**Characterization**

Characterization is the **process** by which the writer reveals the **personality of a character**. Characterization is revealed through **direct characterization** and **indirect characterization**.

* **Direct Characterization** **tells** the audience what the personality of the character is.

Example: “The patient boy and quiet girl were both well-mannered and did not disobey their mother.”

Explanation: The author is directly telling the audience the personality of these two children. The boy is “patient” and the girl is “quiet.”

* **Indirect Characterization shows** things that reveal the personality of a character. There are **six** different **methods of indirect characterization**:

1. **Speech** – What does the character say? How does the character speak?
2. **Thoughts** – What is revealed through the character’s private thoughts and feelings?
3. **Effect on Others** – What is revealed through the character’s effect on other people? How do other characters feel or behave in reaction to the character?
4. **Actions** – What does the character do? How does the character behave?
5. **Looks** – What does the character look like? How does the character dress?
6. **Background Information** – Where does the character come from? What social, economical, political, cultural, etc. background do they have, have they remained true to this or have they drifted from it?

The best fiction centers around **realistic, multi-dimensional characters (traditionally called round**

**or dynamic characters)**. Most writers rely upon their own knowledge and observations of

people to create real characters for their fiction.

**Your Assignment:**

Who is the most peculiar, colorful, or unique person you know**? Describe this person in**

**detail without using a name;** try to capture all the little things the person does, says, believes that

makes him or her different. Also tell how the person looks, what he or she wears, and even how

others think about the person. In your description, try to **use the six methods of indirect characterization**.

http://www.ket.org/education/guides/pd/teachingtheshortstory.pdf

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Entry 2: What are your “idiosyncracies”? Idiosyncracies are little mannerisms (things we do

unconsciously) that make us the way we are. Hensley puts his fingers together like a spider doing

push-ups on a mirror; Mrs. Anderson hums softly while walking around the room and runs her

fingers through her hair whenever Hensley says something stupid. What are some of your

idiosyncracies? Be specific; take time to reflect upon yourself.

\*DECODE: What is the “ID” in psychology? It is part of the unconscious mind that is “instinct”;

it pushes us toward doing what we want for fun and pleasure. EGO is the reasonable, thinking part

of a person that reacts to the outside world. SUPEREGO mediates between the ID and the EGO; it

is part unconscious and part conscious.

Entry #3: Take 10 minutes to observe someone outside this classroom. Then, in your writer’s

notebook, write down every detail you can about this person. Draw a portrait of the person in

words. How does this person look? What are his or her idiosyncracies? (If you don’t see any very

clearly, predict what they might be.) What is the person’s history? If you don’t know anything

about the person, then create a history. What does the person smell like? Can you come up with a

simile or metaphor about this person?

Entry #4: Extended entry . . . Take time to use the observation entries you have already done:

the class discussions and books we have done in class; and your own observations to create a

character. Remember, you can draw on your previous entries to create this character. Provide this

“person” with a . . .

• Name

• Physical description

• List of objects that tell about him or her

• List of idiosyncracies he or she exhibits when certain things happen (when he or she is

sad, scared, challenged, etc.)

• History: where has this person been; what things have happened that really make this

person who he or she is