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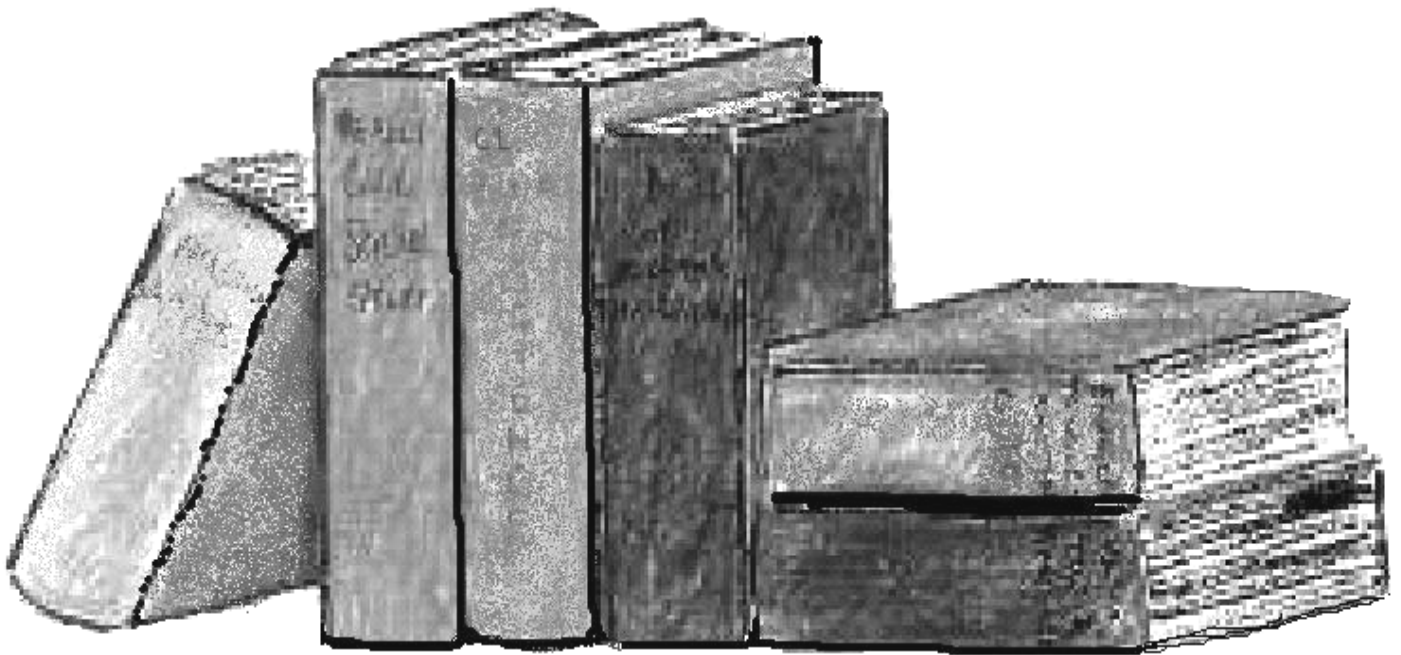
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i Think: Reading & Writing Short Stories



By Dr. Sue Vansant

“InspirEd” by Kendra Corr and Sharon Coletti

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Atlanta, Georgia

** It is the goal of InspirEd Educators to create instructional materials that are interesting, engaging, and challenging. Our student-centered approach incorporates both content and skills, placing particular emphasis on reading, writing, vocabulary development, and critical and creative thinking in the content areas.

Edited by Sharon Coletti and Kendra Corr

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Well, Aren't You a Character?!

Springboard:

Students should read the “Charlotte’s Web” excerpt and answer the question.

(Answers will vary but Fern could be described as determined, stubborn, persistent, etc.)

Objective: The student will be able to explain techniques authors use to create interesting characters.

Materials:

Charlotte’s Web (Springboard handout)
Creating Characters (handout)
Create-a-Character (handout)

Terms to know:

character - representation and traits of a human or other being

characterization - techniques used by an author to create a character

trait - distinguishing quality that can be seen (physical traits such as eye color) or inferred (personality, emotional state, attitude, etc.)

Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard, explain that in this lesson the student(s) will learn about some techniques authors use to create and develop characters, just as E.B. White created and developed the character Fern.
- Distribute “Creating Characters.” Working independently or with a partner, the student(s) should read the information and complete the analysis of a character from their favorite book.
- Have student(s) share and compare their answers and then distribute “Create-a-Character,”
- Using the photograph, student(s) should complete the handout and share their answers. Have the student(s) share which traits and other characteristics made their characters interesting.
- Discuss how the student(s) and other authors can bring characters to life. *(Give them traits to create a picture, describe their thoughts and actions, explain how other characters react to them, and the author can even make direct observations.)*
- **EXTENSION:** Have the student(s) find a picture of another “character” that appeals to them, and analyze that person (animal, cartoon, etc.) in the same way as in the lesson activity.

Charlotte's Web

(Excerpted from the book by E.B. White)



"Where's Papa going with that ax?" said Fern to her mother as they were setting the table for breakfast.

"Out to the hoghouse," replied Mrs. Arable. "Some pigs were born last night."

"I don't see why he needs an ax," continued Fern, who was only eight.

"Well," said her mother, "one of the pigs is a runt. It's very small and weak, and it will never amount to anything. So your father has decided to do away with it."

"Do away with it?" shrieked Fern. "You mean kill it? Just because it's smaller than the others?"

Mrs. Arable put a pitcher of cream on the table. "Don't yell, Fern!" she said. "Your father is right. The pig would probably die anyway."

Fern pushed a chair out of the way and ran outdoors. The grass was wet and the earth smelled of springtime. Fern's sneakers were sopping by the time she caught up with her father.

"Please don't kill it!" she sobbed. "It's unfair."

Mr. Arable stopped walking. "Fern," he said gently, "you will have to learn to control yourself."

"Control myself?" yelled Fern. "This is a matter of life and death, and you talk about controlling myself." Tears ran down her cheeks and she took hold of the ax and tried to pull it out of her father's hand.

"Fern," said Mr. Arable, "I know more about raising a litter of pigs than you do. A weakling makes trouble. Now run along!"

"But it's unfair," cried Fern. "The pig couldn't help being born small, could it? If I had been very small at birth, would you have killed me?"

Mr. Arable smiled. "Certainly not," he said, looking down at his daughter with love. "But this is different. A little girl is one thing; a little runty pig is another."

"I see no difference," replied Fern, still hanging on to the ax. "This is the most terrible case of injustice I ever heard of."

A queer look came over John Arable's face. He seemed almost ready to cry himself.

List at least three adjectives that could be used to describe Fern. _____



Creating Characters

Think of your favorite book and your favorite character from that book. As you read, did you feel as if that character became a friend? Did you hate the book to end because you had to leave your friend? Did you wait anxiously for a sequel so you could read what your friend had been up to? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you can thank the author who created that “friendly” character!

DIRECTIONS: Using the prompts below, describe your favorite character from your favorite book to figure out how the author brought that character to life.

Physical characteristics:

Character's Thoughts/Actions:

Favorite Book: _____

Favorite Character: _____

Other character's thoughts and reactions to the character:

Author's direct comments about the character:

Create-a-Character

DIRECTIONS: Using the photograph and questions to guide you, create the main character for a short story.

Physical Traits:

How old is this man? _____

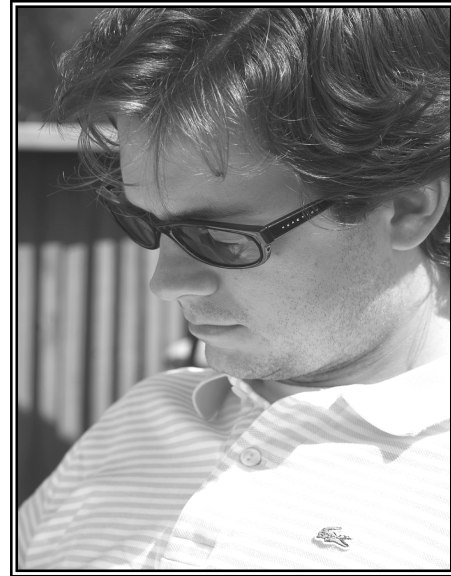
What is his eye color? _____

What is his hair color? _____

How tall is he? _____

What are his common facial expressions? _____

Anything else? _____



Personal Information:

Is the man married? _____

Describe his children or other family: _____

What is his level of education? _____

What is his job? _____

What does he do for fun? _____

Internal Characteristics:

What are his strengths? _____

What are his weaknesses? _____

What does he value? _____

Other Thoughts:

What adjectives would his best friend use to describe him? _____

What would his enemies say about him? _____

Do you want to be his friend? Why or why not? _____



Who Is This Person?

Springboard:

Students should read “A Rose for Emily” and answer the questions.

Objective: The student will be able to explain what makes characters round or flat.

Materials:

A Rose for Emily (Springboard handout)
Characterizing Characters (handout)
Ichabod Crane (handout or transparency)
Character Analysis (handout)

Terms to know:


three dimensional - having many sides, complex
citation - quotation from a book, story, etc., including the title, author, page, or other reference information

Procedure:

- While reviewing the Springboard, explain that while the student(s) did learn quite a bit about the Miss Emily character in a short passage, they did not have enough information to really analyze her. Go on to explain that this lesson examines ways the student(s) can deeply analyze characters.
- Distribute “Characterizing Characters.” The student(s) should work independently, in pairs, or small groups to read the information and complete the exercise.
- Have them share / compare answers and discuss.
- Then, hand out or display “Ichabod Crane” and go over it with the student(s). **NOTE:** Even if your student(s) have not read *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, enough information is provided for them to complete the analysis.
- Distribute “Character Analysis” and have the student(s) complete the handout, using either their favorite short story or one you have assigned. Remind the student(s) to use citations from the story to support their adjectives!
- Have student(s) share their analyses and discuss. (*Answers will vary but should be well supported.*)
- **EXTENSION:** Have the student(s) read Irving’s story, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” @ authorsdirectory.com/b/sleep10.htm (or subject search for the title) to see if their assessment of Ichabod Crane is correct.



A Rose for Emily



“When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old manservant—combined gardener and cook—had seen in at least ten years.”

(excerpted from “A Rose for Emily” By William Faulkner)

After reading the passage, the reader can infer that Miss Emily was

- A. an important citizen of the town.
- B. good friends with most people.
- C. married to her old manservant.
- D. an excellent housekeeper.

Which of these adjectives do you think **BEST** describes Miss Emily?

- A. old
- B. beautiful
- C. poor
- D. private

Which of these adjectives do you think **BEST** describes the town’s women?

- A. nosy
- B. concerned
- C. respectful
- D. affectionate

Do you think Miss Emily is an interesting character? Why or why not? _____

What do you think Miss Emily would be like? Describe her as you imagine her to be. _____

A Rose for Emily *Answers & Explanations*



“When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old manservant—combined gardener and cook—had seen in at least ten years.”

(excerpted from “A Rose for Emily” By William Faulkner)

After reading the passage, the reader can infer that Miss Emily was

- A. an important citizen of the town. * *(Comparing her to a fallen monument implies she was*
- B. good friends with most people. *important. There is insufficient*
- C. married to her old manservant. *information to support other choices.)*
- D. an excellent housekeeper.

Which of these adjectives do you think **BEST** describes Miss Emily?

- A. old *(C is a poor choice since she was not likely poor with a*
- B. beautiful *cook and gardener, and there is insufficient information*
- C. poor *to support A and B. Choice D is the best, especially*
- D. private * *considering no one had been in her house for 10 years.)*

Which of these adjectives do you think BEST describes the town’s women?

- A. nosy * *(Faulkner implies that the only reason many*
- B. concerned *women went to Miss Emily’s funeral was because*
- C. respectful *they were curious about seeing the inside of her*
- D. affectionate *home. So B, C, and D would not be good choices.)*

Do you think Miss Emily is an interesting character? Why or why not? What do you think she would be like? *Answers will certainly vary, but the student(s) should justify their viewpoint.*

What do you think Miss Emily would be like? Describe her as you imagine her to be.

Since the passage leaves a bit of mystery about Miss Emily, it is likely that the student(s) would be a little curious about her. While they will also have different opinions about what they think Miss Emily would be like, their ideas should be in keeping with the little they know of her already.



Characterizing Characters



DIRECTIONS: Think of your favorite movies or television shows. Using the descriptions of “Flat Characters” and “Round Characters,” pick four different characters, analyze them, and decide which term best describes each.

FLAT Characters	ROUND Characters
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two dimensional and simple• Very predictable• Can be summed up in a few traits• Static: they remain the same throughout the story and change very little if at all as a result of the events they endure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three dimensional and complex• Can surprise readers• Takes time in the story to develop• Dynamic: they change throughout the story in the face of events or situations they must face and endure.

Character: _____ Flat or Round? _____

Explain your analysis. _____

Character: _____ Flat or Round? _____

Explain your analysis. _____

Character: _____ Flat or Round? _____

Explain your analysis. _____

Character: _____ Flat or Round? _____

Explain your analysis. _____
