Lesson 7
Describing Characters in Plays

Learning Target
Describing details about the thoughts, feelings, and actions of characters in a drama will help you better understand what you read.

Read When you read a drama, or play, you learn about the characters by what they say and do. A character is a person, animal, or made-up creature in the play.

Identifying details about a character’s thoughts, feelings, words, and actions helps you figure out what each character is like. Character traits are special qualities of the characters, such as shyness or honesty. Motivations are the reasons why characters act, think, and feel as they do. Moreover, the traits and motivations of different characters affect how they behave as a result of earlier events in the story.

Study the cartoon below to identify details that tell you about Edmund.
Think  What have you learned so far about identifying details that help you understand and describe characters? Think about the important information you identified as you looked at the cartoon. Complete the Character Trait Chart below to help you understand what Edmund is like.

Character: Edmund (alien)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Details from the Cartoon (Thoughts, Feelings, Words, Actions)</th>
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Talk  Share your chart with a partner.
- Did you identify the same trait?
- Which thoughts, feelings, and actions did each of you include as clues that show Edmund’s character trait?

Academic Talk  Use these words and phrases to talk about the text.
- drama  character  character traits
- motivations
The

TREASURE

by Mabel Astor

1  [Setting: Iris and Gus, her younger brother, stand in a forest. Iris holds a map.]
2  Iris [studying the map]: We’re supposed to turn left up here by that big tree.
3  Gus [nervous]: But it’s getting dark, and Mom told us to be back for dinner.
4  Iris: [annoyed] Seriously, Gus? We’re searching for buried treasure! The world won’t end if we get home a little late.
5  Gus [nodding his head]: Yeah, I guess you’re right. [hesitantly] But . . .
6  Iris: That’s more like it. Let’s get going! We can’t let Victor and Elsa beat us.
7  [They start walking. A sudden breeze whips the map from Iris’s hand.]
8  Iris: Oh no! The map! [A huge wind gust whisks the map into a tree.]
9  Gus: Now what are we going to do?
10 Iris: I guess one of us is going to have to climb up there.
11 Gus: But I’m afraid of heights.
12 Iris [shivering]: I am, too, but do you think I’m going to let that stop us? We’re so close!! [She takes a deep breath and starts climbing.]
13 Gus: Look! It’s, it’s . . . [points to a gold coin in the dirt under the tree]
**Explore**

How would you describe Iris in the drama *The Treasure*?

**Think**

1. Complete the Character Trait Chart below to help you describe Iris.

   Stage directions are clues that help you learn what each character is like.

   **Character: Iris**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Details from the Drama (Thoughts, Feelings, Words, Actions)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>competitive</td>
<td>Iris shivers when she sees thinks about climbing the tree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determined</td>
<td>“Oh no! The map!”</td>
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**Talk**

2. Describe Iris. Point out details in the drama that helped you understand her character traits. Use the chart above to help organize your thoughts.

**Write**

3. **Short Response** Write a short description of Iris’s character traits. Include details from the drama that helped you identify what she is like. Use the space provided on page 112 to write your response.

   HINT: Reread lines 8–12. What does her reaction to Gus tell you about Iris?
Read

Genre: Drama

William Tell
adapted from a Swiss folktale

1 [Setting: A busy marketplace in Altdorf, Switzerland]
2 William: Come, my son. I have sold the cowhides. Now we must buy the things your mother has asked us to get.
3 Albert: Yes, Father. And what about a toy for little Lewis?
4 William: You are a good boy to remember your little brother.
5 Officer: Stop, man! Why do you not salute the cap of your king!
6 [The Officer points to a pole. On top is a cloth cap. It belongs to the Austrian king, who has conquered Switzerland.]
7 William: I love my country. But I refuse to honor the Austrian king, who forces suffering upon my people.
8 Officer: Then I’ll arrest you as a traitor! What is your name?
9 William [standing tall]: William Tell.
10 Officer: And this is your son? [looks to a nearby Soldier] Soldier! Tie the boy to that tree over there!
11 William: Leave him be! He is only a child!
12 Officer: I hear you are a famous shot. Perhaps you can shoot an apple from the head of your son? If so, I will let you go free.
13 William: Never, you villain! I would rather die than risk hurting him. Now let him go, and take me to jail!
14 Officer: You will both die unless you shoot the apple as I say.
15 William [thinking aloud]: Oh, dear life, what am I to do?
16 Albert [trembling]: Father, I want to go home.
17 William: Stand still, my brave boy. I promise I’ll not hurt you. [He shoots, and then he falls to his knees, sighing with relief.]
18 Soldier: The apple is split! That was a fine shot!
19 Officer [frowning]: I did not believe anyone could make it. I suppose I must honor my word and set you free.
Think  Use what you learned from reading the drama to respond to the following question.

1 This question has two parts. Answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A
Which phrase best describes a character trait of the officer?
- A sly, but fair-minded
- B heartless and cruel
- C bossy, but friendly
- D respectful and polite

Part B
Identify three lines from what the officer says that best support your answer in Part A. Write your evidence in the box below.

Talk

2 Discuss the character traits of William Tell. What details from the drama reveal more about his thoughts, feelings, and actions? Use the Character Trait Chart on page 113 to organize your ideas.

Write

3 Short Response  Describe the character of William Tell. Include details from the drama in your response to support your description. Use the space provided on page 113 to write your response.
The TREASURE

Short Response  Write a short description of Iris's character traits. Include details from the drama that helped you identify what she is like.

HINT Reread lines 8–12. What does her reaction to Gus tell you about Iris?

Check Your Writing

- Did you read the prompt carefully?
- Did you put the prompt in your own words?
- Did you use the best evidence from the text to support your ideas?
- Are your ideas clearly organized?
- Did you write in clear and complete sentences?
- Did you check your spelling and punctuation?

Don’t forget to check your writing.
Guided Practice

Check Your Writing

Did you read the prompt carefully?

Did you put the prompt in your own words?

Did you use the best evidence from the text to support your ideas?

Are your ideas clearly organized?

Did you write in clear and complete sentences?

Did you check your spelling and punctuation?

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Copy of "William Tell" text

2 Use the Character Trait Chart below to organize your ideas.

Character: William Tell

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
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Write Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 111.

3 Short Response Describe the character of William Tell. Include details from the drama in your response to support your description.

HINT Identify the details that explain why William Tell reacts to the officer’s words as he does.
Robin Hood and the Mournful Knight

adapted from an English folktale

[Scene 1: A camp in Sherwood Forest, where Robin Hood and his men are crafting arrows]

1 Little John [a huge man]: My poor empty stomach is growling for dinner! I’d not say no to roast venison with rosemary and spring onions in a delicate cream sauce. Would you, Master Robin?

2 Robin Hood: Stop! You sound like a recipe! Now my stomach, too, rumbles and grumbles for a meal. But first we must find ourselves a wealthy traveler to pay the bill. Little John, please ride out and fetch us a Lord Moneybags.

3 Little John [bowing]: With pleasure, kind Master.

4 Robin Hood: Remember, friend: take care not to bother any simple farmers or laborers you meet. Those who toil1 for their few pennies deserve to live in peace. Fetch us some fat, selfish gentleman who treats the poor like dirt beneath his shoes.

1 toil: work extremely hard
5 Will Scarlet: Look! [pointing] I’ve never seen a knight in such rags! What ails him, I wonder?
6 [Enter the Knight. He looks weary and mournful. He wears fine clothes, but they are old, torn, and dirty.]
7 Robin Hood: Welcome, gentle knight. I am Robin Hood. Will you not dine with us? We were just discussing the menu. We have pheasant, partridge, venison—or all three.
8 Knight: Thank heavens for generous fellows like you! I have not tasted a bite for days. If I ever return to Sherwood Forest, I shall certainly repay your kindness.
9 Robin Hood: Pardon me, Sir Knight, but here in Sherwood, our rich guests customarily pay in advance.
10 Knight: How I wish I could, but I no longer have a penny to my name.
11 Will Scarlet: [suspiciously] He lies! All these gentlefolk lie through their teeth. Let me search his saddlebags, Master Robin.
12 Robin Hood: Please do, Will. Pardon us, Sir Knight, but we do not offer charity to the rich.
13 Will Scarlet [searching, then sounding baffled]: I can’t believe it—he speaks the truth!
14 Robin Hood: What has befallen you, sir? You are surely a landowner, yet you are poorer than a beggar. Pray, tell us your story.
15 Knight [sits wearily on a fallen tree]: A year ago, I was a wealthy man. But then my only son became entangled with a gang of tricksters. To save the foolish lad, I pledged all my lands. Now, unless I pay four hundred pounds² to the Earl of York by next week, I shall lose everything.
16 Robin Hood: Have you no friends?
17 Knight: When I was rich, I had dozens of kind friends. Now that I am a pauper, they have forgotten me. When I need their help, they turn away.

² pound: a unit of English money, originally equal to a pound in weight of sterling silver
18 Robin Hood: Fear not, gentle knight—today you have made a new set of friends. Say, Little John! Unlock the treasure chest and count out four hundred pounds.

19 Will Scarlet [whose suspicious attitude has completely changed; now he all but weeps with sympathy]: Shall he not have cloth for a new coat, Robin? His clothes are badly torn.

20 Robin Hood: Of course! Give our friend a length of fine fabric. Choose a shade of blue that will match his eyes.

21 Little John: Here is the money, good knight.

22 Will Scarlet [sniffling]: Here is the cloth, poor Sir.

23 Knight [overwhelmed with gratitude]: Indeed, I do not know how to thank you! Tell me, Robin Hood, when shall I come to repay the money you have so kindly lent?

24 Robin Hood: Twelve months from now, let us meet beneath this tree. Until then, be merry!

25 Knight: I shall not fail you. Thank you and farewell, my beloved new friends.

[Scene 2: Same Sherwood Forest camp, one year later. The Knight and his wife, Lady Lea approach Robin and his men.]

26 Lady Lea [with a deep curtsey]: A thousand thanks for saving our family from ruin.

27 Robin Hood: Madam, it was our pleasure. How is your son? [in a joking tone] I hope he isn’t keeping company with swindlers these days.

28 Knight: Thankfully he is not. But Sir, let us conclude our business. [He hands Robin a heavy sack of gold.]

29 Robin Hood [peering into the sack]: Surely, Sir Knight, this is too much! We lent you only four hundred pounds!

30 Knight [shrugging]: So I added a few extra coins. You may give them to the next few paupers you meet. . . . Ha! Do I smell venison roasting? May we invite ourselves to dinner?
Think  Use what you learned from reading the drama to respond to the following questions.

1 The box below contains traits and details from *Robin Hood and the Mournful Knight*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Details from the Drama</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adventurous</td>
<td>“Surely, Sir Knight, this is too much!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair</td>
<td>“Unlock the treasure chest and count out four hundred pounds.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suspicious</td>
<td>“You may give them to the next few paupers you meet.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>polite</td>
<td>“Welcome, gentle knight.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generous</td>
<td>“I hope he isn’t keeping company with swindlers these days.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In the chart below, write character traits from the box that describe Robin Hood. Then add details from the box to support your answers. You will not use every detail or trait.

<table>
<thead>
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2 Read the sentence from the passage.

   If I ever return to Sherwood Forest, I shall certainly *repay* your kindness.

What does the prefix *re-* mean in the word *repay*?

A   in
B   not
C   back
D   half
3 This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

**Part A**
Which phrase best describes character traits of Will Scarlet?

- A distrustful, but rude
- B careful, but peculiar
- C easily fooled, but wise
- D suspicious, but kind

**Part B**
Choose three details from the text that best support your answer in Part A.

- A “You are surely a landowner.”
- B “He lies! All these gentlefolk lie through their teeth.”
- C “I can’t believe it—he speaks the truth.”
- D “Choose a shade of blue that will match his eyes.”
- E “Shall he not have cloth for a new coat, Robin?”
- F “Let me search his saddlebags, Master Robin.”

**Write**
Describe the character traits of the Knight in Scenes 1 and 2. How and why does he change?

**Plan Your Response** What are the details that tell you about the Knight in each scene? Use a chart to organize your thoughts about the Knight and how he changes.

**Write an Extended Response** Describe the character traits of the Knight in Scenes 1 and 2. Use your chart and details from the text to support your description of how he changes.
Learning Target

In this lesson, you learned to describe details about the thoughts, feelings, and actions of characters. Explain how describing these details will help you better understand characters in a drama.