

LESSON 5: Characterization

MATERIALS:

- Writer’s Workbook
- Handout: Writing Workshop #3: Describe a Character
- Characterization Passages: *As Brave as You*, *Free Verse*, and *Where I’d Like to Be*
- **OPTIONAL:** Rural picture book (to take the place of the other passages)—see List of Rural Picture Books in the Introduction resources folder
- Word Wall Cards: **Major Character, Minor Character, Direct Characterization, Indirect Characterization**
- Road to Publishing: Characterization
- Fiction Fanatic Cards



BIG IDEA

Literature is based on universal themes/characters/situations that embody the human experience and help us make sense of our own lives

Writers use senses, emotions, and images to evoke connections between the text and the reader

OBJECTIVES:

- Use brainstorming to generate ideas at the pre-writing stage of composition
- Identify and use different story devices to enrich narrative writing
- Identify different characteristics in a fictional narrative



LANGUAGE

Important Vocabulary:

- Major Character
- Minor Character
- Direct Characterization
- Indirect Characterization

SEQUENCE:

INTRODUCTION: More about Characters



CLASS

Explain: *There are a few types of characters that we did not discuss yesterday, because they are hard to read about in excerpts. Like protagonist/antagonist and round/flat, they are easy to discuss in pairs. The pair we are going to talk about briefly today are **major v. minor**.*

(Write or project the pair on the board--there should be two

TEACHER NOTES:



TIP

Check in with students to see if they brought in any Fiction Fanatics

Cards about characters, or any of the other topics discussed thus far. If students do not have

columns, so you can write students' examples underneath them.)

Ask: *Who thinks they can define **major** and **minor** characters?*



Guide students to the idea that **major characters** are important to the development of the story, while **minor characters** are only a part of the story momentarily. Even though they are not in the entire story, minor characters can contribute by providing important information about the major characters, or by adding lighter moments to break the tension.

Project Excerpt #1 from the last lesson from *Hope in the Holler*. Have students discuss who would be an example of a minor character in this passage (*Mrs. Chipman, Hoyt*). Ask: *What makes this character a minor character?* (e.g., the character does not really change the story in any way)

If students are still having trouble distinguishing between major/minor characters, brainstorm a list of minor and major characters in stories with the students that they might be familiar with. For example, Bambi and the Skunk (Flower) in *Bambi*, Elsa and the Duke of Weselton in *Frozen*, Charlotte and Templeton in *Charlotte's Web*¹.

Add **major character** and **minor character** to the Word Wall.



Ask students to share their Fiction Fanatics Cards on protagonist/antagonist or round/flat, and place the character names under the appropriate categories on the board. If you aren't sure about a character, ask questions like "does the character appear throughout the entire story?" and "does the author describe the character with a lot of details?" to help parse out which category the character belongs in.



Explain: *You might have noticed that a lot of the major characters we've discussed are protagonists. They are also round. That is*

any Fiction Fanatics Cards, give them time to fill them out to complete the activity.

Background: Growth Mindset

Growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) is when students believe they can grow their intelligence and achievement through effort and hard work. The opposite is a fixed mindset, when students believe there is nothing they can do to become more intelligent, so they do not put in effort when they do not understand something. As the workshop process is about developing writing, you should be sure to remind your students that you believe they can become better writers with

¹ At the time this unit was written, these were popular movies/stories that kids talked about. You may need to adjust these examples based on more current popular movies/stories.

because it is more interesting to read a story focused on a character that we know a lot about. That way, we can see them change and develop. Think about a growth mindset. As people we can always be learning and changing, and we like to see that in fiction as well. Keep that in mind as we complete today's Writing Workshop. The workshops should be about engaging in the process of writing, and the retreats should be a time for you to get feedback so you can grow as a writer.

effort and practice. Be sure to point out when you see them improve, especially through hard work.

ACTIVITY: Writing Workshop 3



REAL WORLD

Describe a Cl



TOOLS

Write or project the following prompts on the board:



WRITING

*Using only sensory details, write 10 sentences to describe a person so a **bad** feeling towards the person is evident to the reader.*

*Using only sensory details, write 10 sentences describe a person so a **good** feeling towards the person is evident to the reader.*



INDEPENDENT

Ask students to get out their Writer's Notebooks and Workshop Folders. Direct students to choose only 1 prompt to respond to. Explain to students that they can write as much as they want in response to that prompt during the time allotted for the Workshop in their Writer's Notebooks. However, they will need to make sure to save enough time to transfer their final response to their Workshop Folder. Give students 5-10 minutes before giving them a one-minute warning, then ask them to form circle(s) with their group for the Writers' Retreat.



GROUP

As a class or in small groups (3-4 students), have each student read his/her prompt response aloud, and allow time (about 2-3 minutes per response) for students to offer



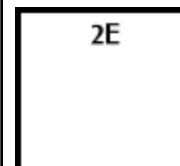
TIP

These are general guidelines for the amount of time to spend on each section of the writing workshop—feel free to adjust their writing and sharing time depending on the amount of class time you have and the ability of the students to focus on and/or complete the activity.



INTEREST

During every Writing Workshop, encourage students to respond to the prompts by writing about topics that interest them or that they are passionate about.



2E

If you have students who have difficulty with writing, you can either act as a scribe for them, or give them access to a computer/tablet so that they can craft a response. You may also allow them to respond using other assistive devices recommended by special education resource teachers/specialists.

constructive feedback. The Writer's Retreats should not dominate the lesson.



CLASS

Encourage students to pay particular attention to the sensory details each author used to illuminate the good or bad feeling toward the character. Try to model constructive criticism by highlighting one common aspect of the Writers' Retreat to reinforce (e.g., a couple of great examples of creating a feeling toward a character using sensory details).

Say: This concludes our Writing Workshop and Writers' Retreat. Thank you for sharing!

However, we are not done with characters just yet. We are going to learn about characterization.









Students should be grouped according to their readiness to write complex responses--this will help ensure that students are challenged and are given feedback at the same level. Designate a different Discussion Leader from each Retreat to take notes on the feedback students receive; collect these notes to help you adjust groups as needed. Sit with a different group for each Writers' Retreat.

You should also be skimming students' Writer's Notebooks/ Fiction Fanatics cards throughout the unit to check and see which students may be having difficulty and which students need more challenge either in the tasks or through comments/questions you provide.



This activity will work best if students are sitting in a circle, so they are all part of the group rather than having to stand in front of their peers. If students are shy and do not want to share, they can ask a classmate or the teacher to read the response aloud for them--the goal is for students to get feedback. As the unit progresses, continue to

	<p>encourage the children to read their own work out loud.</p>
<p>INTRODUCTION: What is Characterization?</p> <div data-bbox="272 363 435 562">  <p>WORD STUDY</p> </div> <p><i>Do you remember what the -tion suffix means? (Let students guess.) So -tion indicates an act or process. That means that characterization is the act or process of creating a character.</i></p> <p><i>When you used sensory details to describe a good or bad character, you were characterizing them as good or bad. This is considered indirect characterization, because you were using the details to show us if the character was good or bad. (Project or write <i>direct</i> and <i>indirect</i> on the board.) Direct characterization is where you tell the reader what the character is like.</i></p> <div data-bbox="272 884 435 1083">  <p>LANGUAGE</p> </div> <p>Add direct characterization and indirect characterization to the Word Wall.</p>	<div data-bbox="1105 342 1268 541">  <p>TIP</p> </div> <p>If students are having difficulty with the -tion suffix, bring in other words like <i>celebration</i>—You are celebrating—a verb, so it’s an action, or an act)</p> <div data-bbox="1214 737 1393 936">  <p>WORD STUDY</p> </div> <p>Characterization: “The act or an instance of characterizing” (<i>American Heritage Dictionary</i>)</p>
<p>APPLICATION: Characterization</p> <div data-bbox="272 1192 435 1392">  <p>CLASS</p> </div> <p><i>Let’s read an example that has both types of characterization to see if we can tell the difference.</i></p> <p>Project the passage from Jason Reynolds’s <i>As Brave as You</i>, or Sarah Dooley’s <i>Free Verse</i>, or Frances O’Roark Dowell’s <i>Where I’d Like to Be</i> (your choice, or feel free to use all three).</p> <div data-bbox="248 1503 410 1671"> <p>PLACE</p> </div> <p>OPTIONAL: Replace the passages with a rural picture book of your choice (see list in the Introduction section if you need a suggestion). Be sure it has both direct and indirect characterization to be sure the students understand the difference.</p> <p>Invite students to find a comfortable place in the room. Remind them that they will want to listen for both direct and indirect</p>	<p>Background Information: Jason Reynolds grew up in near Washington, D.C., but like Genie and Ernie, he spent time with his grandparents in their rural hometown during special trips. He was named the Library of Congress’ National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature in 2020 and focused a great deal of his attention in this role on students who live in rural areas. Students may enjoy Jason’s web series about writing, “Write, Right. Rite.”: https://guides.loc.gov/jason-reynolds/grab-the-mic/wrr</p> <div data-bbox="1105 1822 1268 1906">  </div> <p><i>Where I’d Like to Be</i> is a story</p>

characterization. Read the passage out loud to students. When you finish, tell them to take a moment to look at it again.

Ask: *What examples of direct characterization do you see?*

Write student responses on the board, correcting them as needed.

Ask: *What examples of indirect characterization do you see?*

Write student responses on the board, correcting them as needed.

Ask: *Do you have any questions about direct and indirect characterization?* Make sure students feel confident with the topics before moving in to more critical discussions.

Then ask: *Why do authors use both direct and indirect characterization?* Help students understand that readers do not need all the details spelled out for them. Plus, writing that spells everything out for us would be very boring to read. Indirect characterization allows us to think and write more creatively.



Both *Free Verse* and *Where I'd Like to Be* are stories of displacement. The main characters in both books, Sasha and Maddie, are in temporary homes after experiencing the loss of a guardian while they wait for adults to decide where they will live permanently. Students may connect with the feeling of having been displaced, or feeling powerless in certain situations, and writing can be a powerful way to process these experiences. As you help children build their knowledge of fiction and the elements that make for a good story, try to bring their attention to the emotions that come up as they read fiction—both in the examples shared in this unit and in the books they read on their own—and encourage them to tap into those emotions in their own writing (without, of course, pressuring them to reveal anything personal they may not feel comfortable sharing).

about a young girl, Maddie, who is living in a group home for foster children until a permanent placement can be arranged. The plot revolves around friendships she makes with other children who live at the home and the place they create for themselves by refurbishing an old playhouse. In the passage, Maddie describes herself as “ordinary” in comparison with her new friend, Murphy, but as readers, we can see Maddie has many special gifts she learns to appreciate over time. The way the characters tackle the difficult task of rebuilding the playhouse—which seems impossible at first—is a great example of growth mindset. The book would make a wonderful class read-aloud!

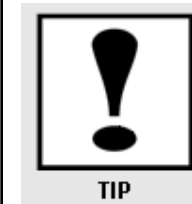


If you choose the rural picture book option, consider if any of the characterization **stereotypes** rural life. Ask students whether or not they feel like the characters remind them of people in their community or stories that their parents tell.



ROAD TO PUBLISHING: Characterization



Show the students Road to Publishing: Characterization. As a class, decide how the excerpt from *As Brave as You*, *Free Verse*, or *Where I'd Like to Be* (your choice, or you could discuss the rural picture book you may have used) fits into this rubric. The idea is to expose



Because these are excerpts, the passages will often fall short of our “publishable” expectations—make sure you explain how the authors are on

<p>students to the rubric so they will understand it for their process later in the unit.</p>	<p>the right track, but that they have to be clear and consistent in order for their work to be published.</p>
<p> ANCHOR</p> <p>remaining, students can complete <u>Fiction Fanatic</u> : characterization and indirect on. Or, encourage students to think of an ing it in tomorrow.</p>	<p> TIP</p> <p>If possible, remember to keep a cart of library books in the room for students to generate ideas from in case there are days where students don't have any ideas to bring in from home.</p>