

Identity

Characterization / Character Traits

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Grade Level	10th – 11th Grade	**Time Frame**	3-4 class period(s)
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	180 minutes

Essential Question

How do a person's traits--looks, words, thoughts, and actions--play a role in forming that person's identity?

Summary

Part of any adolescent's life is determining one's identity. In this lesson, students will initially consider who they are as people—what makes up their identities. Then, they will work through several readings, including a poem and two short stories, with a focus on the role characterization and character traits play in forming a character's identity. Students not only analyze these works, focusing on characterization, but they also create their own poem centered on their identities and construct a biography of a character's identity. While this lesson is currently aligned only to 10th grade standards, it would be appropriate to teach in grades 10 through 11, adjusting standards as needed.

Snapshot

Engage

Students create an autobiography focusing on their personal identities.

Explore

Students read a poem centered on identity and compose an original poem integrating aspects of their identities.

Explain

Students distinguish between direct and indirect characterization and determine aspects of character traits.

Extend

Students read one of two short stories, analyzing the story for instances of characterization and themes of identity.

Evaluate

Students create a character biography for a character in one of the stories. Students compare and contrast the character analysis with their own identities and work toward answering the essential question.

Standards

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

CLR403: Draw simple logical conclusions in more challenging passages
CLR404: Paraphrase some statements as they are used in somewhat challenging passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts (Grade 10)

10.2.R.2: Students will analyze details in literary and nonfiction/informational texts to connect how genre supports the author's purpose.
10.3.R.3: Students will analyze how authors use key literary elements to contribute to meaning and interpret how themes are connected across texts:

- character development
- theme
- conflict (i.e., internal and external)
- archetypes

10.3.R.4: Students will evaluate literary devices to support interpretations of texts, including comparisons across texts:

- figurative language
- imagery
- tone
- symbolism
- irony

Attachments

- Body Biography—Identity - Spanish.docx
- Body Biography—Identity - Spanish.pdf
- Body Biography—Identity.docx
- Body Biography—Identity.pdf
- Identity Poem Activity—Identity - Spanish.docx
- Identity Poem Activity—Identity - Spanish.pdf
- Identity Poem Activity—Identity.docx
- Identity Poem Activity—Identity.pdf
- The Necklace—Identity - Spanish.docx
- The Necklace—Identity - Spanish.pdf
- The Necklace—Identity.docx
- The Necklace—Identity.pdf

Materials

- Writing materials: pencils, pens, paper, etc.
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.
- Copies of Attachments located below
- Copies of other linked attachments as needed (URLs can be found under References or linked in-text)

Engage

Begin by showing this video, a clip from *The Bourne Identity*, to students.

Ask students to discuss the problem the character is having in this clip. Encourage students to consider what it would be like to not know who they are or what their identity is. Students can Think-Pair-Share as they discuss the video clip.

Once students have had time to engage in substantive conversation, distribute copies of the Body Biography Handout (found under Attachments).

Ask students to fill in the body with words, phrases, drawings, symbols, etc., that describe who they are as individuals. Students should construct a representation of their identities using this handout. Encourage them to be creative and use whatever materials they would like to generate this product. Be sure students consider their personality traits, physical traits, likes/dislikes, strengths/challenges, and so on.

Allow students ample time to complete their body autobiographies, and then have them share the results with their peers. Students should be encouraged to share at least a few descriptors of their identities with the class. Encourage students to edit/revise their autobiographies as they listen to their classmates; they might hear a particular trait from a peer that also applies to them.

Additional Engage Activity

Students could focus freewrite a time when they were struggling with their own identities and/or trying to figure something out about who they are and how that made a positive/negative impact in their life. Students could then Think-Pair-Share and discuss their responses.

Explore

Distribute copies of the poem "Identity" by Julio Noboa Polanco (linked here) to students. Be sure the poem is face-down and ask students to not look at the poem yet.

Lead students through the **TPCASTT** poetry analysis technique before delving into "Identity." First, ask students to brainstorm what the poem might be about based just on the title: "Identity." Encourage students to jot down their responses on the back of the poem. Students should share with one another their predictions, based solely on their reactions to the title.

Tpcastt

TPCASTT stands for Title, Paraphrase, Connotation, Attitude/Tone, Shifts, Title, and Theme. A blank TPCASTT template can be found at the ReadWriteThink website, linked here (the URL is also located under References). This might be beneficial for students to use and fill out during this activity.

Then, ask for a volunteer to read the poem aloud. Alternatively, you could read the poem aloud. Students might benefit from first reading the poem silently to themselves before a read aloud occurs.

After students have read the poem multiple times, ask them to **paraphrase** the poem, stanza by stanza. Encourage students to work collaboratively. You can also conduct a whole-class analysis on the board if students require more guided instruction.

Then, ask students to focus on connotation by examining the poem for meaning beyond the literal. Encourage students to look for figurative language, imagery, and sound elements. They should annotate any instances of these aspects in the margins.

Students should also look for the speaker's **tone/attitude** (with the understanding that the tone is the speaker's/poet's attitude) and make notes as necessary. It would be useful to discuss mood here. Students should consider how the speaker's tone affects the reader's mood.

Ask students to note any **shifts** or changes in speaker or attitude. Students should look for key words, time change, and punctuation.

Although students examined the title initially, ask them to examine the **title** again, this time on an interpretive level. Encourage students to determine if and how their perception has changed now that they have read and analyzed the poem.

Finally, ask students to determine the **theme** of the poem by briefly stating, in their own words, what the poem is about and then what the poet is saying about the subject.

Be sure to ask students what, if any, connections they can personally make with this poem once they have spent time analyzing the piece using TPCASTT.

Teacher's Note

Throughout this activity, encourage students to talk with one another and share out ideas. If students struggle with this analysis, hearing what their classmates are thinking will assist them in this higher-level thinking process.

Students will now transition to creating their own identity poem. Distribute copies of the "Identity Poem Activity" handout, located under Attachments. Students will follow the directions on the page to write a poem modeled after "Identity."

To brainstorm, students will answer the open-ended questions on the handout, comparing themselves to a plant, animal, piece of furniture, color, vehicle, and so on. Each student should choose one then fill out the template, creating an original poem describing his or her identity through an extended metaphor.

Students should be encouraged to share their poems aloud with their classmates, if they wish.

Explain

To transition from the theme of identity to the concept of characterization, students will define the following terms using only their prior knowledge and past experiences (including previous activities in this lesson):

- Characterization
- Direct characterization
- Indirect characterization

Encourage students to make inferences to define these terms. Be sure students know you are not expecting them to have a complete understanding of these terms at this point but, rather, that you want to know what they already know about characterization. To help facilitate this activity, students can engage in the Chain Notes instructional strategy. Here's how Chain Notes works in this lesson:

1. Students need a blank sheet of loose leaf notebook paper with their name at the top.
2. Ask each student to write the following starter phrase on a loose leaf sheet of notebook paper: "Characterization is . . . "
3. Give students a minute or two to complete that statement as best as they are able.
4. Ask students to pass their paper clockwise.
5. The new owner of the paper should add to the previous statement. They can agree or disagree with, provide more details for, offer further description of, and so on when elaborating on the previous statement(s). The goal is for them to join the conversation.
6. Ask students to pass the paper clockwise again.
7. The new owner should continue adding to the previous statements.
8. Engage in several more rounds, prompting students to consider the terms "direct characterization" and "indirect characterization."
9. After several rounds, ask students to return their papers to their original owners.
10. Students should read the conversation to determine what is being said about characterization.

Teacher's Note

This Chain Notes activity will work best in small groups of 4-5 students. After a couple of rounds of students working out definitions, the prompt could shift to examples of direct and indirect characterization. By the time students get their papers back, they should have a couple of examples in addition to the definition. These concrete examples will assist students later in the lesson.

Teacher's Note

To facilitate the examples, you could pause the Chain Notes activity and show this compilation clip, asking students how they would describe the characters/people directly and indirectly. This should help if students struggle getting started. They can use these examples as a jumping-off point for the remainder of the Chain Notes activity.

After students have read the conversation on their original papers, encourage students to share out what they noticed during the Chain Notes activity and discuss if and how their thinking has changed as a result of the conversation that occurred.

Provide students with the following definitions:

- **Characterization**: is the process by which the writer reveals the personality of a character by imitating or describing actions, gestures, or speech patterns
- **Direct characterization**: tells the audience what the personality of the character is
- **Indirect characterization**: shows things that reveal the personality of a character through speech, thoughts, effect(s) on others, actions, or looks Adapted from ReadWriteThink. (2004). Defining characterization. Retrieved from http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson800/Characterization.pdf

Teacher's Note

The first page of the "Defining Characterization" handout from ReadWriteThink (linked here) might be useful for students during the remaining activities. Make copies and distribute this handout for students if they need it.

Ask students how their own definitions, including their conversations during Chain Notes, compared to the official definitions detailed above.

To bridge this section to previous aspects of the lesson, ask students to make connections with "Identity" and their original poem they constructed. Encourage students to identify where they see examples of characterization in either poem.

Extend

Students will apply their knowledge of identity and characterization as they read one of two short stories related to this theme. The two short stories for this activity, "Fear" by Gary Soto (linked here and URL included under Resources) and "The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant (found under Attachments), can be printed and distributed for students to use during this activity.

To facilitate this activity, you should split the class into two groups. Knowing your students' interests, strengths, and challenges is important here. One story, "Fear," is a bit shorter and easier to read, while "The Necklace" is longer and more challenging. Consider this when you group your students, although it is certainly feasible that you can randomly sort students, too.

One group of students will read "Fear," and the other group will read "The Necklace." Students can read individually, in pairs, or as a whole group. If your students need additional guided practice, you could read one or both stories aloud as a whole class.

As students read, encourage them to engage in the Stop and Jot instructional strategy.

Here's how Stop and Jot works in this lesson:

1. Set a timer for a specific amount of time (five or 10 minutes would be ideal).
2. Students should read the text individually or collaboratively as the timer runs down.
3. Students should stop reading when the timer goes off and jot down their reactions to the story, paying special attention to characterization (including both the direct and the indirect characterization) they notice in the story.
4. Once students have jotted down their ideas, reset the timer as they begin reading again.
5. Students repeat the jot process every time the timer goes off.

Once students have finished reading the story, engage in a whole-group (or whole-class, if everyone is reading the same story) conversation about what character traits they noticed throughout the story. Be sure to discuss how the characterization present in the stories affects the character's identity. Encourage students to revisit their Stop and Jot notes and to add to their annotations as the class discussion occurs.

As students identify character traits during this discussion, be sure they classify traits as either direct or indirect in order to reinforce previous activities.

Teacher's Note

If time allows, you could create a visual representation of students' responses of characterization via a chart that can be displayed for this class.

Evaluate

Distribute another blank copy of the Body Biography Handout. This time, students will create a body biography for one of the characters in the story they read. They should consider both direct and indirect characterization as they determine the identity of the character.

Encourage students to work collaboratively with those who read the the same story. Students should refer to their Stop and Jot notes in the text as they complete the body biography.

Students should focus on how the characters' traits shape their identities and also how the students' own traits shape their personal identities. In addition, students should consider what experiences shape one's identity.

Encourage students to share out their body biographies and edit/revise as their classmates share the same characters' bios.

Teacher's Note

You could also ask students to complete this body biography as a culminating activity after completing a novel for class. In this case, students would select or be assigned a character from that novel to explore through characterization.

Ask students to complete an Exit Ticket answering the essential question: How do a person's traits (looks, words, thoughts, and actions) play a role in forming identity? Encourage students to rely on their experiences throughout this lesson as they answer the essential question. Students can share out their responses or turn them in to the teacher for a formative assessment.

Resources

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