

Characterisation toolkit © Pie Corbett 2024



Talk for Writing

Always ask, "What mood am I trying to create?" – then you can select words that fit.

To create characters that sound real and the reader can imagine, you could:

Nursery/Reception	Y1/2: as in N/R+	Y3/4: as in Y1/2+	Y5/6: as in Y3/4+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk about what characters look like using describing words (adjectives): <i>tall, short, beautiful, wrinkly</i> Orally describe where something is using simple prepositions: <i>red hat <u>on</u> his head. A magic wand <u>in</u> his hand.</i> Help the reader to see what you are describing by using a simile: <i>His hat is as red as a rosy apple.</i> Orally add in information about your character with the relative pronoun 'who': <i>Once there was a farmer, <u>who</u> lived in a village.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give your character a name that tells the reader something about them (proper noun): <i>Tiny Tess</i> Describe your character using one or two adjectives to give different details: <i>a <u>jolly</u> farmer ...; a <u>large, unfriendly</u> man</i> Pile up the description using a simple sentence of 3 (commas in a list): <i>Santa was <u>red, fat and friendly</u>.</i> Describe how your character moves using carefully chosen verbs and adverbs: <i>She <u>tiptoed slowly</u></i> Make it sound good for the reader by using alliteration: <i>Sam spoke softly.</i> Describe a specific feature through a simile: <i>His smile was like a crescent moon.</i> Drop in extra, important information about your character with a relative clause: <i>Sam, <u>who was lost</u>, sat down and cried.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a name to suggest the character (proper noun): <i>Mr. Hardy (strong and tough), Miss Feather (gentle), Ms Kraken (monstrous)</i> Pile up the description using a detailed sentence of 3 (commas in a list): <i>He had grey hair, sparkling eyes and a bushy beard.</i> Show how a character is feeling through their actions and reactions: <i>Tom froze. A shiver shot up his spine.</i> Pile up the character's actions with precise verbs: <i>Zelda <u>crouched</u> in the darkness, <u>staring</u>.</i> Show how a character feels at the start of the sentence with a fronted adverbial: <i>Cautiously, ... Anxiously, ... Carefully, ...</i> Reveal a character's worries or thoughts through a question: <i>Will I survive? Where was the path?</i> Reveal your character's desire, wish or fear: <i>Gareth had always wanted a pet/never liked lizards.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give your main character: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a hobby, interest or talent: <i>Shiv kept a pet rat in a cage of bamboo.</i> something they love or hate or fear: <i>Carol had always hated the dark.</i> a distinctive feature: <i>She walked with a strange limp.</i> a secret: <i>Jake was the only one who knew the answer to the riddle.</i> Show (not tell) how characters feel by what they do, think or say through precise verbs: <i>"Get out!" he <u>snapped</u>, <u>slamming</u> the door.</i> Drop in a few details to suggest character (precise verbs): <i>Mr. Simons, <u>gripping his cane</u>, glared at the boys.</i> Give your character an expression for speech: <i>"Rats!" she cried.</i> Use other character's (or the narrator's) comments or reactions: <i>"Tracy's upset again," whispered Jamil.</i> Show how a character feels on the inside whilst pretending something else: <i>As their eyes met, she forced a smile upon her face and curtsied.</i>