

## Literary Characterization

When you want to write a characterization, you aim at showing a person's most important character traits. You include his/her outward appearance, reasons and motives for his/her actions, and finally you evaluate and judge this person.



### How can you proceed?

- 1) First you must read the text (or watch the film) very carefully and underline (write down) important observations that help you to understand the person. You may want to consider the following guiding questions:
  - a) what statements does the author make about the protagonist? (*direct characterization*)
  - b) what statements do other persons make about the protagonist? (*direct characterization*)
  - c) what does the protagonist say about himself/herself? (*direct characterization*)
  - d) how does the protagonist behave (actions)? (*indirect characterization*)
  
- 2) Now you collect the important material (notes; keywords) and add the respective page(s) and line(s). It is helpful to follow a systematic pattern:
  - a) *personal situation*:
    - name, age, sex
    - origin and social class
    - family and friends
    - profession
  - b) *outward appearance*:
    - face and body
    - movement
    - clothes, jewelry
    - language
  - c) *important characteristics*:
    - abilities and talents (sports, technical, mental)
    - behaviour, reactions
    - manners
    - significant character traits.
  
- 3) Then you check your material again and think of a meaningful order. In your introduction you may want to mention his/her significance in the book; at the end you should evaluate the person by pointing out his/her positive/negative aspects.
  
- 4) When you have completed all these steps, you start writing the characterization down (in the present tense).