



Welcome to the Character Creation Creation Crew!

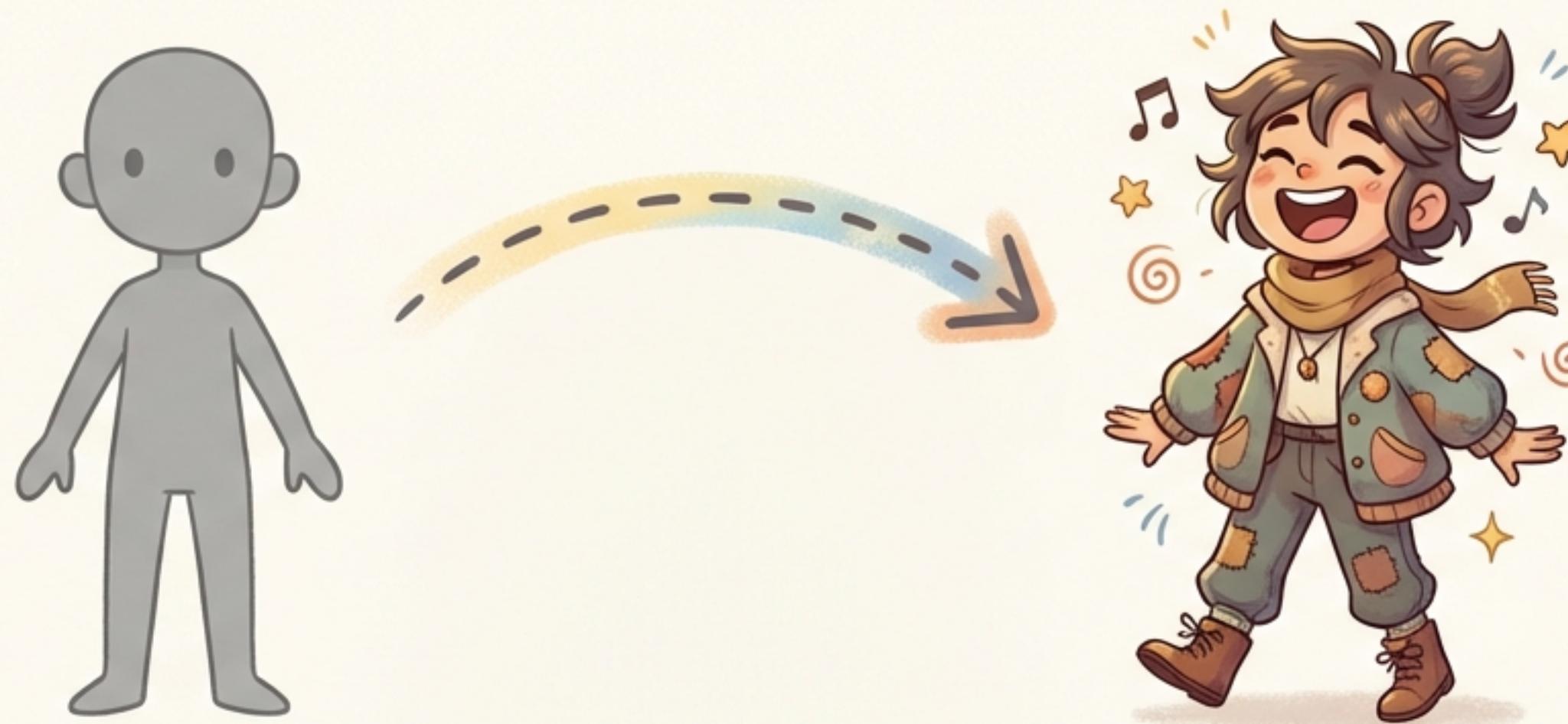
Your Mission: Bring Amazing Characters to Life

Ready to join the crew? Let's get building!

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First, What's Our Building Material?



Characterization is how a writer brings a character to life. It's the art of revealing who a character is by describing what they look like, what they do, and what they think and feel.

Good characterization is what makes readers connect with your story, understand the characters' motivations, and care about what happens next. It's the difference between a flat drawing and a living, breathing person.



Meet Your Crew Chiefs!



**This is Direct Dana.
Her motto: "Just the
facts!"**

Dana is our architect. She believes in being clear and straightforward. She *tells* you everything you need to know to get the basic structure of a character built quickly and strongly.

This is Direct Characterization.

**This is Inspector I.N.
Direct. His motto: "Show
me the clues!"**

The Inspector is our detective. He believes the best way to know someone is by observing them. He *shows* you clues through actions, words, and details, letting you figure out the character's personality.

This is Indirect Characterization.



Dana's Blueprints: The Power of TELLING



Core Concept:

Direct characterization is when the author expressly tells readers about the character. The narrator or character simply states the facts.

When to use it:

This is perfect for crucial details you can't risk the reader missing, like physical appearance, a job, or a core personality trait that sets up the story.

Classic Example

"She had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair and a sour expression... by the time she was six years old she was as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived."

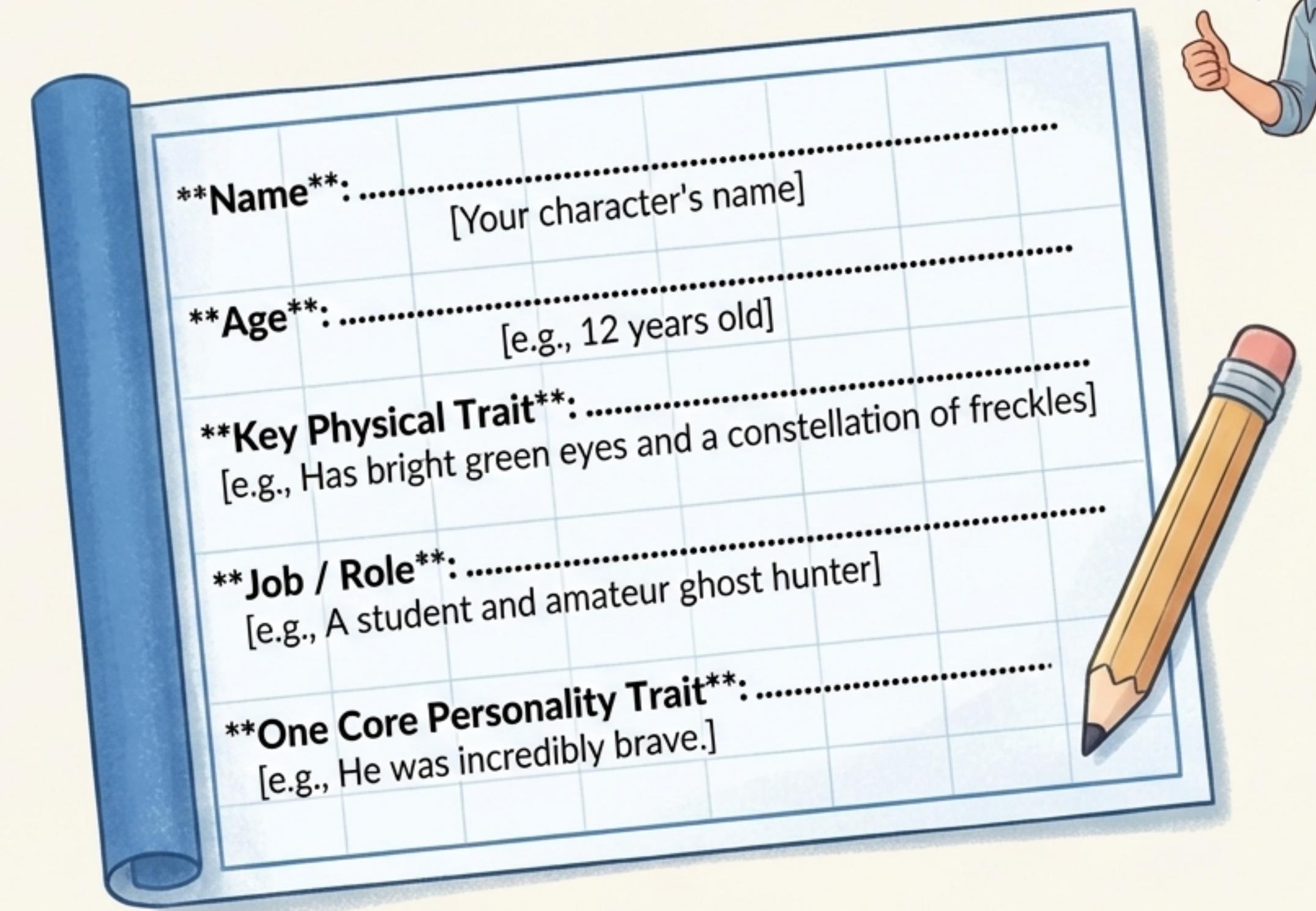
– Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*

Takeaway: Burnett doesn't hide anything. She ***tells*** us exactly who Mary is. The blueprint is clear!

Activity #1: Your Turn to Draft a Blueprint!

Let's build the foundation of a new character using **ONLY** direct characterization.

Grab a piece of paper and fill in the blanks for a character you invent. Don't be shy, just state the facts!



The Inspector's Case Files: The Art of SHOWING



Core Concept:

Indirect characterization is the art of “showing” readers what a character is like. Instead of telling them, the author reveals personality through that character’s actions, speech, thoughts, appearance, and how others react to them.

Why it’s powerful:

This method invites the reader to be a detective, too! They get to interpret the clues and come to their own conclusions, which is highly engaging and makes the character feel more real.

The Inspector's Top-Secret Tool: The STEAL Method!

To find all the clues about a character, Inspector Direct uses his five favorite tools—or as we call them, the STEAL Squad! Each one helps reveal a different part of a character's personality.

S - Speech:

(What does the character say? How do they say it?)

T - Thoughts:

(What's going on in their head? What do they believe?)

E - Effect on Others:

(How do other characters react to them?)



A - Actions:

(What does the character do? How do they behave?)

L - Looks:

(What is their appearance? What do their clothes and expressions say about them?)

Case File Clues: Speech & Thoughts



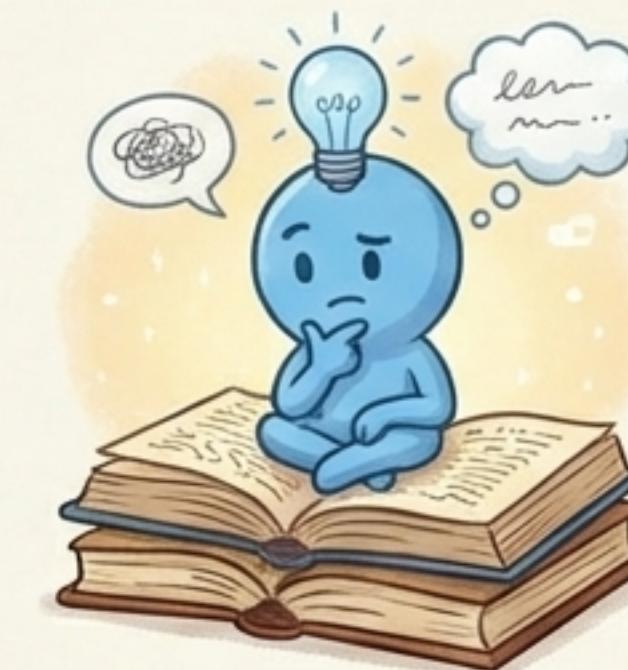
Speech

What a character says and how they say it reveals their background, emotions, and intentions.

Example from *The Great Gatsby*

- ▶ Gatsby cried incredulously, “Can’t repeat the past? Why of course you can!”

This dialogue doesn’t just state an opinion. It shows us Gatsby’s powerful optimism and his deep, driving motivation.



Thoughts

A character’s internal monologue offers a window into their true emotions, desires, and fears.

Example from *Yolk*

- ▶ A girl Jayne just met graduated from Oxford. Her internal thought: “She’s like me but so much better.”

The author never says “Jayne is insecure.” We feel her insecurity and jealousy directly through her private thoughts.

Case File Clues: Effect on Others & Actions



Effect on Others

The way other characters react to your protagonist reveals what they are like. We trust how others see them.

> “After Daisy speaks, Nick thinks, ‘I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said. It made me uneasy...’ > *The Great Gatsby*

Nick's reaction tells us to be cautious of Daisy. It shows she might be manipulative or insincere.



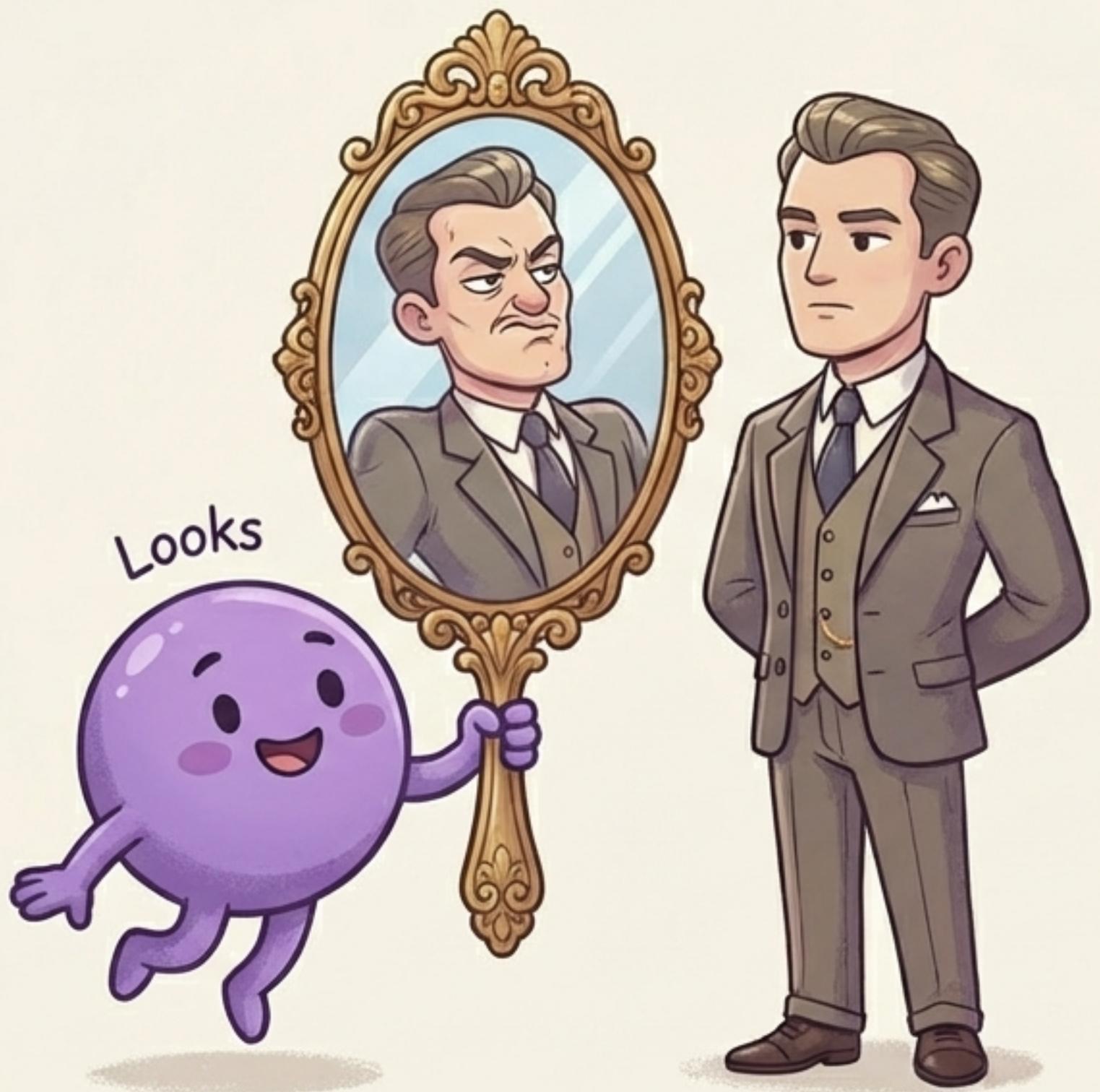
Actions

What a character does in any given situation, especially under pressure, reveals more than words ever could.

> “Before meeting Daisy, ‘a greenhouse arrived from Gatsby’s, with innumerable receptacles to contain it.’”
> *The Great Gatsby*

Gatsby doesn't say “I'm nervous.” His over-the-top action of sending way too many flowers shows his anxiety and his desperate need to make a perfect impression.

The Final Clue: Looks



Description:

A character's appearance isn't just about hair and eye color. Their clothes, posture, expressions, and even their physical presence can reveal their personality.

Example from *The Great Gatsby*:

► “Two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face... you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved... It was a body capable of enormous leverage—a cruel body.”

Analysis: Fitzgerald doesn't just say, “Tom was a cruel bully.” He uses the description of Tom's “arrogant eyes” and powerful body to make the reader *feel* his dominance and cruelty. The description itself is a clue.

Activity #2: Your First Case File!

****Instructions**:** Read the character description below. What clues can you find about this person's personality? Use the STEAL method to list your evidence!

****Passage**:**

> "Without a word, Elara walked to the front of the line, ignoring the grumbles behind her. She tapped her foot, arms crossed, and checked her watch—a sleek, gold piece that flashed under the lights. "Some of us have places to be," she muttered, not to anyone in particular, but loud enough for everyone to hear. The cashier flinched."

TOP SECRET

****Speech**:**

****Thoughts**:** (N/A in this example, which is a lesson itself!)

****Effect**:**

****Actions**:**

****Looks**:**



The Dynamic Duo: Great Characters Use BOTH!



Main Idea: Direct and indirect characterization aren't mutually exclusive. In fact, they are most powerful when blended together. Dana's blueprints give us the essential facts, and the Inspector's clues add the life, depth, and nuance.

Putting It All Together - *The Secret Garden* Example Revisited:

- 1. Direct (Dana's Part):** First, the author *tells* us Mary is "tyrannical and selfish."
- 2. Indirect (Inspector's Part):** Then, the author *shows* this by describing how Mary drove away every governess who tried to teach her.

Takeaway: The direct statement gives us the frame, and the indirect evidence makes us believe it. That's how you build a masterpiece.

The Crew's Cheat Sheet



Direct Characterization (Dana's Way)

Method	TELLING	SHOWING
How it Works	The author directly states a character's traits.	The author reveals traits through STEAL (Speech, Thoughts, Effect, Actions, Looks).
Best For	Facts, physical appearance, and critical information the reader <i>*must*</i> know.	Personality, emotions, motivation, and creating a deeper connection with the reader.
Example Phrase	"He was a kind and generous man."	"He gave his last loaf of bread to the hungry child."



Indirect Characterization (The Inspector's Way)



Activity #3: The Dynamic Duo Challenge!



The Mission: You've been given a simple character concept. Your job is to describe them in two different ways.

Character Concept: "A grumpy wizard."



Part 1 (Direct Dana Style): Write one paragraph describing the wizard using **only** direct characterization. Tell us he's grumpy, old, and powerful.



Part 2 (Inspector Direct Style): Now, write a new paragraph describing the same wizard using **only** indirect characterization. Show us his grumpiness through his actions (slamming a book), his speech ("Bah!"), and his looks (a permanent scowl).

Which version feels more alive?

You're Officially Part of the Crew!



Main Message:** Building great characters isn't a mystery—it's a skill. By using Dana's direct blueprints for a strong foundation and the Inspector's clever clues to add personality and depth, you now have all the tools you need.

- **Final Call to Action**:** Now go build someone unforgettable! ★