

Elements of Fiction

Characterization

Characterization

- The *process* by which the writer reveals the personality of a character.
- Characterization is revealed through **direct** characterization and **indirect** characterization.

Characterization

- **Direct:**

a character is described by the author, the narrator or the other characters.

 - TELL

- **Indirect:**

a character's traits are revealed by action and speech.

 - SHOW

**Which is an example of direct characterization
and which is Indirect characterization?**

- A. Julie owned a multitude of outfits and accessories, and it always took her forever to decide which combination might impress Trent. As usual, she called her sister several times for advice. After doing so, Julie decided to give the navy blue skirt with the white sweater a try.

- B. Julie held up six different outfits in front of the mirror and pondered which would go best with her navy blue shoes, pastel eye shadow and the diamond earrings she'd already procured from her overflowing vanity. After ninety minutes of mixing and matching, and cell-phoning her sister three times for advice, Julie finally made up her mind. She'd give the navy blue skirt and white sweater a try, hoping Trent would love it.

Major

v.

Minor

- **ROUND**, fully developed characters.
- They have good and bad qualities.
- Their goals, ambitions and values change during the story.
- A character who changes inside as a result of what happens to him/her is **DYNAMIC**.

- Almost always **FLAT** or two-dimensional characters.
- They have only one or two striking qualities.
- They are usually all good or all bad. Such characters can be interesting or amusing in their own right, but they lack depth.
- **STATIC** characters do not change in the course of the story.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- **Protagonist:**
The main character in the story (good or bad).
- **Antagonist:**
The character or force that opposes the protagonist.
- **Foil:**
A character who provides a contrast to the protagonist; whose personality and attitude is opposite that of another character. Because these characters contrast, each makes the personality of the other stand out.

Methods of Characterization

- How does a writer create characters that appeal to readers?
- What can we look for when we read to learn about, and understand, a character in a story?

Physical Description

We often infer a lot about characters from the clothes they wear, their facial features, their body language, and their mannerisms.

- Appearance; The most common way of describing a character.
- Identifies any physical qualities of the character.
 - Includes height, skin, hair and eye color. How the character looks, is dressed, walks or stands, sounds or smells, smiles or scowls.

Words and Actions

Words: We often get to know characters because of what they say to each other.

– To develop interesting characters, authors use:

- Dialogue
- Inner dialogue
- Tone
- Diction
- Word choice
- Syntax
- Delivery

Words and **Actions**

Actions: What a character does and how it is done.

- Much of what we learn about characters is revealed to us through what they do.
- “Actions speak louder than words”
 - Denise picked up the slimy bull frog. She could hardly stand to hold it even for a moment. She held it out at arm’s length from her body and quickly carried it to her brother.
squeamish -sensitive –nervous

Other character's reactions

Sometimes other characters will tell us something useful about the character we're reading about.

- look closely at how characters react to, or treat others.
- Reactions include verbal responses and physical or emotional treatment.
- Character reactions can tell you if the character you are analyzing is liked or disliked, popular, honest, trust-worthy etc...

- “ You wouldn’t believe what Lisa did yesterday,” Sara said to her sister. “When we went into the bridal shop, she pushed all the women aside and demanded that the sales lady help us immediately. It was really something!”

-demanding -pushy -assertive

Direct Description by Narrator

The narrator tells you directly what the character is like.

- Jimmy was a mischievous boy and creative too. He could take a discarded box or old blanket and turn it into something adventurous. But sometimes his imagination got the better of him, and he'd find himself in big trouble.

- -mischievous -creative -imaginative

Thoughts and Feelings

- When an author lets us get inside the mind of a character, we can often learn a great deal about him or her.
 - The thoughts of a character can only be analyzed if we are inside the head of the character.

Thoughts and Feelings

Butch looked around the neighborhood. “This would be a safe place to play catch with Bobby,” he thought. “Why doesn’t Bobby throw the ball? He must be in a bad mood or something.”

-loyal -concerned -playful

POINT OF VIEW

» The point of view of the story is the standpoint from which the story is told.

– First Person

When the narrator *is a character* in the story who can reveal only personal thoughts and feelings and what he or she sees and is told by other characters.

- He can't tell us thoughts of other characters.

POINT OF VIEW

- **Third-Person Objective**

The narrator is an outsider who can *report* only what he or she sees and hears; can tell us what is happening, but can't tell us the thoughts of the characters.

- **Third-Person Limited**

The narrator is an outsider who sees into the mind of *one* of the characters.

- **Omniscient**

The narrator is an all-knowing outsider who can enter the minds of more than one of the characters.

EXTRA note:

- Name Analysis
 - Analyzing a character's name is looking more closely to it's meaning (if there is one) and describing it.
 - Not all characters have a name with significance to the story.
 - A lot of times though, author's carefully choose a character's name to represent something about the character and/or the story.

Which method of characterization is being used?

Org the ugly was usually angry.

- Words
- Actions
- Appearance
- Thoughts and feelings
- Other characters' comments or reactions
- Direct comments by narrator

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"I haven't seen him this angry in a long time," said Org's wife to the cook.

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Org leaned against a tree trunk and thought about how mean and ugly and mad he felt.

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Which method of characterization is being used?

Suddenly, he wrapped his arms around the tree. He pulled and tore at it until it ripped out of the earth, roots and all.

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All the gentle woodland creatures in the forest shook their heads sadly at Org and his hateful ways.

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Credits

Portions of the presentation modeled after:

- Elements of Fiction compiled by *Laura Bokesch, Library Media Teacher at Yorba Academy of the Arts Middle School, Orange Ca.*
http://www.orangeusd.k12.ca.us/yorba/literary_elements.htm
- Methods of Characterization: http://www.slideshare.net/kjhatzi/methods-of-characterization-presentation-673731?from=share_email
- Glossary of Literary Terms:
http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/literature/bedlit/glossary_a.htm
- Stephanie Goldman, LA teacher WKMS