

Binge Factors

THE BINGEABLE CREW

MODULE TWO

binge | binj | informal noun a short period devoted to indulging in an activity to excess

We'll be working with the book you chose as your favorite from Part I of the Binge Factor Worksheets...

Thinking on the book you've chosen to break down for our Binge Factor worksheets, jot down a few things about the major secondary characters that are present in the story in whatever handy notebook you've got nearby. Note the following (do not include marginal characters or the villain or characters your proto doesn't actually interact with):

- **List each crew member**
- **What is their crew archetype?**
- **List any characteristics you remember about them, and any notable aspects of their own backstory, or Character Keys (Desperate Desire, Longing, Misbelief, Purpose)**
- **Note where they fit in as far as the power structure of the crew**

Assembling Your Crew

In my experience, books I've binged almost always have a crew of sorts, a friend group the proto is part of that interacts with one another and the proto, moving the plot along, helping the proto, etc. This is ESPECIALLY true for genre books, like sci-fi and fantasy, but I find the crew is present in most of the contemporary or historical books I like best, as well. I like to call this group the "crew." They can be as small as three (Harry, Hermione, and Ron), or as large as the Fellowship of the Ring.

Among these secondary characters in your binge book, see if there is a cohort that acts as a sort of Fellowship of the Ring, a group that, together, either helps your protagonist in their journey or is a moveable body of friends/colleagues/etc. that are always in the background of the story as a GROUP, even if individually they all may play their own, important roles.

If your book has a crew, describe the crew a bit. Look at the following:

- How does the group function as a unit?
- Does the cohort add humor? Is it fun to be around them?
- What roles does each person in the cohort play?
- Do they help the proto in pivotal moments?
- Do they take away from the proto's agency, or do they act as a springboard for the character to make their own way?
- How do they function in the plot/story?
- Are the fully realized characters or are they more flat, stock?
- What subplots do you see in the book that stem from the crew itself?
- Do these subplots converge with the proto's main one?

Your Crew Binge Factor

Now we're going to look at reader psychology here: WHY do crews make the stories we engage with more bingeable?

((Now, you might be in the minority of readers who could take or leave a crew and, if this is you, really look at that. Why do you not really care about the crew? And what replaces that dopamine hit crews often give readers? Your binge factor for this area will be the thing that replaces the crew. Maybe you are all about books where there are two characters that are the only people we care about, or a total lone wolf who interacts with secondary characters in less pivotal ways and you stay deep inside the proto's mind always. It takes all kinds!))

If you DO find the crew is a binge factor for you personally, then look at the following questions to find the secret sauce for yourself as a writer when you assemble your own crew, using your chosen book as the basis for these answers:

- As a reader, how do you feel when the crew is together?
- Is it more “fun” when the crew is around?
- Do you wish you yourself were a part of this crew?
- Does anything different or new get opened up in the story for you when the crew is present?
- How is the pace of the story changed when the crew is present (does it speed up, is there a nice lull where we can reassemble, or is the pace unchanged?)
- Are these sections more or less emotionally resonant than other parts of the story?
- Do you prefer the crew to always be together, or do you like when a member of the crew leaves, dies, or is somehow turned against the group?
- Does the proto need to be in the center of the crew, or does it work if they are a less central figure?

Now, look at anything about the crew that DOESN'T work for you.

What takes you out of the story, breaks the fictive dream? Can you think of any books where the crew didn't satisfy? Is there anything about your chosen book where the crew didn't satisfy, but you overlooked it? And WHY did you overlook it?

Think back to the lecture and jot down any other thoughts that come to mind about the binge factors of the crew and how they might both stand individually as characters and help move the protagonist through their arc.

Take a look at the crew in your WIP. Do they have your binge factors? Jot down notes about how you might amplify your binge factors through your protagonist.