

# Characterisation

## Characters

Stories are all about the characters

When reading texts or writing texts, the more we know about our characters the more rich, complex and compelling our analysis or creations will be. When analysing or creating characters we can use the following categories to help us.



- Physical Characteristics
- Background
- Behaviour
- Attitudes & Beliefs
- Dominant Traits

## Attitudes and Beliefs

Attitudes and Beliefs is about the character's strongest beliefs about life and about the world in which he or she lives.

As readers we ask ourselves how these beliefs affect how the character acts and feels.



- What is their attitude towards their parents? Or to other people in their lives? Do they believe the same things as their parents?
- How does the character feel about themselves? Do they have a positive or negative self-image? Where did this belief originate? (linked to background)
- How do their beliefs affect the way they behave or react to situations? Where did this belief originate?
- Do they hold the same beliefs as other characters in the story?
- Do they act in a particular way to fit a particular belief system? (i.e. boys are supposed to be tough, so they act tough)
- What lifestyle choices have they made? Have these choices been influenced by their background?

## Background

Background is about the character's past. Everybody has a past, full of memories, feelings, and events that have happened before the start of your story, which will influence how the character will act throughout the text.



- What is the character's name? How did they get their name?
- Where did the character grow up?
- Who is in their family? Are they from a rich or poor family?
- What positive or negative past events are influencing their behaviour? How does this affect their outlook?
- What are their interests and hobbies? How did they get involved with these interests or hobbies?
- What type of school do they attend? Are they achieving well at school? Do they have a learning disability? Are they being bullied?
- Who are their friends? Are they well liked?
- Do they have a nickname? How did they get this nickname? Do they like this nickname?

## Behaviour

Because the character has a personality, he or she will do certain things or say certain things under certain circumstances. Your character's feelings will fluctuate just like those of a real person, and as such we need have an understanding of the character's pattern of feelings.



- How are they likely to act in any given situation?
- Do they respond well to new challenges?
- How are they likely to feel in any given situation?
- How structured is their life? Do they follow the rules, or do they rebel against the rules?
- Is their behaviour predictable?
- Do they lie? Are they always honest?
- Do they show or cover up their fears?
- Do they have any quirks that are unusual to most people?
- Do they have a catch-phrase?
- What thoughts does your character have?
- What are their relationships like with other characters? Is their behavior different depending on which character they are with?

## Dominant Traits

Dominant traits is about what the character wants. All characters are motivated by big dreams, or goals. Sometimes the character will achieve something they did not know they wanted at the start, but as the story progresses it supersedes the original dream or desire.



- What does the character hope to accomplish in life?
- Does the character want power or money? Why do they want power or money?
- Does the character want freedom? Freedom from the rules of home? Freedom from a situation they do not want to be part of anymore? Freedom from a life or lifestyle they no longer desire? Physical freedom?
- Do they want to feel happy?
- Is it a feeling or thing they desire?
- Do they want to be liked? Do they want to be close to other people?
- Do they want to be good at something? Do they have a desire to have a particular talent? Do they have a talent that they want others to notice?
- Do they want revenge?
- Do they want forgiveness?

## Physical Characteristics

Physical covers everything to do with the character's physical attributes, - such as their height, weight, eye colour, age and other distinguishing features.



- Natural Attributes:** Hair colour and style, eye colour, height, facial features (freckles, moles), and birth defects
- Chosen Attributes:** Hair colour, style and length, eye colour, clothing, make-up, piercings, tattoos, jewellery and plastic surgery
- Background:** The receiving of scars or an injury from an accident or traumatic event. Bruising as a result of a fight or a beating. The setting will influence their appearance—such as living in a foreign country, or a different time period, and/or their socio-economic status—i.e. Rich or poor.