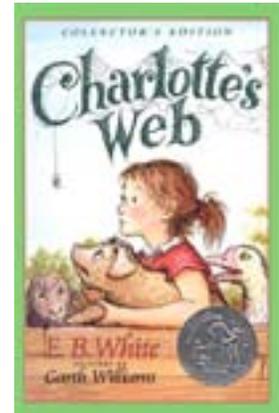


What Is Character?

If I asked you WHO the characters in book were, you'd probably be able to name them. For instance, you might know that Charlotte is the main character in *Charlotte's Web*.



You probably also know WHO the characters are in television shows or movies that you've seen. For example, Joe is a character on *Blue's Clues*.

Stories need a plot (the series of events that happen), setting (the places where they occur), and characters (the people or animals who are affected by the plot and setting). But that's still WHO the characters are. We're talking about WHAT character is, not who some characters are.

Character development is the collection of features that bring the people (or animals) to life. It's not just their physical features, but their mental features, their personalities, their appearance, and so on. Character is something you can figure out by paying attention to what they do, what they say, what they think and feel, and what others say about them.

The degree to which a character is revealed classifies characters into flat and round ones. We know the most about round characters—they are well-rounded. Flat characters are usually less detailed.

Sometimes characters are very predictable. Think about the following kinds of characters:

- The Hero/Heroine
- Class Clown
- Bully
- Brain
- Athlete

For most of them, you can think of specific features that they're likely to have. In a good piece of writing, the characters go beyond the obvious features. They might have an unusual or surprising feature. Look at not just the person's outer qualities, at what the character looks like, but also at the inner qualities.

How often have you seen a movie after reading the book it was based on and said, "That's not how I pictured _____, she should be [taller, meaner, funnier]"? Readers often see themselves or others they know in the fictional characters (human or animal) they read about in books. When we think about all the features that make up character, what the readers bring to the story is just as important as what the author wrote.