

*Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*  
**Character Analysis Lesson Plan – #1**

**Methods of Characterization in Literature**

**Characterization** in literature is the process authors use to develop characters and create images of the characters for the reader. There are two different approaches to characterization, including **direct (explicit) characterization** and **indirect (implicit) characterization**. With the direct/explicit approach, the author tells us what he or she wants the reader to know about the character. With indirect/implicit characterization, the author shows us things about the character to help us have an understanding of the character's personality and effect on other characters.

**Five Methods of Characterization**

An acronym, **PAIRS**, can help you recall the five methods of characterization: physical description, action, inner thoughts, reactions, and speech.

**Physical description** - the character's physical appearance is described. For example, characters might be described as tall, thin, fat, pretty, etc. We might be told the color of hair, or something about the clothing of the character. How the character dresses might reveal something about the character. Does the character wear old, dirty clothing, or stylish, expensive clothing?

**Action/attitude/behavior** - What the character does tells us a lot about him/her, as well as how the character behaves and his or her attitude. Is the character a good person or a bad person? Is the character helpful to others or selfish?

**Inner thoughts** - What the character thinks reveals things about the character. We discover things about their personalities and feelings, which sometimes helps us understand the character's actions.

**Reactions** - Effect on others or what the other characters say and feel about this character. We learn about the relationships among the characters. How does the character make the other characters feel? Do they feel scared, happy, or confused? This helps the reader have a better understanding of all the characters.

**Speech** - What the character says provides a great deal of insight for the reader. The character might speak in a shy, quiet manner or in a nervous manner. The character might speak intelligently or in a rude manner.

- I. In groups of three:
- Examine your rocks/stones. Which rock represents/symbolizes your character? Why? Toss around the ideas. Be creative and imaginative. Look at the shape, size and contour of your rock. Feel the texture. Connect your rocks' features to your characterization.
  - Brainstorm and jot down character traits (using the acronym PAIRS) for each character (Oskar, Grandma Schell and Grandfather Thomas Schell) based on the rocks you have collected.
  - You **MUST** use at least one word from the list of character traits for each character.
  - Look up and define those words which you are unfamiliar with.
  - Then, find one implicit and one explicit example of those character traits which support your choice of characterization for each character.

**Example:** Thomas Schell : physical trait and emotional state: scarred  
characterization: penitent

**Explicit: Scarred**

- *He opened his right hand, which had NO tattooed on it (81).*

**Implicit: Scarred**

- *We never talked about the past (83).*

**Explicit: Penitent**

- Action/Behavior: *He flipped back and pointed at "I'm sorry"(238).*
- Speech: *I don't speak, I'm sorry (262).*

**Implicit: Penitent**

- Reactions: *After only a few sessions it became clear that he was sculpting Anna. He was trying to remake the girl he knew seven years before. He looked at me as he sculpted, but he saw her" (83).*
- Inner Thoughts: *To my child: I wrote my last letter on the day you died, and I assumed I'd never write another word to you, I've been so wrong about so much...(267).*

MHDAon

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**Character Analysis Lesson Plan #2**

- I. Speed Dating:  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the groups will remain sitting in their groups of three. The other groups (of three) will stand next to groups and collaborate, share and combine their characterizations:
- II. Each group will have 6 minutes to present their rocks and characterizations for the the characters. Switch
- III. Socratic Discussion: As a class compare group responses.