

L.O. To be able to create an interesting, well developed character for my story.

BBC

CHARACTER

From Batman to Nemo, lots of stories centre around a hero, villain or even a lost fish. If your pupils are stuck for a story, get them thinking about a protagonist first.

Lights, camera, action!

Once your pupils have even a glimmer of an idea for their plot, get them to storyboard it. What would the set look like? Who might play the parts? What costume would they wear? What might be the soundtrack? Visualising their characters in this way will help them paint a strong image in the reader's mind.

Doodle it!

Many brilliant stories are accompanied by illustrations, like the mermaid judge Francesca Simon and her *Horrid Henry* novels. If any of your pupils are struggling to find a plot for their story, sometimes it can come from finding a brilliant character. Pens at the ready – get doodling!

Character charades

In small groups, your class play charades with a twist – they are miming characters. By having to think about the characteristics of their chosen figure, they'll get to see how a lot of successful characters have a striking or outstanding characteristic.

Good baddies!

What if Winnie The Pooh were secretly evil? Or Shrek were a treacherous spy? Or our own Alphabet wanted to take over the world? You get the idea...

What would the set look like?

What would the cast wear?

Who would you cast to play the parts?

Where would the film be set?

Which songs would be on the soundtrack?

Would there be any music in it?

What props would be needed?

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Some people say that every story has already been told...
but as Year 6 writers we know that's not true! This week we would like you to come up with an inventive and original story to share with us. Let your imagination run free and take us on an adventure.



What Is a Character Description?

What do we learn about Serla from this description?

An enormous white wolf was walking stiffly towards them on its hind legs. It was dressed in a breastplate and a red cape, which swished lazily around the creature's furred feet. Its eyes were a burning orange, and a glint around its mouth gave the merest suggestion of sharp fangs.

The wolf stopped directly in front of Cole and gazed down at him, amber eyes bulging. "Who is this?" she growled.

Cole held his breath as the wolf prowled around him in a circle, looking him up and down. She had long, grey streaks in the fur on her nose.

Which words and phrases tell us about Serla's appearance?

Which words and phrases give us clues about Serla's personality? What kind of person do you think she is?

Describing a Character's Appearance

It is important that a character description allows the reader to picture what that character looks like.

Look at King Enk. What features would you want the reader to picture?



Describing a Character's Appearance

What adjectives would work well to create a picture of the king?

Think carefully about what is most important for your reader to know.



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Describing a Character Using Your Senses

As well as thinking about what the character looks like, we could consider the other senses.

What would the character sound like? What would they smell like? What would their clothes feel like?

Focus on describing things that will tell the reader something important. What clues can we give that the king is wealthy, powerful and old?



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Figurative Language

To keep your reader engaged, and to create a comparison which is easy for your reader to understand, why not use figurative language?

**hair as white
as snow**

A **simile** compares two things using the words 'like' or 'as'.



**The jewels in his crown
were stars plucked from
the night sky.**

A **metaphor** compares two things without using the words 'like' or 'as'. It simply says that one thing is another.

**The cloak hung lazily
over his shoulders.**

Personification describes a non-living object or animal using the features of a human.

What Is a Character Description?

Let's look again at the description of Serla the wolf. As well as Serla's physical features, this character description told us about her character.

An enormous, white wolf was **walking stiffly** towards them on its hind legs. It was dressed in a breastplate and a red cape, which swished lazily around the creature's furred feet. Its eyes were a burning orange, and a glint around its mouth gave the merest suggestion of sharp fangs.

The wolf **stopped directly in front of Cole** and **gazed down** at him, amber eyes **bulging**. "Who is this?" she **growled**.

Cole held his breath as the wolf **prowled around him in a circle, looking him up and down**. She had long, grey streaks in the fur on her nose.

What key features of your character's personality could you show? How could you show this?

Describing a Character's Personality

How could we show these character traits without simply listing them?

You should try to show the reader what they are like rather than tell them.

Untrustworthy

"You trust me, don't you Cole?" King Enk smirked. Although his words were kind, Cole felt uneasy.

Powerful

With a click of his fingers, the wolves appeared. The king waved a delicate hand and the table filled instantly with delicious fruits and cakes.



Putting It All Together

When putting all of your planning together, it is important to remember that:

you don't need to include every single detail of the character, only those which give the reader useful clues;

you should group similar points together;

varied word choices and sentence structures will help to make the writing engaging;

speech and action can help you show your reader about the character's personality rather than telling them everything in a long description.



Putting It All Together

King Enk's tall, slender frame appeared in the doorway. As he entered the room, every creature and person fell silent. As the long, velvet cape that hung limply around his narrow shoulders swept across the floor, his servants bowed low. A heavy, bejewelled crown sat on top of his wispy, white hair and the soft, faux fur that trimmed the top of his cloak framed his grey face. From the end of his pointed chin sprouted a pointed beard as white as snow. At a click of his spindly fingers, a dozen wolves appeared.

"Guards," he said in a silky voice which oozed confidence, "show our visitor how we greet outsiders." A cruel smile twisted on the king's face and his silver eyes flashed dangerously.



What Makes an Effective Character Description?

Create a clear picture of your character in the reader's head.

Think carefully about the senses.

Use figurative language.

Show the reader what the character is like through the use of action or speech.

Vary your vocabulary and sentence structure to keep the reader engaged.



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More top tips

Asking yourself questions about the characters in a story can give you the answers you need to bring them to life.



Unforgettable characters need a memorable name. Would you expect to find a character called Eowyn Broadsword in a love story or a fantasy tale? Is this the kind of name you would give to a heroine or villain? Think about the type of story you are writing to make sure the character names you choose fit the bill.



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Use these questions to create your character profile.

It would be fantastic if you could
Include an illustration of your character
alongside your description.

Challenge:

To write a descriptive paragraph of
your character, including an example
of direct speech which shows their
personality.

Character profile

Complete this character profile to collect ideas about the lead character in your story. Try to answer every question to find out what makes your character tick.

Calling
all young
writers

My character's name is: _____

Can you describe what your character looks like?

My character looks like: _____

Does your character speak or make any sounds?

My character sounds like: _____

What interests or pet hates does your character have?

My character likes/dislikes: _____

Does your character have a hobby? What do they do?

My character: _____

Where does your character live?

My character lives: _____

Does your character have a family?

My character has: _____

