

“Interesting characters...are never static...They long for something, they dream, they move in a direction....Great characters don't know their place. They want more.” (Barry Lane, *But How Do You Teach Writing?*, p. 101)

Characters and Characterization

The **characters** are the people who “live” in your story. **Characterization** is the way you let your reader know your character(s). Your reader’s understanding of your character can be presented **directly** or **indirectly**.

- **Direct** – information the reader gets by description from the narrator
 - *He was a small boy with blond hair. His shoeless feet were dirty and his coat belonged to a much smaller child. His eyes stayed fixed to the sidewalk as he stomped by, scowling.* (The narrator tells you exactly what this boy looks like and even gives an indication of his mood.)

- **Indirect** – information the reader gets by the character’s thoughts, actions, or dialogue OR by another character’s reaction (thoughts, actions, dialogue) to the character (see your Major Character Traits organizer)
 - *“There is no way I’m going to wear that stupid suit and tie to Aunt Jen’s wedding!”* shouted Bill, as he backed away, as if the clothing might attack.
 - *Bill’s mother sighed, held her breath, and counted slowly in her head.*

What do we know about these two characters? How do we know what we know?

Something else to consider is **character motivation**. The reason behind your character’s actions is his or her **motivation**. It is this motivation that drives the plot.

What makes your character do what he/she does?

What does he or she want?

Why does he/she want it?