

## How to Write a Character Analysis

### A strong character analysis will:

1. identify the type of character it is dealing with. (A single character could be two or three type. Different kinds of characters are listed below.)
2. describe the character.
3. discuss the conflict in the story, particularly in regards to the character's place in it.

### There are different kinds of characters.

Characters can be:

- *protagonist (heroes)*, The main character around whom most of the work revolves.
- *antagonists*, The person who the protagonist is against. This is often the villain, but could be a force of nature, set of circumstances, an animal, etc.
- *major*, These are the main characters. They dominate the story. Often there are only one or two major characters.
- *minor*, These are the characters who help tell the major character's tale by letting major characters interact and reveal their personalities, situations, stories. They are usually static (unchanging).
- *stereotypical (stock)*, This is the absent-minded professor, the jolly fat person, the clueless blonde.
- *foils*, These are the people who job is to contrast with the major character. This can happen in two ways. One: The foil can be the opposite of the major character, so the major's virtues and strengths are that much "brighter" in reflection. Two: The foil can be someone like the major character, with lighter versions of the major's virtues and strengths so that the major comes off as even stronger.

### Describing a Character

#### Consider the character's name and appearance.

- Is the author taking advantage of stereotypes? The hot-tempered redhead, the boring brunette, the playboy fraternity
- Is the author going against stereotypes? The brilliant blonde, the socially adept professor
- Is their name significant?
- Are there any unusual visual attributes?

**Consider is he/she if a static (unchanging) or dynamic (changing) character. If the character has changed during the course of the story:**

- Was the change gradual or rapid?
- Was it subtle or obvious?
- Are the changes significant to the story or are they a minor counterpoint?
- Are the changes believable or fantastic?
- What was his/her motivation to change?
- What situations or character encouraged the change?
- How does the character learn from or deal with change?

**Consider how the author discloses the character:**

- By what the character ways or thinks.
- By what the character does.
- By what other characters say about him/her.
- By what the author ways about him/her.
- The short form for this is STAR (says, thinks, acts, reacts).

**Look for these things within the creation of the character:**

**Psychological/personality traits**

- Do these characteristics aid in the character being consistent (in character), believable, adequately motivated, and interesting?
- Do the characteristics of the character emphasize and focus on the character's role in the story's plot?

**Motivation**

- Is the character ethical? Is he/she trying to do the right thing, but going about it in the wrong way?
- Is the motivation because of emotion (love, hate) or a decision (revenge, promotion)?

**Behavior/Actions**

- Does the character act in a certain way consistently?
- Or is the character erratic?

**Relationships**

- With other characters in the story
- How others see/react to him/her

### **Weaknesses/Faults**

- Typical tragic weakness is pride.
- Weakness could be anything.

### **Strengths/Virtues**

- There are many different strengths and virtues.
- One strength/virtue is being good in trying times.
- Another strength/virtue is caring for family.
- Another strength/virtue is being smart.
- Most protagonists have more than one strength/virtue.

### **Moral Constitution**

- Often a character will agonize over right and wrong.
- If a character doesn't agonize and chooses one or the other easily, that is also significant.

### **Discussing the Conflict in the Story**

#### **Conflict can be many things:**

##### **External**

- man vs. man
- man vs. machine
- man vs. nature
- man vs. animal
- man vs. fate or destiny
- man vs. society
- man vs. himself