Character Backstory

Backstory refers to everything that has occurred in a character’s past before you meet them in a story. A character’s backstory may include family background, education, and any memories that you create for that person from childhood on. The backstory of a situation includes events that led up to it and a suggestion of why that situation is occurring now.

* Family background and friends: use the information that you have read in the book to fill this in. Invent what isn’t there using what you know about the character and what you can infer from their actions and interactions with other characters;
* Key past events: what past events led up to the story that we hear about this character in ***Part-Time Indian***;
* Past successes and failures: people are shaped in part by their best and worst memories;
* Talents: what has your characters always been good at? Do they utilize this talent or are there reasons why it has been forgotten?
* Education: consider both formal education and acquired education

**Example of a character backstory: Rowdy**

Rowdy’s real name is John Bennett Twin Feather. People started calling him “Rowdy” when he was very young and could not sit still in preschool. Every day when all the other children lay down for a nap, he would throw all the picture books on the floor of the reading area and read through them one by one.

His namesake John Bennett is his father’s younger brother. Uncle John lived with the family when Rowdy was born. Uncle John played a large role in Rowdy’s life up to the age of four when he left the reservation working on a pipeline in Alaska. Rowdy’s father felt very hurt by uncle John leaving so he has never let Rowdy read the letters that John sent to Rowdy.

Rowdy does not have many memories of his uncle but he does remember John teaching him how to throw a football. He and his uncle would spend hours in the backyard running and catching the ball. Today, Rowdy has the best spiral throw on the reservation.

Rowdy looks a lot like his uncle. His uncle John is “long and lean and strong as a snake” just like Rowdy is now. People often mistaken Rowdy for his uncle John. They see him the grocery store and run up to him saying “hey John, you’re back” and then they realize that it is Rowdy. This leaves both Rowdy and the person a little disappointed.

When his uncle lived with them, his father didn’t drink as much so there was no violence in his house. Even though Rowdy doesn’t remember his uncle well, he remembers these peaceful times in his house.

Rowdy and Junior became friends in preschool when they found out that they were both born on the same day. That was pretty cool in preschool to have someone almost be your twin. Even though Rowdy was tough and confident, he enjoyed hanging out with Junior and trying to protect him from his rougher classmates. Junior would draw comics in which Rowdy was a superhero. Any time that Rowdy was really upset about what was happening at home, Junior would draw him a new story and this would calm him down.