

# How to Write a Character Analysis

---

 [thoughtco.com/how-to-write-a-character-analysis-1857638](https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-write-a-character-analysis-1857638)

by [Grace Fleming](#)

Updated January 29, 2018

If you are required to write a character analysis, your task is to describe the character's personality traits, role, and significance in a work of literature. To make this process as easy as possible, it is best to take notes as you read your story or book. Be mindful of subtle hints, like mood changes and reactions that might provide insight into your character's personality.

## Describe the character's personality

---

We get to know characters in our stories through the things they say, feel, and do.

It's not as difficult as it may seem to figure out a character's personality traits based on his/her thoughts and behaviors:

*"Say cheese!" the exasperated photographer shouted, as she pointed her camera toward the group of squirming children. Margot displayed her broadest, most convincing fake smile as she inched ever-closer to her younger cousin. Just as the photographer's finger twitched over the shutter button, Margot leaned into her young cousin's side and pinched hard. The boy let out a yelp, just as the camera clicked."*

You can probably make some assumptions about Margot from the brief segment above. If you had to name three character traits to describe her, what would they be? Is she a nice, innocent girl? Doesn't seem like it from this passage. From the brief paragraph we know she's apparently sneaky, mean, and deceptive.

## Determine the character type of your protagonist

---

You will receive clues about a character's personality through his or her words, actions, reactions, feelings, movements, thoughts, and mannerisms.

As you get to know your character, you may discover that he or she fits one of these stock character types:

- **Flat Character:** A flat character has one or two personality traits that don't change. The flat character can play a major or a minor role.
- **Round Character:** A round character has many complex traits; those traits develop and change in a story. A round character will seem more real than a flat character because real people are complex.
- **Stock or Stereotype Character:** Stock characters are stereotypes such as hot-tempered redheads, stingy businessmen, and absent-minded professors. They are often

found in genre fiction (romance novels and mysteries, for example), and are usually flat characters. They are often used as a tool to move a plot forward.

- **Static:** A static character never changes. A loud, obnoxious "background" character who remains the same throughout the story is static. A boring character who is never changed by events is also static.
- **Dynamic:** Unlike a static character, a dynamic character does change and grow as the story unfolds. Dynamic characters respond to events and experience a change in attitude or outlook.

## Define your character's role in work you're analyzing

---

When you write a character analysis, you must also define each character's role. Identifying the character type and personality traits can help you better understand what the larger role of the character is within the story. They either play a major role, as a central element to the story, or they play a minor role to support the major characters in the story.

**Protagonist:** The protagonist of a story is often called the main character. The plot revolves around the protagonist.

There may be more than one main character.

- In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck Finn is the protagonist.
- In *Little Red Riding Hood*, the little girl is the protagonist.

**Antagonist:** The antagonist is the character who represents a challenge or an obstacle to the protagonist in a story. In some stories, the antagonist is not a person!

- In *Little Red Riding Hood*, the wolf is the antagonist.
- In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, society is the antagonist. Society, with its unfair laws and rules, represents the obstacle to Huck's development as a person.

**Foil:** A foil is a character who provides contrast to the main character (protagonist), in order to emphasize the main character's traits. In *A Christmas Carol*, the kind nephew Fred is the foil to nasty Ebenezer Scrooge.

## Show Your Character's Development (Growth and Change)

---

When you are asked to write a character analysis, you will be expected to explain how a character changes and grows.

Most major characters go through some kind of significant growth as a story unfolds, often a direct result of them dealing with some sort of conflict. Notice, as you read, which main characters grow stronger, fall apart, develop new relationships, or discover new aspects of themselves. Make note of scenes in which character changes become apparent. Clues include phrases such as "she suddenly realized that..." or "for the first time, he..."

