

We've Got Character!

Literary Analysis: Characterization

Chelsee Wilson, Adam Yeargin, Susan McHale
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Grade Level	8th – 9th Grade	**Time Frame**	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	180 minutes
Course	A.P. Language and Composition, A.P. Literature and Composition, American Literature, World Literatu		

Essential Question

How does an author create meaning in a text through character development? How do the decisions and actions of a character reveal their personality and motivation?

Summary

How do authors develop characters? How do readers recognize a character through their thoughts, actions, and emotions? This literary analysis lesson will examine literary characters, invite students to consider the literary "anatomy" of a character, and find textual evidence that showcases characterization. The lesson will incorporate references to characters in popular media and can be used alongside one of two class novels, "Dreamland Burning" or "To Kill a Mockingbird."

Snapshot

Engage

Students discuss whether Harry Potter is a protagonist or an antagonist, based on what they know about his character. Then, they participate in a Honeycomb Harvest card sort to discover common relationships between fictional characters.

Explore

Students read excerpts from "Dreamland Burning" or "To Kill a Mockingbird," using the Categorical Highlighting strategy to find evidence that informs the description, personality, and motivation of the characters.

Explain

Students take notes as they watch an interview with Jennifer Latham, author of "Dreamland Burning," who explains her career as an author and how she develops characters.

Extend

Students use textual evidence to complete a character analysis, including a given character's thoughts, actions, emotions, hopes and dreams, and physical appearance.

Evaluate

If class time allows, students present or submit their character analysis to an online gallery. Students' character analysis handouts serve as evaluations for this lesson.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

CLR401: Locate important details in somewhat challenging passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 8)

8.3.R.3: Analyze literary elements to support interpretations of a literary text:
- setting
- plot
- characters (i.e., protagonist, antagonist)
- characterization
- conflict (i.e., internal, external)
- point of view (i.e., third person limited and omniscient, second person, and unreliable narrator)

Attachments

- Author Interview Note Catcher—We've Got Character - Spanish.docx
- Author Interview Note Catcher—We've Got Character - Spanish.pdf
- Author Interview Note Catcher—We've Got Character.docx
- Author Interview Note Catcher—We've Got Character.pdf
- Character Analysis Handout—We've Got Character.pdf
- Character Analysis Rubric—We've Got Character - Spanish.docx
- Character Analysis Rubric—We've Got Character - Spanish.pdf
- Character Analysis Rubric—We've Got Character.docx
- Character Analysis Rubric—We've Got Character.pdf
- Excerpts from Dreamland Burning—We've Got Character - Spanish.docx
- Excerpts from Dreamland Burning—We've Got Character - Spanish.pdf
- Excerpts from Dreamland Burning—We've Got Character.docx
- Excerpts from Dreamland Burning—We've Got Character.pdf
- Excerpts from To Kill a Mockingbird—We've Got Character - Spanish.docx
- Excerpts from To Kill a Mockingbird—We've Got Character - Spanish.pdf
- Excerpts from To Kill a Mockingbird—We've Got Character.docx
- Excerpts from To Kill a Mockingbird—We've Got Character.pdf
- Honeycomb Harvest—We've Got Character - Spanish.docx
- Honeycomb Harvest—We've Got Character - Spanish.pdf
- Honeycomb Harvest—We've Got Character.docx
- Honeycomb Harvest—We've Got Character.pdf
- Lesson Slides—We've Got Character.pptx

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Interview Note Catcher (attached; one per student)
- Character Analysis Handout (attached; one per student)
- Character Analysis Rubric (attached; optional)
- Excerpts from "Dreamland Burning" (or below; attached, one per student)
- Excerpts from "To Kill a Mockingbird" (or above; attached, one per student)
- Honeycomb Harvest activity (attached; one per group of four students)
- Highlighters (optional)
- Crayons, colored pencils, markers, or similar

Engage

optional Content Throughout: *Dreamland Burning* and *to Kill A Mockingbird*

This lesson assumes students are reading or have read one of the following novels as a class: *Dreamland Burning* or *To Kill a Mockingbird*. *Dreamland Burning* is recommended for middle school readers and above, while *To Kill a Mockingbird* is recommended for high school readers. Excerpts from both novels are included in the attachments. This lesson also includes an interview with *Dreamland Burning* author Jennifer Latham, which should be used with either novel.

Teacher's Note: Preparation

To prepare, print and cut out a set of the attached **Honeycomb Harvest** cards—about one set per four students or eight sets per thirty students. Consider printing on card stock and/or laminating each set for reuse and keeping sets in individual plastic bags. Additionally, print out a copy of the **Character Analysis** handout and **Excerpts from *Dreamland Burning*** (or **Excerpts from *To Kill a Mockingbird***) for each student. Students also need highlighters and colored pencils (or crayons).

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson, and begin with the lesson objectives on **slide 3.** Next, read aloud the guiding questions on **slide 4**: *How does an author create meaning in a text through character development? How do the decisions and actions of a character reveal their personality and motivation?* Share with students that this lesson will answer those questions by focusing on how characters are developed in stories through the use of a literary device called "characterization."

Continue to **slide 5.** Ask students the question on the slide: *How well do you know Harry Potter?* Invite each student to evaluate their level of knowledge with the Fist to Five strategy. Each student should hold up one hand and indicate their knowledge level using 0–5 fingers. Ask each student to find a partner with a number different from the one they displayed. Have partners discuss the character of Harry Potter. Allow a short time for discussion, then call on volunteer pairs to share what information they discussed. Reiterate that all the information we have originated came from and was developed in J. K. Rowling's book series.

Move to **slide 6.** Ask students to discuss the questions on this slide with their partners: *What is the difference between a protagonist and an antagonist? Is Harry Potter a protagonist or antagonist?* Encourage students to think about what motivates Harry Potter in the books and movies. Does he act with integrity and morality, accomplishing good deeds? Or does he act as a force of conflict, hurting other characters in the process? If students struggle with the terms "protagonist" and "antagonist," ask the class to break the words down—what do "pro" and "anti" mean? How might they apply to characters in a story? Once partners have discussed these questions, call on volunteers to share answers with the class.

Optional: Alternative Character Discussion

If your students are unfamiliar with Harry Potter, or if it simply suits your classroom needs better, you may prefer to substitute a different character. For example, you might use Winnie the Pooh, Calvin from Calvin and Hobbes, Greg from Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Captain Underpants, etc.

Possible Student Responses

Students should find that Harry Potter is a protagonist because he tends to do what is morally right. Students may also bring up that Voldemort is the series' antagonist, as he works counter to Harry Potter and tends to hurt other characters to accomplish his own goals.

Next, combine sets of partners to create groups of four. Pass out one set of the prepared **Honeycomb Harvest** cards to each group. Move to **slide 7.** Ask students to use the Honeycomb Harvest strategy to organize these cards. This involves placing the hexagonal cards so in a pattern similar to the one depicted on the slide. Cards that touch each other should relate to each other in some way. For example, Superman and Batman are both protagonists. The honeycombs touching each of those characters' honeycombs describe them—for Superman, Law-Abiding; for Batman, Ruthless. Ruthless also describes Darth Vader, but since he is not an antagonist, his honeycomb does not touch the Protagonist honeycomb.

Emphasize to students that the picture on the slide is only one way to sort—there is no right or wrong way, as long as they can justify why they choose a given pattern. Allow about 15 minutes for groups to discuss and organize their honeycombs. Once all groups have completed the task, invite groups to circulate around the room and view other groups' honeycomb patterns.

Optional: Alternative Honeycombs

If you think students might struggle with the characters included in the Honeycomb Harvest set, considering editing the file directly to replace them with characters students have previously encountered in class.

Explore

Teacher's Note: United States Copyright And Fair Use

The attached handouts contain excerpted text from *Dreamland Burning* and *To Kill A Mockingbird.* These excerpts meet the criteria for Fair Use according to U.S. copyright laws due to the following factors: the purpose and nature of the excerpts, the amount and sustainability of the excerpts, and the effect of the use upon the potential audience. The use of the text is for educational purposes only and not for profit.

Pass out a copy of the attached **Excerpts from *Dreamland Burning*** and a highlighter to all students.

Optional: *to Kill A Mockingbird*

Classrooms reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* may find the attached Excerpts from *To Kill a Mockingbird* more relevant to classroom instruction.

Move to **slide 8.** Ask students to work with their partners and use the Categorical Highlighting strategy to highlight words that help clue in readers to William's character and Rowan's character. Alternatively, if highlighters are not available, students can underline instead of highlighting. What are the characters' thoughts? What actions do they take? What do those actions tell the reader about them? Are they a protagonist or an antagonist?

Move to **slide 9**. Consider having students switch partners for the following activity, then invite those pairs to discuss what they highlighted in the text. As they discuss, have the partners use the Stop and Jot strategy to write in the margins of the excerpt what the highlighted information tells the reader about each character. After allowing time for partners to collaborate, ask for volunteers to share ideas with the class.

Optional: Partner Summary

If the Stop and Jot strategy doesn't suit your classroom, consider having each pair write a summary describing the characters they analyzed in the excerpts. Students should cite evidence in the text for each assertion they make in their summaries.

Explain

Author Interview Video

This section of the lesson contains a video interview with Jennifer Latham, author of *Dreamland Burning*. Even if your class is using the optional *To Kill a Mockingbird* text, this interview and related activity should be used, as it provides insights into an author's career and uses of characterization that are common among many writers and books.

Move to **slide 10**. Pass out a copy of the attached **Author Interview Note Catcher** handout to each student. Brief students by telling them they will be watching and taking notes over an interview with Jennifer Latham, author of *Dreamland Burning*. This is an opportunity for students to learn how Latham develops characters in the novels she writes, as well as gain insight into a career as an author. The Note Catcher handout consists of two columns. In the left column, students should take notes on Latham herself, including the author's education and the career path that led her to her current career. In the right column, students should take notes about Latham's writing technique, such as how she develops characters, setting, plot, and other writing elements. Ask students to record their observations in this manner as they watch the video.

When ready, move to **slide 11**, and play the interview embedded on the slide. You can also use this link or the full video URL in the References section below.

Teacher's Note: Author Background

Jennifer Latham's website and autobiography are available here. Consider introducing this author prior to the video to capture students' interest and provide prior knowledge for the students to draw on as they watch the video.

Embedded video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGSZf4YXHAA

Once the video is over, ask for volunteers to share observations they noted from the video. For example, *how did Latham describe her pathway to a career as an author? How does she develop her characters? What other information about the interview is important to share?*

Extend

Invite students to analyze a character from the text or novel they are currently reading. Or, if it suits your classroom needs, you may have students analyze the same character—for example, Rowan from *Dreamland Burning*. In this case, students would use examples of Rowan from the excerpts they read in the Explore phase, as well as examples from other parts of the book.

Optional: Characterization And Illustration

If you or your students prefer, the activity below can be completed on a sheet of blank paper instead of the Character Analysis handout. This would give students more freedom in how they depict the character's appearance. You may choose to have some copies of the handout available for students who need more scaffolding or who dislike drawing.

To do so, hand out a copy of the attached **Character Analysis** handout to each student (or provide blank paper). Move to **slide 12** to show the first instructions for the character analysis activity. Have students follow along with each slide for the appropriate section for the handout, detailed below:

1. **Slide 12, Character's Head:** *What does the character think about? What do these thoughts reveal about the character?* Write down two thoughts and where they are found in the text. Students should identify two thoughts that the character has in the novel, providing page citations for these claims.
2. **Slide 13, Character's Arms:** *What does the character do in the story? How do these actions tell you more about the character?* Find two examples of the character's actions from the text. Students should identify two actions of the character in the novel, providing page citations for both.
3. **Slide 14, Character's Heart:** *What are the character's emotions in the story? How do these feelings tell you more about the character?* Find two examples in the text that tell you about the character's feelings. Students should identify two emotions of the character in the novel, providing page citations for both.
4. **Slide 15, Character's Legs:** *Where does this character want to go in the future? What are their hopes and dreams?What do these wants tell you about the character?* Find 1-2 examples in the text of the character's hopes and dreams. Students should identify 1–2 hopes for the character's future, providing page citations as needed.
5. **Slide 16: Character's Appearance:** *What does this character look like? How does he or she dress? What does the character's appearance tell you about them?* Draw the character's features. Give text evidence to support your choices of appearance. Students should draw (to the best of their ability) the character on the page. There is very little room for artistic license, as students should provide page citations for evidence of the character's appearance.

Possible Middle School Responses: dreamland Burning

If your class is reading *Dreamland Burning*, some students might choose to draw Rowan. If referencing the text while drawing Rowan, they would likely draw her in casual attire, as the text describes her preferring flip flops and sneakers throughout the novel. Students referencing the text most likely would not draw Rowan in high heels.

Possible High School Responses: to Kill A Mockingbird

If your class is reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, some students might choose to draw Scout. If referencing the text while drawing Scout, they would likely draw her wearing overalls, as is referenced in many scenes throughout the novel. Students referencing the text most likely would not draw Scout wearing formal clothing.

Evaluate

Teacher's Note: Technology Integration

If time allows, consider inviting students to present their character analysis drawings to the class using a document camera or similar or asking students to take pictures of their drawings and upload those pictures to a shared virtual gallery.

Students' Character Analysis handouts serve as evaluations for this lesson and can be graded according to the attached Character Analysis Rubric. The Author Interview Note Catcher and optional Stop and Jot summaries can be used as additional assessments.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Categorical highlighting. Strategies. Retrieved from https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/fc74060730ea745c8c4f356aa204c85d
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Honeycomb harvest. Strategies. Retrieved from https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/6f19b778b73e4c339d1a7d9653001825
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- Latham, J. (2017). *Dreamland Burning*. New York: NY: Little, Brown, and Company.
- Lee, H. (2006). *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.