

# Lesson Skill: Identifying direct and indirect characterization

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**Strand** Reading--fiction

**SOL** 6.5  
7.5  
8.5

## Materials

- Text selection containing good character development—from a novel or short story
- Copies of the attached 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 his/her 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. Ask students to think about their favorite person and make a list of that person's *character traits* (personality traits). Students will likely use words such as *nice, funny, fun, approachable, friendly*. Next, ask them to think about their least favorite person and make a list of that person's character traits (e.g., *mean, angry, strict, rude*). Ask students how they know the character traits of these people. What is it about these people that makes it possible to describe them with such adjectives? Lead students into understanding that we can describe a person's character traits by knowing the things he/she *says* and *does*. Also, when we come to know someone fairly well, we are able to figure out what the person *thinks* based on what he/she most often says and does, including how he/she responds to others.
2. Explain that in the world of literature, we learn the character traits just as we do in real life through *indirect characterization*—by what they *say, do, and think*. The writer usually makes direct statements about characters' personalities also—that is, the writer also uses *direct characterization*.
3. Distribute copies of the attached Says, Does, Thinks: Character Traits Revealed! worksheet, and model for students how to fill in the chart while reading a portion of the text selection.
4. Have students continue filling in the chart as they read.

5. After students are finished, lead the class in listing the character traits that have been revealed in the text. Review how character traits can be revealed indirectly by what a character says, does, and thinks, particularly when responding to other characters, as well as directly by what is said about the character.
6. Close the lesson by reminding students that understanding characterization and how it is revealed in literature will greatly enrich the 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)... |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>says this:</i>   |  |
| <i>does this:</i>   |  |
| <i>thinks this:</i> |  |
| <i>thinks this:</i> |  |
| <i>thinks this:</i> |  |