

Whole Class Lesson #1: Character Analysis

The readings for this lesson come from the first few pages of the Book Club texts. They introduce the students to the narrators of the novels, and teach them how to complete a character sketch.

Readings come from the following texts:

Sanchez, Alex. *So Hard to Say*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2004. (pages 1-2)

Sherrard, Valerie. *Speechless*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007. (pages 7-8)

Goobie, Beth. *Sticks and Stones*. Victoria: Orca Soundings, 2002. (pages 7-8)

Before Reading

1. Ask the students the following question: *When you meet someone new, how do you decide what the person is like?* Students may suggest that judgments are made about physical appearances, or may talk about things the person says or does. They even may suggest that others will tell them about the new person.
2. Tell the class that beginning to read a novel is like meeting new people. They will look at things that the characters say, think, and do, as well as the things others say about them. They may even examine physical descriptions, if the author gives these, to try to figure out what a character is really like. Discuss how we make judgments about people's characters or personalities.

During Reading

3. Instruct students to try to picture the narrator in the passage being read. What does s/he look like? What is her/his personality? Would they like to meet her? Because the speakers are narrators, the reader does not get much information about physical appearances. They will have to use their imaginations.
4. Read the chosen passage aloud.

After Reading

5. Have students sketch a quick illustration of the narrator. Instruct them to put in as many details as possible. An alternate activity could be to have students find a picture from samples the teacher has provided that they think looks like the narrator of the passage.
6. Once students have had an opportunity to begin their drawings or select the pictures, hand out a paper copy or put on the overhead projector the passage that was read. Instruct students to read through it themselves, to see if there are any details they missed.

7. When the drawings or selections are done, have students show their work to a partner. Discuss what details they both included, as well as obvious differences in their pictures.
8. Discuss, as a class, the portraits of the narrator. Have students explain what they have put in the portraits, and why these details are appropriate. Encourage them to connect their conclusions to specific details from the text.

Note Taking

9. Hand out the work sheet called **Character Sketch**. Point out that it includes all the kinds of details that you have been discussing, and provides room to make notes about each topic.
10. Depending on the time available, and the needs of the class, choose to use the passage already read or one of the other examples provided.
11. Have students complete the work sheet, using details from the passage read to illustrate their opinions.

Extension Activity

12. When completing the **Character Sketch** work sheet, students will have used adjectives to describe the personality of the narrator. As part of the discussion, there may have been some disagreement about whether certain actions or words were positive or negative. This is an excellent opportunity to discuss the connotations of words, and how we make judgments in the words we choose. In describing the same action, one individual may say a character is being a leader, while another may see the character as being bossy. One person may see a character as decisive, while another sees him as pushy. Also, vague words leave much to the imagination. What does “nice” mean? Is the character generous, kind, thoughtful, easy-going? In order to explore these ideas further, complete the following activity:
 - Hand out the work sheet **Character Study: Venn Diagram**.
 - Examine the example given in diagram #1. Discuss any questions that students have. Explore why Jake would seem different to different people.
 - Instruct students to complete diagram #2, using themselves or someone they know for the description in the middle.
 - Share some responses, as a class. Talk about the variety of descriptions possible for a single action, and the necessity of finding the most appropriate word when describing people or things.

1.0

Character Sketch

In order to understand a character in a story or novel, the reader must be able to “read between the lines.” This means the reader must see what a character **says**, **thinks**, or **does**, or what **others say about her/him**, and then **draw conclusions**.

Think about the narrator (name) _____ in the passage read. Then fill in the details in the chart below:

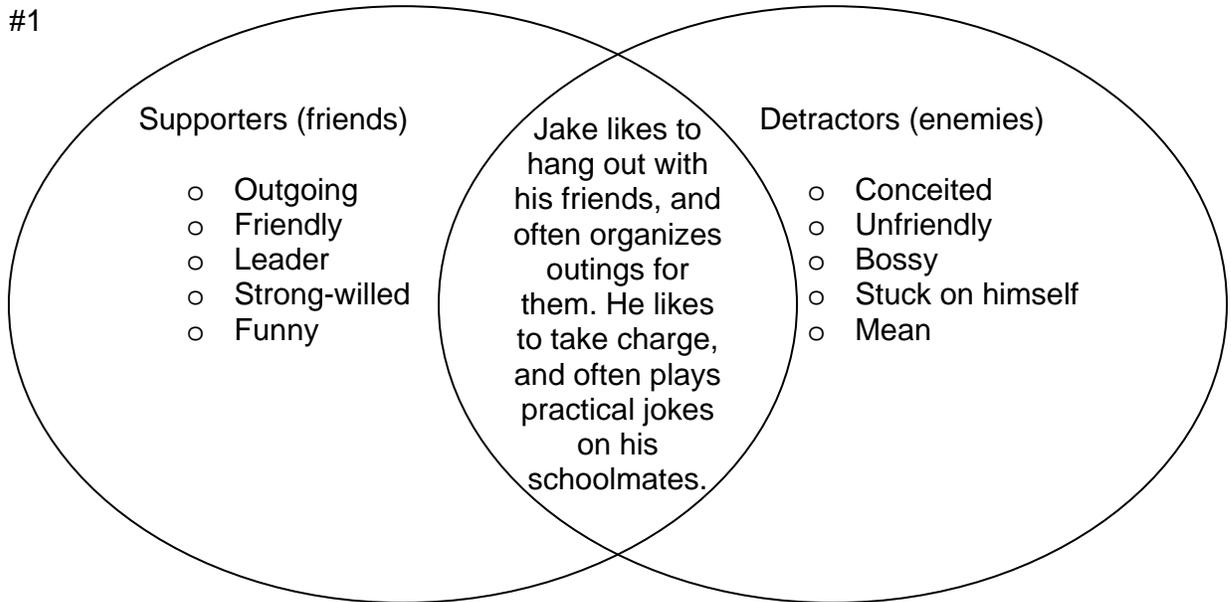
	Details from the text (actual words from the passage)	What this shows the reader (character traits shown)
What s/he says	1. 2.	1. 2.
What s/he thinks	1. 2.	1. 2.
What s/he does	1.	1.
What others think	1.	1.
Physical Appearance (if given)	1. 2.	1. 2.

Conclusions I can draw: (what kind of person is this, and do I like her/him?)

1.1

Character Study: Venn Diagram

#1



#2

