



Writing Skills

Character Descriptions

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Character Descriptions

This writing activity is user-friendly for both students and teachers/tutors/speech language pathologists. It not only teaches students how to write a sophisticated and comprehensive character description essay, but also shows students how they can infer information about a character's personality and perspective from that character's actions and dialogue. Given a short novel excerpt, students are first tasked with attributing adjectives to one of the characters by analyzing his actions and words, and then they use those adjectives to write a character description by following a written scaffold. This strategy and scaffold can apply to almost any character analysis writing assignment. Included are extensive notes on the provided excerpt and a sample character analysis essay following the scaffold to aid in instruction.

Name _____

Date _____

Novel Excerpt from *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes

Background: Louisa and Patrick live in England and are girlfriend and boyfriend. Louisa has just lost her job and is looking for some sympathy from Patrick.

Excerpt:

He was down at the athletics club, as I had known he would be Mondays to Thursdays, regular as a station timetable, Patrick was there in the gym or running in circles around the floodlit track.

“Run with me,” he puffed, as he got closer. His breath came in pale clouds. “I’ve got four laps to go.”

“I wasn’t expecting you.”

“I got fed up at home. I thought maybe we could do something.”

He looked sideways at me. There was a fine film of sweat on his face. “The sooner you get another job, babe, the better.”

“It’s all of twenty-four hours since I lost the last one. Am I allowed to just be a bit miserable and floppy? You know, just for today?”

“But you’ve got to look at the positive side. You knew you couldn’t stay at that place forever. You want to move upward, onward.” Patrick had been named Stortfold Young Entrepreneur of the Year two years previously, and had not yet quite recovered from the honor. . . . “Being made redundant can change people’s lives, Lou.” He glanced at his watch, checking his lap time. “What do you want to do? You could retrain. I’m sure they do a grant for people like you.”

“People like me?”

“People looking for a new opportunity. What do you want to be? You could be a beautician. You’re pretty enough.” He nudged me as we ran, as if I should be grateful for the compliment.

“You know my beauty routine. Soap, water, the odd paper bag.”

Patrick was beginning to look exasperated.

I was starting to lag behind. I hate running. I hated him for not slowing down.

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