Characterization in Literature

Characterization

- the process that an author uses to reveal the personality of the characters in a literary text

Direct Characterization

- When the author explicitly describes a character's qualities.
- Direct characterization can come straightforwardly from a narrator, from another character, or through self-description by the character himself/herself.
- For example: Lola was brave and fearless.

Indirect Characterization

- When the reader has to infer a character's qualities from implicit information given about the character.
- Indirect characterization can be analyzed through five different methods:

1 Physical Description

- For example: Robert was wearing ripped blue jeans with mud stains all over them. His eyes were black and blue and his nose was bleeding.

- Readers can infer from Robert's physical description that he was just in a physical fight.

2 What the Character is Thinking

- For example: I could forgive Jordan for what she said if she apologized to me. I know that people say things in the heat of the moment that they don't mean.

- Readers can infer that the narrator is sympathetic and understanding based on what he or she is thinking.

3 What the Character Says

- For example: Joanie said, "I would never be caught seen eating lunch by myself."

- The readers can infer that Joanie is insecure and cares about what other people think based on what she said.

4. The Character's Actions

- For example: Greg pulled over to the side of the street. He stopped traffic and picked up the turtle from the middle of the road. He then let it free in a grassy area facing the other way.

- Readers can infer Greg is caring and is considerate of animals based on his actions.

5 *What Others Say About a Character*

- For example: Thomas said, "Matt doesn't take any vacation days all year even though his boss offers him paid time off."
- Readers can infer from what Thomas has said that Matt is a workaholic and doesn't take a break by choice.

Flat and Round Characters

- Flat characters show readers only one side of their personalities and are easy to understand. Think, flat like a pancake!

- Round characters are fully developed and complex; they show more than one side to their personalities.

Static and Dynamic Characters

- Dynamic characters undergo a major change in a story.
- Static characters do not change throughout the course of a story.
- Round characters are not always dynamic and flat characters are not always static.

Foil Characters

- Foil characters are a pair of characters who provide a striking contrast to one another.
- The differences between the two characters highlight their biggest personality traits.

- For example, you really notice Character A is overtly rude because Character B is so polite.

Name: _____   Class: _____

Characterization Notes

Characterization	
Direct Characterization	
Indirect Characterization	
	5 Methods: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Flat Characters	
Round Characters	
Dynamic Characters	
Static Characters	
Foil Characters	