public eye.

You don’t have to be psychotherapist to know that our early years greatly influence how we learn to see the world.

Your family, hometown, education, and other circumstances deeply effect and shape you today. Even if you’ve decided to leave much of that behind you (goodbye smalltown, hello big city!).

Not all of our back stories are the same. For some of us, the early years might be all sunflowers and lollipops. For others it might of included overcoming obstacles or surviving great hardship. Either way, consider these effects on you today. How have those experiences informed how you now see the world?

Character is revealed through the choices in the face of circumstance.

While we cannot change the past, we can change our relationship to those experiences. That’s the transformative power of storytelling. You always have the right to reinterpret the exact same events -- from a new vantage point. Try it in the following exercise: create a backstory that reinforces your sense of destiny.

Questions to Answer:

1. Where were you born and/or raised? How did this affect you.
2. Who are your parents? What were their professions? How did their presence impact your life? What expectations did they hold for you? What parts of them can you see in yourself?
3. What other people had a big impact on you? This might include relatives, teachers, public figures, pets, and/or imaginary friends.

1. What did you study? Formal education? Informal life studies? What were your motivations in studying these subjects? What did you learn? What disappointments did you have in the process?
2. What other circumstances, forces, and events have had a big influence on your chosen path and profession?