

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 7 AND 8 WRITING/HOMEWORK 2

NAME (FIRST AND LAST): _____ GRADE: _____

Creating a character **everyone will love or hate**

Before you begin your story, take some time to create fresh new characters that are your own.

Think of yourself as the Master Planner -- this is your story and only your characters are going to fit in it. Custom build them to suit your unique story-world. If you really must use real people you know, then try to disguise that person's identity as much as possible.

1) Begin by giving your main character (protagonist) a name that you are comfortable working with. Remember, you'll be with this character for a while, so you should choose a name you at least like.

The name must not only suit the character, but must also be easy on your intended readers. If you decide the name Xzugytgymool is the only name that suits your character, bear in mind that the reader is forced to stop and stumble through the unfamiliar word, which means he is no longer engrossed in your story. Aside from this, you'll also have to write or type this name every time your character appears, which can be annoying.

2) Create a short biography for your new character. You'll need to decide which physical aspects best suit your protagonist -- height, weight, hair and eye color and age. But these alone will not be enough. Consider creating a personality outline as well. Take your time and think about this. You can take as much time as you like and make changes. But you want a character you think others in the class will like to read about and will be curious about. Include:

- Temperament (positive/negative – active/passive)

- moral/ethical/religious beliefs _____
- political stance _____
- hobbies _____
- habits (odd is good, it makes a reader wonder)

- quirks or eccentricities _____
- likes/dislikes _____
- fears or phobias _____

- short and long term goals _____

- hopes and dreams _____

3) It sometimes helps to search newspapers, magazines and even the Internet to find a picture of someone that fits the character you are creating. Tacking an image onto a corkboard at your workstation with a brief bio beneath it can give you a wonderful visual image to work from.

So now you have a character to work with, but this information is not enough to bring him or her to life. Using the principle that all good stories are about **unique, individual complex people**, you'll need to map out a few more points.

When you are creating your character's personality description, decide what his/her greatest strengths are. Give several strong traits and then add **one major glaring weakness**. Your character must still be likeable, but the glaring weakness must form the underlying tension that drives behavior. This creates the person vs. self conflict.

Now create a big problem that preys on that weakness. It must be a difficult or fearsome problem for your character to overcome, so that the story can recount his struggle to turn his weakness into a form of victory at the end. Above all, never let the protagonist know he is going to succeed. That way he can not win unless he surrenders something of inestimable value to himself. And have fun. Stories and characters that are fun to create are fun to read.

Who Am I? Create a character

- Name of Character: _____

- Describe the character's physical appearance. (Describe hair, eyes, skin, clothes, unusual features, and anything else that makes the character unique.)

- Describe the character's personality. (Does she/he have a sense of humor? Is she/he serious? Is he/she kind? Does he/she have strong feelings about anything? What?)

- Describe the way the character speaks. (Does he/she speak in an unusual way? Does he/she speak at a fast or slow pace? Does she/he listen to others?) Give an example.

- Describe how the character thinks. (Is there any change in the way the character thinks? Does she/he analyze events or think about them as little as possible?) Give an example.

- List the different roles the character plays in the lives of the people around him. (Is the character a son, daughter, husband, wife, best friend, policeman, teacher, etc.?)

Sketching Someone

This is an example of a character sketch.

Opening statement/facts	Grandpa, My Favorite Relative My favorite relative was a fighter pilot in World War II, and he's only 5'4" tall. But those 64 inches weigh a solid 185 pounds. Even though he is 79, you'd guess he couldn't be more than 65. Maybe he was blond when he was young, but now his hair is silvery white. There's usually a twinkle in his eye and a half-smile on his face. He looks like a good-natured gnome. Grandpa cracks jokes all the time, but sometimes they aren't very funny. That's all right—he tries.
Appearance/facts	
Personality trait	
Glimpse of subject	When I visit my grandparents, Grandpa is usually busy at his workbench in the garage. He can fix almost anything. Once, when I was young, he fixed my train set when Dad couldn't. The other day he was able to fix the muffler on my dad's car. He just works away at whatever he's doing, but when I ask him a question he likes to explain how things work.
Personality trait/examples	
Personality trait	
Personality traits	Grandpa doesn't talk much about his experiences in World War II or about being a high school principal, and he doesn't try to give me advice. He's a great fisherman because he's patient. Maybe that's why he has been married to Grandma for 51 years. During that time she went from being a flaming liberal to a diehard conservative. When someone asked Grandpa why he put up with Grandma's political shenanigans and occasionally bizarre behavior, he said: "Maybe it's because I love her."
Facts	
Quote	
Summary statement/example	Even though he doesn't tell me what to do, I like to talk with Grandpa when I have a problem. He doesn't tell me I goofed or anything. Mostly he just listens. I guess that's why he's my favorite relative and one of my very favorite people.

After you have read the character sketch above, you should be able to write a character sketch that gives your readers a good picture of your character or perhaps someone you know. Jot down your ideas on a separate sheet of paper, and then write your character sketch.

Name of character: _____

Opening statement/facts	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Appearance/facts	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Personality trait	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Glimpse of subject	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Personality trait/examples	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Personality trait	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Personality traits	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Facts	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Quote	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

3. competitive cruel strong self-important

4. fragile brilliant honest shy

Tenses, tenses, tenses

This story is in past tense so write the verb using the write tense and don't switch with other tenses.

In the Finish the story exercise (about The Dumpsite) students have handed in, I'm see a mistake that is sometimes called the tense shift/switch. This means that if the story is told in past tense, all verbs must remain in past tense, no switching to present tense.

Example: (wrong) He went to the store and sees a robber.

Correct: He went to the store and saw a robber.

Or if in present tense: He goes to the store and sees a robber.

_____ (ever - you - fly) to America? Kevin is lucky - he
 _____ (can) visit his cousin Amy Baxter last year. Yesterday,
 while Kevin _____ (read) a book, his mother
 _____ (come) in and gave him a letter from Amy. He read:
 "Hi, Kevin, I hope you _____ (not forget) me yet.
 _____ (you - remember) how much fun we
 _____ (have) last year?

What _____ (do - you) since then? Well, let me tell you the
 chaotic story of my trip to the Poconos. I _____ (want) to
 spend a nice weekend with my friend Jane. She _____ (live)
 in Manhattan for some months now.

"I'm sure we _____ (have) lots of fun," Jane said while I
_____ (unpack) my things. "If the weather
_____ (be) fine tomorrow we _____ (go)
on a trip to the Poconos."

"I think this is a fantastic idea," I _____ (agree). "I
_____ (want) to climb the highest mountains."

When we _____ (drive) along Interstate 95 the next day, we
_____ (notice) a red light in Jane's mother's car. "I think, if
we _____ (want) to reach the Poconos we
_____ (need) some help first," Jane's mother said.

THE END