

The Artios Home Companion Series

Literature and Composition

Units 19 – 23: Character Study—Writing a Character Analysis

A Tale of Two Cities

by Charles Dickens

Literature for Units 19-23

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/98/98-h/98-h.htm>

For Units 19-23, we will again work on completing a literary analysis. Our focus will be on the characters and determining how well the author describes them using both indirect and direct characterization. We will also focus on learning about the types of characters and how these characters help tell the story.

Unit 19 – Assignments

Literature

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Read all of “Book the First” in *A Tale of Two Cities*.
- Using 5 x 7 index cards, make one card for each character listed by writing their name on the front of the card.

Unit 19 – Assignment Background

Characters

Characters are important elements to a story. What the characters think, say, and do can help the reader get a deeper understanding of the novel and the theme the author is presenting in the story.

There are several types of characters within a story, each playing an important role in drawing the reader into the imaginary world the author has created.

Types of Characters:

Protagonist: The protagonist is the main character of the novel. Sometimes the protagonist is hard to spot because we often think that the protagonist should be the most likable character. This is not always the case. Oftentimes, authors will make the protagonist someone we do not admire. When looking for the protagonist of the story, find the character whose life and thoughts you know the most about and whose actions are followed the most closely. A good example of a protagonist is Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*.

Antagonist: The antagonist is the character in the novel who opposes the protagonist. Sometimes the antagonist is not even a person. To find the antagonist, look for the person or thing that causes conflict for the protagonist or keeps the protagonist

from reaching their goal. A good example of an antagonist is the White Witch from *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

Foil: A foil character is placed in the story to highlight the attributes or lack thereof in our protagonist or in another character in the novel by presenting a contrast. If our protagonist is fearful, the foil will be brave; if our protagonist is humble, the foil will be proud. While reading the novel, look for characters who have characteristics that are in direct contrast to another character. A good example of a foil is Dickon, the foil for Colin in *The Secret Garden*.

Round (Dynamic): Typically in a novel characters experience growth and change through each of their trials. When a character confronts an opposing force and shows change through this interaction, we say that the character is round. A good example of a round character is Bilbo Baggins from *The Hobbit*. In the beginning of the story, Bilbo is afraid of traveling and wants nothing to do with adventures. By the time the novel ends, Bilbo has proven himself to be a smart, brave adventurer who dreams of traveling back to the mountains.

Flat (Static): When our protagonist does not change throughout the story, we consider him/her to be a flat character. There are many reasons an author will choose to have the protagonist remain consistent throughout the story. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens keeps the protagonist, Oliver, consistent throughout the novel in order to prove to his readers that a good person can remain good even through conflict.

Stereotype (Stock): This is an ancillary character

who may not be directly involved in the action of the story. However, this type of character plays a part in helping the reader identify with the social mores of the time, as they represent commonly held beliefs about certain races, religions, etc. They are easy to identify, and the same type of stereotype character can be found in many pieces of the same literary time or genre. An example of a stereotype character is Fagin in *Oliver Twist*. He represents the ideas people during Dickens' time held about Jewish people.

List of Characters in *A Tale of Two Cities*

Jarvis Lorry
Miss Pross
Marquis St. Evermonde
Ernest Defarge
Vengeance

Jerry Cruncher
Dr. Manette
Sydney Carton
Madame Defarge
Roger Cly

Lucie Manette
Charles Darnay
Mr. Stryver
Jacques I, II, III
Gabelle

Unit 20 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below.
- Read “Book the Second,” Chapters 1-13 in *A Tale of Two Cities*.
- Complete the characterization worksheet from Read, Write, Think in the **Language Arts Resources** section of your **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website.
- Using character cards you made in Unit 19, on the back of the cards, write a brief description of each character. In your description, be sure to note whether Dickens used direct or indirect characterization to reveal the character. Also note the type of character. (Refer to Unit 19 for a list of the types of characters.)

Unit 20 – Assignment Background

Characterization

When we read stories, it is important that we connect with the characters and find them believable. It is through this connection that we become “involved” and interested in the conflict of the story. In order for the characters to be believable, we need to find out more about them, not only through what the author tells us about them but also through what the author shows us about them.

When the author simply tells us about a character, we call this **direct characterization**. An example of direct characterization is found in *Of Mice and Men* when Steinbeck tells us that “Curly was quick and mean.” In this instance, Steinbeck is telling the reader about Curly. We do not have to rely on our experiences to help us understand this character. Because we do not rely on our own intuition to learn about him, we do not immediately connect with the character.

When we rely on our intuition and knowledge to learn about a character, this is known as **indirect characterization**. The author shows the reader things that reveal information about the characters.

Readers have to use their own knowledge to evaluate this information and to connect with the character. The author shows us things about characters through the following:

Dialogue: What the characters say, and how they say it.

Thoughts: What the characters think and feel. Thoughts of one character can also reveal information about other characters.

Interaction with others: How does the character treat others? How do others treat the character?

Actions: What the character does, and how the character behaves.

Appearance: How does the author describe the physical attributes and clothing of the character?

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Look at this example from *A Tale of Two Cities*, in which Dickens describes Jarvis Lorry:

*Very orderly and methodical he looked, with a hand on each knee, and a loud watch ticking a sonorous sermon under his flapped waistcoat, as though it pitted its gravity and longevity against the levity and evanescence of the brisk fire. He had a good leg, and was a little vain of it, for his brown stockings fitted sleek and close, and were of a fine texture; his shoes and buckles, too, though plain, were trim. He wore an odd little sleek crisp flaxen wig, setting very close to his head: which wig, it is to be presumed, was made of hair, but which looked far more as though it were spun from filaments of silk or glass. His linen, though not of a fineness in accordance with his stockings, was as white as the tops of the waves that broke upon the neighbouring beach, or the specks of sail that glinted in the sunlight far at sea. A face habitually suppressed and quieted, was still lighted up under the quaint wig by a pair of*

*moist bright eyes that it must have cost their owner, in years gone by, some pains to drill to the composed and reserved expression of Tellson's Bank. He had a healthy colour in his cheeks, and his face, though lined, bore few traces of anxiety.*

Dickens is showing us that although Mr. Lorry does not have the finest of things, he does keep himself well-groomed. Also, we can tell from this line “. . . some pains to drill to the composed and reserved expression . . . his face, though lined, bore few traces of anxiety” that Mr. Lorry has learned to suppress his emotions and maintain a constant look of reassurance. Being a banker during a time when revolution was looming, it must have been quite an asset for Mr. Lorry to be able to hide his fear and anxiety. Dickens goes on to describe Jarvis Lorry as someone who resembles a man “sitting for his portrait.” We can gather from this description that Mr. Lorry likes to appear to be in control of himself.

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In contrast, Dickens describes Dr. Manette:

He had a white beard, raggedly cut, but not very long, a hollow face, and exceedingly bright eyes. The hollowness and thinness of his face would have caused them to look large, under his yet dark eyebrows and his confused white hair, though they had been really otherwise; but, they were naturally large, and looked unnaturally

so. His yellow rags of shirt lay open at the throat, and showed his body to be withered and worn. He, and his old canvas frock, and his loose stockings, and all his poor tatters of clothes, had, in a long seclusion from direct light and air, faded down to such a dull uniformity of parchment-yellow, that it would have been hard to say which was which.

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We can tell from this description that Dr. Manette is rather thin and old. The fact that his beard is “raggedly cut” lets us know that he does not have the time, freedom, or money to visit a barber. Also, his “loose stockings,” “poor tatters of clothes,” and “yellow rags of shirt” reveal that he is rather poor and does not have access to nice things. We can gather from the rest of that chapter that Dr. Manette has been

locked in the room for a long while and does not have much exposure to sun.

From the two descriptions of the characters, we get a good example of indirect characterization. Dickens does an excellent job of revealing the characters through showing us different aspects rather than telling us directly that they are expressionless or poor.

## Unit 21 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below, then read “Book the Second,” Chapters 14–24, of *A Tale of Two Cities*.
- On the back of the character cards you made in the last unit:
  - Describe the setting in which the characters live or work.
  - Explain what the setting reveals about the character.

## Unit 21 – Assignment Background

### Setting

Another way the author reveals characters to us is through the setting. The areas in which the author places the character can reveal much about them: are they messy? Do they like sports? Do they like to read?

Think of your bedroom. If you were to describe your bedroom to someone, what would it reveal about you? Would it reveal your favorite color? Would it reveal that you like to listen to music?

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In Book the First, Dickens reveals the conditions in which Dr. Manette has lived while in Paris:

The garret, built to be a depository for firewood and the like, was dim and dark: for, the window of dormer shape, was in truth a door in the roof, with a little crane over it for the hoisting up of stores from the street: unglazed, and closing up the middle in two pieces, like any other door of French construction. To exclude the cold, one half of this door was fast closed, and the other was opened but a very little way. Such a scanty

portion of light was admitted through these means, that it was difficult, on first coming in, to see anything; and long habit alone could have slowly formed in any one, the ability to do any work requiring nicety in such obscurity. Yet, work of that kind was being done in the garret; for, with his back towards the door, and his face towards the window where the keeper of the wine-shop stood looking at him, a white-haired man sat on a low bench, stooping forward and very busy, making shoes.

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We can tell from this description that Dr. Manette has lived in a place not originally built for humans to reside. We can see that he has also lived with little light coming into the room. These

descriptions help us understand that Dr. Manette has been living much like a prisoner, hidden away in a dark, cramped space.

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In contrast, we find in Book the Second that Dickens describes the conditions in which Monseigneur has been living:

Monseigneur, one of the great lords in power at the Court, held his fortnightly reception in his grand hotel in Paris. Monseigneur was in his inner room, his sanctuary of sanctuaries, the Holiest of Holiests to the crowd of worshippers in the suite of rooms without. Monseigneur was about to take his chocolate. Monseigneur could swallow a great many things with ease, and was by some few sullen minds supposed to be rather rapidly swallowing France; but, his morning's chocolate could not so much as get into the throat of Monseigneur, without the aid of four strong men besides the Cook.

Yes. It took four men, all four ablaze with

gorgeous decoration, and the Chief of them unable to exist with fewer than two gold watches in his pocket, emulative of the noble and chaste fashion set by Monseigneur, to conduct the happy chocolate to Monseigneur's lips. One lacquey carried the chocolate-pot into the sacred presence; a second, milled and frothed the chocolate with the little instrument he bore for that function; a third, presented the favoured napkin; a fourth (he of the two gold watches), poured the chocolate out. It was impossible for Monseigneur to dispense with one of these attendants on the chocolate and hold his high place under the admiring Heavens. Deep would have been the blot upon his escutcheon if his chocolate had been ignobly waited on by only three men; he must have died of two.

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From this description, we can glean much about Monseigneur's character. Not only does he have several rooms available to him, he allows only certain people to enter the innermost of these rooms; these reveal his heightened sense of his own importance. Dickens furthers this revelation about Monseigneur's character when he describes the preparation and delivery of Monseigneur's nightly hot chocolate.

As we look at these two examples, we see that when an author reveals his characters through setting, we get a deeper understanding of the characters.

## Unit 22 – Assignments

- Read the Assignment Background below, then read Chapters 1–6, “Book the Third” of *A Tale of Two Cities*.
- Using the character cards you have worked on in previous units, choose one character for deeper study.
- Write an outline for a character analysis essay on this character. Remember to use complete sentences; this will be helpful when you write your essay in Unit 23.

## Unit 22 – Assignment Background

### Character Analysis Essay

In this unit, you will learn about constructing an outline for a character analysis essay and will find the information needed to complete a character analysis.

A character analysis essay shows that you understand the characteristics and the motives of a specific character in the novel. In the essay, you will explain not only who the character is, but how the author reveals the character to the reader, how the character interacts with others, and how this character shapes the story.

A good way to organize your character analysis is to create an outline, using complete sentences to express what information each paragraph will contain. As you create your outline, remember to include transitions between paragraphs.

#### Introduction (Paragraph 1):

Your introduction should introduce the character you will be analyzing in the essay. Your introduction must include the name of your character, the title of the novel, and the author. Other information to add would include why you chose to analyze this character, whether or not you like the character, how you identify with the character, or whether the character reminds you of someone you know. All of the information should help you compose your thesis statement.

**Thesis statement:** Your thesis statement should express how the character interacts with others, how the character overcomes obstacles or conflict in the story, and how the character changes or stays the same during the course of the story.

#### Body Paragraphs (Paragraphs 2-4):

The **First Body Paragraph** should discuss what your character is like in the beginning of the story. One way to do this is to show how the novel's characters interact with each other and explain how this interaction reveals information about your character. In this paragraph, you should use quotes from the novel to support your ideas about your character.

The **Second Body Paragraph** should discuss how your character is involved in the conflict: does he cause the conflict, does he help resolve the conflict, etc. Use quotes from the story to support your ideas. In this paragraph you should also include your understanding of your character's role in the conflict and whether or not you agree with your character's actions or inactions.

The **Third Body Paragraph** should discuss how your character changes (or remains unchanged) throughout the novel. Does your character learn a lesson from the events in the story? Does your character change for good? Use quotes from the novel to support your ideas. Explain in the paragraph how these changes affect your character and other characters in the story.

#### Conclusion (Paragraph 5):

Begin the conclusion by restating your thesis. The next three sentences should be summaries of each body paragraphs. The final sentence of your conclusion should be a thought-provoking statement or question. You may choose to use a quote from the novel that you feel encompasses the message of your essay.

## Unit 23 – Assignments

- Read the sample character analysis essay found in the **Language Arts Resources** section of your **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website.
- Read “Book the Third,” completing *A Tale of Two Cities*.
- Using your outline from Unit 22, complete a rough draft of your character analysis essay.
- Review your rough draft, then complete a final draft using the rubric in the **Language Arts Resources** section of your **ArtiosHCS** curriculum website.