

Name: _____

Due date: _____

Write Away 5

Topic:

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Background:

All good stories require certain elements, such as an exciting or interesting plot, a well-defined setting, a meaningful theme and - perhaps most importantly - characters who hold the reader's interest.

There are many ways to develop character: through description, through the eyes of other characters, through dialogue. Think of stories you have read in which the main character has seemed like a real person, not a character in a book. Well-written characters move the plot along and help define the themes of the book. Try to make your characters as interesting and well-drawn as possible.

Activity:

Choose one of the following characters:

- A person standing in a field
- A person on a bus
- A person on a bridge
- A person on a street corner
- A person in a magazine
- A person on stage
- A person on the front steps of a house

Now do the following:

1. Describe this person from your viewpoint as an observer. Describe the person's appearance, but also try to raise questions about the character. Make him sound interesting or intriguing.

I saw Mike standing alone in the near field, staring out across the expanse of golden corn towards the farmhouse in the distance. The setting sun glinted off his blonde head, and although I couldn't see his face, I knew his blue eyes would be squinting and thoughtful. The set of his shoulders told me that he was worried, and I knew exactly what he was worried about. He would never speak of it, but his stillness said it all: his father was home.

2. Write a dialogue between two people observing your character. One of them should know the character, and the dialogue should reveal something about him.

“Look at Mimi standing there on the corner. See her?” Gwen leaned closer and whispered. “She’s in so much trouble!”

“Why?” I asked, curious.

“Didn’t you hear what happened?” Gwen’s eyes were wide with disbelief. “She stood in front of the 5:10 train last night. Nearly got squished all over the tracks!”

“Why would she do that?” I asked.

“Haven’t you heard anything about what’s going on down at the Mills house?” Gwen shook her head at me. “Have you been out of town or something?”

“No, but I didn’t know she was interested in trains. What’s up?”

Gwen looked over at Mimi standing on the corner and shook her head. “Oh it’s such a long story, I hardly know where to begin. Did you ever hear about the fire down at the old warehouse?”

I nodded. “Everyone in town knows that story.”

“Well, people are saying that was Mimi’s fault. Mimi and Frank Blair.”

I gasped. “Frank Blair? The minister’s son?”

Gwen nodded slowly, eyes wide. “I know. Can you believe it?”

3. Using description and dialogue, write a conversation involving your character. Try to reveal something about your character through the dialogue: not just plot, something about the person.

“Hi Mimi,” I said awkwardly.

She turned quickly, startled. Her black hair shone like a raven’s wing in the streetlight. “Oh - hi.” Her voice was tense.

“Um - what are you doing? It’s kind of late to be standing around downtown, isn’t it?”

“I guess, but, well -” she paused and looked around as if searching for an answer. I noticed the shadows under her eyes. “I don’t, um, really have anywhere, um - well, I just can’t go home, see?”

“Oh,” I said, not really sure whether I should just leave her here or go home. She was looking down the street, away from me. I felt as if she didn’t really want me there. “Well, bye then,” I turned to leave.

“Brenda -” she said suddenly. I turned back and she was watching me, her eyes bright with tears. “Thanks. Thanks anyway.”

Your three writing samples should be either typed on plain paper or written neatly on lined paper.