Pick a character, any character…but it probably should be one that has a significant role in the novel.

ACTION

Do a bit of brainstorming. Make a list of the actions of your character.

Though this is not an exhaustible list, by any means, here are some questions to consider here:

1. Does the character sacrifice something important in order to help himself?
2. Does the character sacrifice something important in order to help someone else?
3. Does the character act to prevent something from happening?
4. Does the character take action to do something moral/right/good under difficult circumstances?
5. Does the character take action or refuse to take action because he is afraid of something?
6. Does the character take action to right a wrong?
7. Does the character do something immoral or, at the very least, insensitive?
8. Does the character take action to hide a wrongdoing—his or someone else’s?
9. Does the character do something that demonstrates poor judgment?
10. Does the character interfere in another character’s life?
11. Does the character take action to “save face” or make sure others see him to be a certain kind of person?
12. Does the character act in a way that is contrary to the way “everybody else” thinks he should act?
13. Does the character take action to rebel against something?

Now, start thinking about WHY your character acts the way he/she does.

* List all the obvious causes of the actions.
* Write down all of the possible less-than-obvious causes. Think: What causes for a character’s actions does an author imply, rather than state directly?
* Now, evaluate the causes. How does your list of possible causes increase your understanding of the character?

RELATIONSHIPS

Is the character in conflict with another character?
Does the character desire a relationship with someone that doesn’t want or have time to have a relationship with him?
Is someone the character doesn’t like trying to have a relationship with the character?
Does the character misunderstand the attitudes or actions of another character?
Is the character misunderstood by other characters?
Does the character sacrifice something for another character?
Is the character afraid of another character?
Is the character trying to protect another character?

List the obvious causes and not-so-obvious causes of the types of relationships the character experiences.
List the obvious effects and the not-so-obvious effects of the types of relationships the character experiences.

Self

What is the character’s inner conflict? (Man vs. Self)
What does the character understand about himself?
What does the character NOT understand about himself?
Does the character have an illusion that keeps him from making sound decisions?
Does the character know what he wants?
Does the character desire something that he cannot get?
Is the character afraid of something he can’t escape?
Does the character feel alone?
Does the character feel misunderstood by others?
What makes the character unhappy?
Does the character live in oppressive circumstances?
Does the character live in privileged circumstances?
Does the character have the ability to make choices?
Does the character make good choices?
Does the character make bad choices?
How does the character’s geographical and cultural surroundings affect his behavior?
Does the character behave in accordance with others in his culture or society?
Are there any values/attitudes the character’s culture expresses that go against the desires of the character?
Does the character rebel (or want to rebel) against the values/attitudes of his society?
Is the character true to himself?
Is the character a hypocrite?
Is the character willing to face fear to achieve a worthy goal?
Is the character afraid to face fear even if it means accomplishing a worthy goal?
If the character changes, what particular characteristics does he demonstrate, at first, and what particular characteristics does he demonstrate after he changes?

Here, again, list all of the obvious and not-so-obvious causes of the character’s inner conflict, personality, character changes, and beliefs/attitudes.