

Activity 2 Character Traits – Stated and Inferred



When students describe characters in books, they do so in terms of character traits, usually descriptive adjectives that tell about the character. This activity helps students learn to discriminate between traits the author tells the reader directly and those the reader infers from the author's writing.

Learning Objectives

- Identify traits of a character in a selected eBook.
- Explore how the author creates the character through dialogue, action or description.
- Examine the text to determine which traits are presented and which are inferred.
- Identify character traits presented through dialogue, action or description.

Getting Ready

- Select an eBook with one or more well-developed characters. [Note – this activity uses the copy and paste feature. While most of the eBook titles allow for limited copying and pasting, some publishers do not permit this. Be certain to select a title that does allow this feature to be used.]
- Connect your laptop or computer to the whiteboard.
- Open a new word processor document and copy and paste selected text from the eBook that has passages of dialogue, action and description of or about the main (or another) character. Make one copy for each student.
- Have three colors of pencils, crayons or markers for each student (optional).
- Reproduce the worksheet "What Evidence Is There of the Character's Traits?" for each student. [Alternately, give students access to this worksheet as a word processor document loaded on multiple computers.]

eBook Learning Activity

1. Have students check out and read the selected eBook.
2. After they have read the story, tell students you are going to explore how characters in a book are presented, and identify character traits for the main (or another) character in the book.
3. Ask for volunteers to describe the main character in the book they read to someone who has never read the story. Record the responses on the whiteboard.
4. After compiling the list, ask: "How do you know that is a trait for that character?" Go down the list and for each item ask, "Was this stated in the book, or did you infer it (draw a conclusion based on what you read)?" Write the word "stated" or "inferred" by each trait as students respond.
5. Explain to students that we learn about characters through what is stated by the author and also by what we infer. What is stated may be in the form of dialogue – what the character says or what others say about him or her; action – things the character does or thinks; and any description about the character – appearance, interests, fears, preferences, habits, etc.
6. Using the whiteboard, go through several pages of the eBook and call upon students to identify dialogue that describes a character trait of the character being considered as you highlight each response.
7. Repeat this process for action taken by the character, and then any description of the character. [Note – be sure to delete previous highlighting before focusing on the next element.]
8. Distribute copies of the pages copied and pasted from the eBook.
9. Have students work individually to identify text that describes the character traits of the character being considered in the following three ways: (a) through dialogue, (b) through action and (c) through description. Tell students to identify each in a different way, e.g. dialogue in blue, action in green and description in red, or use underline, circle and a box to identify each.
10. Have students pair share to discuss and justify their responses. Then have pairs share with the whole group, using their notes to justify their responses.
11. Distribute the worksheet, "What Evidence Is There of the Character's Traits?", either as a printed document or as a word processing document on multiple computers.
12. Have students check out and work individually or in small groups with the selected eBook and complete the worksheet. In the left hand column, have them indicate three or more character traits discovered and inferred from what the author wrote. On the right side, have them indicate examples of dialogue, examples of action and examples of description that contributed to their conclusion about the trait. For each, they should indicate the phrase, sentence or passage and include the page number of the reference. In parentheses, they should indicate whether the reference is (DI)alogue, (AC)tion or (DE)scription.

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Additional Ideas and Alternate Grouping Suggestions

- Repeat this activity with another character in the eBook.
- As an alternative to using the worksheet "What Evidence Is There of the Character's Traits?" assign one third of the students Dialogue, one third of them Action, and one third Description. Have them check out the eBook and work individually or in groups to highlight text indicating the element assigned, and create a note to indicate (DI)alogue, (AC)tion or (DE)scription. Have them report back to the whole group.
- On the whiteboard, create a character map of character traits for a given character, grouping those that are stated versus those that are inferred.
- Have students work individually to read through the eBook and copy and paste 5 passages into a word processor document that best describe something about the character, e.g. physical traits or appearance,
- Have students refer to their list of character traits for a given character and write a typical phrase or expression the character might say that was not stated in the book. Have them explain from the traits that were stated in the book why this phrase or expression might be typical or important.

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Name: _____

What Evidence Is There of the Character's Traits?

eBook

Title: _____

Character: _____

Directions: In the left column, write a trait you would use to describe the character. Justify your response with examples from the eBook, identifying each as taken from (DI)alogue, (AC)tion or (DE)scription provided by the author.

Trait	(DI)alogue, (AC)tion, (DE)scription