



Toolkit Focus: Characterisation

To create characters that sound real and the reader can imagine, you might want to:

EYFS	Year 1 & Year 2	Year 3 & Year 4	Year 5 & Year 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give your character a name Use adjectives to describe, e.g. <i>friendly, scary</i>. Have a 'goodie' and a 'baddie' Give your character a problem <p><u>You could also:</u></p> <p>Develop descriptive vocabulary (synonyms and antonyms) through orally discussing the features of characters and their profiles. e.g.</p> <p><i>What do you think is thinking? How do you think.....feels? Do you like..... ? What makes you like them? What do you think would say? Why do you think.....behaved like that?</i></p> <p>And...</p> <p>Introduce speech bubbles and thinking bubbles as visual aids to help focus talk on what a character is saying and thinking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use expanded noun phrases to describe the character, e.g. <i>Personality: <u>The brave, young knight strode forward.</u> Appearance: <u>The tall, handsome knight kissed the damsel.</u></i> Use sentence or power of 3, e.g. <i>Santa was red, fat and friendly. Sentence of 3: <u>The alien had green hair, an enormous nose and seemed to be completely confused.</u></i> Use simple similes to describe, e.g. <i>He stood as tall as a tree. The giants head was</i> Use adverbs to describe how something does something e.g. <i>She tiptoed <u>quietly</u>.</i> Use a carefully selected character name to hint their personality. e.g. <i>Miss Trunchbull vs. Miss Honey</i> Use feelings and personality traits to build a character e.g. <i>trouble maker, day dreamer, hard-working, joker.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use pronouns/nouns effectively when describing a character, e.g. <i>Henry could be – 'he' 'the boy' 'the trouble maker' etc...</i> Show not tell – describe a character's emotions using senses, e.g. <i>the effect on the character's body: a shiver shot up her spine. Sarah's face went pale and her heart froze = scared.</i> Use comparatives and superlatives to describe e.g. <i>He was taller than the Empire State Building..., He was the bravest knight in the whole eight kingdoms....</i> Use subordination to add detail for effect, e.g. <i>When he reached his bed, the exhausted boy collapsed. The young girl smiled at the woman because she was lonely.</i> Use expanded noun phrases in different positions to describe a character, e.g. <i>The curly haired maths teacher... The maths teacher with curly hair.</i> Use small details about appearance and personality to build a character, e.g. <i>a character who spits on the floor or wipes his nose on his sleeve is likely to create dislike or disgust. A character who wears a kind smile is likely to be friendly.</i> Give your main character a hobby, interest or special talent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shiv kept a pet rat called Simon in a cage made of bamboo shoots. An expression for speech, e.g. 'Rats!' she cried. A distinctive feature, e.g. she wore scarlet jeans. A secret Know your character's desire, wish or fear, e.g. <i>Gareth had always wanted a pet/never liked lizards.</i> Begin to use dialogue and speech verbs to show a character talking, e.g., <i>screamed, shouted, called, whispered.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drop in a few details to suggest character, e.g. <i>Mr. Simons, gripping his cane, glared at the two boys.</i> Show (not tell) how characters feel by what they do, think or say: <i>"Get out!" he snapped, slamming the door. (to show anger). The forest seemed to close in on Jade as the moon faded behind the clouds. She pulled her jacket around her whilst the wind blew a shiver down her spine.</i> Use relative clauses to add detail to the character, e.g. <i>James, who was white as a ghost, shivered in the corner.</i> Reveal a character's thoughts, e.g. <i>He hoped that he would find his way home.</i> Use dialogue (including accent and dialect) to portray the character and advance actions e.g. <i>"Ow many times 'av I told ya? Enough is enough! Come inside this VERY minute," shouted his mum. "Just coming!" Jane replied.</i> Explore how a character's personality and behaviour can impact and drive plot, e.g. <i>a moral flaw or a deep rooted fear will determine how the character reacts in certain situations.</i> Use other character's (or narrator's) comments or reactions, e.g. <i>'Tracy's upset again,' whispered Jamil. or Jamie stared at his friend, shaking his head sadly.</i> Use contrasting characters to develop conflict in narrative. e.g. <i>Two siblings, one shy and withdrawn and the other adventurous, find themselves at a crossroads in the narrative - who prevails? At what cost?</i> Explore writing in the first/third person and from different viewpoints to effect characterisation. e.g. <i>if using the first person you may have more empathy and insight into a characters thoughts and feelings.</i> Show character development – how they feel at the start and end of a story. Do the characters learn anything. Does their personality change e.g. <i>not likeable character becomes likeable at the end. e.g. Mrs Bonny frowned. [opening] Mrs Bonny turned to her new-found friend and smiled [ending].</i>



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Useful teaching ideas:

TalkforWriting

Useful ideas for teaching characterisation – always co-construct the toolkit with the class

Model all aspects of the toolkit and display word banks, sentences and ideas on prompt cards, washing lines or learning walls

N/R	Y1/2 As in N/R plus:	Y3/4 As in Y1/2 plus:	Y5/6 As in Y3/4 plus:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect a bank of characters from reading • Notice, collect and use descriptive language • Ask class to sort characters into goodies and baddies • Discuss how characters feel and find clues in the text or images • Discuss dilemmas for characters • Role-play scenes in stories • Invent new characters together • Use hats, costumes & puppets to retell or invent stories with strong central characters • Draw characters on story map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From reading, create 'role on the wall', collecting character clues and tracking development • Add speech or thought bubbles to pictures • Collect, display and use a bank of descriptive language (adjectives & similes) • Use drama/ mime/ play 'in the manner of the word' to show how a character feels, e.g. <i>walked sadly</i> • Create banks of words to describe how a character feels • Draw characters + speech bubbles • Role-play brief conversations before writing dialogue • Use freeze frames, hot seat and interview characters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice and collect ideas for how authors develop characters through what they say, do and thin • Use reading and images to collect banks of words or phrases to draw on when writing for feelings, e.g. <i>scared – shivered, spine tingle, legs shook, tremble</i> • act out simple scenes with different characters, e.g. <i>coming into a room angrily, shyly, bossily, etc.</i> • Use drama to re-enact or develop new scenes • Collect character triggers, e.g. <i>a secret, a wish, a fear, finding something, an anxiety, a dream, losing something, a lie, etc.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play games where children mime and others have to guess – who and how they feel • Write dialogue for images of films with the sound turned down • Collect banks of names and idioms/expressions • Look at images of people and write banks of details to describe faces, hands, eyes, mouths, teeth, etc. • In reading, discuss how authors build characters and show/suggest feelings • Use drama to develop 'show not tell'. Act out scenes, changing a character's feelings, e.g. how does a bossy character answer the door or a shy one? • Rehearse changing sections of good writing by altering the character type thinking about what a different character would say, do or think; • Read and imitate good writers. Borrow characters and write new stories for them.