

Characterisation Toolkit – Progression Document

Purpose: to create characters that sound real and the reader can imagine.			
Reception	Year 1 and 2 As in Reception plus:	Year 3 and 4 As in Year 1 and 2 plus:	Year 5 and 6 As in Year 3 and 4 plus:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write about a character from a story you know or make up a new character. • Give your character a name. • Use adjectives to describe – <i>e.g. friendly, scary, tall.</i> • Practise speaking simple list sentences <i>e.g. I need paper, glue and paint.</i> This should be modelled by adults. • Talk about good and bad characters and spot these in shared stories. • Discuss simple similes we can use to describe characters. • Give your character a problem. • End with ‘happily ever after’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give your character a name that tells the reader something about them – <i>Tiny Tess.</i> • Use similes to describe a specific feature – <i>His smile was like a crescent moon.</i> • Pile up the description using a list sentence (sentence of 3) – <i>Santa was red, fat and friendly.</i> • Describe how your character moves using carefully chosen verbs and adverbs – <i>She tiptoed slowly.</i> • Describe your character using 2 adjectives to give different details – <i>a large, unfriendly man.</i> • Make it sound good for the reader using alliteration – <i>Sally slept silently.</i> • Use repetition for description to add detail – <i>a lean cat, a mean cat.</i> • Use but or so in sentences – <i>Tony loved going to school but he hated PE.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a name to suggest the character – <i>Mr Hardy (strong and tough), Miss Honey (gentle).</i> • Show how a character is feeling through their actions and reactions – <i>Sarah glowered; a shiver shot up her spine.</i> • Drop in extra, important information about your character (relative clauses) – <i>Sam, who was lost, sat down and cried.</i> • Give your character: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a hobby, interest or special talent - <i>Shiv kept a pet rat called Simon in a cage made of bamboo shoots.</i> - An expression for speech – <i>“Rats!” she cried.</i> - Something they love, hate or fear – <i>Carl had always been afraid of the dark.</i> - A distinctive feature – <i>she walked with a strange limp.</i> - A secret – <i>She had promised that she would never tell.</i> • Reveal your character’s desire, wish or fear – <i>Gareth had always wanted a pet / He had never liked lizards.</i> • Use BOYS sentences (but or yet so) – <i>He could be really friendly or he could be miserable.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop in a few details to suggest character – <i>Mr Simons, gripping his cane, glared at the two boys.</i> • Show, not tell how characters feel by what they do, think or say – <i>“Get out” he snapped, slamming the door.</i> • Reveal a character’s thoughts – <i>He hoped that he would find his way.</i> • Link the way the character feels with their actions – <i>Encouraged by the bright weather, Jane set out for a walk.</i> • Use other characters (or the narrator’s) comments or reactions – <i>“Tracey’s upset again,” whispered Ted.</i> • Use contrasting main characters and show how a character feels in the inside whilst pretending something else (link to Outside (Inside) sentences – <i>As their eyes met, she forced a smile onto her face.</i> • Show character development from the start to the end of the story – <i>Mrs Bonny frowned → Mrs Bonny turned to her new-found friend and smiled.</i> • Use 2 pairs sentences to give character insight – <i>Injured and terrified, shell-shocked and lost, he wandered aimlessly across the battlefield.</i>

Useful ideas for teaching characterisation – always co-construct the toolkit with the class.

Reception	Year 1 and 2 As in Reception plus:	Year 3 and 4 As in Year 1 and 2 plus:	Year 5 and 6 As in Year 3 and 4 plus:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect a bank of characters from reading. • Notice, collect and use descriptive language. • Ask class to sort characters into 'goodies' and 'baddies'. • Discuss how characters feel and find clues in the text or images. • Discuss what might go wrong for a character and how they would feel. • Role-play scenes in stories. • Invent new characters together. • Use hats, costumes and puppets to retell or invent stories with strong central characters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From reading, create 'role on the wall', collecting character clues and tracking development. • Add speech or thought bubbles to pictures. • Collect, display and use a bank of descriptive language (adjectives and similes). • Use drama/mime/play 'in the manner of the word' to show how a character feels, e.g. <i>walked sadly</i>. • Create banks of words to describe how a character feels. • Draw characters and speech bubbles. • Role-play brief conversations before writing dialogue. • Use freeze frames, hot seat and interview characters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice and collect ideas for how authors develop characters through what they say, do and think. • Use reading and images to collect banks of words or phrases to draw on when writing for feelings, e.g. <i>scared – shivered, spine tingle, legs shook, tremble</i>. • Act out simple scene with different characters, e.g. <i>coming into a room angrily, shyly, bossily, etc.</i> • Use drama to re-enact or develop new scenes. • Collect character triggers, e.g. <i>a secret, a wish, a fear, finding something, an anxiety, a dream, losing something a lie, etc.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play games where children mime and others have to guess – who and how they feel. • Write dialogue for images of films with the sound turned down. • Collect banks of names and idioms/expressions. • Look at images of people and write banks of details to describe faces, hands, eyes, mouths, teeth, etc. • In reading, discuss how authors build characters and show/suggest feelings. • Use drama to develop 'show not tell'. Act out scenes, changing a character's feeling, e.g. <i>how does a bossy character answer the door or a shy one?</i> • Rehearse changing sections of good writing by altering the character type thinking about what a different character would say, do or think. • Read and imitate good writers. Borrow characters and write new stories for them.