

Writing a Characterization

PREPARATION:

Step 1 - Read the text carefully. Mark **a**) unknown words and mark or write down **b**) the words or sentences that provide information about the character(s). (Do you need to look up all 'unknown' words in the text? ⇒ Only if they seem to describe the character's actions, attitudes, feelings or appearance!)

Step 2 – Collect what you have found in categories like, "basic data (name, sex, age), "outward appearance", "personal situation / position in family/group/ ...", "behaviour (towards others)", "thoughts/words", "feelings/attitudes", "other characters' reactions to him/her", "similarities/differences in comparison with other characters".

Step 3 – Look up / try to find expressions that are useful to describe the behaviour, attitude and role played by the character. Also try to rephrase instead of copying complete passages from the text (⇒ Dictionary ⇒ Synonyms/ negation of opposite)

Step 4 – Is there a notable change in the character's position, attitude, behaviour etc.? What is it and what causes this development?

Step 5 – Decide in what order you want to use your notes and number them.

WRITING THE CHARACTERIZATION:

Step 1 Introduce the character like a real person (name, sex, age) and outline his or her situation.

Step 2 Use your ordered notes to write proper paragraphs. Ideally, every paragraph covers one characteristic feature (e.g. loneliness, bitterness, wish to become independent, etc.) Also include the evidence you have collected (phrases from the text) that prove your characterization/ understanding of the character to be correct. Give lines/quotes where they are required.

Step 3 Show how the character traits are linked.
Show the character's development and the factors responsible for this change.

Step 4 Sum up your analysis in a short conclusion. Perhaps describe the role the character plays in the story / reading process.

AFTER WRITING

Check if ...

1. the introduction leads to the characterization in the main part and doesn't make promises it can't keep.
2. you haven't forgotten to use any of the notes you have made.
3. you have linked the different traits of character (=paragraphs) properly.
4. you have included quotes or given lines (if this is required).
5. your conclusion clearly summarizes your findings.

*Source: People Around You. Enriched Version (adapted)
Klaus Hinz (Ed.). Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997, p.72 ff.*