

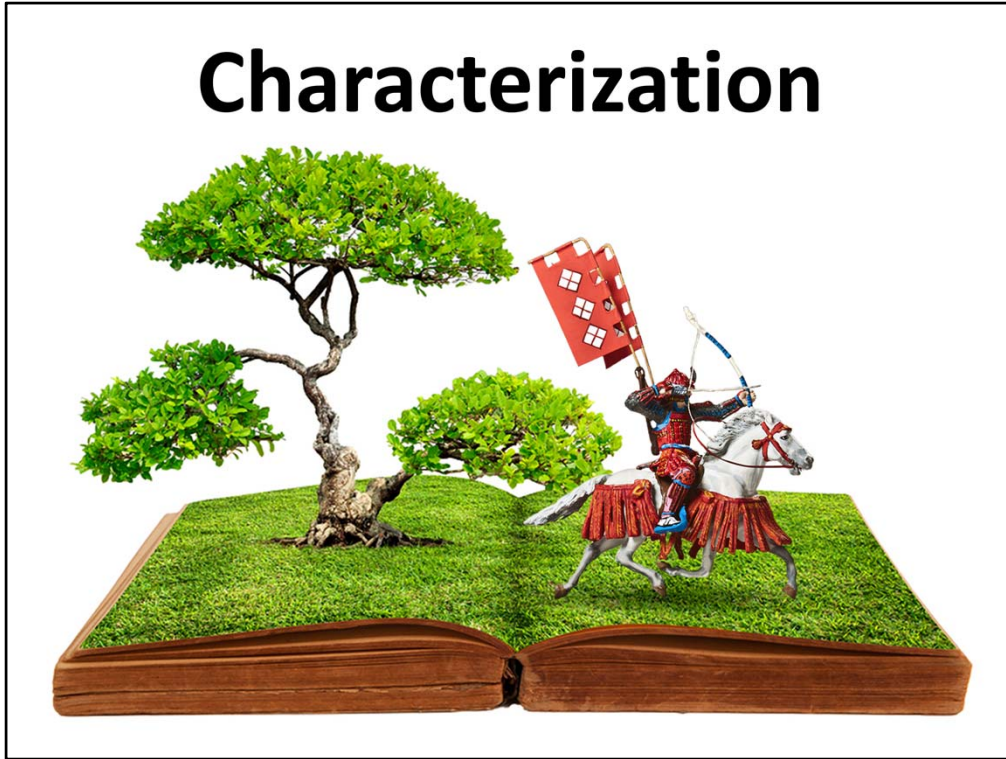
Module 3: Exploring Good, Evil, and Noble Sacrifice
Topic 3 Content: Characterization



Characterization

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Characterization



Characterization is the process in which a writer reveals the personality and motivation of a character to the reader. Character traits can be revealed using direct or indirect characterization.

Even though it is often easier to use direct characterization to describe characters, authors can paint more colorful and rich portraits of their characters by using indirect characterization to *show* you rather than *tell* you who their characters are.

Module 3: Exploring Good, Evil, and Noble Sacrifice
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Direct Characterization



"The **arrogant** politician marched through the crowd, **impatient** to get his **revenge** on his upstart opponent."

An author uses direct characterization when he or she directly tells the reader the character's personality, feelings, or motivation.

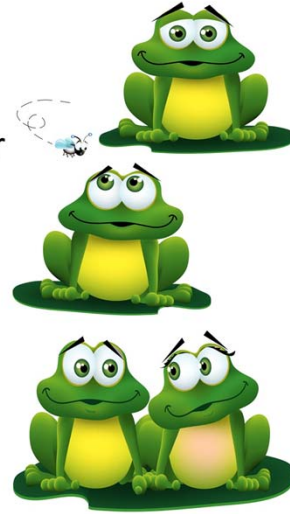
Consider this example: "The arrogant politician marched through the crowd, impatient to get his revenge on his upstart opponent."

In this passage, the writer has directly told the reader that the politician is "arrogant" and "impatient." There is no doubt as to what his motivation is: revenge. Direct characterization allows the reader to quickly and accurately learn about a character, assuming that the narrator is reliable and trustworthy.

Module 3: Exploring Good, Evil, and Noble Sacrifice
Topic 3 Content: Characterization

Indirect Characterization

- T** what the character **THINKS**
- O** what **OTHERS** think of the character
- A** the character's **APPEARANCE**
- D** what the character **DOES**
- S** what the character **SAYS**



Indirect characterization *shows* rather than directly *tells* the personality and motivation of characters. Character traits are revealed through five different methods of indirect characterization. The mnemonic TOADS is a useful way to remember the methods of indirect characterization.

- T – what the character THINKS
- O – what OTHERS think of the character
- A – the character's APPEARANCE
- D – what the character DOES
- S – what the character SAYS

Module 3: Exploring Good, Evil, and Noble Sacrifice
Topic 3 Content: Characterization

Indirect Characterization



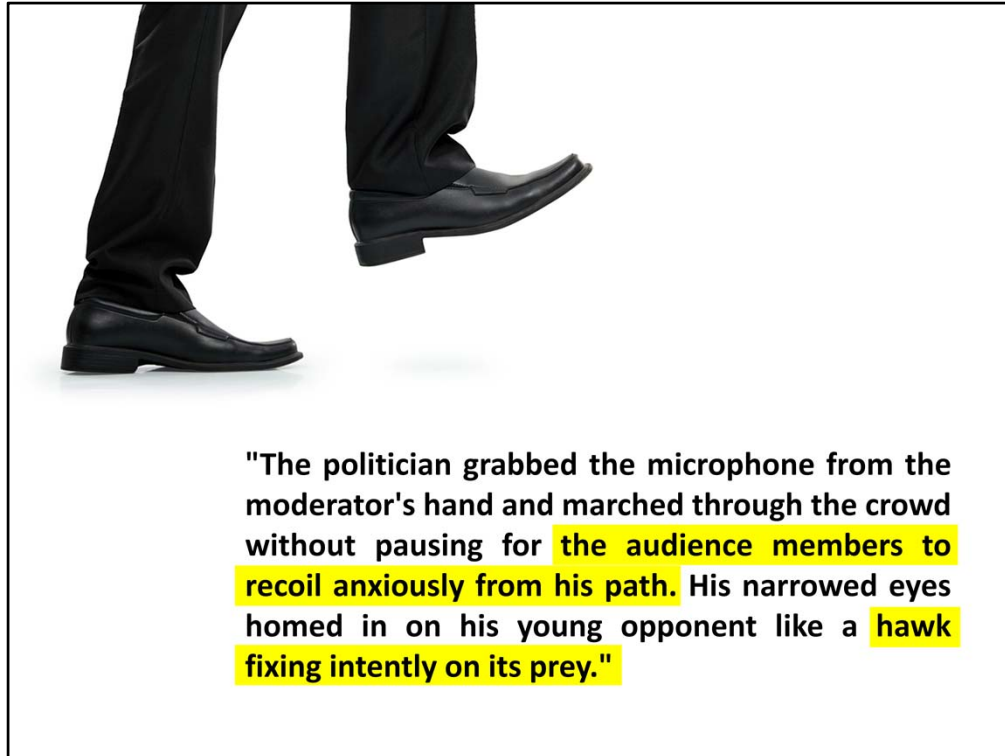
"The politician **grabbed the microphone** from the moderator's hand and **marched** through the crowd without pausing for the audience members to recoil anxiously from his path. His narrowed eyes homed in on his young opponent like a hawk fixing intently on its prey."

Consider the following example: "The politician grabbed the microphone from the moderator's hand and marched through the crowd without pausing for the audience members to recoil anxiously from his path. His narrowed eyes homed in on his young opponent like a hawk fixing intently on its prey."

Instead of telling the reader that the politician is arrogant, the writer shows that the politician is arrogant by the way he takes control of the microphone and immediately moves to confront his opponent, as if he were not a participant of a campaign debate but the boss in charge. Notice also how he takes the microphone; he does not ask for it or borrow it but rather grabs it, implying forcefulness. In addition, the verbs "grabbed" and "marched" give a sense of urgency and impatience.

Module 3: Exploring Good, Evil, and Noble Sacrifice

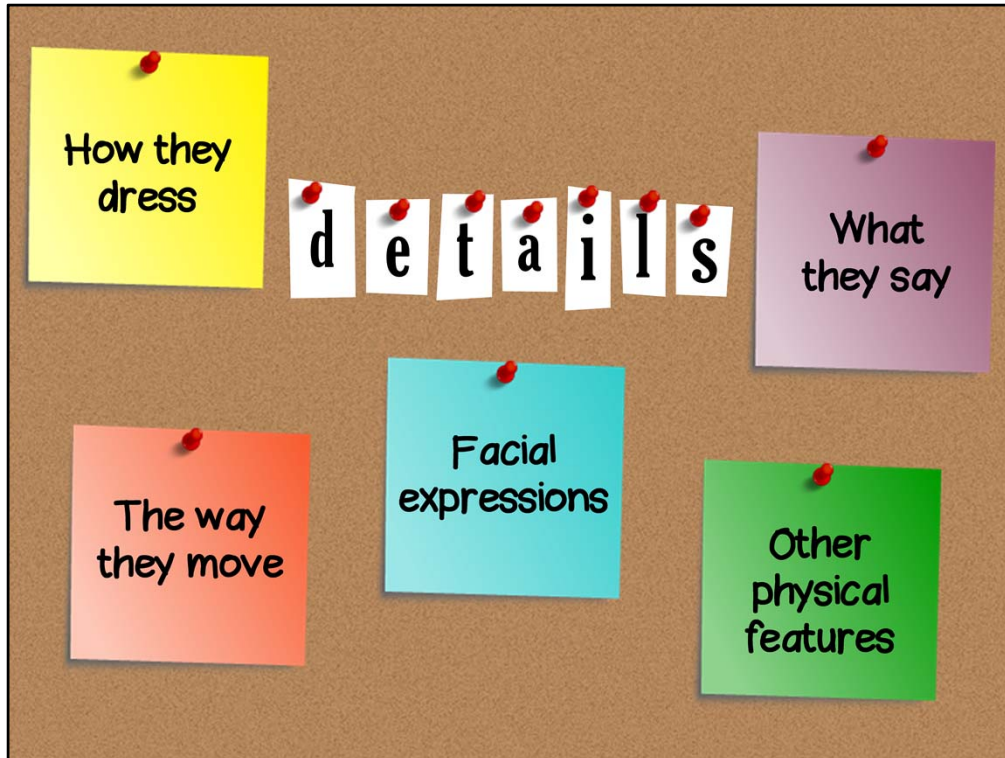
Topic 3 Content: Characterization



Also note how other people react to the politician. You do not yet see the opponent's reaction, but you can observe how the members of the audience shrink away from the frustrated politician, suggesting that either they have prior experience or knowledge of his aggressive personality or the fury of his anger in this moment is enough to alarm them. Finally, the author shows you—but does not tell you directly—the motivation and intent of the politician. Just as a fierce hawk attacks his prey, the politician is targeting his opponent with the same intensity, and you can imagine the conflict will be a brutal one.

Module 3: Exploring Good, Evil, and Noble Sacrifice

Topic 3 Content: Characterization



When analyzing a literary work for indirect characterization, pay attention to details. Observe how characters dress, the way they move, any facial expressions or other physical features, and what the character says in soliloquies and monologues.