

Characterization videos to watch before you test

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Methods of Characterization in Literature

Characterization in literature is the process authors use to develop characters and create images of the characters for the audience. There are two different approaches to characterization, including direct characterization and indirect characterization. With the direct approach, the author tells us what he or she wants us to know about the character. With indirect characterization, the author shows us things about the character to help us have an understanding of the character's personality and effect on other characters.

Five Methods of Characterization

An acronym, PAIRS, can help you recall the five methods of characterization: physical description, action, inner thoughts, reactions, and speech.

Physical description - the character's physical appearance is described. For example, characters might be described as tall, thin, fat, pretty, etc. We might be told the color of hair or something about the clothing of the character. How the character dresses might reveal something about the character. Does the character wear old, dirty clothing, or stylish, expensive clothing?

Action/attitude/behavior - What the character does tells us a lot about him/her, as well as how the character behaves and his or her attitude. Is the character a good person or a bad person? Is the character helpful to others or selfish?

Inner thoughts - What the character thinks reveals things about the character. We discover things about their personalities and feelings, which sometimes helps us understand the character's actions.

Reactions - Effect on others or what the other characters say and feel about this character. We learn about the relationships among the characters. How does the character make the other characters feel? Do they feel scared, happy, or confused? This helps the reader have a better understanding of all the characters.

Speech - What the character says provides a great deal of insight for the reader. The character might speak in a shy, quiet manner or in a nervous manner. The character might speak intelligently or in a rude manner.

Example of Characterization

This is a brief excerpt of a narrative to help understand how authors might use the various methods of characterization:

Ann could feel her heart pounding as she entered her new school for the first time. She was not expecting such a large campus. Her old school was very small in comparison. She felt a little out of place as she looked around and saw how the other girls were dressed. They seemed so mature in their skirts and heels. She felt uncomfortable in her baggy jeans and old tennis shoes, but this was how everyone at her old school dressed. She started to miss how she felt with her old friends. As a group of girls approached her, she became increasingly nervous and dropped her books. The girls laughed as they pointed to her and made jokes, calling her a farm girl. She quickly gathered her books and ran to the restroom to hide. She called her mother on her cell phone and cried, 'Mother, please, I want to go back home. I don't belong here!'

Medicine River – Chapter 1 Test

Name _____

1. What various methods of characterization to develop characters and create images for the audience does Thomas King use in the first chapter of Medicine River?

Explain fully and use examples.

2. What chapter title would you give Chapter 1 and why? Explain and support your choice.