*English Instructional Plan – Describing Characters Grades 2-3*

**Primary Strand: Reading 2.7, 3.5**

**Integrated Strand/s: Communication and Multimodal Literacies 2.1, 3.1**

**Essential Understanding:**

All students should:

* understand the elements of fiction (i.e., characters, setting, plot events)

**Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes:**

To be successful with this standard, students are expected to:

* explain how illustrations and images contribute to and clarify text
* describe a character’s traits, feelings, and actions as presented in fictional texts
* describe the characters, settings, and important plot events using details
* apply knowledge of characterization by
  + describing a character’s attributes (e.g., traits, motivations or feelings)
  + using evidence from the text to support generalizations about the character
  + comparing and contrasting characters within a selection or between/among two or more selections
  + explaining how the actions of characters contribute to the sequence of events
* make a variety of connections with the text, such as:
  + connections between the text they are reading and other texts they have read, such as identifying a similar plot or character;
* compare and contrast characters, setting, and plot in at least two versions of the same story (e.g., Cinderella stories)
* demonstrate comprehension by writing responses to what they read

**Primary SOL:**

2.7 d) Describe character, setting and plot events in fiction and poetry.

3.5 d) Compare and contrast setting, characters and plot events.

f) Identify the narrator of a story

**Reinforced (Related Standard) SOL:**

2.6d Discuss meanings of words and develop vocabulary by listening to and reading a variety of texts.

2.7 b) Connect previous experiences to new text

h) Draw conclusions based on the text

3.4 c) Apply meaning clues, language structure, and phonetic strategies to determine the meaning of new words.

d) Use context to clarify meaning of unfamiliar words.

e) Discuss meanings of words and develop vocabulary by listening to and reading a variety of texts.

3.5 b) Make connections between reading selections

h) Draw conclusions using text to support

**Academic Background/Language:**

In fictional stories and poems, there will be at least one character that the reader can identify, and have a discussion about. Your students should be able to discuss characters within a single story/poem, as well as, extend the discussion to compare and contrast characters across texts. Incorporate prompts such as, “Think about what the character just said or did, can you make a connection to something you/another character has said or done, that is similar/different?”, to help guide this discussion.

They will need to know about character traits, which are words we use to describe characters, be developing a descriptive vocabulary appropriate for their grade level, (e.g *to describe a character as mischievous and not just bad)*, and be ready to take that knowledge further. It is helpful to have a shared vocabulary, in order to prompt students’ thinking and deepen their understanding of the character. Utilize prompts such as, “When the character said/did \_\_\_\_\_, it made me think he/she is/feels/thinks/wants…”

When you teach characterizations, you need to explain that these are the methods by which authors communicate/reveal the attributes of characters. An attribute can be defined as a quality or characteristic of a person; and can include physical traits, feelings, opinions, motivations and effects on other characters. In other words, if character traits are the ‘what’ of a character, then characterization is the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ behind it. Prompts like “What do you know about the character?” and “The character is \_\_\_\_\_\_, because\_\_\_\_\_\_.”, can help assess the current level of understanding.

Authors can use two types of characterization to help the readers better understand the character’s behaviors and thought processes, and in turn lead the reader to a deeper comprehension of the character and how they impact the story. These two types of characterization are called direct *(telling)* and indirect *(showing)*. It will be important for the students to know that a narrator tells a story, while dialogue is when the characters speak in a story.

With Direct Characterization, the author uses the narrator (or another character) to tell us about a character’s attributes. With Indirect Characterization, the author uses the character’s actions to show us things about a character’s attributes. Indirect characterization, will require the students to make inferences, answer questions like “Why would \_\_\_\_\_ act this way?Re”

## Materials

* Familiar Mentor Texts-Fiction/Poetry with a strong character presence. Such as, *The Recess Queen by Alexis O’Neill, Enemy Pie by Derek Munson, The Potato Chip Champ by Maria Dismondy,* or MVP by Clare Mishica <https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/mvp?search_id=22661853>
* Chart paper for graphic organizer/anchor chart
* Markers

## Student/Teacher Actions: What should students be doing? What should teachers be doing?

1. Hook students’ interest by telling them that you are going to revisit a class favorite, to focus more on the character of the story. Refer to this focus as characterization, defining it as the steps authors take to highlight and explain details about a character.
2. Explain that these details are often called attributes and can include physical traits we see about the character, as well as, things we learn about the character, by hearing what they say and/or seeing what they do (their actions).
3. Choose one fiction mentor text that the students are familiar with, give a brief review of the story and recall one character that has a strong presence in that particular text. For example: Katie Sue from The Recess Queen, the narrator from Enemy Pie, or Walter from The Potato Chip Champ.
4. Direct the students’ attention to the chart paper, with the graphic organizer for this focus skill, such as a T-chart, labeled *Attributes* and *Evidence* (see example attached). List the character’s name at the top, begin to recall details (attributes) about that character, from the beginning of the story, and support those details with examples (evidence) from the text.
5. Model this process to the students, by thinking aloud, incorporate sentence stems such as, “The character is \_\_\_\_\_ and I know this because\_\_\_\_”, “When the character did \_\_\_\_\_\_, it made me think\_\_\_\_.”, and list the various attributes and evidence on the chart paper.
6. As you continue through the text, repeat this process with including student input and discussion. Introduce students to question/sentence stems that will prompt them to discuss varying attributes (e.g. what we learn about the character from the author telling us, as well as, what we figure out about the character through their actions). Encourage the students to ask themselves questions like, “Why is the character this way?” or “What do you know about the character?”
7. At the end of the discussion, ask students to look at the entire graphic organizer, the T-chart, and individually make a connection to one of the attributes listed. Using a sentence stem such as, “When the character did/said\_\_\_\_ it made me think \_\_\_\_\_, because\_\_\_\_\_.”, the students can share orally, or in writing as a quick check.
8. Tell the students that you will now take the characterization process an extra step, by organizing the attributes into two categories. One category will be labeled *Direct*, and the second category will be labeled *Indirect.* Explainingthat direct characterization is whenthe author uses the narrator (or another character) to *tell* us about a character’s attributes. Indirect Characterization, is when the author uses the character’s actions to *show* us things about a character’s attributes.
9. Model for the students as you think aloud and complete this next step of the Characterization process. Utilize question/sentence stems that prompt and support your thinking, for example “How did the author describe \_\_\_\_\_?”, “The author described \_\_\_\_ as\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”, “How do you think the character felt when\_\_\_\_?”, “When the character \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I think he/she felt\_\_\_\_\_.” Label the attributes with a ‘D’ for Direct or an ‘I’ for Indirect. .
10. After modeling this process with a couple attributes, invite the students to join in on the discussion, and as a whole group work through this characterization process to categorize and label the next few attributes. Be sure to include a question stem that will prompt the students to identify the narrator, such as “Who is telling the story?” During the discussion, encourage students to cross check the direct attributes with its supporting evidence, to determine if it is the narrator or another character that tells the reader this detail.
11. Continue to gradually release this process to the students, by having them turn to a partner to categorize some of the remaining attributes. If you choose, call on a few volunteers to share this partner work to assess the learning. Display this chart in the classroom for students to reference.

**Assessment (Diagnostic, Formative, Summative)**

* Students can work with a partner, or independently, during workshop to categorize the attributes from a read aloud or a buddy read.
* Students can choose one of their independent reading books, and orally (reading conference) or in writing work through the characterization process of a character, to identify attributes, then determine if they used direct characterization or indirect characterization to do so, and provide supporting evidence.
* Students can demonstrate an understanding of Identifying Characterization Methods by reading short passages/texts, list what is revealed about the character and identifying if Direct or Indirect characterization was used.

**Writing Connections:**

* Students can produce varying forms of writing, and elaborate on the details through the use of direct and indirect characterization.
* Students can take examples of direct characterization and rewrite them in a way that reflects indirect characterization, and vice-a-versa.
* Students can analyze specific character attributes; by defining the specific quality/trait, providing a sentence that correlates to that attribute, and then determine if their sentence is an example of direct characterization or indirect characterization.

**Extensions and Connections (for all students)**

* Students can take the books they are currently reading (i.e. their personal book boxes from reading workshop, their current library books, or a basket of books from the classroom library) and read or reread the introduction of a character, in order to identify attributes and evidence following the characterization process.
* Students can refer to a characterization chart/graphic organizer, from the classroom and/or their independent work, and create a different graphic organizer, such as a venn diagram to compare and contrast themselves with the character from that chart.
* Students can compare and contrast characters across texts, by utilizing the details of two (or more) characterization charts to create a graphic organizer.

**Strategies for Differentiation**

* Multicultural books for mentor texts and the classroom library
* E-books, recorded audio or books on tape
* Mentor texts with increased picture support, such as Max the Brave by Ed Vere
* Native language text available for ELL students, both audio and written
* Access to modified text
* Modified or student choice of graphic organizer to record attributes and evidence of a character
* Provide word banks for individual students and/or in the classroom with examples of direct and indirect character attributes
* Model identifying direct and indirect attributes and evidence that supports, by sharing details/stories about who you are as a teacher, family member or friend
* Develop a matching activity, utilizing characters and attributes from familiar text/s
* Provide a list of key words or signal words that the students can use to help recognize attributes of a character within a text, and the author’s use of direct and indirect characterization
* Guide students’ thinking with additional question/sentence stems such as:
  + What did the narrator tell you about the character?
  + What do you think about the character?
  + How do you think the character is feeling?
  + Why is the character acting/speaking/feeling this way?