Lesson Skill: Understanding indirect characterization

Strand Reading--fiction

SOL 6.5
7.5
8.5

Materials

- Television show, short story, or fiction film that presents at least two contrasting characters
- Copies of the Says, Does, Thinks: Character Traits Revealed! worksheet

Lesson

Direct characterization. The writer makes direct statements about a character's personality and tells the reader or viewer what the character is like. Direct characterization *tells* the reader or viewer.

Indirect characterization. The writer reveals information about a character's personality through that character's words, actions, and thoughts, along with other characters' responses to that character (what they say and think about him/her). Indirect characterization *shows* the reader or viewer.

1. Review the various definitions of the word *character*, and list them on the board for students to record. Ask them to name some of their favorite characters from literature, TV programs, or films. Ask why these characters are favorites. What are the *character traits* of these persons that make them so appealing?

2. Ask how the reader of literature or viewer of TV programs or films learns the character traits of a character. Students should respond that we learn character traits by what the author *tells* us, either directly or through the words of other characters (**direct characterization**). Beyond that, we learn character traits by what a character does, says, and thinks (**indirect characterization**). Therefore, characterization is defined not only by what is said or *told* directly about a character, but also by what the character's words, actions, and thoughts *show*, just as in real life.

3. Distribute copies of the Says, Does, Thinks: Character Traits Revealed! worksheet. Tell students that they will be watching a video in order to observe and analyze a particular character. Assign half of the class to observe one character and the other half to observe another character. Instruct students to watch carefully and simply write in column one at least five examples of things their assigned character says, does, or thinks. Tell them *not* to complete column two while watching. If necessary, stop after the first few minutes to model filling out an example for each character so as to ensure that students understand the task.

4. When the video is over, put students into groups of three or four so that each group is dedicated to one of the two characters observed. Have students in each group compare their lists and confirm and add examples as necessary. Next, have them work together to fill in column two, identifying what these sayings, actions, or thoughts show about the character's traits. Circulate to assist as needed.

5. Hold a class discussion on the character traits of the two focus characters, asking students to explain exactly why particular sayings, actions, or thoughts reveal certain traits.

6. Close the lesson by reminding students that their job as readers and viewers is to notice a character's actions and words, and to use that information to figure out what a character's traits are and how they affect the story.

7. Once more, remind students that understanding characterization and how it is revealed in TV programs and films, as well as literature, will greatly enrich the viewer's or reader's experience by helping him/her fully appreciate the story and its messages.

Says, Does, Thinks: Character Traits Revealed!

Character's name: _____

The character…	The character trait(s) revealed by this is(are)…
says this:	
says this:	
says this:	
says this:	
does this:	
does this:	
does this:	
does this:	
thinks this:	
thinks this:	
thinks this:	