

thinking ALoud

Making Sense of Literacy



WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY SPOT: Luis Garcia: End Zone Hero Fourth Quarter & Overtime Characterization



(others' thoughts about the character & the character in action)

Others' Thoughts About the Character: Description and Insight

In addition to using narration, authors also use the thoughts of other characters to describe their characters. Readers are able to visualize the character's appearance, learn of speech habits, or a character's sensibility, based on other characters' thoughts.

Appearance:

Mary... looked plain and fretful.... Her black dress made her look yellower than ever, and her limp light hair straggled from under the black crepe hat.

"A more marred-looking young one I never saw in my life," Mrs. Medlock thought. (Marred is a Yorkshire word that means spoiled and pettish.)

Mrs. Medlock's thoughts about Mary Lennox, *The Secret Garden*, p. 12

Speech Habits:

"Rabbit," Pooh said to himself. "I like talking to Rabbit. He talks about sensible things. He doesn't use long, difficult words, like Owl. He uses short, easy words, like 'What about lunch?' and 'Help yourself, Pooh.'"

Pooh's thoughts about Rabbit, *The House at Pooh Corner*, p. 58

Sensibility:

"No-o," Laura said. "Not exactly. I think she just hasn't got very good judgment. But she does know everything in the books. She is a good scholar."

Laura's thoughts about Miss Wilder, *Little Town On the Prairie*, p. 153

Interpreting Character's Actions

Authors also reveal their character through their actions. In the book, *Tom Sawyer*, readers may wonder if Tom is clever or naughty when he talks other boys into whitewashing the fence for him. Or they may wonder if Tom is clever, silly, thoughtless, witty, or if he should ever be trusted again after discovering he attended his own funeral? Readers are free to interpret character's actions according to their understanding.

How do readers know if their conclusion matches what the author really had in mind? Authors often use two devices to show characters in action: repetition and contrast.

Repetition: Repeated action shows the character's determination, perseverance, or occasional stubbornness. Tom Sawyer's repeated antics characterize him as naughty but not evil.

Contrast: Authors provide a contrast either between a character's actions in different situations or between two character's actions. Tom's witnessing against Injun Joe in court is very different from his and Huck's childish oath of silence. It shows Tom's moral growth.

While repetition and contrast are effective techniques, a character's single action can also contribute to understanding their personal traits.



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