

Characterization Definition

Characterization is a literary device that is used step-by-step in literature to highlight and explain the details of a character in a story. It is in the initial stage in which the writer introduces the character with noticeable emergence. After introducing the character, the writer often talks about his behavior; then, as the story progresses, the thought processes of the character.

The next stage involves the character expressing his opinions and ideas and getting into conversations with the rest of the characters. The final part shows how others in the story respond to the character's personality.

Characterization as a literary tool was coined in the mid-15th century. Aristotle in his Poetics argued that **“tragedy is a representation, not of men, but of action and life.”** Thus the assertion of the dominance of plot over characters, termed “plot-driven narrative,” is unmistakable.

Types of Characterization

An author can use two approaches to deliver information about a character and build an image of it. These two types of characterization include:

1. Direct or explicit characterization

This kind of characterization **takes a direct approach toward building the character. It uses another character, narrator, or the protagonist himself to tell the readers or audience about the subject.**

2. Indirect or implicit characterization

This is a more **subtle way of introducing the character** to the audience. The **audience has to deduce for themselves the characteristics of the character by observing his/her thought process, behavior, speech, way of talking, appearance, and manner**

of communication with other characters, as well as by discerning the response of other characters.

Characterization in Drama

On stage or in front of the camera, actors usually do not have much time to characterize. For this reason, the character faces the risk of coming across as underdeveloped. In dramaturgy, realists take a different approach, by relying on implied characterization. This is pivotal to the theme of their character-driven narrative.

The actors who act in such roles usually work on them profoundly to get an in-depth idea of the personalities of their respective characters. Often, during such shows, plays, or dramas, no direct statements about the character's nature are found. This kind of realism needs the actors to build the character from their own perspective initially. This is why realistic characterization is more of a subtle art, which cannot directly be recognized.

Importance of Characterization

Characterization and skill to create characters are very important for writing fiction, especially short stories and novels. The reason is that the storyline of stories hinges upon characters. The actions of the characters in certain settings not only move the storyline forward but also create tension, and conflict and convey a message to the writers. **Although there could be a story without characters, it would not be much interesting for the readers, for they want to learn something about human beings and the human quest for peace, happiness, and solution of mundane issues or complex ones.**

Everyday Examples of Characterization

1. **Online Dating Websites:** Every dating website offers examples of characterization as people pick up certain characters and adopt them as their names. Some even go for avatars.
2. **Police Line-ups:** Some people adopt different characters from police-lineups to hide their true identities.
3. **Obituaries:** Obituaries also demonstrate the characterization of the dead ones in good terms.
4. **Eulogies:** Written for specific persons, these poems also offer examples of characterizations.

Difference Archetypes and Characterization

Whereas **archetype** characters have specific features and characteristics, characterization means to bless such characters with those features. Characterization is the manner of delineation while archetypes are characters themselves. Also, archetype and characterization are both nouns, but whereas one means the creative task, the other is itself the creation.

Difference Between Characterization and Stereotypes

Characterization and stereotypes are both entirely different things. As a literary device, a **characterization** is an act of creating characters. It is linked with stereotyping as some of the skills learned during characterization are used for generalizing some traits of specific people to denounce or torment those people. This is called **stereotyping**.

Round and Flat Characters

Round Characters are complex characters. They undergo a considerable transformation during their work or life in the storyline. They, sometimes, cause shock and surprise to the readers and seem to them interesting. However, **flat** characters are not very complex as they are just two-dimensional. They are simple and often stay the same throughout the storyline.

Characterization in Stories

1. **The Gift of the Magi:** It introduces innocent characterization as both Dell and Jim are loving and caring, demonstrating their family traits.
2. **Lord of the Flies:** It reveals innocent characterizations of Ralph and Piggy and cleverness of Roger and his supporters.

Function of Characterization

Characterization is an essential component in writing good literature. Modern fiction, in particular, has taken great advantage of this literary device. Understanding the role of characterization in storytelling is very important for any writer. To put it briefly, it helps us make sense of the behavior of any character in a story by helping us understand their thought processes. Good use of characterization always leads the readers or audience to relate better to the events taking place in the story. Dialogues play a very important role in developing a character because they give us an opportunity to examine the motivations and actions of the characters more deeply.