# **Characterization – Direct & Indirect**

**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 five different methods of indirect characterization:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **S**peech | What does the character say? How does the character speak? |
| **T**houghts | What is revealed through the character’s private thoughts and feelings? |
| **E**ffect on others toward the character. | What is revealed through the character’s effect on other people? How do other characters feel or behave in reaction to the character? |
| **A**ctions | What does the character do? How does the character behave? |
| **L**ooks | What does the character look like? How does the character dress? |

**TIP #1:** Use the mnemonic device of STEAL to remember the five types of indirect characterization

**TIP #2:** Use indirect characterization to analyze visual media:

* **Film**: Look at how the character dresses and moves. Note the facial expressions when the director moves in for a close-up shot.
* **Drama**: Pay attention to the way that the characters reveal their thoughts during a soliloquy.

**TRY IT!**

1. **Read the passage.**
2. **Decide which type of characterization the passage demonstrates.**
3. **Highlight or underline your proof.**

**Paragraph Pair 1:**  
**A.** Ed Johnson scratched his head in confusion as the sales rep explained Dralco’s newest engine performance diagnostic computer. The old mechanic hated modern electronics, preferring the old days when all he needed was a stack of manuals and a good set of tools.

Paragraph A demonstrates which type of characterization? DIRECT or INDIRECT?

**B.** “That Ed Johnson,” said Anderson, watching the old mechanic scratch his head in confusion as the sales rep explained Dralco’s newest engine performance diagnostic computer. “He hasn’t got a clue about modern electronics. Give him a good set of tools and a stack of yellowing manuals with a carburetor needing repair, and he’d be happy as a hungry frog in a fly-field.”

Paragraph B demonstrates which type of characterization? DIRECT or INDIRECT?

**Paragraph Pair 2:**  
**A.** Julie held up six different outfits in front of the mirror and pondered which would go best with her navy blue shoes, pastel eye shadow and the diamond earrings she’d already procured from her overflowing vanity. After ninety minutes of mixing and matching, and cell-phoning her sister three times for advice, Julie finally made up her mind. She’d give the navy blue skirt and white sweater a try, hoping Trent would love it.

Paragraph A demonstrates which type of characterization? DIRECT or INDIRECT?

**B.** Julie owned a multitude of outfits and accessories, and it always took her forever to decide which combination might impress Trent. As usual, she called her sister several times for advice. After doing so, Julie decided to give the navy blue skirt with the white sweater a try.

Paragraph B demonstrates which type of characterization? DIRECT or INDIRECT?