

Analyzing Character and Elaborating on the Story World

Typically when readers closely examine a character in a work of fiction, they look at several sources of information:

- What the character says, does, and thinks
- What other characters in the book say or think about the character
- What the narrator tells the reader about the character

Readers have to be aware that some of this information will come to them **directly**—they might be *told* that a character is old, mean, happy, sad, a lawyer, an orphan, and so forth.

Other times characterization is **indirect**, meaning that readers have to make an inference about the character beyond what is directly stated.

As you and your group fill in the gaps on a minor character, keep in mind all of the information the novel already gives and imagine a plausible (but creative) back story for your character that goes beyond what the novel tells you.

Areas that you will want to think about might include

- Family life/growing up
- A day in the life—what are this character’s routines and habits?
- Occupation—what is this character like at work?
- Hobbies and interests—what does this character like to do in free time?
- Hopes and dreams
- Motivations
- Disappointments
- Favorites—objects, foods, people, and so forth
- Annoyances and pet peeves
- Responses to action in the novel that the character does not get a chance to express

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