

# Characters and Characterization

## Student Resource

**Characterization** is the act of creating or developing a character. No work of fiction can be effective unless the author creates believable and sympathetic characters to people it. Through them, the fictional conflict arises and is resolved, the theme revealed, and the reader entertained and enlightened.

### Types of Characterization

**Direct Characterization:** The author directly states the character's traits.

**Indirect Characterization:** The author reveals the traits of a character through various methods, leaving it up to the reader to draw conclusions about the character based on this indirect information. Authors may indirectly characterize through any of the following methods:

- what the character says (dialogue)
- what the character does (actions)
- what the character thinks (interior monologue)
- what other characters say about him/her

### Character Terms

**Protagonist:** the central character of a drama, novel, short story, or narrative poem

**Antagonist:** the adversary of the protagonist

**Foil:** a character designed to highlight qualities of another character

**Epiphany:** a sudden revelation in which a character proceeds from ignorance and innocence to knowledge and awareness

**Round Character:** a three-dimensional character

**Flat Character:** a character with a single important trait

**Dynamic Character:** a character who changes in response to the experience through which he or she passes

**Static Character:** a character who changes little over the course of a narrative

**Archetypal Character (or Archetype):** a character who embodies a certain kind of universal human experience; a type seen in myths, fairy tales, and in other forms of literature in every time and place

#### Examples:

**Mentor:** a wise teacher who provides guidance

**Damsel in distress:** a young, beautiful woman in need of saving

